The Cutting Edge

by tashhhh

Summary

In which Frisk lives in the Ruins forever and runs a restaurant. Sans moves in to help build some new infrastructure. Frisk is... a perfect child who can do no wrong! And Sans, he's so good at protecting her... that he could do it in his sleep.

Notes

- This is a fan-based derivative work of Undertale. It is not affiliated with the creators or endorsed by them. This is a work of fiction. Any resemblances to real-life people, places, or brands are a coincidence or a fair-use parody.
- Please share any feedback or reactions that you have. All comments from singing praise to violent flames are accepted and appreciated!
- Updates some Fridays.
- Intended as a comic script.
- Also posted on Wattpad.com and Fanfiction.net
Frisk Gets Lost

UNDER TALE

How shall we play today?

...

→ [True Pacifist]
* The path of Mercy.
*A cute little chibi human holding a stick. They wear a dirty bandage on their forehead and a neutral expression on their face.

...

→ [GeNoCiDE]
* The path of No Mercy.
*Chibi human dons a maverick grin. Their eyes snap open with a red gleam. As if by a manifestation of their sheer determination to maim and slaughter, the weapon in their hand flickers back and forth between the image of a stick and that of a knife.

...

(psst. hold on a sec. keep scrolling.)

...

→ [Chef]
* Even Less Mercy
*The human gains a black collar, a black apron, and a gender. Her eyes remain open and her mouth keeps smiling.

(yes. do it.)

Selected [Chef].

The chef's sprite bobs along and sneaks onto the previous screen. She plucks the knife away from the genocidal human. She twirls it around by the handle and grabs it firmly with its blade pointing downwards.

The smooth, clean steel stabs through the air and shatters the [RESET] button like a piece of glass. Heedless, it continues.

The tip of the knife sank into the large block of yellow-white cooking fat. The girl peeled back the paper wrapper a little further down. She put her other palm on the flat edge of the blade and used her body weight (all 40 kilograms of it) to drive it in and cut away a rectangular slab of the specially formulated blend of golden flower seed oil and cocoa butter. She placed it onto a scale and saw that it was 170 grams. "Perfect!"

She added the chunk to a metal bowl. Although the various other uncombined ingredients in the bowl included white chocolate chips, heavy cream, and a heap of some powdery white substance, the girl's black polo and black apron were spotless. She placed the mixture into a powered cabinet. The GUI above the door read, 50° C.
She was tiny, but she could kick a little stool around on the floor as needed, and she managed to reach far enough over the counters to work effectively. Her dark hair was kept trim in a short bob. One lock of her bangs always tended to stick up on the right side. Her modest blue jeans did not do much to conceal her figure, because she unfortunately did not have one of those. But, she was too busy cooking to care about that. She turned her attention to another heated vessel sitting on the marble counter. She vigorously stirred its shiny, dark-brown contents with a plastic spoon. Recipes for ganache and fondant were taped to the wall.

Behind the girl, in the doorframe, stood a man of average height. "Frisk! We're doing assembling and frosting on the cake now. Can you please make some dark chocolate for the leaves—oh, you're already doing it." He spoke with a hint of a foreign accent.

Frisk had poured out the chocolate onto the cool counter top and was moving it around with a metal scraper. She smiled and gave him a glance. "Yep."

He was paler than she was. His beard and his hair, which he wore in a knot, were a lighter shade of brown than hers. A boy the same age as Frisk quietly appeared behind him. The boy contemplated his options. He tried to flatten himself against the wall and squeeze through the space between the man and the doorframe.

Frisk spoke up and said, "Hi there, John!"

"Oh, I'm sorry!" The man politely stepped aside. He ushered the boy in with a pat on the shoulder. "Do you need something?"

"M-hm. More of… these ones for the shop." John opened a refrigerator. He pulled out a tray of chocolate truffles that were shaped like rounded squares and drizzled with white streaks.

Frisk said, "Dad, what time is the delivery?" He glanced at the clock on the wall above the doorframe.

"Hm, well, their wedding is going to start pretty soon. So we should be ready to drive the cake over by four. I think that you can clean up and be done for today. Didn't you want to go down to the village market?"

"Yeah, you're right. They close earlier on Saturday," she replied and set aside the bowl of tempered chocolate.

"Did you kids get your schedules for school yet?"

"Yeah," said Frisk. John was checking off an inventory list on the counter. He added, "We have homeroom together."

"Nice!" said Frisk's dad. He gathered some red and yellow food dyes from the shelf. He addressed John, "Hey, would you like to come over later?"

"Dad!" Frisk protested. "He's been over to our place the past two days in a row! Give his own parents a turn with him, geez."

"Eh, but Frisk, you're cooking amazing seafood tonight. The last two days we only had cake and frozen pizza."

"Yeah, whose fault was that?!" she retorted. "It was your turn to cook dinner. You coulda told me if you were too lazy. You know I can't practice Mom's recipes when I'm working here."
"Ok, ok," he chuckled. He told John, "You can invite your parents over too!"

"Huh," the shy apprentice blushed under all the attention. He headed back out to the cafe with the trays of fresh chocolate morsels.

After another hour of working, Frisk wrung out a dish cloth and draped it over the sink. She unplugged her cell phone from the wall and walked across the kitchens where she encountered other employees on her way out. "Wow, that's beautiful," she remarked when she saw the 2-tier cake coated in glossy dark chocolate. It was bordered in romantic swirls of white frosting, and topped with shimmering sprinkles and colorful autumn leaves, which were also made out of chocolate. Two young adult coworkers, a man and a woman, were bickering over which figurines to put on the cake. There was already one white-tuxedo-clad toy standing in the center.

The man said, "This guy looks just like him. Way more than yours." He pointed to the photograph of the couple as if to prove his point.

The woman said, "It's not always about having the exact right colors! This one has a vibe that's much closer to the way he smiles in this picture! I don't think he would wear a bright blue suit like yours." She noticed Frisk and said. "Hey there. Are you going home?"

"Yeah."

The man suggested, "Maybe we should let Frisk solve this dispute for us."

"Sure!" The woman agreed, confident that Frisk would side with her. "Here kid. Which of these two guys should we put on the cake?"

Frisk put a finger under her chin and said, "Hmm." She looked at the one that was already on the cake, at the one the man wanted, at the one the woman wanted, and at the reference photo of the couple-to-be. She thought that the woman's choice of figurine resembled her own father and got creeped out by the idea of putting that on top of a wedding cake, so she chose the man's darker-skinned, blue-clad model.

"What?!" The woman was surprised and disappointed. Frisk giggled at her older friends and continued towards the exit. Still annoyed at losing, her female coworker said, "Hey Hans, aren't you gonna kiss your daughter goodbye?"

"Eh?!" Frisk braced herself, but before she could escape, she was picked up by her father. "Gyaah~!"

"Of course I am going to hug my dear daughter Frisk!" He squeezed her against his chest as she squirmed. Her legs couldn't reach the floor. The rest of their coworkers enjoyed a laugh at her expense. "Da-a-ad stop ohmygod you're embarrassing me. Gwah!" Her face glowed red as he ruffled her hair with his chin.

"Aw Frisk," he said and put her down. "Don't be so embarrassed. I have to tell you how much I love you." She started to smile, but then he added, "What if you get lost and I never see you again?"

"I'm not going to get lost!" She fumed and ran out of the kitchen. The sound of their laughter was muffled behind the door as she walked out from behind the counter and across the public section of the cafe. Another older colleague was handling the service side together with John. There were cakes, pies, and many types of chocolate treats arrayed in the glass displays. She sighed and smiled to herself as she left the store.

"Brr!" She hugged her bare arms with her hands. "It's already this cold?" She stood on a sidewalk
with the glass windows of the shop behind her. There was a blue and white striped banner overhanging the outdoor seating area. Above the door there was a neon sign with a blue and pink logo: Café Frisk. With a red heart for the dot on the 'i'.

Frisk walked down the street for a couple of blocks. The sky was gray and the city air smelled fresh. She opened the door to her apartment and went inside. She picked up a letter addressed to her dad and added it to the pile of unopened mail on the table. She suddenly had to adjust her steps and almost tripped over the guitar lying in the middle of the living room floor. "Ack!" She groaned as she corrected her movement. She put the acoustic back in its case and stacked it up neatly in the corner with the others. She sent her dad an angry text message telling him to, 'stop leaving your guitar out or else i'm going to step on it one day!'

That being over with, she paid a brief visit to her bedroom and picked up the striped sweater lying on the bed. She took her empty brown-and-black backpack from the floor where it was arranged next to neat piles of textbooks, notebooks, folders, and pens. On her way out, her foot brushed against something in the hallway. She looked down at the dirty white shirt lying on the floor. "Grr!" She refused to pick that one up for him. Instead she left a note on the wall next to it. 'Dad! Pick up your shirt!'

She was thinking about these annoyances and her clever rebuttals to them as she got on the bus to the seaside village. She only then just realized that she forgot to take off her apron. She did so and put it in her backpack. The bus turned onto a highway leading out of the city. Frisk sat down and enjoyed the sensation of resting her feet. The bus route hugged the side of the mountain as they passed through the steep terrain. She looked out the window at the trees and wildflowers. As they approached populated areas once again, the mountain gave way to views of the coastal plain, the windy ocean, and the many fields of golden flowers in full bloom. She observed the billboards as they passed. A confident man in a suit boldly presenting a number you can call to sue your doctor. A list of fast food restaurants that could be found on the next left. The logo of Nutrino Farms Inc. with its mascot of a winking skull wearing a pink bow. After getting off of the bus, she had to walk another 15 minutes in the direction of the shore. The downtown area was impressive for such a small village. She strolled along the stalls of the outdoor food market near the fishing harbor. The unbidden autumn breeze blew the salty scent of the sea into her face.

"What'll it be today, miss?" A vendor greeted her with a hint of familiarity. She looked over the selection of small white clam shells, medium oblong clam shells, shrimp, and oysters. She pointed to the second item from the above list and said, "2 kilos of those, please." After buying them she said to herself, "I should make something else too, since others are coming over. Oh yeah, we were running out of salt too." So she bought a jar of salt and bunch of vegetables—carrots, onions, potatoes, red bell peppers, and celery. The soft pitter-patter of water droplets tapped on the canvas roof covering the stalls. She put all of the ingredients in her backpack and walked back to the bus stop.

The bus was late. She stood underneath the shelter and waited. Eventually she sat down on the bench, although she had to bear with the feeling of the cold metal sapping away the heat from her legs. A middle-aged woman came and joined her in waiting for the bus. After 40 minutes, still no bus had shown up. Frisk sighed. The woman next to her read from the screen of her smartphone. "'Hum… village route cancelled…"

"Hm?" Frisk looked up.

"They're saying… there's been a triple accident on the highway? Other routes going around the mountain may be delayed as well…" She shrugged.

"Oh, I see. That sucks. Thanks." They nodded politely. Frisk looked up information on the internet
on her own phone. *I need to get going with all of these fresh foods on my back. Maybe I should call a taxi? Nah, too expensive. I'll walk around to this bus stop here, and get on that route instead. Even if it is delayed, that should be faster than trying to walk all the way home.* After determining that that was her best course of action, she set off in the direction of the mountain.

She walked past the golden flower fields and continued on for a while until she got to a highway ramp. "I shouldn't have to walk over a highway to get there. If I go under the bridge it should be right up ahead…" She followed the smaller road past the highway bridge until it curved northwards and led her into the woods. "Hm, I haven't seen that street that it pointed to. They aren't marked, maybe I missed it?" She turned around and retraced her steps for a while until she found the right dirt path to turn down. The road seemed less and less likely to contain the bus stop she desired to find the longer she walked down it. She started to feel frustrated and considered just going back to the seaside village, or perhaps calling a friend for a ride. Woops, no signal. "Ugh."

Her annoyed glance fell upon a very worn sign marking the 'Trail over Mt. Ebott'. "Screw this! I'm going over the dang mountain! How hard can it be?" *I mean, I see it all the time from the city, so if I just hike up to the other side I should be able to see my district from there and then just walk home!*

She set off and hiked up the trail, filled with determination. After 10 more minutes of climbing, the worsening rainstorm sapped away her determination. "C-cold…" She squinted into the icy raindrops that pelted her exposed face. The exertion of climbing uphill didn't seem to help much with staying warm. The wind blew straight through her sweater. "How can it be this cold in August?" She folded her arms. *The trail is really worn down at this point. It's like no one ever goes up here. Kinda weird for a mountain right next to a major city.* She was basically walking through the forest. *Well, there must be other trails somewhere, it's such a big mountain. I should be getting to the point where I can see the other side soon.* She reassured herself. She saw a few patches of golden flowers as she continued. The rare sight of the common crops growing in the wild filled her with determination, again. Their bright yellow color seemed to shine through the darkening storm, beckoning her onwards. Regardless, she couldn't stave off the cold through determination alone. By the time she came across a rocky clearing filled with grass and more golden flowers, she was shivering too hard to appreciate them.

"A-ah, it's a cave. Maybe I should r-rest and try to w-warm up?" It was too dark to see very far into the cave. She went just a few steps into it and huddled up against a rocky wall. "I-I don't know if I c-can actually w-warm up like this…" She hugged her backpack and fiddled with the zippers. She checked her phone again. "H-huh, no signal here either."

Her hands shook so much that she dropped her phone on the ground by her side. "W-woops…" As she felt for the device, her fingers brushed against its side. It teetered over the uneven ground and slipped away from her. A series of unexpected bumps and echoes indicated that the terrain in front of her was much more deep and spacious than she had thought. She froze and listened carefully. The amount of time that passed before she heard the final sound of it hitting the ground sent a different sort of chill down her spine.

She stared into the dark cave. Her eyes slowly adjusted. "Wait a minute. Is that… light?" She dropped onto her belly and carefully crawled forward over the floor. Her heart pounded in her chest. The further she inched up, the deeper the pit in front of her was revealed to be. It was wickedly deep. She gripped some winding roots on the ground and stared over the edge with morbid fascination. She would surely die if she fell down there. Outside the cave, the rain poured. A bolt of lightning struck nearby and made her jump. She returned her attention to the deep pit. She was so curious. Why the heck was there *light* on the floor down there? She could see hues of brown, lavender, green (like grass?), and yellow (like flowers?). A structure that was hard to make out, but looked… manmade?
As she dug her fingers into the cliff, some pieces of dirt crumbled and fell into the abyss. In return came a creepy voice echoing the way back up.

"What are you looking at, human?"

Frisk let out a surprised squeal. The rocks supporting her weight shifted with the sudden movement. She felt her heart sink in her chest as she saw the ground crumble in slow-motion. She tried to push back with her palms. The soil liquefied and moved between her knuckles. She screamed as she fell and tumbled over the edge. She was one with the falling rocks.

*SNAG.*

She fell again and everything went black.

Frisk's eyes slowly opened as she came to. She started breathing hard and fast for a number of reasons. For one, she had no idea how long she had passed out for and if she was about to die. For the other, a good third of her body from her lower back to her shoulderblade had seemingly disappeared and been replaced with a burning mass of excruciating pain. She breathed harder, which only made it hurt even more. Her eyes tried to do something about it, but all they could manage was to squeeze some tears onto her cold cheeks.

"Howdy!" said the voice again. Through blurred vision, Frisk could make out a talking flower. "I'm Flowey the Flower!"

"..."

"Hmmm… You're new to the Underground, aren'tcha?"

"..."

"Golly, you must be so confused. Your arm's on backwards." Frisk's eyes widened as if she had just finished processing her situation. She then started screaming very loudly.

"SO, SOMEONE OUGHT TO TEACH YOU HOW THINGS WORK AROUND HERE." Flowey shouted over her. "SEE THAT HEART, IT'S YOUR SOUL, HERE, HAVE SOME FRIENDLINESS PELLETS!"

The bullets smashed into Frisk's immobilized body. She gasped and then went back to screaming at the top of her lungs. The crumbly walls above them crumbled ever so slightly more. The backpack that had snagged on the way down opened just a little further. The slippery glass jar within the backpack slipped just a little bit more and fell out. It shattered on the ground and covered the hostile flower with a white crystalline substance.

"Pht-phtyou idpthiot! Plegh, ptu!" Flowey coughed. He started to shrivel up as he berated the human. "You idiot! Why would you have a—GASP—jar of s-s-salt in your back, p-pack?" He coughed and wheezed and used the last of his fast-fading strength to summon another round of bullets to shoot at the girl. "D-HIE!"

But the bullets didn't hit Frisk. Instead there was a 'thud', a bright glow, and a burst of heat from somewhere in front of her. The bullets lost their aim and landed randomly on the walls.

"Oh, my what—Ah!" the owner of the motherly voice cried out as the rest of the backpack and all of its contents fell off of their snag and rained over her head. She tripped and fell onto her bottom.

"Ow, oh my… what a horrible creature that was…" Her voice trailed off in a daze as she regained
her bearings. "Are you alright my child? Oh no… your arm's on backwards."
"Oh my goodness…" The stranger knelt and looked to her sides as the bags of carrots and clams fell off of her thighs. "That's quite a lot of food you're carrying." Her polite smile fell when she heard the human's weak cries.

"H-help, a-ah…"

"You poor child! It's alright, I am here now."

The tiny girl saw only the harsh shadows created by the flames and the blurry image of an imposing creature's hand reaching out towards her. Instinctively, she flinched with what little range of movement she had left.

"Fear not young one—I will heal you."

A large thumb gently rubbed away the tears from one of her cheeks. The touch was so warm and comforting, that the girl gasped in surprise and squeezed her eyes shut. The stranger exclaimed in equal surprise. "Oh, how you are freezing!" The large woman made some sort of gesture. The bright flames adjusted themselves to radiate their diffuse heat more effectively.

"Listen my child, I am going to have to straighten your arm out. Please brace yourself for a painful moment. It will be over very soon."

"O-ok?!” She squeaked. She chomped down on a mouthful of her sweater and screamed into it as the kind stranger put her arm back the right way. It only took a few seconds. They both sighed in relief.

"Wait, please continue to hold still." The girl relaxed and observed the faint green glow over the floor. Whatever mysterious technique the stranger was using took its effect, and the human felt her pain continue to dissipate until it was all better.

"How could anyone do this to such an innocent and defenseless child?! Alright… try moving now."

The girl stood up and tested the rotation of her left arm. She muttered with a tone of awe, "I'm sure that must have been broken in multiple places."

She looked up at the person responsible for this feat of healing. A very tall and cuddly-looking goat-like creature. "Wuh… are you a monster? I've never seen a real monster before…” Her jaw hung open and she stared in amazement.

"Ah, do not be afraid, my child. I am Toriel, caretaker of the Ruins. I pass through this place every day to see if anyone has fallen down. You are the first human to come here in a long time."

"Oh!" Frisk blinked and remembered her manners. "Uh, thank-you very much for saving me, miss Toriel. That was really amazing! My name is Frisk!"

Toriel blushed at the praise. "What a polite child! It is nice to meet you, Frisk. You do not have to call me miss." She laughed softly. "Here, please come with me. I will guide you through the catacombs." Toriel offered her hand. Frisk eagerly reached to accept it, but stopped at the last second.

"Oh!" She looked around at the mess on the floor.
Toriel caught on and said, "Ah, of course! We should pick up all of your nice, fresh foods."

"I just came from the village market. They must have fallen out of my backpack," Frisk explained. She glanced back up at the ceiling so high above, where dull blue tones of daylight reflected off of the rocky contours.

"There it is, it's not that high up," Toriel said and pointed to a spot much lower down the wall, where the backpack was hanging on one of the occasional wooden branches growing out of the wall. "Your arm must have gotten caught in it when you fell!" Her face winced in sympathy when she imagined how the girl's body must have been thrown around and twisted like a ragdoll.

Frisk looked up and tentatively patted the wall with her hands, as if she were contemplating whether she was capable of climbing up it.

"Hm?" Toriel raised an eyebrow and watched her. Frisk put both of her hands above her head and stood on her tippy toes, reaching and grasping at the air in vain. Toriel suppressed a little snort of laughter at how cute her futile attempt looked. She picked up Frisk and held her high up in the air. With their powers combined, they were able to reach the backpack. As Toriel lowered her, the girl got another glance at the ground.

She said, "Be careful Toriel! There's broken glass everywhere! You're not wearing any shoes, are you?"

Toriel smiled. "Do not worry. I will come back here and clean it up later."

They left the grassy dead-end and walked down the hall until they came across a larger room with staircases leading up to a framed entrance. The rooms and the walls were carved out of a hard, lavender-tinted rock. Everything was illuminated by an unexplained, atmospheric lighting. For an underground cavern, it was fresh and spacious. Even Toriel was refreshing. Refreshingly easy to read, that was.

Frisk asked her, "So do you know how I can get out of here?"

"Err, of course my child! Let's get out of these dreary halls. Come, I will lead you home!"

Whose home? Frisk thought doubtfully. Toriel's hand clasped around her own. Frisk felt as if her whole Soul could sink into the comforting sensation. She withheld her questions for later and observed everything with curiosity as Toriel lead them through a series of rooms. There were green vines growing on the walls, and beds of red foliage among the stone paths. Frisk sometimes thought she sensed the presence of other creatures, such as giant frogs, in the corner of her vision. She whirled around suddenly.

"What is the matter, innocent one?"

"I just thought I saw something."

"As a human living in the Underground, monsters may attack you." Why does she keep talking like I'm moving in here? Frisk thought.

Toriel continued, "You will need to be prepared for this situation. However, worry not! The process is simple. When you encounter a monster you may enter a Fight. If this happens, strike up a friendly conversation. Stall for time. I will come to resolve the conflict. Practice talking to the dummy."

Frisk stood in front of the dummy for a few seconds. The dummy stood around absentmindedly. "Hello. I'm Frisk. Nice to meet you, uh, 'dummy'?" It didn't seem much for conversation.
"Well, you look like you have places to go," Frisk said and let the dummy be.

Toriel seemed pleased with her. "Ah, very good! Please try to handle any future encounters just like that. Although, you are a good child so I'm sure you won't get into many fights anyways."

Am I even going to be down here for that long? Frisk wondered. "Um, Toriel, what about—"

Toriel didn't notice the quiet beginning of Frisk's sentence and said, "Come along now."

She offered her hand again. Frisk let the cuddly paw close around her wrist and smiled blissfully. Toriel turned her head away to hide her elated blush. Through their touch, she could sense the undeserved trust that the innocent child placed in her as she allowed the caretaker to lead her.

They were walking through the next room when a large frog-like creature jumped in between them. Its body was white and it seemed rather stressed out. Frisk tried to adjust her steps, but put her weight down onto the foot-like protrusion at the base of the monster's strange body. It caught against her shoe like a piece of fabric, which caused the frog creature to trip as it tried to hop away again. It flailed about and hit Frisk with one of its limbs.

"Ouch! I'm sorry, I didn't mean to step on you." The frog monster looked around like a frightened mouse surrounded by cats. Toriel stepped nearer and glared at it. It panicked and hastily hopped away.

"Frisk, thank you for trusting me. You are indeed a good child. However, I am afraid I must ask something difficult of you. I must attend to some business and you will have to stay alone for a while. Please remain here. It's dangerous to explore by yourself."

Frisk looked down and said in a subdued tone, "Sure learned that one the hard way."

Now Toriel also felt guilty for making Frisk look sad. "I have an idea," she said. "I will give you a cell phone. If you have a need for anything, just call."

"Huh? Ah, thank-you." Frisk took the older-model cell phone and managed to find TORIEL already in her contacts. "Be good, alright?"

Frisk stood in the room. She leaned against a pillar. She felt like there was something she was forgetting. "Oh!" She put her new old phone in her right pocket and took her old new phone out of her left pocket. She frowned when she saw that the screen had been damaged in the fall. The phone was still working. She took a few pictures of her surroundings. There was still no signal. She stubbornly tried to text or call her dad anyways. But nothing happened. She sighed and put it away.

She curiously peeked her head around the corner into the next room. To her surprise, there was another Froggit sitting by itself near a doorway. The round, magenta-colored monster made eye contact with her and she checked herself for staring.

"Hello," she smiled. "It's nice down here, isn't it?" The Froggit bashfully blushed an even deeper shade of magenta. It was so flattered that it hopped away in a hurry. Frisk heard a jingling noise and saw something shiny fall to the ground.

"Hey wait, you dropped something!" But the Froggit had escaped her line of vision.

"Is this, hmm… money? A monster carrying money? I guess they really are just like people. Oh! I wasn't supposed to leave the room. But… I have to return this money! Yeah. Then I'll go back to the room. I'd better keep track of my surroundings so that I can find my way back." She nodded to herself with confidence.
There were several patches of red bushes in the corridor. Frisk turned around the corner. She thought she saw a magenta body hiding behind the plants. "Hello there," she said nicely. She held out the gold coins in her hand for him to see and tried not to appear threatening as she approached. She had almost succeeded when her cell phone rang out loudly.

"Ah!" She yelled in surprise. "Ribbit!" Not only did the Froggit get scared and run away again, but an additional monster that looked like some sort of large fairy took its cue that the human was to be feared. The second monster ran away with the Froggit and also dropped a couple more gold coins onto the ground.

"Hello? This is Toriel. You have not left the room have you?" Frisk made a facial expression like a deer caught in headlights.

"There are a few puzzles ahead that I have yet to explain," she continued. "It would be dangerous to try to solve them yourself. Be good alright?"

Toriel hung up, leaving Frisk feeling terribly guilty. This nice goat lady had protected her and trusted her to 'be good'. And what was she doing? Stealing gold coins from frogs and cloth fairies.

"She's right, look at all the trouble I'm causing! I should go back to the room from before so I don't bother anyone else."

Determined to be good, Frisk went back through the doorway she had come from.

The hallway she arrived at seemed much shorter than before. And there hadn't been a bowl of monster candy on the pedestal. Or had there? take one, read the note. She took one small black caramel wrapped in orange paper. She gave it a sniff and then put it in her mouth. It was distinctly non-liquorice flavored. There were also white caramels wrapped in orange. She took one of those too, and found it to be distinctly non-vanilla flavored. She took two more pieces for the road.

"This must be the wrong room. I should go back," she reminded herself. She put the gold coins in her pocket for the time being. How disgusting.

Determined to set things right, she marched back to the room that Toriel had told her to wait in and fell through one of the pitfalls in the floor. As she landed she scared the gold out of a light-green, juvenile Froggit. She collected the spoils and climbed up a vent to get back to the top floor. She was beginning to lose track of how many coins belonged to each monster.

Toriel can help me find them later.

Determined not to acquire any more gold coins, Frisk went back to the room with the rocks and spikes that Toriel had told her to wait in.

But what does 'later' mean? How long am I going to be down here? I have to get home and make dinner soon.

Her Underground phone rang again. "Hello? This is Toriel."

"Hello! I'm just sitting here. In the room that you left me in."

Just then, one of the rocks yawned and then spoke to Frisk. "Hey uh, you there—kid?"

"Oh, hold on Toriel. Yes?" Frisk held her hand over the phone and looked at the rock.

"Uh, sorry to interrupt, but could you maybe like, push me across the floor? If you don't mind… I
just woke up with the worst floor itch. Sorry to bother you… aw, thanks kid. Aw yeah… that's better," it sighed in relief.

"There you are. Hello, Toriel? Are you still there?"

"Yes, my child. Ah, I was wondering. For no reason in particular… which do you prefer? Cinnamon or Butterscotch?"

Frisk suppressed a happy noise. She's going to make me something?! "Butterscotch!"

"Oh, I see. Thank you very much!" Toriel hung up. Frisk paced around the room and hummed. After a few passes, she heard a 'click' behind her. A row of spikes had appeared from some holes in the ground and were now blocking her way back to where the talking rock was.

"Ugh… who am I kidding?" she sighed. "This is not the room that Toriel—"RING! Frisk made a surprised noise and answered the phone again.

"Hello, this is Toriel. You do not dislike cinnamon, do you? I know what your preference is, but… would you turn up your noise if you found it on your plate?"

"HAHAHAHA!" Frisk drowned her anxieties in nervous laughter. "You're worrying about this way too much! Just make whatever you want! I'll eat anything as long as it's not frozen spaghetti stuck to a table!"

Toriel laughed in return. "Right, right, I understand. Forgive me my child. I am just a silly lady who worries too much!"

They both giggled into their phones. Then Toriel said, "Thank-you for being patient, by the way," and hung up. Frisk's expression hardened as she accepted the pang that went through her Soul from hearing that praise. She felt like the scum of the earth.

It filled her with determination.
"Ok, me. Let's think about this, rationally. I climbed up a mountain. Nearly froze to death. Fell down a hole and broke my arm. Got assaulted by a flower. Got saved by a goat mom. Disobeyed goat mom and wandered off. And uh…" she looked around at the unfamiliar rooms.

"Now, I need… h…" A light-blue eyeball monster walked up behind her.

Frisk took another deep breath and said, "I need he—"

"Are you lost?"

"NO!" She yelled and whirled around.

The monster jumped at the sight of her face. "AH WHAT ARE YOU!?" He took some involuntary steps backwards. At the same time Frisk blurted out, "GIANT EYEBALL!?" as her field of vision was overwhelmed by his brilliant, red iris. Giant eyeball was thoroughly spooked and ran away around the corner.

Oh god, that was really rude, Frisk scolded herself. She tried to run after him.

"Wait, I'm sorry!" But as she caught sight of him around the corner, he became even more terrified that she was chasing him and ran even faster into the next room.

"I'm sorry, I won't hurt you, come ba—GYAH!" She slipped over a patch of ice right under the next doorframe.

"Oof!" She cried as she fell backwards and landed on her backpack. "Whew, good thing it's all hard vegetables and shells…" She patted the floor and was mildly intrigued by the presence of the ice. She retrieved the handful of gold coins that had fallen from the giant eyeball's pockets.

Frisk calmed down and continued through the halls. "I'll admit, I have no idea where I am. There's no choice but to ask some monsters for help... If only I could find someone who wouldn't run away from me!" She exclaimed in frustration.

She checked her new cell phone and saw that the time was 4:30 PM. "If I don't get home soon…"

As she was walking along, she suddenly felt as if she had stepped into a cold, numbing puddle. She looked down to find a strange, white blobby thing lying on the ground. It lay so still that she would have thought it was a doormat if not for the ghostly sensation it caused in her foot.

"…"

"zzzzzzz"

"…"

"Are they gone yet?"

"Hey there, buddy," she greeted, politely stepping back out of the ghost-mat.

"H-hey," it choked out.

"Um… what are you doing?"
"Lying on the floor like a piece of garbage." The blob's eyes teared up and pellets of acidic ghost tears flew out in all directions. A few splashed against Frisk and burned where the liquid touched her bare skin. She made a human noise and stepped back in response.

"Oh no… I hurt you… just walk through me and go away," it continued crying.

"You want me to walk through you?" Frisk felt uncomfortable at doing such a thing after she had herself been lying helpless on the ground a just a few minutes ago.

"No," she shook her head stubbornly.

"…"

"No!" She stepped up to the blobby thing again. It wasn't so bad if the tears only hit her jeans.

"You're the first—I mean second person I've met down here who hasn't run away from me!" She beamed. "Don't you know how great that is?"

"…it is?" the blob looked just at little bit better and the tears slowed down.

"Yeah. I just fell down from the surface a little while ago. It's nice to find someone to talk to. Even better if they say something back," she winked.

The prone creature blushed lightly. "Heh… so you just moved in. You must be really busy then… I'll get out of your way…"

"What, no. Wait! Don't go!" she yelled, but it had already disappeared.

She continued onwards through rooms of mushroom buttons and spike switches. The dampened sound of party music echoed through the walls. There were angular and rectangular creatures with crab claws, lumpy jello monsters, and more one-eyed things loitering about. Many monsters warily kept their distance from Frisk, but others were too absorbed in dancing and going to the spider bake sale to notice her. It was Saturday after all.

"Made by spiders, for spiders, of spiders," she read from the sign. Her curious feet led her down the hall towards the vending webs. They sold spider donuts and spider cider. They looked pretty good. Her fingers brushed lightly against the pocket where her gold coins jingled. She felt as though the spiders were crawling up her back. "I'll… come back later."

After passing through that area, it was quiet and mostly deserted again. She found another 'puzzle room' where she heard someone humming a tune. The familiar voice sounded like it was coming from the floor. She climbed down one of the pitfalls to find a switch which opened the next door on the main path. The humming must have been coming from the adjacent room.

"Hello?" She smacked on the wall with her palm.

"Oh… I fell down a hole… now I can't get up… Wait, ghosts can fly, can't they…" The blob slid through the wall into Frisk's cell, the entire time maintaining a position flat against the ground, as if he were sliding underneath a door. "Oh… hi."

"Hey. I was looking for you!"

"Oh… you were? … really?"

"Well, maybe not you specifically. But anyways I am glad I got to see you again! How is, uh, lying on the floor going?"
“Eh… it's surprisingly alright. I thought of something cool while you were gone… um… do you want to see it… ?”

"Of course!" She agreed eagerly.

"Let me try…” the blob ghost floated upright and cried himself a hat. "I call it 'dapper blook’ …'cause my name's Napstablook… yeah… do you like it?" He asked without much confidence. Frisk snorted and laughed behind her hands. "I love it!" She couldn't help thinking that this neurotic ghost was just a little bit adorable.

"Heh. You're nice… maybe we could hang out sometime… you can come by my snail farm…”

"You have a snail farm?!"

The ghost looked away, embarrassed. "sorry… you'd probably think that's boring."

"That’s not true! I’m really interested in seeing your snail farm sometime! I love cooking snails," she grinned. "Ah, you do raise them for food, right?"

"Yeah, they are animal snails, I mean…”

"Ok, great! I didn't want to offend anyone," she smiled in relief.

"I've got a few pet monster snails too…”

"There are monster snails too?!!" Frisk looked apprehensive. "Gee, that's… I'd better be careful to learn the difference then!" She laughed nervously. The ghost said, "Heh." He sunk back down onto the floor and said, "Today was nice…”

"Actually, er… Napstablook? I don't mean to bother you, but do you think you could help me out a little?"

"Huh… you want… my help?" He asked in a tone of disbelief.

She tilted her head and smiled. "Do you know your way around this place?"

Frisk and Napstablook walked and floated through the halls. "So are you friends with her or…?"

"Well, I just met her today. But she was really nice to me. She kind of acts like she's my mom or something."

"Yeah, I get what you mean… her house is right up around the corner over here."

"Oh, thank-you!" Frisk said as she looked across the spacious hall. There was a dead black tree in the front yard, gardens of red bushes, and a comforting scent of something home-baked and delicious filling the underground air. A cute and tidy house was built against the wall on the far end of the room. "Now I know how to get to Toriel's. But do you know how I can get home?"

"Where is your home?"

"Well, I live in the city."

"Oh yeah… I could take you to the Capital?"

"Capital? No, I meant the city at the foot of the mountain… on the surface."
"Oh… you want to go to the Surface?"

"Huh?" Frisk looked in confusion at his expression full of sorrow and regret.

"Oh no… you want to go back…"

"Uh, yeah? Is there… something wrong with that? Napstablook, err, Blooky? Please tell me."

"Well you see… no one in the Underground can go to the Surface, because there's a barrier."

"What do you mean, a barrier?"

"Yeah, it's a magical barrier… it's pretty strong, no one can get past it." Frisk scrutinized her floating companion, but he seemed to be telling the truth. She slowly paced around to the corner where there were a couple of signs on the wall.

**HOME STREET**
Toriel's House ^
Market →

Napstablook floated nervously. "Um… are you gonna go in… or just stand there… this is getting awkward…"

Frisk turned back to him and said, "It's not that I'm mad at her for not telling me yet. We only just met an hour ago, I'm sure it must have been awkward for her too, but… I just feel like seeing what's over here first!" She followed the sign to the 'Market' and went down the corridor.

"Am I still supposed to follow her…?" Napstablook wasn't sure, so he floated after her.

Around the corner, the same white Froggit from earlier in the day was sitting next to the entrance to the next room.

"Ah, it's you!" Frisk exclaimed in recognition.

"Huh? What do you want?" The Froggit nervously hunched a little. Frisk thought, *I should show him that I'm nice now.*

"Nice to see you again! Sorry about that trouble with Toriel, huh? Let's see now, how many gold coins did you drop again?"

"Ribbit…?" He looked confused. But after a second, he replied, "15." Frisk counted out 15 of her stolen gold coins and offered them to him.

She looked at his bewildered expression and reassured him, "Yeah, go ahead. Have them back. I'm no thief."

The stout white Froggit accepted the coins and then said, "You're a human, right? You know, just between you and me… I saw Toriel come out of here just a little while ago. She was carrying some groceries. I didn't ask what they were for…” Frisk lifted her head and sniffed the air. The Froggit looked down and admitted, "We're all too intimidated to talk to her. Ribbit."

Frisk looked up at her companion and said, "There's a grocery store in here? Can we go there please?" She clapped her hands together excitedly.

"Sure…?" Napstablook stared at her oddly. "You don't need to ask my permission…"
They stepped through the doorway out onto a balcony overlooking a spacious, underground city square. The paint on the walls was chipped and faded. Monsters who had places to go were walking to and fro. Frisk and Napstablook followed a flight of stairs down to the ground floor. Turning the corner revealed an unsecured, door-less entrance to the inside of the building whose roof they had just been on. The interior space gave off an ancient-library-temple vibe, repurposed with aisles of half-empty grocery shelves. An orange Froggit sat at the counter with his face buried in a book.

Frisk asked her companion, "Is this your first time here too?"

"Yeah… I don't really know anything about food… Sorry…"

"Do you think anything they sell here is okay to feed to monsters?"

"Well, it's run by monsters, so… yeah that makes sense I guess…"

Many of the products were foreign to Frisk. There were a few prepackaged items that were identical to brands from the Surface world. Giant ice cubes were placed between the items on the refrigerated shelves, which were full of dairy products made from goat milk. She reached into her pocket and counted out her 'acquisitions'. She looked around and behind herself, half-expecting an angry mob of monsters to come charging into the store at any moment. But nobody came.

She selected a bottle of white wine and a bunch of garlic, and approached the counter. She waited silently because she didn't want the attendant to get scared or flattered. But he was so absorbed in his book, whose cover bore an illustration of an elaborate, ghastly wraith in tattered brown rags, and a curled up, frightened human child.

"Hello," Frisk said. "I hope he will sell this to me, she thought as she placed the fermented beverage onto the counter. She repeated, "Hello?"

The orange Froggit lowered his book and dropped it in shock at the sight of the REAL human and REAL ghost before his eyes. "R-Ribbit, Ribbit, Ribbit, Ribbit, Ribbit!" His white bowtie twitched in sync with his croaks.

Frisk smiled politely and said, "I'll just leave this here, ok?" She left 7 gold coins on the counter.

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The pair left the store and went back to the junction next to Toriel's house. The amazing, buttery, cinnamony aroma filled every corner of the room. Napstablook paused and said, "I should get rid of this thing now… it's starting to tire me out… uh, stand back a bit."

Frisk distanced herself and used her long sweater sleeves to cover her hands and her face. The ghost let his fabulous hat dissolve into a bunch of tear bullets that flew off in all directions. A few landed on Frisk's clothing, but otherwise disappeared without doing much damage.

"Thanks so much for guiding me, Blooky! You're a great friend."

"Heh." Napstablook felt a little flutter as one corner of his mouth involuntarily shifted upwards—by just one pixel. He then frowned again and shook his 'head' in doubt. "Friend? Me? Oh no… I can't… I'll just weigh you down."

"But, you're a floating ghost?"

"Yeah… but… I weigh 183 spectral kilograms," he admitted with a blush of shame.

"Oh… Toriel's coming now. Guess I'll see you around. Come visit me in Waterfall sometime… if you feel like it." With a final, proper farewell, Napstablook faded out again.
The front door of the house opened. Toriel paced out into the yard and said, "Oh dear, that took longer than I thought it would." Toriel took out her cell phone and started to call Frisk, but noticed her standing right there across the room. "How did you get here, my child? And... did you go to the grocery store?"

Frisk shrugged and said, "Yeah," as she let the nurturing woman fuss over her.

"My child, you're hurt!" She exclaimed, noticing the burns on the young girl's cheek and the 3 points missing from her HP bar. "There there, I will heal you. Oh, I should not have left you alone for so long!"

At Toriel's comforting touch, Frisk shrugged and lowered her gaze. "Toriel, I'm really sorry."

"What for?"

"Well, I tried to stay in the room like you said, but I, um... some monsters dropped their coins and then... I picked them up but then I couldn't find them again, so I just, err... kept them? Um, and then I tried to go back to the room, and then... hm..." she trailed off. The more excuses she put into words, the more petty and childish they sounded.

Toriel had been set on respecting Frisk's personal space, but now she really could not help the deep sense of injustice she felt at seeing the child act so submissive and apologetic, so she hugged her.

"No, Frisk. It was irresponsible of me to try and surprise you like this. Please do not blame yourself. None of this is your fault."

Frisk blinked. For a split second, her face was buried into a white shirt fastened by rows of buttons, and it was a broad, tanned forearm with calloused palms that stroked her hair.

"Toriel? Um, I met a friend on my way here, and he told me that... is it true that I can't go home?"

Toriel bit her lip and said. "Yes, it is true... err, but let's talk about that later! Come small one, I have some surprises for you!"

"Ok..." Frisk said, resigned, and followed after her.

Toriel noticed to her dismay that she had missed the stray sock lying in the middle of the front room. She whirled around to face the front door again, and kicked the sock backwards so that it fell between the rails of the basement staircase and out of sight. She smiled with a nervous chuckle and hoped Frisk had not noticed as she stepped across the threshold.

They went in the kitchen and Frisk gaped at the massive pastry on the counter. Toriel said, "Surprise! It is a butterscotch-cinnamon pie. I thought we might celebrate your arrival."

Frisk was still moody, but she lifted her chin a bit and said, "It's big." She sniffed the air. "Did you use nutmeg too?"

"Eh? How did you know that?" Toriel giggled, "My sweet child, I thought you were a human, not a puppy!"

The playful comment made Frisk feel a little better. She put the bottle of white wine on the counter and started to unpack the rest of her groceries from the Surface.

Toriel said, "I want you to have a nice time living here, Frisk. So I will hold off on snail pie for tonight."
Frisk gripped the netting of the bag of fresh clams and said, "So you don't have any plans for dinner then?"

"Heh? But… I just made us a butterscotch-cinnamon pie…?" Toriel smiled, confused, as Frisk's sad expression was quickly replaced by one of annoyance.

"Toriel, sigh. Butterscotch pie is not dinner. This is dessert."

Toriel's ears wavered around and fidgeted. "Ah, well... yes my child. I suppose... technically speaking, you are right… hehe."

Frisk put her vegetables away in the fridge. She found a bundle of leaves in there and sniffed them with curiosity. Toriel explained, "Those are green vine herbs that I have picked from the walls. They are safe for humans to eat."

The girl nibbled on a leaf. "Woah. It's got a good flavor. Did you say you had some snails lying around?"

"Oh yes, I left them in my room…" she went and retrieved the bucket of snails. "Here we are."

"Wow, we've got so many shells!" I wonder how we're gonna finish all of this. Toriel looks like she could eat a lot more than me, but still. "Maybe we could invite some neighbors over to share with?"

Toriel seemed to hesitate to agree. "Oh, heh... Alright, but how about we do that tomorrow night instead? You've already seen so many new things today, including my kitchen!"

"Yeah, I guess you're right," Frisk agreed. "They should still be ok to use tomorrow."

"Please tell me what I can help with. Although, I'll admit I do not know how to cook clams. I have no idea if you can even get them here in the Underground."

"They are pretty easy to cook, you just have to make sure they are nice and clean," Frisk explained as they stood side-by-side at the sink and scrubbed and sorted through the clams. "If they are broken or open then we throw those ones away."

"Frisk, this one is open," Toriel held the clam up in front of the young human's face and squeezed it open and shut.

"Human... I clam not be your friend, for I am too shellfish."

As she made the dead clam talk it flicked droplets of liquid at the human's face. Frisk stared in disbelief. Her new caretaker smiled back. Suddenly the girl doubled over with laughter. Toriel seemed pleased with her work. She grinned in satisfaction as Frisk, started looking through the drawers. Still laughing, she wiped a tear from the corner of her eye as she checked another drawer.

"Heheheh, ahaahaha... heh... hah, where are the knives?"

"I don't have any."

"Hehe... huh?!" Frisk stopped laughing and looked surprised again. "Uh... how do you cut things then?"

"I just use my hands."

Frisk put some garlic cloves on the counter and stood back. Toriel clenched her right hand into a fist and pounded it down over the garlic cloves. Frisk raised her eyebrow. "Ok then..." She said as she
peeled back the paper skins and inspected the resulting half-pasted garlic inside of them.

She held up the bundle of green vine herbs. "What about these?"

Toriel slashed her clawed fingertips through the air. A bunch of leaves rained over the countertop. "So..." Frisk stared at the clean stovetop with its 4 round plates. "How do I turn this on?"

"Ah, there is fuel that we can buy to power this stove, but I don't have any right now, because I use fire magic instead."

"Eh?!"

Toriel pointed her finger and made a magic fireball appear just a few millimeters over the burner. "Wooow..." The dancing orange light reflected in Frisk's eyes. She curled her fingers open and closed in front of the magic fireball.

"Here, before we start, let me teach you an important safety tip."

"Uh!" Frisk shook her head and snapped out of her trance. "Ok!"

"You see, this type of fireball with stay like that on its own, until I actively use my powers to change it. It takes no effort for me maintain it like that, see?" She held up her hands and looked away from it to emphasize how she wasn't doing anything to affect the self-sustaining cooking flame.

"So what if I were to go away now and leave you alone with this fire?"

"Uh... that sounds kinda dangerous?" Frisk guessed with a shrug.

"That's right," Toriel pointed and nodded. "But luckily, you can put it out all by yourself, even if I am not here. Just use this pot lid to smother it! Here, why don't you give it a try?"

"Like... this?" Frisk took the thick stoneware pot lid and calmly yet swiftly set it down over the magic flame. When she lifted it up, the fire was all gone save for a wisp of smoke that trailed off the rim. "Cool!"

"Well done! Now then, what would you like to do first?"

Frisk held up a metal grate that had some feet to help it sit over the burner. "Let's use this."

"Alright."

Toriel set up another fireball and dragged her finger down, flattening it into a more even shape. Frisk timidly placed the grate on top of the stove and snapped her hands back as she let go of it. She picked up the snails that they had already set aside on the counter, and placed them open-end-down over the fire.

"Ok, now we leave them like that until they just start to bubble... there." She stepped back, pleased at the grilled aroma filling the kitchen. She looked around the counter. "Uh..." She looked through the drawers more frantically. "Don't you have any tongs?!"

She back with a worried glance at the burning snails. Toriel was calmly picking them up with her bare fingertips and setting them aside on the counter.

"Oh!" Frisk smiled and sighed in relief. She giggled, "That's great! You've got leather fingers just
"Heh?" Toriel tilted her head attentively.

"Uh, never mind..." Frisk said and glanced away.

Toriel lit another round fireball on a different burner, which spread out when it was pressed by the heavy bottom of the stoneware pot that Frisk placed over it. She added a chunk of butter, the crushed garlic, and some black pepper. She stirred them with a well-worn, long-handled wooden paddle. They added the snails to the pot. Frisk poured in a bunch of wine until it was nearly covering the shiny shells. Once the broth came back up to a boil, Toriel dumped in the clams and Frisk put the lid over the pot.

She finished counting under her breath, "57, 58, 59, 60." Steam billowed out of the pot as she lifted the lid.

She used a pair of green, flowery potholders to grip the shallow handles of the pot and shake it around. Toriel threw in a fist-full of the green herbs while Frisk continued to stir everything. Meanwhile, they had some slices of bread toasting over the grill set-up.

They served themselves bowls of snails and clams topped with broth and bread and sat at the table, smiling and pleased with their work.

Toriel tried one clam and said, "Mmm!". She used the tip of her claw to dig out the meat from each shell fish and gobbled down one after the other. "My child, this is truly wonderful! And such a simple recipe. Maybe they do raise clams somewhere around here..." She trailed off pondering. She smiled at Frisk again and praised her, "You are very talented, little one!"

"Heh, I have some working experience too," Frisk grinned and scratched the back of her head. She added softly, "That was one of the first things I ever learned to cook though, it's my favorite..."

She stared at the back of her hand which was drizzling the shellfish broth over a piece of bread. It was delicious, but still... It tastes different with all of these Underground ingredients.

She curled one leg up against her body and leaned back, staring over the back of the chair and out at the purple cavern visible through the living room window. Is it just me, or do the lights seem a bit dimmer now? A small scuffle in one of the red bushes and a tiny, dark shape darting over the floor. Some kind of small animal?

Toriel interrupted her contemplation of the scenery. "By the way, Frisk, there is something else I wanted to show you." She led her guest down the hall to the first room.

"Hm," Frisk pulled the door shut and turned away from the room, staring into Toriel's dress.

"Frisk?" Toriel sighed and lightly patted her shoulder. "What is wr..." That is a stupid question. But what else am I supposed to say?

"Perhaps... err, would you like to see my room instead?"

Frisk shrugged and mumbled, "Ok."

They sat side-by-side on the large bed. Toriel read aloud to Frisk from a notebook. "How do
skeletons call their friends? … On the *telebone*!" Frisk squirmed and glanced away with a slight blush.

"Ok now… How does a short person greet you? … With a *microwave*." Frisk made a small noise that was somewhere between a laugh and a huff. She curiously glanced at her palm as her fingers curled slightly. The next page of the notebook was filled with jokes of a similar caliber.

Frisk took an interest in Toriel's bookshelf. She skimmed through a book on plants. Setting it aside, she picked up a book labelled 'Dictionary' and opened it. She blinked in surprise and flicked through the pages. "Huh, it's blank?"

Toriel said, "Ah, yes. It came like that when I ordered it. I have *no words* for how angry I am."

Frisk stared, and then burst into wild giggles. Toriel started laughing along, and then Frisk started crying from how hard she was laughing. She took another book and started reading about the Underground's history.

Toriel left for a moment to bring them some pie and tea. She patiently sat by Frisk's side and kept her company as she browsed the books for hours. Finally, she took the human who had fallen asleep against her arm, and tucked her in to the big bed. She took one last glance at her before turning off the lights and exiting the room.
Frisk woke up in an unfamiliar bed in a strange, blue bedroom. She rubbed her eyes and squinted at her surroundings. "Huh? Where… oh. Right." She ran her fingers through her hair while pressing her palms against her forehead. She scratched her scalp and patted down her bangs. She looked around herself at the queen-sized bed. *Seems like the right size for Toriel.*

A soft beam of light from the half-open door penetrated the room and lit up the faded portraits on the wall above Frisk's head. She shuffled out of the room and stared outside the window again. *Yeah, it's definitely lighter now. Someone smart must have set it up to do that. I guess that's pretty neat.* She braced herself against the wall and squeezed her thighs together.

She stepped into the living room. Toriel had slept in her reclined reading chair. She opened her eyes as soon as Frisk walked in. "Good morning my child. Welcome to your official first morning in the Underground!"

Frisk looked down. She muttered, "Sorry, I didn't mean to kick you out of your own bedroom."

"That is alright, Frisk. You may sleep in my bed for as long as you wish to!"

"Huh? But, I don't want to be a bother…” Frisk looked increasingly uncomfortable as she shifted her footing.

Toriel sighed and said, "My child—no—Frisk. Please, listen to me. I know this is not easy for you. I know that I am still a stranger. It is not fair to ask you to trust me so suddenly. But, I can't help you if I don't know what you need, so you must also try your best to tell me… Is that alright, Frisk?"

"Uh, ok," Frisk nodded with a shy blush. "Sorry, I didn't mean that—I do trust you, so far. It's just kind of…"

"What?"

"U-um… I have to, um…" The color of her face kept darkening as she stuttered.

Toriel tilted her head. "Do you need to use the bathroom? Is that it?"

"Huhwhat?!" Frisk's blush spread across her cheeks and she looked up at Toriel, surprised.

"Hehe… Yes little one, I know what that is. Come, this way."

Frisk was relieved that she would not have to explain any further. Toriel guided her down to the basement. Frisk caught a brief glance of a long, mysterious hallway. Toriel opened the door to a room that was built right into the crawlspace underneath the stairs. Frisk stepped inside and was even more relieved to see that Toriel had a bathroom suitable for human use.

"Oh, I am sorry, this room looks complicated. But worry not, I shall explain it to you!" The monster woman gestured around the bathroom while speaking. "You can use this chair here for your 'human business', afterwards which one pulls this lever here to make the, um, 'residues', go away. It will create quite a loud noise when you do that, but please do not be alarmed. It is nothing to be frightened about."

"Ah, heh…” Frisk nodded. Her eye twitched, and the corner of her mouth raised in a smirk as she listened.
"Now, there are two separate places where you can wash yourself. I would recommend using the 'tub' if you would like to wash your whole body and the 'sink' if you would like to remain standing and just wash a little bit without undressing yourself. In addition, there are two methods of bathing in the tub, one of which is to fill it up with water of a comfortable temperature, and then submerge your body in it, the other is to use this detachable nozzle to dispense the water over yourself while you stand or sit on the edge of the tub. I know that sounds confusing, but in fact the two vessels work in the same way, you see the handle on the right will cause the faucet to release cold water, while the left…"

"Ahem, Toriel?" Frisk was having fun listening to the overzealous explanation, but she could not wait any longer. As she hunched over and squeezed her legs, she said, "It's ok Toriel, I already know how everything works. This looks just the same as bathrooms on the Surface! But I really have to go right now, and I wanna take a bath after that…"

"O-oh, yes my child! Pardon me, hehe. Well then, I will be upstairs if you need anything," Toriel said and shut the door.

"Thanks," Frisk replied. She was about to start pulling down her pants.

"Frisk?"

"Geh?!" The human looked in surprise as the door opened again and the goat woman's head reappeared in the space there.

"Please come upstairs as soon as you are done."

"Ok, I will!" She hastily replied.

"Good, thank-you!" Toriel shut the door again and left for real. Frisk sighed and continued on with her business.

She relaxed in the bubbly bathtub and stared at the ceiling as she contemplated her strange new circumstances. As she dried off, she stood wrapped in a towel and stared at her reflection in the mirror while brushing out her hair.

I wonder how Dad is doing? I hope he went to work. Last night must have been a mess for them… Especially Dad. I guess the police will be searching for me now? Maybe it's better if they don't find me because then they'll just get stuck down here too.

She sniffed the air and perked up. The scent of toast and freshly brewed coffee filled her with determination.

I guess I'll just focus on my new situation for today. She nodded to herself. She cast one last curious glance down the dark hallway before climbing back up the stairs.

"Up already, I see?" Toriel hummed as she pulled a jar of red jam and a soft, white cheese out of the refrigerator. She looked inside it again after setting the items down on the counter. "Oh. I'm sorry Frisk, I forgot to buy milk yesterday… Hmm?"

Toriel looked to her side in mild surprise to see Frisk pouring herself a cup from the pot of coffee on the stove.

Frisk said, "What?"

"Oh, nothing! Tehe. I am only a little bit surprised. You are the first child to have coffee with me."
The girl grinned back and spread some jam on a piece of toast.

Toriel took a sip of coffee as Frisk was biting into her toast. "Um, I want you to know how glad I am to have someone here. I am glad that you enjoy reading. There are many old books I would like to share with you. Hmm, I wonder what we should do today? I want to show you my favorite bug-hunting spot…"

"Toriel, I have an idea," Frisk interrupted. "I still feel kind of bad about what happened yesterday. I did not make the best impression on your neighbors…" She frowned and ran her fingertips over the pocket which still contained some stolen gold coins.

Toriel responded, mumbling, "Ah well, I'm sure they'll forgive you if you just…"

Frisk continued, "Let's throw a picnic!"

"Huh?" Toriel stared at her, bewildered. "You want to… throw a—"

"A free picnic for the neighborhood!" Frisk cheered. She pursed her lips and blew over the surface of her piping hot coffee mug.

"I… have never thought of doing such a thing. But… it sounds interesting."

"I think it would be a good way to apologize to everyone. And maybe I could get to know some of the folks who live around here. And since I'm going to be here for… I mean, I should start learning about monster methods of cooking anyways."

"Ah, I see! You are taking responsibility. Very good, I am proud of you! I will support you, my child!"

Frisk paused and blushed slightly. She was taken aback by Toriel's sudden praise and eagerness to help. "Are you sure? I don't have any money, so you'll have to buy all the ingredients for me. And, I'll be learning new recipes, so I'll probably mess up a few times and waste a bunch of it, and it might take some time to—"

"Young one, please calm down," Toriel giggled. "Of course I meant that I will support you financially as well!" Frisk's shoulders hunched as she listened. "I want you to succeed. You just focus on learning and trying your best, alright?"

Frisk looked up at her. "O-ok. Thank-you. But um, please, uh… tell me if I ask for too much."

Toriel smiled back and said, "Nonsense. You can do no such thing!"

Frisk felt it was pointless to continue protesting. "Ok," She accepted with a hesitant smile. She sunk into her chair at the table and finished eating her breakfast.

Frisk said, "So the first thing we should do is make some fliers and put them up on the walls. Let's set the date for next Saturday. That way I'll get some time to learn more about this place and find my way around and also decide what to make. That should also be enough time for people to see the advertisements so that someone actually shows up to the party."

"Let's go buy some paper then. I know a place," Toriel offered.

They went outside and walked around the corner, down the stairs, and past the grocery store. Their footsteps rang throughout the old underground city in the still morning air. There was a table near the middle of the market run by a Migosp, one of the square-shaped, clawed monsters. He had a white
body with cyan, yellow, magenta, and black markings on the side. His partner, a black monster of similar stature, was standing off to the side, printing long, blank sheets of paper from the horizontal slots on his body, and sorting them into piles. They purchased a stack of paper and some markers.

They went into the grocery store again on the way back.

"What's this?" Frisk pointed to bushels of red leaves in baskets next to the other vegetables.

"Those are red bush herbs," said Toriel. "They are safe for humans to eat."

"What's this?" Frisk pointed to a box decorated with yellow petal designs.

"That is a box of golden flower tea."

"Huh, they make tea out of those too?"

"Yes, that's what we drank last night."

"Oh. Cool! Toriel, why are these vegetables shaped like huge cubes?" She pointed to the bins of 2-foot-wide, rectangular, vegetable-like objects in varying shades of white, yellow, and orange.

"Why wouldn't they be?" Toriel replied.

"Hm." Frisk picked up a thin yet stiff, square black sheet from a tray. "What's this?"

"Seaweed from Wa—err, it's seaweed. It is a wonderfully versatile ingredient. Let's get some."

"Ok. Toriel? Where does all of this food come from?"

"Where does it all come from…" Toriel smiled boldly and replied, "Why, that's easy. It's a mystery!"

The orange Froggit watched attentively as they approached the counter. He made eye contact with Frisk. They both tried to speak.

"Greetings child,"
"Hello!"
"I mean human."
"Um, yesterday I,"
"Sorry about,"

His bowtie twitched under the feeling of immense pressure as Toriel's figure dominated his field of vision. He looked down at the child and cleared his throat with a croak.

"Ribbit! G-greetings, human! Apologies for my rudeness yesterday! It's been an while since I've seen a… uh, Ribbit! I mean, welcome to the Ruins!"

"Thanks. I'm Frisk."

"Y-yes, good. I'm Coco."

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Coco," Frisk replied and extended her hand in a polite gesture. She was surprised when the monster opened his mouth and met her hand with his long, red tongue.

"Huh." She froze and stared. Toriel remained calm and did nothing to indicate that Frisk feel threatened by this. So the human went along with it and shook the tongue with grace as the goat monster placed their few purchases on the counter.
"Bice do bee' you doo," said Coco.

Frisk nodded. "By the way, we're going to have a picnic at Toriel's house next Saturday. Um, in the yard or…" She glanced questioningly up at the taller monster.

"In the yard, that sounds good," she agreed.

"Right, in the yard in front of Toriel's house. It's free and open to the public, so could you maybe help spread the word?"

"Sure, I can."

"Great, thanks!" she said and grinned.

"Anyways, Ribbit! Those items will be… 12.5 gold," he said as Toriel was pulling out her coin purse.

Back at the house, Frisk rummaged through the drawers next to the basement staircase. Pushing aside a calendar and some old broken crayons, she found a pair of scissors. She sat at the kitchen table and cut the long sheets of paper into rectangles more suitably sized to become posters. She varied the colors she used to write out the text by hand on each poster. She added decorative red hearts in the margins. Meanwhile, Toriel was sitting in her chair and reading books.

Frisk walked out by herself to the corner junction. She put the first poster underneath the street sign. She grinned and looked pleased with her work so far. She continued on to the market and put a poster on the wall of the grocery store.

As they had planned the previous day, she tried to find someone to invite over to their house for dinner. The grocer Froggit said, "No thank-you, I already have plans."

Other strangers kept a wide bubble between themselves and Frisk as she wandered through the market square. She tried to chat up the Migosps running the paper stand. The white one said, "Do you mind? We're trying to run a business here."

Frisk went back up the stairs. A trio of eyeball monsters was about to come down from the other side, but they backed up and waited for her to pass before they continued. She continued on through the mushroom puzzle halls. She saw glimpses of parents hustling their children out of the way and heard doors slam shut. Just after she put up her last poster outside the monster candy room, she looked through the doorframe. The Migosp and the Loox hanging out inside the room fidgeted nervously and avoided making eye contact with her.

Rejection stung Frisk's Soul. She stared at the floor and sighed as she walked away from them. Let's go home. She went through a long hallway. Wait, isn't this where I fell in?

She saw Toriel kneeling in the green-and-yellow flower bed. She stood and turned to notice Frisk. The shards of broken glass clinked and clattered inside the plastic garbage bag clutched in her hand. A food container with some of the salvageable salt was tucked under her arm.

"Hello Frisk! Are you ready to go home and cook soup?"

"Yeah." She accepted the empty hand that Toriel offered. They walked back to the house.

Is this my home now? She thought as they stood in the kitchen and rinsed vegetables and shellfish. Toriel swiped her claws through the air and created piles of roughly chopped bell peppers, onions, and celery.
Frisk said, "You know, I was supposed to start school tomorrow." She watched as the flames flickered between the snails that were arrayed face-down over the grate.

"Do not fret, diligent one. I have prepared a curriculum for your education."

"Huh."

"This may come as a surprise to you… But I have always wanted to be a teacher." Toriel picked the open clam shells out of the stock pot with the tips of her claws and set them aside in the bowl that Frisk was holding. "Actually, perhaps that isn't very surprising."

Frisk smiled and giggled. The broth in the pot swam with roughly cut vegetable pieces and bell pepper seeds. They added some seaweed, and finally added back in the clams and snails. They sat down at the table with their bowls of soup. Toriel tried a big spoonful of hers.

"Mmm, delicious!" She picked up another spoon and narrowed her eyes as she examined it closely for a moment. "Now Frisk, are you ready for a little pop quiz?"

"Hm?" She looked up and listened attentively.

"The soup we have concocted today has a hitpoint rating of 40… Where do you think that power comes from?"

"Uh… Is it because of how you used your magic fireballs to grill the snails?"

"Yes, that is one important factor. Can you think of anything else?"

Frisk tugged out the meat from a snail with her teeth and slurped it up. "Hmm… do the snails have some healing factor of their own?"

"Well, yes. A little. But there is one more thing."

"Um…” Frisk looked at her spoon which was full of celery and onion chunks. *These are all ordinary vegetables from the Surface, so that just leaves…”* "The seaweed?"

"That's right, very good!" Toriel smiled.

"Hehe," Frisk grinned back. She relaxed and enjoyed her home-cooked soup.

She leaned back and sighed. "It's too bad I couldn't find anyone to invite over."

"Oh," Toriel shrugged.

Frisk sipped her broth and thought, *Does she really not have any friends?*

The next day, Frisk sat on a bench near the spider bake sale. She chewed a big bite of a donut, which had a grayish dough and a glossy, streaked, purple icing. She washed it down with a long sip from her glass of spider cider, a sparkling, deep-bronze liquid. She exhaled with a satisfied smile.

She knelt on the floor and wrote a note against the hard stone.

*Dear Mr. or Mrs. Spider(s),

Your spider donuts and spider cider are so good! I am very curious to know more about your products. Do you really put real spiders in them? I would like to try making my own spider donuts.

Sincerely, Frisk.*
She placed the paper in the spider web. Some spiders crawled down and carried the note up into little holes in the ceiling corner. Frisk waited for a few minutes, slowly finishing her snacks. Just when she was about to leave and go back to Toriel's house, some spiders crawled back down with a response. Frisk picked up the little card of pink, lacy stationary.

_Dearest Human Child,_

Please browse this most elegant spider catalogue. May you find the products to your liking. warning: unauthorized trade or usage of spider products may lead to a risk of sudden dismemberment.

"Mm, fair enough," she muttered. There was a printed list of products and prices on the other side of the card. She wrote in an order for 1 bag of spider meal, 1 tin of desiccated whole spiders, and 1 copy of the book, _Old-Fashioned Spider Baking with Muffet_. The sale was accepted. After a few minutes, the delivery spiders arrived with the order. Frisk gasped when she saw the tiny creatures struggling to bear the heavy bag as they descended down their webs. She took it from them as soon as it was within her reach.

"Thank-you," she nodded and headed back.

Frisk was thinking to herself, _It seems like Toriel has some experience taking care of humans. I'm really grateful that she has a bathroom with a flushing toilet and everything. But… I just can't help noticing that she acts super weird whenever I actually use it._

It so happened that Frisk was just then pivoting at the top of the staircase and taking her first step down into the basement. Toriel seemed to appear out of nowhere around the corner from the living room. "Where are you going, Frisk?"

"Huh? I'm just going to use the bathroom…"

"Oh, yes! Of course you are, silly me!" she smiled and tapped herself on the cheek.

Later that evening, Frisk was taking a shower. Toriel knocked on the door and said, "I've found you some nice clean nightclothes."

"Ok, thanks."

"I'll leave them here by the door, so come right back up when you're done."

"I will. Why are you always so worried about that? This is kind of getting weird?" Frisk replied, confused.

"Um, yes my child, my apologies! It's just that it is… drafty down here. You might catch a cold if you don't hurry back upstairs." She chuckled awkwardly.

"I'll be up in five minutes, I promise!"

"Ok Frisk, I'll be waiting."

Once again, Toriel read books together with Frisk in the blue bedroom. She patted the girl's head as she fell asleep against her arm.

The next morning, Frisk did her waking routine as usual. As she was leaving the bathroom she stared down the long basement hallway for a few seconds.

"There is nothing interesting down there my child. Why not go for a walk in the yard?"
Frisk jumped and whirled around to see Toriel standing right above her on the staircase. The girl grinned reassuringly at her new guardian, and then bounded back up the stairs. She stood in the kitchen and sipped her coffee.

*Ok, what the hell is she hiding down there?*
Frisk took a sip from her cup of golden flower tea. She was reading through *Old-Fashioned Spider Baking with Muffet*. Other books titled *Basic Fire Magic* and *The Daily Lives of Froggits* were set aside on the table.

The sound of running water shut off. Toriel came in from the kitchen, shaking the excess water out of her furry hands and wiping down the remainder on her dress cover. "Have you found a tasty-looking recipe to try? Would you like to cook together again? Or do you want to do it by yourself?"

"Together is fine! It's fun cooking with you!"

"Tehe," Toriel giggled with a slight blush. "Shall we go shopping together then?"

"Actually, I'm kind of busy reading this," said Frisk. "Could you maybe… get the ingredients for me? And then we can get started when you come back?"

"Sure Frisk. That sounds fine. I'll be back in a bit then. Call if you have a need for anything, and be good alright?"

"Ok!" Frisk grinned and nodded. Toriel left the house and shut the front door. "I'll be good," she said to herself. She wore a hollow smile as she watched the caretaker's back. "Very good." She was filled with determination.

She quickly snuck down the basement stairs in her socks. She took one final breath of courage before breaking into a run down the long purple hallway. She halted at the corner and looked back over her shoulder before continuing. An insatiable curiosity propelled her feet forward as she steadily marched down the remainder of the hall to the double door on the other end.

*I'm sorry Toriel… I have to know.*

She opened the door and stepped into a dark room. Through her socks she felt cool stone slabs and dewy grass. As the door behind her drifted shut, it cut off the light from the hallway and left her in pitch-black limbo, save for a tiny spotlight in the middle of the room. The room sounded spacious and tall, but she couldn't make out the terrain or tell if there were any obstacles. She felt around on the ground with her feet before each small step that she took towards the light. High, high up above there must have been a tiny hole letting in the light of the sky. She shivered at the cool breeze coming from somewhere in front of her.
"Well, this isn't exactly the potato cellar I was expecting," she joked to herself aloud and heard her sentence echo through the tall stone room.

"that's not the voice i was expecting either," said an unknown speaker. The tone was dampened as if behind a wall somewhere ahead of her. Frisk covered her mouth with her hands and muffled a surprised noise. She suddenly felt how very alone and vulnerable she was. While she contemplated the pros and cons of responding to the deep-toned entity, it spoke again.

"are you still there?"

"Y-yeah. But where are you?"

"i'm by the door."

"Door?" Her vision had adjusted slightly and she could see tiny cracks of light tracing the outline of yet another double door. This door was larger than the one behind her and was bordered by a fancy, decorative frame. The stone was cold against her palm as she pushed slightly. Just as a vertical crack of light appeared, the door slammed back shut. She made a girl noise and stepped back in surprise.

"careful," the voice chuckled. "this door has a certain… one-directional quality. so long as you like being over there i'd recommend, uh, not opening it."

"O-oh… Ok. What's on the other side?"

"uh… snow."

"How much snow?"

"it goes up to my… kneecaps."

"Wow, that's deep! Is it cold over there? I can feel a draft through the door."

"heh, yeah. it's so cold i can't feel my skin."

"Oh," she responded lamely. "What else is over there?"

"well, there's trees everywhere."

"So you're outside? How'd you get past the barrier?!"

He laughed, "heh, what're ya talkin' about pal? it's just as undergroundy over here as it is over there."

"You say that you're Underground, yet you have trees and snow up to your… oh wait. Don't tell me…"

"ok." The voice fell silent.

"I mean, woops, I meant that as an expression! I wanna to know how there can be trees and snow Underground."

"i could tell you, but i don't wanna Ruins the surprise for ya."

"Heh, what?" She giggled. "So… you don't actually know then. I guess it's just 'magic' or something."

After a few seconds of silence he responded, "i just shrugged."
"Oh."

"it was a very hilarious shrug. you woulda laughed."

"Ah, heh. Ok, I believe you." She rolled her eyes, but chuckled softly.

Soft footsteps echoed in the distance. Frisk gasped. "Oh no!"

"what's up?"

"Oh no, um..." she stammered and looked around over her shoulders. "Listen, uh, Mr. Voice Guy... I know we just met, but can you please keep this visit a secret? My uh, caretaker will get really mad if she finds out I was here..."

"well damn, you said 'please' so i have no choice..."

The footsteps were getting louder.

"by the way i winked," the voice guy added.

"I'm going to go hide now. Bye!" Frisk whispered.

But there was nowhere to hide. She stood with the cold stone door to her back and looked around in vain. She ran into one of the dark corners, but doubted that it would make a difference against Toriel's superior night vision. Her breath created little clouds in the air. She folded her arms and waited as the door opened.

Suddenly, a pair of hands clamped over her mouth, muffling her scream as she was hoisted into the air. After a disorienting moment, she opened her eyes and found herself hanging upside-down, tightly bundled up in a cocoon of white silk, as several more pairs of thin arms held her in place. She looked into the pitch-black space and stared into the shimmering blue eyes—all five of them.

"shh," whispered a feminine voice. The human and the mystery monster both looked back down at the ground.

They saw the white fur on top of the goat woman's head illuminated by the ray of sunlight as she passed through the room, humming to herself. The monster Frisk knew to be so tall and imposing looked like a tiny little doll from their vantage point.

"knock knock," came the voice from behind the door.

"Who's there?" Toriel answered.

"what, you forgot me already? i'm crushed."

"Hehehe! Of course I have not forgotten you! Here, I've got one: Why did the skeleton want a friend?"

"i dunno, why?"

"Because she was feeling bonely!"

Frisk winced and shifted uncomfortably as the two voices below them laughed.

"heh, in that case... you'd better keep an eye on her, or else she might start sneaking around and hanging out with weird skeletons."
Frisk squirmed in her bundle. Toriel laughed innocently at the playful response. He continued, "you know, it's too bad we can't meet in person. if it wasn't for this big ol' locked door, we could play all sorts of fun games together. like… hide-and-seek. i bet you have lots of cool hiding places over there."

"Why, yes…" Toriel agreed with a thoughtful look. The mystery voice continued, suddenly speaking in a much darker tone.

"There could even be someone hiding in plain sight."

The human held her breath and shuddered nervously. Her captor hugged her tighter. A bead of sweat rolled off her forehead and splashed on a stone tile. Toriel jumped and looked over to the corner. The suspended duo silently swung to the other side of the room just before Toriel looked up at the ceiling. "just kidding," the voice chuckled and cut through the tension. The goat woman joined him in laughter.

"Well, I must return now. Until later."

"me too. see ya."

The mysterious wall crawler held Frisk steady as Toriel walked away. "Patience, my dear," she whispered. They waited another couple of minutes, even after Frisk could no longer hear any footsteps.

"Just so," said the mischievous voice. Frisk clenched the threads within grasp of her fingers as they descended gently. When she was safely unwrapped and standing on her own two feet, the coyly smiling monster stepped into the light.

She was a spider monster standing upright like a human on two of her hind legs. Six more thin, arm-like limbs attached to the sides of her dusty-blue body, clothed in a lacy black dress. She had two long, blonde pigtails, tied up with little black bows. "So sweet to meet you, human," she offered a limb to Frisk.

Frisk's mind was still racing to process everything, but she followed her automatic instincts and met the fragile-looking spider arm in a handshake. "Um… th-thank-you? Wh-who?"

"Buffet. Buffet the Cupcake Baker at your service, my dear. Oh my. The coast is clear now, you'd best be going home. Pretend to use the bathroom and then ascend the stairs."

"Y-yes, I will do that. Um, thank-you again." How does she know?! Frisk wondered. She left the room and followed the advice.

Toriel looked up in mild surprise when Frisk walked into the living room. "Frisk, there you are."

"Hiya." She grinned and shrugged slightly.

They spent the afternoon baking spider donuts. Bags of spider meal, sugar, and wheat flour sat open on the counter.

"Woah, cool!" said Frisk.

"It's so black!" Toriel remarked as they stirred the wet and dry ingredients together for their dough.

As they watched the first batch of small, round, black balls sizzle in the pot of hot oil, Frisk said, "Don't use your bare hands this time."
"Yes, I know." Toriel smiled. She used the wooden spoon and the tip of a fork to remove the deep-fried treats.

The next day, Frisk stopped by the paper stand and bought a map. With a textbook from the house under her arm, she marched up a different staircase on the outskirts of the market and found a nice, refreshing little corner on the balcony level.

*The War of Humans and Monsters*

_Hurt, beaten, and fearful for our lives, we surrendered to the humans. Seven of their greatest magicians sealed us underground with a magic spell. Anything can enter through the seal, but only beings with a powerful SOUL can leave._

_There is only one way to reverse this spell. If a huge power, equivalent to seven human SOULs, attacks the barrier, it will be destroyed._

*Why did the humans attack? Indeed, it seemed that they had nothing to fear. Humans are unbelievably strong. It would take the SOUL of nearly every monster just to equal the power of a single human SOUL…*

"Hmm, do they mean every single monster, in this country, at the time this book was written?" Frisk muttered as she continued reading.

Later on, she snuck down to the room with the large door again. As she walked down the hallway, she thought, *So they need human Souls to break the barrier… and this district I'm living in is cut off from the rest of the Underground by a one-way door.*

"knock-knock."

"Hey, it's me."

"…you were supposed to say, 'who's there'?"

"Oh. Sorry…"

"meh, don't worry about it. what's up kid? you are a kid, right?"

"I'm 13 years old."

"yea, you are a kiddo."

"Hmh. Can I ask you about something then, adulto?"

"sure."

"So, you know about the big, powerful, magical barrier sealing us down here?"

"yea, of course. i learned all about the barrier when i was a baby-bones. they don't talk about that in school on your side?"

"Uh… not too sure yet. I'm kinda new around here. So anyways, I read that someone with a powerful Soul could leave."

"yup."

A little pang of hope rushed through her chest. "Could a… I mean, just hypothetically, if a human
were to fall into the Underground… could they just leave then?"

"oh… i see… you must have the old edition of that book. actually, it turns out that a human soul isn't powerful enough to leave on its own. it would have to be strengthened by something, but the only thing that a living human soul could fuse with, in theory… would be a boss-type monster soul. here in the underground? the only one i can think of would be the king."

Frisk's eyes widened as she involuntarily took a step backwards. "Wha… fuse his… Soul? You mean… they'd have to… kill him!"

"woah, hey, buddy. don't worry about that. there's no way they'd ever get that far. they'd be stopped long before they met the king."

"Wh… Why is that?"

"whelp, we've got like a million guards set up to capture them. in order to get to asgore, they'd have to go through all of the royal guards in snowdin, all of the royal guards in hotland, the captain of the royal guard. not to mention all the puzzles and security cameras. but y'know… to even get to any of that, they'd have to go through me first."

"You? Are you a guard?"

"uh, well technically speaking, i'm a sentry. honestly, my brother's the one who pushed me to get this job. he's the one who really wants to get into the royal guard."

"Oh… he sounds kind of cool."

"heh, yea. my brother's a real star." He seemed eager to go on about this subject. "we're actually supposed to be on watch for humans right now. and he is… a human-hunting FANATIC."

"O-oh… I see." Her smile fell as she stared at the door. Hunting? A bead of sweat appeared on her forehead. "What about you?"

"me? i don't really care about capturing anybody. sounds like a huge pain in the tail-bone. heh, do you get what i'm saying, buddy? don't worry about any humans, ok? if you see one, just send 'em right on through this door.

i'll dunk them where they stand."

…

"heh… what?"

So there is a way home… but I'd have to fight my way through this guy, and then hundreds of other monsters… and then KILL THE KING?!"

"you still there, kiddo?"

Even if I were… physically capable of doing such a thing, which I'm not, how could I?! It sounds so violent… so wrong…

She barely heard his voice as tears pooled in her eyes. Her mind raced with thoughts.

Even if I want to go home... I can't just run around starting fights with people. Toriel's given me a nice place to live. There's still a chance that I could find a way to tell Dad that I'm alright. It's not fair to them to risk my own and others lives like an idiot. Besides, I really don't want to fight this...
guy behind the door, he's so…

He must have heard her sniffle. "hey… you ok?"

She stared at the door and blinked. A droplet trickled down her cheek.

"I'm a human."

The voice fell silent. Frisk stared at the door. What's this feeling? Her heart pounded in her chest and she clenched her fists against her body. He can't get in here, right?! Her eyes darted around as if looking for an escape (but from what?). She felt as if there were rifts of energy building up around her which could erupt at any moment and vaporize her fragile existence.

The inexplicable tension suddenly vanished, as mysteriously as it had appeared. Most likely, she had just imagined the whole thing.

"so." the voice continued, "about my favorite dunking spots. there's this one pond in waterfall, the rocks are so slippery that they always get double or even triple dunked before they manage to crawl out of it. then there's the river of course. it's always nice and convenient to be able to dunk 'em so close to my station."

"A-are you talking about the river in Snowdin Forest? That's too cold for a human like me."

"yea, of course it is. that's why i'd probably throw you in the hotland springs instead."

"I just looked at a map today. That's on the other side of the cavern."

"well, yea, but i know a…"

"You were gonna attack me, weren't you?"

"what, nah. i was just joking with you, pal."

"R-really, were you?"

"yeah! hah. good one, huh? …kid?"

She turned and sprinted away from the door.

"uh, hello? human? buddo? door lady #2?"

As she stomped up the stairs, she stumbled on the top step and banged her hip on the corner of the drawer. She curled up into a ball on the floor and sobbed. She heard the front door shut as Toriel came back from her daily walk.

"Frisk, what is… little one?"

Blurry white blobs representing the monster's feet appeared at the edge of her vision. Toriel noticed the human's missing hitpoint. She bent down and reached out a healing hand, while smiling kindly and trying to laugh away the bad mood.

"Hehe… There now, my child—"

"NO!" Frisk stood up before the magic could affect her. Her head bonked into Toriel's chin. The taller woman stepped back in surprise as the child darted past her. She ran into the blue bedroom and slammed the door shut.
Toriel heard her crying behind the door and stepped forward hesitantly. "F-Frisk?" She gulped. She put her hand on the door handle.

"Go away!" the Frisk yelled angrily. Toriel's hand snapped back as if the handle had burned her. She took a calming breath and tried not to feel offended. She stepped back and started to turn away when the door opened again.

"Sorry." Frisk was trying to fuse into the wall as her white fingertips gripped the wooden doorframe. "I, didn't, mean that… don't go away!"

Toriel bent forward again and pulled her away from the wall into a hug. Frisk grabbed onto her. "Sorry, I'm s-so sorry… please don't go away."

"Shh, I am right here Frisk. What's the matter?"

Frisk clutched her dress in her shaking fists and cried for a bit before responding. "Toriel?"

"Yes?"

"I can't go home." As she admitted it out loud, her eyes squeezed shut with a new wave of tears.

"I know," Toriel said and hugged her. Frisk hugged her back even tighter, almost desperately.

"Frisk, I promise you that you will have a home here with me for as long as you wish to."

"Mm." For some reason, Frisk did not sound entirely convinced.

Toriel sighed in concern. "My child… do you really think that I would leave you?"

Frisk shrugged, which was not the response Toriel was expecting. "I am right here, Frisk," she repeated. "I'm not going to go away."

5.5 Hot Dogs and Cupcakes

They took the rest of the day at an easy pace. Toriel repeated her walk to the golden flower garden just so that Frisk could tag along. Frisk observed with a new sense of recognition when they passed by the spider bake sale.

"So, you bought the spider ingredients there?"

"Yeah. Sh… they just sold them to me after I wrote them a note."

"Oh, I see. That's nice! I'm glad you are getting along here. But… be careful of strangers, Frisk."

"Ok."

They had leftover soup for dinner. In the evening, Toriel sunk into her reading chair as Frisk perched on the armrest.

"Would you like to hear about this book I am reading? It is called '72 Uses for Snails.'"

She picked up the book from her small side-table and flicked it open to the bookmarked page. Frisk
could only see its cover from the angle at which it was held.

"Here is an exciting snail fact. Did you know that snails… make terrible shoelaces?"

Frisk gaped for a moment. "It doesn't actually say that?!"

She grabbed the top of the book and tried to pull it down so that she could see. Disappointed, Toriel said, "You don't have to spoil it…"

Frisk was more interested in the real snail facts written in the book. "Snails have a chainsaw-like tongue called a radula…"

"Wait your turn to read, my child!" She pulled the book away. As Frisk reached for it, Toriel spoke over her protests.

"Here is another exciting snail fact! Did you know that—"
The human tried to climb up her arm,
"—on a snail farm, one is likely to find a—"
She pushed Frisk's forehead away and held the book up higher.
"—a snable?"

"What the heck is that?!"

"A stable for snails!"

Frisk ignored her and read another real fact from the book. "Huh, snails sometimes flip their digestive systems as they mature?"

As Frisk clung to her shoulder, Toriel used her hand on the same arm to poke her side.

"Hng?!" Frisk gasped in surprise and fell down into Toriel's lap where she was poked some more.

"Gyahahaha, To-torie t-that's not fair! N-nyah, gyuhuhuhwa!"

After that, they read for realzies. It didn't take long before Frisk was nearly asleep. Toriel walked her down the hall towards the blue bedroom, but Frisk tugged on her sleeve, making her pause and turn around.

"Um, Toriel…" Frisk glanced at the door to her left. "I can, um… I'd like to sleep in my own room tonight."

"Of course my child." Toriel tucked her in and patted her head.

"Goodnight Toriel."

"Goodnight Frisk." She said and turned off the light. Frisk closed her eyes.

She opened them again, squinting against the light from the hallway as someone came into the room. She tried to ignore him as his footsteps scuffled across the carpet. She heard the soft plunk of a plate being placed down as a fork clinked on top of it. A chocolatey aroma invaded her nostrils. She stopped pretending to be asleep and sat up in annoyance.

"Dad! Don't put cake on the floor!"

She blinked. She breathed in the scent of fresh coffee. She looked over the side of the bed. There was a piece of butterscotch-cinnamon pie and a cup of coffee on the floor. She took a bite and
A trickle of moisture made its way down her cheek.

After her usual morning routine (besides the breakfast surprise), Frisk stood in the kitchen with her hands on her hips and narrated the day's plan. "Alrighty! It's already Thursday, so I'd better figure out a main dish for the picnic!"

She went to the grocery store and looked over the refrigerated section. "I think something like burgers would be great! But… they don't have too many choices for meat."

The shelf next to the right of the dairy section was full of various cuts of chicken meat, and nothing else. No red meat? She considered buying a whole chicken, but… "I don't have anything to grind this up with. Toriel's claws? I don't think her technique will cut it small enough… Hm," she hummed doubtfully.

She picked up two packages of already-ground chicken. "I guess I could try using this." She picked up a package of chicken wings. "These are pretty cheap."

"Good morning Frisk," said the attendant.

"Morning Mr. Coco. Whatcha reading?" She asked curiously. The cover of the book he was reading had a close-up picture of a dog baring its teeth, which were yellow and clogged with soil and blood.

"Oh, heh, this? It's um… a story where… the main character went to her ex's backyard and buried her dead pet dog there. But then uh… the dog came back to life. As a zombie dog. Now it's wandering around and eating people. Seems like it's gonna get her new boyfriend next. It already killed the ex and his son… oh gosh, I'm spoiling it all. I'm sorry, Ribbit, I suck at summaries…"

"Hah… that's ok," Frisk smiled nervously. "I'm glad you're, um… enjoying (?) it."

In Toriel's yard, Frisk used the scissors to clip some green vine herbs off of the wall. She rubbed the leaves between her fingers and sniffed them. "I think this flavor will go pretty well with the chicken."

At the kitchen counter, she peeled the skin off all of the chicken wings and used the scissors to snip it into small pieces over a wooden bowl. It was an annoying and tedious method, but eventually, as she continued to snip through the heap of fatty skin strips, they started to blend into a gooey, flesh-colored mass.

"Hopefully, the fat will melt into the burgers and make them nice and juicy." She put the skin bits, ground chicken, a spoon of salt, and a spoon of black pepper into a mixing bowl. She cracked an egg over the bowl. She held the green vine herbs over the bowl in a tight bundle and snipped the finest shavings that she could manage with the scissors.

"Toriel, can you help me?" she called. Toriel put her journal down on the small side-table and came to help her cook the patties over the grate with fire magic. Afterwards they sat down at the table to try the results. They each cut a piece out of their chicken burger and took a bite.

Toriel tilted her head uncertainly. "It's… good?"

Frisk's eyebrows wiggled a bit. "Hmm… it's kind of dry, and weird. The flavor's all over the place," she shrugged. She stood up and said, "I'm going to go explore the market some more."

"Alright my child, be safe!"

She walked into the store again. The attendant was absent. *Must be busy in the back somewhere.* She drummed her fingers on the counter. She decided to turn around and look at some more things on her
own. Her nose nearly bumped into the black dress of the monster standing behind her.

"Huhu, hello my dear!"

Frisk let out a calming breath after being startled. "Oh! Miss Buffet? Hiya." She shrugged hesitantly.

"How is your picnic coming along?"

"Uh, it's ok I guess."

"Anything you need help with?"

"Huh? Um, well… I still haven't quite decided on the main dish. I was thinking of burgers, but they didn't come out as I expected."

"Burgers, you say? That gives me an idea…" She put two of her hands under her chin and looked up at the ceiling, contemplating. Out of some vent that Frisk hadn't even noticed existed, a group of spiders descended on a thread carrying an old, worn book. "Hmm..." She found the page she was looking for and presented the book. Frisk could see that it was a hand-written recipe for "Spider Hot Dogs."

"Huh, hot dogs?" Frisk considered the possibility.

"It's an old family recipe," Buffet explained.

"A combination of chicken meat and live spiders?" She remarked curiously. "Well, a tried-and-true recipe does sound good. I don't have that much time left to experiment, especially if they have to sit a while to develop the flavor. But how am I gonna make hot dogs? For sausages you need some kind of casings to fill them in. Do they sell something like that here?" She glanced at the shelves.

"Hm, let me see..." Buffet made some spiders retrieve a catalogue from behind the store counter.

*Is she allowed to do that?* Frisk wondered.

"Oh yes, here we are. I'll order some for you and you can pick them up tomorrow."

*Order from where?*

"How many do you need?"

"Huh? Um..." Frisk thought about it.

Buffet interrupted and answered for her. "For the size of the crowd I'll estimate... that should be enough." She held the card she was writing on for Frisk to see.

The spider woman seemed confident so the human shrugged and said, "Yeah, ok."

Frisk was both a little suspicious and a little flattered by how eager Buffet was to help her. She led her around the marketplace.

"Here's an little independent garden shop that sells some fresh spices you can't get in the grocery store." The garden shop was almost hidden behind a piece of the wall that stuck out. Vines and flowers artfully tented and artfully tented its floorspace.

"Wow, cool! I don't have the tools to grind these up though." Frisk looked at the small tin that she had acquired, which contained a blend of differently-colored peppercorns.
"This shop over here sells a lot of miscellaneous stuff. Greetings dearies." The attendants nodded back to her.

Frisk said, "I found a mortar and pestle."

"Grounded!" Buffet replied. They went back to the grocery store. "Hold on let me go get somethning."

*She's not moving. I guess the spiders are getting something.* Frisk thought as she observed.

Behind the store's counter, in the right-hand corner of the room, there was a door for employees. The door opened and a squad of delivery spiders came hauling a hand-cranked meat grinder.

"Here, why don't you have this?"

"Huh, you're giving this to me?" Frisk took it from them, but hesitated to completely accept the favor.

Buffet picked up a clipboard with one of her other arms and started scribbling through some notes. She muttered some things about numbers and multiplying very quietly to herself. She brought up a handheld calculator from who-knows-where and punched something in and then wrote something else down.

"Ok, that should do it for the ingredient quantities. Since you have the meat grinder now, you'll be able to use the whole chickens, which are cheaper and better balanced than the pre-ground packages. Can you afford that? Will you be alright cutting them up? I'm sorry, I don't have any knives either."

"Um… yes, that's good. And Toriel can probably help me pull the meat off. But uh, Miss Buffet? Is it really ok for me to take this machine? I mean, I appreciate the help very much. But, you don't even know me. Don't you think you're going a little overboard?"

"Definitely not, Frisk! I want your picnic event to go well for many reasons. Not the least of which is because you are so cute and hardworking!" She said and giggled. Frisk blushed.

Buffet continued, "I've actually been wanting to start producing those hot dogs for a long time, but I haven't been successful in turning a profit on them. That meat grinder's just been gathering dust on my shelf, so go ahead and take it! I'm sure it'll find better use in your tasty little hands!"

"Ew, don't say it like that, it sounds gross…" she said and laughed nervously.

"Whatever you say, my dear, ahuhu! Now then, you'll want to buy the herbs here instead of picking them yourself, unless you want to deplete them all. Well, it's up to you but I personally think it looks very nice to leave them full and luscious in the halls that people walk by all the time. The casings should come in tomorrow around 12:00. If you start putting the sausage mixture together a little before then, then you'll be able to get started on filling them as soon as you get them! So I'll deliver the spiders you'll need to you in the morning. I'll bake some delicious bread for you on Saturday as well!"

"You sure are helpful!"

The next day, Frisk and Toriel were busy preparing for the picnic. Toriel helped Frisk cut up the chickens. Frisk clamped the meat grinder to the kitchen table. The resulting ground meat fell over the edge of the table into a large bowl set on a chair.

Toriel's eyelid twitched in uncertainty as Frisk opened a container and poured a bunch of live, still-
crawling white spiders into her mortar and pestle and mercilessly ended their lives with the masher.

_I mean, I guess I do the same to snails_, she thought.

Frisk held the long sausage casings open while Toriel helped her squeeze the filling into them from a makeshift piping bag.

"I'm not sure what this is made of, but it seems to stick to itself just like natural skins," Frisk remarked as she twisted the links around to separate them. They went out into the yard and hung up the sausage links over a clothes line.

Toriel made a lot of butterscotch-cinnamon pies. She clawed vegetables into bits. "Finer," Frisk requested. Toriel tried to squeeze her fingertips a little closer together as she swiped, which did result in slightly smaller pieces of potato. Frisk used the scissors like a vegetable peeler to shave off carrot strips from large orange carrot cubes. She snipped sheets of lettuce and red bush herbs.

"Can you turn down this flame a bit?" Toriel pointed her finger and made it so. Frisk had a large pot slowly brewing a chunky, mushy, brown-colored stew of vegetables. She poured in sugar and vinegar and stirred it up with the wooden spoon. As it continued to soften, she ladled the concoction into the mortar and pestle one spoonful at a time and patiently refined its texture by hand.

They finished making a potato salad and a regular lettuce-based salad and put them in the fridge.

Toriel giggled. "Are you planning on turning my house into a restaurant?" she teased.

Frisk paused her movements. "Huh. My own restaurant… well, I was going to wait until I was a little older, but…"

A beat of sweat dampened the fur of Toriel's forehead. _That was just a joke…_

"Yeah! That's a great idea!" Frisk nodded and beamed with determination. "It's a little sooner than I expected, but I've always planned on doing that!"

Toriel looked away and shrugged with uncertainty. She realized that the girl was not joking. "W-well, if that is, I guess… ahem. If that is what you wish to spend your time doing, then I will support you," she nodded.

"Thanks!" Frisk yelled and hugged her. Toriel smiled and patted her head.

On Saturday morning, Frisk met with a fellow at the market who had agreed to lend her some tables. A group of Whimsuns helped her move the tables to Toriel's yard. The Whimsuns appreciated a solemn moment of group prayer during their break. A moldsmal came by and dropped off a few decorative flower pots. They were filled with worn-down, slightly dirty plastic flowers. Toriel helped the workers move a heavy stone rectangle with a grilling surface into her yard.

The turnout in the afternoon was above and beyond anybody's expectations. Someone commented, "The new human is the coolest!" Someone else said, "Wowee, I didn't even know we had this many people living in these ol' Ruins!"

A poster on the wall in the yard advertised the opening of an upcoming business. A rough drawing of a hot dog was depicted in bold black marker. The scent of cinnamon combined with the charcoal grill radiated throughout the spacious yard.

Toriel was busy scooping out slices of butterscotch-cinnamon pie and distributing them onto plates. She had a Froggit, who wore a flowing white cape and a rose pin, assist her. He moved the plates
onto the table by using the tip of his tongue as a hand. No one found this unhygienic.

Frisk stood behind the grill and some deep fryers. Labels denoted the foods as Black Sesame Spider Balls and Spider Hot Dogs. Frogs especially loved the savory donuts. The hot dogs were the most popular item of all. She was glad they had made so many. She drizzled them with a cross-hatching of mayonnaise made from golden flower seed oil, and a dark, sweet-and-tangy barbeque sauce. Moldsmals preferred to have the sauce poured directly into their tops. Frisk learned a little about the dining etiquette of each monster type as she watched them eat.

And to the left of Toriel’s pie table, Buffet had set up her own stand where she handed out pink-frosted spider cupcakes and spider cider.

Wait, what?

"Huh, Buffet?!" Frisk looked across the tables in confusion. *When did she get there, I didn't even see her set up?*

"Hehehe, are you surprised my dear?"

Toriel said, "My child, I wasn't aware that we invited any spiders."

"Oh, what can I say? We just found ourselves all… tied up together one day!" Buffet grinned.

"Uh, yeah," Frisk caught on. "She kind of err… threw out a line for me. I couldn't turn her down."

"Dearest me, how could you turn these down," the blonde spider giggled and threw a cupcake at Frisk.

"Heh?!" Frisk dropped her spatula and managed to catch the cupcake. She quickly stuffed it in her mouth so she could have her hands free again.

"Mmf," she nodded and gave Buffet a thumbs-up, as she continued working on the hot dogs.

Some Whimsuns were singing as a vocal quartet. Monsters were getting drunk on spider cider and others were carrying cups of golden flower tea around. Everyone was dancing and chatting and having a good time. For a little while, they didn't seem so afraid of Toriel. Frisk beamed. She was filled with determination!

Elsewhere, in an empty, dark room, a beam of sunlight from far up above cut through the cool air.

* Knock knock knock knock

"uh… hello? … door lady? ladies? … knock knock. … man, something smells good over there.
To craft food items with healing power, magic is infused during the cooking process. Although fire magic is justifiably the most well-known method for achieving this, it is not the only thing to consider. Even without fire magic, the experienced cook can produce potent dishes given access to the proper ingredients. Some organisms naturally absorb more magical compounds from the environment and are thus ideal for being incorporated into healing items. This category includes a variety of wild species that grow in the Underground, as well as many notable Surface ingredients commonly used in human cuisine. In some cases their efficacy may depend on the preparation method and potential reactions with other ingredients.

**Fig 3.0 Table of Ingredients by Magical Potency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>found in</th>
<th>season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waterfall Seaweed</td>
<td>Waterfall</td>
<td>All Year (Spring*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Bush Herb</td>
<td>Ruins</td>
<td>Summer – Late Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fireblossom</td>
<td>Hotland</td>
<td>Midsummer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Potato</td>
<td>Surface</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Toriel peeked at the book over Frisk’s shoulder as she sat at the table. The used plate and cup from her breakfast were pushed aside. "That is an interesting book. Where did you get it?"

"The spider lady lent it to me."

"Oh, I see."

"There's so many interesting places in the Underground! Have you ever been to Hotland? What about Waterfall?"

"O-oh, the waterfall?!" Toriel scratched her chin and chuckled. "Why yes, I know of one! Would you like to go for a morning walk with me?"

Frisk was confused, but she enjoyed holding Toriel's hand as she led the way through the halls. After a couple of minutes, they arrived at a room which had a small waterfall coming out of a hole in the wall. The water was channeled into stone troughs that bordered the room and appeared to flow off into pipes leading to other garden rooms in the area.

Frisk thought, *This is not exactly what I meant. But she seems like she really wants to avoid talking about places outside of the Ruins. Well, this is a nice place anyways.*

She remarked out loud, "Yeah, this is a pretty cool room!"

"Quite refreshing, is it not?" Toriel agreed.

Toriel went home to take care of some important joke authoring. Frisk walked towards the market. Brimming with excitement, she bounced on her toes and clapped her hands against the notebook she held in her hand.

"Hehe! I'm really going to do it! I'm going to start my own restaurant! Kyehhe, it's gonna smell so good when people walk by our house, and Dad'll be so surprised when he finds out! And with this menu..." She squealed happily as she glanced at the short list of dishes she had decided on. "Heh, I'm gonna have to hire my own workers too..."
As she came out of her fantasies and looked around herself, she noticed the small crowd of four monsters standing on either side of the market staircase. They were staring awkwardly and waiting for her to move on so that they could pass too.

Frisk continued on into the grocery store. She looked at the meat shelf in the refrigerated aisle. "Hm." Right, she thought. *There's this... situation.*

"Hey Mr. Coco, don't you sell any meats besides chicken and snails?"

"Here Frisk, why don't you have a look at the catalogue? Ribbit!" He stuck one of the booklets from behind the counter to his tongue and transferred it to her. "'ere you 'o."

"Oh right, this thing." She voiced her recognition as she took it. "But, who or where exactly does all this stuff come from?"

"It gets delivered from the Capital. There are different companies and vendors listed as you can see." He pointed out a relevant line in one of the description paragraphs.

"Cool, I could order rice! And fresh tomatoes too! But... I still don't see any fish... or clams or shrimp?"

"Well, Ribbit, there are some limitations on what can be shipped. But maybe you could try calling around to set up your own trade... there's a directory in the back here. You have a cell phone, right?"

"Yeah. Wooah?! There's a fish market in Waterfall?" She dialed the number. A minute later, the phone disappointed her. "The number's been disabled."

"Yes, some of those numbers may be out of date..."

Behind Frisk, an indigo Loox with a frilly hat was tapping her foot. "So, should the customers just come back some other time then?"

Frisk stepped aside and said, "Sorry! Go ahead, I'll take this outside."

Coco said, "Here wait, Ribbit! Borrow this version instead. I'll let you order wholesale under my name until you get registered."

"Wow, thanks!"

Frisk stood a few feet outside the store entrance. "Maybe if I just call some random numbers someone will know their new number, or give me some other useful information about the Underground. I know they said the outside is dangerous for me, but... this is all remote. No needs to know I'm a human. Besides that one guy. Hm, I wonder what 'HCT' stands for?"

*Ring... Ring...*

"Greetin's. You have contacted the head office of the Hotland Construction Team. As of this moment, there's no associate available to take your call, but if you'd like to leave a message, we will call you back during business hours. Our business hours are..."

"Woops," Frisk hung up and tried some more numbers. After a while she managed to contact someone who would consider her request to import fresh fish to the Ruins.

"You silly dearie, why would I know anything about—wait, did you say you are calling from the Ruins? You wouldn't happen to know any... spiders?"
"You mean, like miss Buffet?"

"Yes, like her. How is she doing?"

"Uh… I think she's fine."

"… Hold on, I'll see what I can do for you darling! Hehe!" Click.

As Frisk was staring at her cell phone with a glimmer of hope, the spider baker she had just mentioned spotted her. A pastel pink Whimsun trailed behind her.

"There she is. How are you doing Frisk? Is that a catalogue? Wholesale edition? Trying to source some ingredients for your new restaurant? So how is that going, have you found any good vendors yet?"

"Uh…” Frisk grinned and tried to keep up with her questions. "No, I just started. But they're gonna call me back, I think." How does she always know about everything?

The cell phone rang again. Frisk answered it eagerly. "Hello? … Oh? … Huh. No, that'd take too long …" Her shoulders slumped again. "Oh … No, I think that's too expensive… but thanks for the info …"

The pink Whimsun whimpered, "Ahem, m-miss human, um,"

Buffet interrupted her and whispered, "No sweetie, ahhuhu… Don't call her that while she's on the phone."

Can she read my mind? Frisk wondered as she hung up her phone. Luckily the Whimsun's whimper had been pretty whimpy, so the monster on the other end had probably not heard her.

"O-oh! I'm s-sorry, boo-hoo!" The pink creature was so embarrassed that she cried and glowed a deeper shade of pink.

"There there, don't cry, just tell her what you need."

"O-ok, um, miss F-Frisk? I-I want my grill back please!" She tearfully squeezed her eyes shut as she proclaimed her desire.

"Hey, it's ok," Frisk replied with a friendly smile. "I wanted to talk to you about the grill too! Do you actually use it very much?"

"Huh? W-well, not really. I just, lend it out to parties sometimes…"

"Could I buy it from you then?"

"Oh…?" The pink Whimsun stopped crying and thought about it for a moment. "500 gold."

Frisk was taken aback by how quickly the timid monster transformed from a nervous wreck to a confident negotiator. "Uh… 500 gold is kind of…"

Buffet said, "I'll admit, it is a very nice charcoal grill. But still, that is a little high. How about… 330 gold?"

"Hmph. I'm not going lower than 450…"

"Wait a minute miss Buffet," Frisk said, a little flustered. "I appreciate the help, but it's just way out
of my price range even if you convince her to lower it a little bit. I'll look around for something else, alright…"

"Frisk, don't worry about that! I'll buy it for you!"

"Huh. What?!

"You weren't planning on starting your restaurant all by yourself, were you my dear? Frisk, let's work together!"

"Wha… together? You mean like… partners?"

"You don't want to burden Toriel with your finances, right? I can cover all the start-up costs such as this grill. You can have that stand I used yesterday as well. It'll make your setup look splendid! As a young chef, you must be itching to try a lot of new things, right? If you work under my guidance, you'll have a much greater safety net to experiment with. Though, I still expect you to turn a profit, of course! But I won't get in your way, dear human. I'll let you run your restaurant, your way, and hire whomever you like, so long as you sell my pastries and listen to my business advice from time-to-time."

"You mean like… you'll be my mentor?"

"Precisely! I'll help you along with everything you don't know about running a business in a foreign country. I assume this is your first time."

"Well, I helped my Dad a little before, but yeah that's pretty much true…"

"Frisk, I want you to be the new face of spider pastries! I'm sure you'll make much better sales than those boring, lonely webs. And that premium location right by Toriel's house is just… ooh!" She squeezed her hands in excitement. "Oh, and of course you may name it whatever you like."

"Name it, huh…" She said softly. "You've been planning this from Day 1, haven't you?" Although she still felt a drop of skepticism, she couldn't deny what a great deal she was being offered. It filled her with determination.

"I bet you've already got a contract drafted."

"Huhuhu!" Buffet giggled and held out a piece of paper. "She's short and cute, and very astute!"

Frisk took the paper. As she began to look it over, she admitted under her breath, "That was a good rhyme…"

"Ok. I guess this looks pretty fair. Though, I don't know if I'll be able to run my restaurant 'my way' as you said… I've always wanted to have a seafood restaurant, but according to the people I just contacted, it sounds like the cost of keeping those kind of ingredients fresh, and for the length of the shipping route… it would be too expensive. So it's probably not viable to import them at a mass scale."

"Hum… I understand Frisk. There are many technical challenges to living in the Underground. I have had to deal with those kind of obstacles before, too. But you are a very hard worker. I believe that if you start with the options available to you for now, you may eventually be able to figure out how to add more of your kind of dishes to the menu. It may seem impossible right now, but I've got some big changes planned, so you never know what will happen! You have to stay determined!"

"Hah, ok then." Frisk stood rigidly and cleared her throat. She looked the spider baker in the eye and
said as seriously and professionally as she could, "I accept your terms. Looking forward to working with you from now on, miss Buffet."

Buffet met her handshake while giggling madly. "Ahehehehe! Drop the 'miss', my dear. We're partners now!"

It took a few days of planning and organizing to re-purpose the corner junction in front of Toriel's house for the food business. A group of Whimsuns helped to move furniture around. They moved the stand with the pink laced banner away from the house and set it up closer to the populated path. They put the large charcoal grill to right of the stand with an extra counter in between. They added a bunch of round wooden tables, cushioned chairs, and couches. Since there was no weather in the Ruins, they could use comfortable indoor furniture and have an 'outdoor' sitting area at the same time.

While the pink and blue Whimsun pair was carrying a round table, Frisk approached from the opposite direction carrying a pair of folding chairs. She had to step 6 inches to the side in order to go around them. The Whimsuns reeled in horror at the grievous insult they they had just committed towards the human.

"I-I-I'm sorry!"
"Please forgive me, m-miss!"
"Boo-hoo!"

"Woah, hey, calm down you guys!" Frisk tried to reassure them. Her arms were full so she could only gesture by wiggling her fingers slightly. This caused the Whimsuns to freak out and fly higher, the table dangerously rising with them.

Buffet saw Frisk's attempts to soothe them and decided to help too. "Oh you poor dearies, you could use a hug. Here you are!" She sent a spider to descend from the ceiling and crawl on the blue Whimsun's head.

"Hnn?!" He hunched his shoulders and his antennae curled up in terror as the tiny legs tapped against his cloth head.

"Whoopsies! One spider is far too small to give an adequate hug to a monster of your size! Ahuhu, my mistake." She added two more bunches of 20 spiders each to descend from the ceiling and land on each Whimsun in attempts to 'hug' them. The floating fairy monsters freaked out so much that they nearly dropped the table.

Luckily, Toriel was conveniently standing around at just the right time and place to catch it. "Is everything going alright over here?"

Everyone ceased their antics, shrugged and said, "Yeah."

There was an empty room around the corner that Frisk had used to store a couple of extra items during the picnic. The workers installed a lock on it. Frisk made a new batch of hot dogs and strung them up in the storage room.

Toriel positioned a painted, carved wooden sign on the wall.

"Higher!" said Buffet.

"No, lower!" said Frisk. "Actually, a little higher. Tilt it a bit to the side."

They both exclaimed, "There, that's perfect!"
They all stepped back and admired their work. The corner junction was now completely furnished and ready for service. The sign sat in between the door to the storage room and the hallway leading to Toriel's house.

*Café Frisk*

Morning. Frisk lay in her bed. She squinted at the blurry figure that softly tiptoed into the room and stealthily placed a plate of pie and a cup of coffee on the carpet. The person towered over her and patted her hair.

"Mm..." Frisk mumbled, still half-asleep. "Thanks Mom..." She closed her eyes and opened them again to see Toriel looking shocked.

"Huh? Did you just call me... 'Mom'?" Toriel was so flattered she blushed and trailed off saying, "Hehe... I suppose... would that make you happy? To call me... 'Mother'?"

Frisk sat up and scooted back, looking as if she had done something wrong. "Sorry. I must have been dreaming. You're not my mother. Though sometimes, with you... I'm tempted to pretend... heh..."

"Ah, right!" Toriel replied with an awkward chuckle. "Forgive me my child, it was wrong of me to assume that."

Something in her expression seemed genuinely disappointed. Frisk hastily reassured her, "But I'm not saying you're a bad mom or anything! You're great and I love you!"

"You..." Toriel was stunned for a moment. Frisk immediately blushed at her own outburst and buried her face in her hands.

"I love you too Frisk," Toriel replied and hugged her. "It's nothing to be embarrassed over. And please, know that you may call me whatever makes you feel comfortable. Now, eat your breakfast so you'll have energy for your big day today!"

Still sitting up in bed, Frisk smiled and ate a spoonful of the pie that was placed into her lap. "Mm, thanks!"

"Frisk, are you... sure about all of this? You have chosen quite long hours to work. You know there is no need for you to push yourself so hard."

"Don't worry Toriel! This is only temporary, for the first few weeks. Once I get everything running smoothly then I'll hire some people to help me, and then I'll switch to an easier schedule for the long-term." Frisk explained as she got dressed and finished her coffee. She tied her black apron around her waist and rolled up her sweater sleeves.

"If that is what you want to do, I hope you work hard and have a great time!"

11:00. September 10, Wednesday. Open for business.

She put her phone away and stood behind the counter, waiting for her first customer. Some spiders came by with boxes of fresh hot dog buns. Frisk re-arranged things on the counters and shelves. She drew some golden flowers on the chalkboard menu. She leaned over the counter and rested her cheeks in her hands. She looked at a spider dangling on the pink-laced banner and sighed.

Finally, around 12:30, a green Loox and two Moldsmals came around the corner.
"Ooh, customers! Frisk stood up properly and smiled. "Welcome!"

"Hi," she replied. "Can I have three hot dogs? One for each of us."

"Coming right up!" Frisk put three hot dogs on the grill. The green Loox pulled some coins out of a slimy pocket that was part of one of the Moldsmals' pudding-shaped body.

"Thank-you," Frisk said and hid any displeasure she may have felt at being handed slimy coins. She stared at the mess in her palm for a second. She put them on a small plate and set them next to the coin box under the counter, so that she could rinse them off later.

One of the Moldsmals made a slime sound. The other did a sexy wiggle. They bounced excitedly and emitted some bullets from their centers. The bullets spilled down their sides and bounced on the ground a few times before fizzling out.

Frisk said, "Oh! Please, no bullets at the café."

"I think they're just really excited to see a human. You should try petting them."

"Uh, ok then?" The human tried to appease them by gently laying one hand on each jello monster. Her hands became coated in slime as she rubbed them and smiled awkwardly. The monsters glowed pink and bounced faster. They seemed even more excited, but they did cease their bullet emission.

Frisk wiped her hands on a towel. She handed the Loox her hot dog on a paper napkin. She squirted triple quantities of barbecue sauce and mayonnaise on the Moldsmals' meals and inserted the food into their… tops. They giggled flirtatiously. More monsters showed up and a line formed. The success of the lunch rush filled her with determination!

Traffic slowed down after 3:00, but customers kept coming now and then throughout the evening. They sat or stood around the tables and ate cupcakes and donuts with golden flower tea. At 9:00 PM Frisk closed the restaurant. She wheeled a cart full of dirty teacups into the storage room. She swept the floor and pushed in the chairs. She locked up the storage room and took the cash box with her.

"Welcome home!" Toriel said and gave her a big hug.

"I'm home. Waoh!" She vocalized as the large monster picked her up. "Toriel, I can walk!"

"No my child, I'm afraid your feet will fall off! Now relax and eat your dinner!" Toriel placed her into a chair at the table. She giggled and ate her chicken soup and toast.

"Mm. Toriel, I earned 86 gold today. If this keeps up, I'll cover the cost of the grill in four or five more days!"

"Hooray! I am so proud of you!"

Two weeks passed. Frisk enjoyed running her restaurant every day. One day a pair of spiders delivered a note on a pink card.

Dearest human, I have completed the necessary designs for the spider delivery system. From now on we will be able to send and receive orders remotely with our most delicious spiders. Please read the details on the back for installation instructions. I am still working on the manual. P.S. That was a joke. The logistical spiders are a different breed from the ones we raise for food.

Frisk turned over the card and read the details.
She opened at 11:00 AM the next day as usual. There were now couple of spider webs at the base of the counter and some connected to the corner of the ceiling. A couple of spiders came crawling from the hallway carrying a small wooden tray.

"Wow, this is so cool!" Frisk took some coins and a paper note out of the tray. An order! When she was done, she placed one can of soda and a hot dog topped with sauce on the tray.

"Oh no, that's not too heavy for you is it?"

The spiders ignored her pity as they shakily carried it away.

"Don't worry Frisk. There are enough spiders, I assure you."

"Huh, when did you..." Frisk turned around to see Buffet standing behind her carrying some crates of pink-frosted cupcakes. "Oh. Hehe. Well, you are the spider expert!"

After running the restaurant like that for two days, Frisk remarked to Buffet as they were closing up, "Wow, this is really effective! There's a lot more orders during the less active times now. And especially in the evening."

"That's great! Come walk with me, I'd like to discuss some things with you."

"Ok."

"So, a couple of days ago I heard Toriel talking with that guy behind the door again. I was also baking and only half paying attention but then she said..."

Frisk interrupted, "I knew it! You do spy on people with your spiders!"

"Ahuhuh! Are you surprised my dear?"

"No."

"Hehe! Ok, so Toriel..."

Toriel stood in the cool, dark room behind the door.

"you're awfully quiet today. what's up?"

"My friend... I wonder if I could ask something of you... Oh, I don't know if I should, but still..."

"what is it?"

"Um, well... If a human ever comes through this door... could you please, please promise me something? Watch over them, and protect them, will you not?"

"oh, Door Lady... you know, i normally hate making promises. but well, you said 'please' twice, so what can i do? don't worry. i'll keep an eyesocket out for her."

Toriel's nose twitched. "Her? I did not tell you the child was a girl?"

"ah... lucky guess, huh?"

Frisk stopped walking and looked stunned as she listened to the story. "She what?! But, she gets anxious if I even ask questions about places outside of the Ruins! There's no way she would ever let me go through that door without a fight."
"Hehe! Aren't you more surprised that guy's reaction? He agreed right away!"

"Hm... something about that doesn't surprise me. I've only talked to him a few times but... I feel like I believe him when he says he's capable of doing something. But Toriel... why does she think I would run away without telling her?"

"Because you already did at least three or four times?" She said, recalling all the times she had overheard Frisk talking to the weird guy behind the door.

"Geh!" Frisk's shoulders hunched as if she had been caught in the act.

"Well Frisk... I am sure that Toriel wants nothing more than to protect you and take care of you forever. But change is inevitable, and she is neither naive nor stupid... in fact, she's completely right to worry. I haven't told you the details of my development plans yet, have I?"

"Huh," Frisk listened curiously.

"As you know, these Ruins we live in have been sealed for a long time. But I and a few of my colleagues would really like to change that. We could eventually try to reason with Toriel about opening the door. But even if she were to agree, I feel that's still not a very good entrance for the general public. We need something more accessible and convenient. Something that even vehicles or carts could pass through.

"You just want to sell cupcakes to Snowdin Forest don't you?"

"Ahuhu," Buffet put her hands on her cheeks and giggled little schoolgirl.

"Have you been planning this for a long time?"

"Yes, we've been raising money for years. Now, we'll need a contact on the outside. Next time you talk to Mr. Voice Guy..." Buffet chattered on about her plans as they walked.

When Frisk came home around 10:30 PM, Toriel ushered her inside and patted her shoulders. "Frisk, you mustn't stay out so late when you are working full-time! Come, have some snail pie! I'll run a bath for you, alright?"

"Ok," Frisk said with a droopy-eyed expression.

A few days later, the smooth flow of business was interrupted. Around 6pm a few spider trays came back with notes from customers.

Did you drop my cupcake in water?

My hot dog was cold and moist. Can I get a refund?
-Pink Fungus House no. 10, apt. 3, Fungus hall 2

Hi, I have a complaint to make. But first of all, I really love your hot dog stand, so please don't feel bad. I just thought you should know that a lot of people are getting cold food today. Is your grill broken? Maybe you could call someone to take a look at it? I know a few people if you need help. Anyways I hope you figure it out soon! Love your place by the way!

"Uh oh, looks like something weird is going on. I guess I'll go check it out." Frisk set a hot dog on the grill. While it was cooking, she closed up the shop and adjusted the writing on the blackboard. She took a lap of paper from the recently discarded receipts.
"Here, please deliver this hot dog to this address," she said and placed the note and the fresh hot dog in its fresh bun on the wooden tray. When the spiders crawled down and picked up the tray, Frisk followed after them. She walked through the halls in the direction of the flower garden area. When she passed through a narrow walkway across a small bed of red foliage, she felt a familiar cold sensation in her feet.

"Oh!" She hopped across the earthy patch and picked up the wooden tray. "You can go back now," she said and dismissed the spiders.

She tried a bite of the hot dog. It was cold and moist. She swallowed the unappetizing bite and put the tray down in the corner for the time being. She looked at the familiar ghost monster lying on the ground. She didn't have the heart to feel any anger towards him. Instead she just smiled and greeted him with cheer.

"Hey there Blooky."

"Oh, hi… human…"

"Um… nice day today! How is lying on the ground going?"

"It's going OK… I usually come to the Ruins because there's no one around. But today a lot of spiders have been running through me. I was doing an impression of a discarded plastic bag… I didn't expect it to work so well…"

"Heh. Say, are you… wearing earbuds?"

"Yeah. Do you want… to join me? I'll lend you a bud…"

"Ok…" Frisk laid down on the ground with her head close to his face. An earbud somehow managed its way into her ear. She lay on the ground for a moment and listened. She started to nod her head along.

"Huh… hey, this is pretty good!"

"Oh, you like it… heh, this is a theme song… from a show I like to watch… sometimes…"

"Wow, I just realized I haven't listened to music like this since I came from the Surface."

"Oh…" He glanced away shyly. "Maybe I could … make her a mix tape sometime…"

They got up and walked back to the café. As they approached the booth, Frisk said, "So basically when ordinary foods pass through your body, they turn all cold and soggy. So I received a bunch of complaints from customers."

"Oh… I see…" He looked around nervously at his proximity to all of Frisk's things. "Is it bad that I'm floating here? I don't want to mess everything up… I'm sorry to bother you…"

"It's ok, you can float there! As long as you don't pass through food, it's no problem!"

"I guess I'll just go lie by the Vegetoids instead from now on."

"Vegetoids? What are those?"

"Oh yeah… you'd probably be interested in checking them out… I could show you…"

"That sounds cool! But I'm going to be working here until 9. As long as you don't mind waiting…"
"Oh…" He didn't exactly smile, but he seemed like he didn't mind waiting.

Frisk worked through the evening serving pie and tea and hot dogs. Napstablook made a novel decoration, and a handy source of inconvenient questions.

He said, "So… are you a child? You seem pretty… small…"

"Uh, yeah. I am."

"So, do you go to school? Or… have you not started yet?"

"Heh, Blooky! If I hadn't been to school yet, I wouldn't be old enough to be in charge of a restaurant!"

"Oh… So you're old enough to be in charge of a restaurant now?" He nodded diligently and stared in admiration. "So you're already finished with school… you must be an amazing student…"

"Yeah! Hahaha!"

After Frisk closed up her shop, they went together to one of the pitfall rooms. They crawled down one of the passages hidden in the bushes. In the stone room there was a monster that looked like a white-and-purple bulb.

"Wow! It's a vegetable monster!" Her eyes glittered.

"Vegetoid offers a healthy snack!" The monster shot cubes of white vegetable flesh at her.

"Ack! Owowow!" She yelped as she got pelted by a generous serving of diced roots.

The Vegetoid rested after its attack. Rubbing the bruises on her face, she picked a piece off the ground. She brushed away a bit of dirt with her finger tips and gave it a little nibble.

"Aha! It tastes like a turnip!" A smile of glee spread across her face. "Mm, it's so fresh and crunchy!"

She picked up another piece and tried it. Unfortunately, the second piece had phased through Napstablook before it had hit the ground. She groaned and made a grimace.

"No like Vegetoid?" The monster sounded offended.

"Uh, i-it's great!" Frisk forced a shaky smile and gave a thumbs up as she swallowed.

"There's more different types over here…" Napstablook said and tried to lead her through a wall. "Oh… only I can do that… yeah…" he sighed from behind the wall.

"Don't worry! There seems to be a puzzle over here. Maybe if I press these switches I can get through."

Napstablook poked his head back out of the wall to watch as Frisk completed a fairly easy switch puzzle. The correct buttons were related to the shape of the decorative framing around the door that unlocked as a result. She stepped through into a large courtyard. Irrigated water flowed through canals. There were beams of moonlight trickling in from the skylights way up high. Frisk stepped into the moonbeams and inhaled the rainforest-like scent. The romantic atmosphere filled her with determination.

Then she was assaulted by a lot of flying vegetables. "Hy-Ow!" She flinched and ran back out of the room.
"Oh… It looks like they're hurting you… I guess that's not too helpful…” Napstablook thought she was disappointed.

"That's not true! I'm sure I can make use of this somehow. I'll just have to come back with a helmet or something."

"Oh, ok."

She yawned. "I should probably head home now."

"Oh… guess I'll see you later… bye then…"

"Bye-bye!" Frisk said as he disappeared.

She found herself alone in the dimly lit corridors once more. She walked around for a few minutes. She passed by the mushroom switches and turned down some street.

"Hey, human! Human!"

"Huh?" She saw a light blue Loox addressing her.

"You're home's like… that way," he said and pointed down the opposite way she had come.

"Oh," she blushed.

"Come on, it's dark."

"Huh, you're walking with me? Err, thanks…” she mumbled.

"Actually um… I wanted to tell you like, uh… I saw that that doormat ghost thingy finally moved. So um… good job getting rid of him, you know? I guess it was his fault and not yours for the soggy hot dogs… so like, don't worry about the note I sent you. You know, forget about it."

"What? No that's ok! You can have something for free next time you come by. On the house."

"Oh, hah. Ok, thanks. Like… you're cool and stuff. Um, there's your house. I'm Allens by the way. Imma leave now… Toriel is kinda… scary."

Frisk smiled innocently and walked up to the door thinking, Who, Toriel? Scary?

When she opened the door, Toriel was standing in the entrance, expecting her. She towered over the tiny human, and she looked just a little bit scary.

"Frisk. Your work ended two hours ago. Where have you been? Are those bruises on your face?!"

"Uh, I was just… looking at uh… Vegetoids…” She shrugged and got the inkling of a feeling that she was in some sort of trouble.

"Come in and sit down." Frisk came in and sat down.

"Frisk, how many hours have you worked this week?"

"Uh, well let's see… I go out and open shop at 11. And I get off at 9. So… for the last two weeks… and then… um…"

"You also take some time to clean and prepare your restaurant before and after your actual working
"Yeah, you're right. So I guess that's like an extra hour... err, maybe hour-and-a-half?"

"Do you see where I am going with this? My *child*? Is this what other children your age on the Surface normally do all day?"

"Well, no but..."

"This has gone too far now. I know you are excited about your new business, but the fact is you are working far more than is reasonable for *any* monster or human, let alone a child. So tell me, Frisk. When is your weekend?"

She yawned and protested. "Hm... but Toriel, I'm going to look for employees to hire starting tomorrow."

"You are most definitely not, Frisk. You are taking a *break* tomorrow!"

"Huh, does it have to be tomorrow?"

"And the next day after that too!"

"Whaat? But *Toriel*, you don't understand!" Frisk pouted even as her eyelids drooped. "It takes a lot of hard work to start a new business... It's just for a few more days... this is normal..."

"That is enough excuses Frisk. Look at you—you are falling asleep at the table, your dinner is cold," she gestured to the two-hours-old plate of grilled vegetables and half-dried-out brown rice. "When was the last time you had something to eat? It was not this morning. Are you going to take care of your hygiene tonight as well?"

"Um, I hadn't... hm..." She was so tired she found it hard to pay attention to the lecture she was receiving.

"There there, child." Toriel turned off her scolding face and sat beside Frisk so that she could pat her shoulders with her fluffy goat paws. She ignited some small fireballs over the dinner plate to bring some life back into the food for her child to eat. Frisk gave up and obediently accepted the care given to her. When she was done eating she tried to put away her plate, but Toriel gently pushed her back down into the chair and took it for her. She carried Frisk around the house and pampered her as she got ready for bed.

"You are a wonderful child, and you are very passionate about your job. But starting tomorrow, you will have to begin thinking about restoring some balance to your life... alright?"

Frisk was already fast asleep.
"You're Hired!

"…and then I tried to go down to the store but the monster in charge there won't even sell to me because T-my caretaker got up early and talked to him first. And I was planning to have my mentor friend teach me about doing taxes today. Now she's not going to be free again for a couple of days! Ugh, it's so frustrating to be told to take a break today when I was literally about to start working on the hiring and stuff I need to do to fix that situation! Running a restaurant is not all fun and games you know! It's not like baking homemade pies for children! It's an arduous, back-breaking labor of love!"

He was starting to laugh as she went on.

"But she doesn't understand that. She just writes jokes all day!"

"hey, pal. joke writing is serious business. trust me, i'm an author… -ity on the matter."

"?!"

"heh. i've got a good joke for ya right now. here it goes. you need a hobby."

"Huh?!!" He snickered again at her reaction.

She sighed. "So what's your hobby then? Being a world-class punster?"

"nah… that's way too much work. my hobby is… napping."

"What, napping?!"

"yep. i was doin' it all last night."

"Oh… wait, but isn't that just—oh…" She heard him chuckle. "Well Mr. Door Guy, maybe you count sleeping as a way to pass the time, but a normal, ordinary person like me needs more to do during the day."

"gotcha pal. a normal, ordinary workaholic like you needs more to do."

"Ugh!"

She heard him snickering behind the door. "heheh… you're gonna get along great with my brother… wanna hear another one? ok… what's a skeleton's favorite instrument?"

"I dunno, what?"

"A trom-bone."

"Huh?" She raised her eyebrow at the door. "That's like, a baby joke."

"aw come on. i can tell you're smiling by the tone of your voice."

"I'm not sm—" A trombone cut her off, playing 'wah, wah waaah.'

"Wha?!!" She laughed and smiled. "Hm… you just made a joke about skeletons and trombones. And then you actually played a trombone… Does mean that you're a skeleton?"
"maaaybe. you've got a pretty sound argument there. but actually, that joke was made up by your
guardian, not me, so… wait… is she a skeleton?"

"I dunno, could be!" she sang. "Maybe you should come over here and find out?" They both giggled
at the suggestion. She added, "Hehe… why are we being so secretive again?"

"good question bud. status quo, i guess? Door Lady #1 has never asked for my name or introduced
herself, so i haven't brought it up either. although… she's been a little different lately."

"How so?"

"well, when we first started this whole routine, the only thing we did was tell knock-knock jokes.
which rules. but… since a few weeks ago, she's also started talking to me normally, about normal
stuff."

"Oh, that's great! She doesn't have any friends and everyone here is intimidated by her. So I'm glad
she has you to talk to."

"hey, that's my line. she's obviously much happier with you around. you must be great company."

"Oh." She said and looked down.

"yeah. she really cares about you. she even asked me to… well… maybe it's not my place to say…"

"She asked you to protect me?"

"yeah," he replied automatically. "…huh? she told you?"

"Ah, no… It was my mentor-y business partner. She spies on everything in the Ruins with her
remote-control spiders and she's really nosy. Hehe… Sorry about that."  

"ok."

"So actually, speaking of her, she wants to ask you do something for her/us. We've got this big
project planned and we're gonna need a contact on the outside soon. And we thought that maybe you
could help us get in touch with someone. She's still working on the information packet now. Wanna
meet us here next week?"

"wow, uh… ok?"

The next day, Frisk was sitting on a ledge in the marketplace. A book was open in her lap. The
background noise of monsters going about their day faded into a dull hum as she intensely stared at
the spider donut sitting on the stone surface next to her.

"Hiya Frisk. Watcha up to?" She popped out of her bubble of concentration and looked at the blue
Loox.

"Hi!" she said. "I'm trying to see the stats on this donut."

"Oh, you're learning like, Check and stuff?"

"Heh, yeah… I bet you monsters all learn that when you're babies, huh? Toriel can tell how much
HP a food will restore just by looking at it. This book says that inventory scanning falls under
Check."

"Uh-huh, that's right."
"And then it says that humans can use Check. But I can't quite figure out how…"

She held the book against her body and stared up at the ceiling as she thought about the problem. Allens could see its title, *First Grade Magic*.

"Oh cool. That's like, that exact same book is the one we read when I was kid. In class. I mean magic class. Uh, so… I was thinking maybe you could ask a teacher for help? I know a guy you could ask. I mean, not just like any guy, but he's a magic teacher. So y'know,"

"Yeah, I get it," she giggled and nodded. "That sounds great, do you wanna show me now?"

"Yeah, Ok! So, follow me?"

"Lead on."

They walked into a door in the center of the far wall of the market square. The interior hallway was narrower than expected. There were only two unoccupied rooms. They were full of furniture and desks that were pushed against the walls, revealing their barren stone floors. The third room at the end of the hall was a small office which Frisk knocked on.

An old Loox with beige-yellow skin opened the door. He squinted at the through his narrow, wrinkled eyelid. "Yes children, how can I—oh my!"

He caught his little red hat from falling off the top of his head. His skirt was the same color, as was his iris which he widened as much as he could.

"A human?! My, my, what a surprise! Did you bring her here, Allens? Good to see you, lad."

"H-hi, uh, good morning Master Visage. Uh, Frisk. This is my magic teacher, Master Visage. And teacher, this is a human girl named Frisk. She has like, a food business on Home Street. Guess she's taking a break today." Frisk nodded. "I thought maybe you could like, help her learn… basic commands?"

"Yes, well then, what are we waiting for? Come, child!" he grabbed a metallic walking cane from a hook on the wall and limped out of the room. They followed him into one of the empty classrooms where there was more space to breathe and move around.

* Allens and Visage are standing around doing nothing!

"Ok, young Frisk, check this out!" Visage's iris flashed yellow as he raised his cane and whacked Allens on the back with it. As the blow connected, a spark of magical energy jumped from the staff's coppery tip into the younger Loox's body.

"Ow! What was that for?!!" He rubbed the his back with his hands. A trail of smoke rose up from the singed fabric of his pants.

Frisk gasped and clenched her fists with worry. "Allens, are you ok?! You lost a lot of HP from that!"

"Yeah, I noticed!" he winced and glared at his teacher.

Visage chuckled knowingly, "Ho ho ho… How did you know he lost HP?"

Frisk said, "Huh, what you you mean? I only… Oh I get it!" Suddenly the vague options available to her snapped into place and she could almost imagine an action bar of various commands floating
before her eyes.

[ACT]
→ * Check
→ * Allens

* ALLENS – ATK 1 DEF 9 HP: 27 / 35
* Can he get to the point already?

"Hehe!" Frisk giggled.

[ACT]
→ * Check
→ * Visage

* VISAGE – ATK 4 DEF 2 HP: 24 / 26
* This monster loves fireballs.

"Huh? Are you ok?" Frisk asked him.

"Ah, it's nothing child! Just this old back. Ho!" He stretched and made his spine pop. Frisk gave her spider donut to Allens. They all heard the sound of the outer door opening. Wings buzzed and feet stomped through the hallway.

Visage said, "Blazes! Would you look at the time?! The students for my afternoon class are arriving already! Frisk, why don't you come back tomorrow and learn some more?"

"Sorry, I have work tomorrow. But maybe next week!"

"Allens, would you like to volunteer for a class demonstration?"

"Oh, haha… no thanks. I have to uh… also work, and stuff!" he backed away, eager to leave the classroom.

Visage sighed. "Oh well, that's too bad… We'll just have to go with the original plan. Robbie! Go get the Dummy!" He ordered one of his students, a magenta-colored Froggit. Robbie turned around and went back the way he had come. Visage took a piece of chalk and wrote *Fireballs* on the blackboard.

"Let's go," Frisk said. Allens was glad to agree.

As they walked across the market square, he explained, "When I said I have to work tomorrow, that was just a lame excuse… I don't have a job or anything."

"I see," Frisk nodded along. "Funny you should mention it. I need to hire someone to help me…"

Robbie came hopping the other way and passed them again, carrying a familiar-looking training dummy on his head.

"Oh!" She looked at Allens. "Would you like to work with me?"

"Huh?!"

The next morning there was a knock at the door. Toriel opened the door to see a blue monster with a large red eye. "Hello?"
"U-uh, h-hey, hello, g-good morning miss T-Toriel, heh…” he nervously greeted the goat-woman who towered over him. "Ahem. M-my name is Allens. Is, uh, Frisk home?"

"Oh, you're here! Come in here," the girl gestured from the table. She was still dressed in her pajamas which were green with yellow hearts on them. Toriel served their guest some coffee, which made him relax a little. Frisk showed him some notes that she had scribbled out the previous night, giving a brief explanation of her plans for their wages and schedules. She got changed into her usual outfit for the day.

Toriel said, "So, you've found another friend to work with? How nice! See what you can do with a little time off?"

"Yeah," Frisk smiled. "Guess you were right Toriel."

"It Loox like you two will make a great team." Toriel added and smiled.

Frisk sighed. "I don't know why I'm even surprised."

"Neither do I my child. I thought you should have seen that one coming!"

"Allens, let's leave!"

"Heh, Ok! Heheh…” He chuckled while following her out the door.

Toriel watched them walk away together and beamed with pride. "My little Frisk is a leader now! So… responsible!"

Allens quickly learned the ins and outs of running the café. They went over opening and closing checklists. They made a batch of hot dogs together. She showed him around the counter area and the storage room, the shelves and refrigerators where the various ingredients and utensils were kept, and gave him a spare key. By the end of the week he had somehow acquired a pair of bakery slippers as well as a black apron to wear over his poofy white shorts.

As the days passed by, Café Frisk gradually increased in popularity. It had taken some time for the local monsters to warm up to the idea of going to a restaurant run by a human under Toriel's protection. Lines formed every day shortly after opening. A pink-and-yellow Migosp came by and took some pictures of them working. Toriel came by a few times a day to deliver butterscotch-cinnamon pies, and pots of snail soup. She would also pass by every time she went for her daily walk. One day a baby Moldsmal had a temper tantrum, but its parent sucked in the bullets, preventing any damage from occurring. The green Loox was thrilled to see that Allens had found a job.

One afternoon, Frisk and Buffet were sitting at one of the tables, looking over a spread of paper documents. They had a few stacks of gold coins organized into piles on the table.

"Then you write the total here…” the spider baker pointed as the Frisk nodded and filled in the box. They scooped up the coins into a draw-string pouch that had a key-chain tag with the name of their business on it. "Huhu, all done."

They both sighed. Buffet sank into her cushioned armchair while Frisk stretched over the table.

"This tax only applies to certain businesses. I'll drop it off on my way back. Next month's may be a thread more complicated as we factor in the income of our new employee."

"Mm," she yawned and nodded.
"Speaking of which, where is that cutie today?"

Frisk got up and went back behind the counter as she replied, "Oh, he works Tuesday through Saturday, so he's off today."

"Yes, customers are the fewest on Sunday, so that's a good choice. By the way Frisk... Toriel does not have a computer, does she?"

"No."

"What a shame. No matter, no matter," she waved dismissively. "I can work by hand just as well. I have plenty of them to spare." A bundle of spiders descended from the ceiling and dropped off a textbook and a folder of notes in front of her on the table. Frisk picked up a piece of paper from a wooden tray carried by spiders and threw two hot dogs onto her grill. Meanwhile, Buffet hummed and worked on her papers.

In the Ruins Door room, Frisk approached with Buffet, who carried a thin folder containing papers.

"This should be the about the right time. Greetings, Voice!"

"that's three now. you guys starting a fan club over there? i'll be honest, i'm not sure how many more voices I can keep track of," he chuckled.

Frisk said, "Why don't we just introduce ourselves then..."

Buffet interrupted, "But my dear, I want a turn being mysterious and anonymous for no reason, too!"

"yea don't be such a party pooper human."

"I'm not a—" pffftthththh.

Frisk sighed as the two monsters laughed across the door.

"so... kiddo said you've been spying on me? how's that workin' out for ya?"

"Ahuhuhu! Well, you know how it is! It gets a little repetitive baking and brewing all day, and entertainment's hard to come by around here... What's a monster to do?" She giggled.

"you're saying you appreciate my fine taste in humor?"

"Yes. I wrote down nearly 30 of your knock-knock jokes."

"i find that... dis-door-bing." They all shared a giggle at that.

Frisk said, "So... dis door bing locked and all... how is this going to work?"

Door guy chuckled, "awesomely, with that attitude."

"Hehe! Ok, but how are you gonna give him the folder?"

Buffet tilted her head one way, and then the other, considering the question. She lowered her body and fed the corner tip of the folder into the crevice between the bottom of the door and the floor. Frisk made a "Hm?" noise.

"woah there." They heard the sound of snow being dug through and patted and brushed off of paper.
“shuffle, flip. "m." flip. "ok, i get it… hmm… most of this looks pretty easy… i have no idea about gettin' investors though…”

"I can help you with that one, if you'll be my eyes and ears."

"ok. what about distance then? i mean uh, the length of the passage? did you do terrain surveys yet? you got the location planned for the entrance on your side?"

"Not yet. I would leave that up to the designers and builders."

"ok, well you'll wanna figure that stuff out as early as possible. we can get a rough idea of the design (maybe i could use the tunnels in town as a base?) but you'll wanna decide on that soon, 'cause whatever you have to build or dig around could make a pretty big difference in the planning. kinda pointless to start on any final blueprints or even drafts before you have a good idea of your budget, y'know… 'cause you'll just have to redo it later…"

Frisk said, "Ooh. You sound like you know what you're talking about."

Buffet said, "Have you done something like this before?"

"well, maybe something a little similar, but…"

Frisk asked, "So you know how to build stuff?"

"i mean, machines and puzzles are more fun…"

Buffet said, "So you're more than just a messenger?" She said to Frisk, "It sounds like he could really help coordinate all of this. He should totally work with us!"

"i should?"

Frisk said, "Yeah totally! You're interested, aren't you?"

"uh… it does sound kinda cool. but i've already got a job over here…"

"You mean your sentry thing? Your job's to capture human souls, right? Well, you seem to have made your decision on that. You don't even have to pretend to look anymore. You literally just sit at your station and do nothing."

"i know, it's great!"

"Heh," Frisk laughed and rolled her eyes. "Come on Voice, I bet your, uh… brother'd be proud of you," she completely guessed.

He fell silent and they stared at the door for about 20 seconds.

"sure. why the hell not. wink."

Buffet said, "Splendid! Just flip through to that light blue page in the back and sign on the dotted line."

"ok." There was a series of noises. fp. kchw. squirk. crinkle. shff. shf. crease, pat, fold, pat, pat…

Frisk took the thick paper rectangle that was shoved under the door. As she unfolded it, her nose twitched at the scent of vinegar. They squinted at the blotchy red name.
Frisk said, "Ok, I guess we'll meet you next week then, um… Sons."
On the eastern border of Snowdin Forest, at the end of the road, stood a huge locked door set into a
wall of purple stone. Not many monsters came out this far, as there was not much to look at. The
snow piled against the wall was untouched beneath the trees for as far as one could see, except for a
small trodden path and a spot on the door's platform where the snow was impacted from the daily
wanderings of the forest sentry who manned the first station on the path from the door.

Short leg bones paced away from the wall in their comfy sneakers. Mittened hands brushed some
snow off of the thin folder that had been squeezed under the crack of the door. He gripped the base
of his blue hoodie and zipped it up for some shelter against the freezing wind. Sans the skeleton
walked back to his station, scratching the forehead of his smiling skull with the tip of his mitten.

"huh… i just wanted to practice some jokes. how did it come to this?

i’ve got three promises to three different ladies, whose names i don't even know. Door Lady #1 said
to protect Door Lady #2. Door Lady #2 said not to snitch on her to Door Lady #1 for sneaking out.
And Door Lady #3…"

He checked the paper to refresh.

"…signed me on as project coordinator for the development of a new tunnel between the Ruins and
Snowdin Forest, including an entrance station on either side, in order to facilitate trade between the
Ruins and the larger Underground. This project will increase the viability of a number of exports,
create new job opportunities for our community, and grant access for the denizens of Snowdin Forest
to purchase products (such as our highly recommended spider cupcakes) from local businesses," he
read.

"and then they asked for my phone number..."

He slumped against the front of his booth, letting the snow act as his cushion. He looked over the
papers again.

"they said to meet back in a week. i could probably get this done in two or three days… Interrupting
his thoughts was the sound of running footsteps and the increasing volume of a voice. That would be
his brother, Papyrus.

"...ssaaaaAAAANSSS!" The taller skeleton came sprinting along the path and skidded to a halt,
kicking up a bunch of snow that landed all over Sans and his sentry booth.

"sup bro."

"YOU KNOW WHAT'S UP BROTHER! It's been th-FOUR DAYS since you last calibrated your
PUZZLES! You just sit around your station and boondoggle! You are actually just sleeping on the
ground! What are you even doing?!

"uh…” he smiled as the dots of light in his eye sockets glanced around the clearing. They landed on
a large indigo-colored lamp that was littering the vicinity. "staring at this lamp. it's really fun, wanna
try it?"

"NO! I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT!" Papyrus grabbed the lamp (which was quite large for a
lamp, being about the size of a human child) and threw it into the air, far away and over the trees.
"hey, lighten up bro. you'll get a stress-fracture."

"AAAARGH! That is enough of your jokes, Sans! Come on, we gotta go make more puzzles!" He scooped up the smaller skeleton under his arm.

well, i can take care of this later, Sans thought as Papyrus ran off into the woods yelling, "NYEH-HEH-HEH-HEH!"

It was Wednesday, Frisk's second weekend day. She sat at the table sipping from a cup of red herb tea and reading a book about the Capital.

*Chickens are one of the only farm animals that have been successfully bred in the Underground. They are raised in the Northern Agricultural District of the Capital. The chickens are fed water sausages, which results in a meat with respectable healing qualities. Originally, farmers used corn, but consecutive bouts of head smut combined with increasing demand for crop space during the expansion from c.a. 20XX-20XX led to the corn farms switching to wheat, and chicken farmers switching to a water sausage-based feed from 20XX onwards.*

Done with that chapter for the time being, Frisk put the book aside and piled *The Daily Lives of Froggits* on top of it. She picked up a novel to read instead as Toriel came inside the house.

"Oh… hello my child!"

"Hey Toriel," she gave a small smile and sat in her chair. Toriel came over and set her cloth grocery bag down on an empty chair. She stood behind Frisk and rubbed her shoulder. Frisk couldn't think of any interesting conversation topics, so she continued reading.

"Would you like to bake something together with me today? I am going to try making some butterscotch pie flavored with a golden flower tea concentrate, instead of the usual cinnamon."

"Wow, that sounds really cool! But, I'm going to class in a minute, so…"

"Ah, I see! Do not be late then."

"I won't," Frisk said and got up to put on her boots. She hugged Toriel goodbye and took off for the market. Toriel watched as she jogged away from the house and vanished around the corner. She went to put away her groceries.

The class of about 20 students sat around on the floor waiting for class to start.

"Lil' cooking human! Hiya, is this spot taken?" The green Loox plopped down next to Frisk without waiting for an answer.

"Hey Irene," Frisk greeted her. Irene leaned back on her hands and stretched out her legs. She had an orange eye, two orange round horns, and a white skirt. She was one of Frisk's most frequent customers. They sat and watched the front of the class. Visage walked in and picked up a piece of chalk. The student assistant Robbie hopped behind, carrying the dummy on his head.

"Ok, class! I hope all of the firecasters have been practicing hard, because you're having a pop-quiz today! But first, let me introduce the special student who is joining us today. Everyone say hi to Frisk, the human!"

Frisk stood up as the class burst into rowdy applause. She blushed while scratching the back of her head.
"Yeaaah, human!"
"Hot dogs gurl!"
"Go out with me!"

"Alright, alright children, settle down. Since Frisk is with us we have the wonderful opportunity to
learn more about using magic on humans! Irene, would you please volunteer to demonstrate? I hope
you'll be willing to indulge us, Frisk"

"Well sure, practice whatever you want on me. Anything I can do to help!"

"Excellent, ho ho!" He grinned. Then he pointed his staff excitedly and yelled, "USE FIREBALL,
GO!"

Irene complied and hurled a fireball at Frisk.

"HEH?!" Her eyes went wide before she squinted and flinched. "Ay!" She yelled as she got burned.
"ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL ME?!" She shouted at them angrily, her face singing with black
spots.

"Of course not, child! Irene will use her heal on you next. You will leave this classroom no less alive
than when you came in!"

"That's not the point!" she grumbled. "You can't just use me as your target practice, that hurt you
know…" As Irene started to heal her, Frisk cut off her own rant. "Awa~" She suddenly smiled and
relaxed. "That feels good…"

Visage said. "Great job Irene, you pass on both fireballs and healing! Let's have Robbie try next.
Now Frisk, Robbie's not a healer, so try to dodge the fireball this time."

"Wuh, again?!" Before she could reason with them another fireball was flying her way. She braced
herself again, but felt only the heat as the fireball made an impact in front of her. She opened her eyes
to see the training dummy standing in front of her.

The dummy?!

"Aw, Dummy..." Visage complained. "We're shooting at the human right now, can't you wait your
turn?"

The dummy could not wait its turn. It intercepted all of the following fireballs thrown in Frisk's
direction, and even a few that were not.

So, he's actually alive then?

"Ah, th-thank you…" The dummy suddenly turned and stared at Frisk intensely with its beady black
eyes.

"U-uh…" Why is he looking at me like that?

"Well done, you burning young souls! Now then, let's move on to Spare…" Visage changed the
topic and continued the lecture.

After the class, Visage tried to pick up the dummy which was covered in fireball scorches. "Ooh, my
back!"

Frisk said, "Here, let me help you!" She held the dummy in her arms. It seemed to be radiating heat,
yet Frisk could have sworn she felt it shiver.

"Thank you, child. Would you mind? Take him back to the grocery store. The attendant will know what to do with him from there."

"O-ok," Frisk didn't understand the point of storing the dummy so far away, but did as she was told anyways. After a short walk across the market square, she stepped into the store and wiggled a few fingers in greeting as best she could from position of her hands underneath the dummy.

"Oh great, you're back!"

"Hey Mr. Coco. Er… Visage said you would know what to do with this… Dummy?"

"Good job, Ribbit! Bring him back here. The shipments have been piling up since this morning!"

Frisk wasn't sure what to make of the comment, but she followed the Froggit through a door in the far-right corner of the shop. They went through a small hallway and passed by an employee break room. They passed by two storage rooms full of cardboard shipping boxes that were coincidentally the same size as the ice cubes used for refrigeration in the grocery aisles. At the end of the hallway they entered a door on the left which opened up to a larger room.

A few small windows on the wall peeked into the alleyway. They could see the main market staircase and the side of the grocery store. There was a desk was covered in envelopes, piles of paper, pens and pencils inside of space makers, and a stray bar of astronaut food. Built into the walls around the desk were huge grids of drawers and cabinets from the floor to the ceiling. There were more free-standing file cabinets against the wall across from them, as well as another door and a large glass window that gave a view of the room across from them where a large number of things that looked like miniature versions of Dummy were standing.

On the right side of the room, there was a small slot at floor-level. The square opening was the same size as the shipping boxes in the vicinity. The top edge of the slot was barely higher than Frisk's knee. A red light was glowing above the slot, and miniature dummies were coming into the room through the hole. Ropes tied to the waists of the drones secured them to the boxes that they dragged inside, though it was hard to classify their movement using mundane words such as hop, walk, slide, or shuffle. They would reach down with their nuzzles and push a seatbelt button that unfastened their harnesses from the boxes. Then they would park themselves in the storage room behind the glass window, arranging themselves into neat rows. Meanwhile, in the main room, clumps of worker spiders descended from the ceiling and picked up the boxes that were left behind, sorting them into stacks either by dragging them across the floor, or picking them up with silken threads from the ceiling.

The sight of such clever, efficient logistics filled Frisk with determination.

"Oh dear, Ribbit!"

"What's the matter? Ah!" she gasped as the Dummy in her arms sprang to life. It began moving around the room and assisting the spiders in sorting the boxes, though it wasn't clear exactly how it did so. "You work here?"

"The Dummy manages our mail room and our tax office. All of our supplies from the Capital come through this secret passage, and all of our exports go through it when the light is green. The Dummy is too shy to talk, but he's very good at his job, so be careful not to spook him."

Frisk wore a doubtful expression as she remembered the number of fireballs to the face this Dummy
was seemingly willing (eager?) to put up with.

"Can you help us with this build up?" Coco croaked. He used his tongue to pick up the boxes, hoist them on top of his head, and then nudge them into their stacks.

"Oh, sure! These ones are cold storage, right?" She looked at them as she glanced over a pile of boxes. The Dummy looked at her and nodded his head. The gesture of communication from such a shy creature made her blush as she began to pick up the boxes.

"derz beena jortage ub zbiderz ladely (there's been a shortage of spiders lately)" Coco said through his extended tongue. "So sometimes we have to plow through these buildups manually!"

"Ooh, it's Toriel!" Frisk saw her through the small window in the left wall that bordered the outside street where the outside of the grocery store was also visible. The Froggit saw that Toriel and other customers were entering the store and dismissed himself. The human stayed behind to help the Dummy finish sorting the boxes. After putting all of the cold-storage boxes on a wheeled cart, she took them into a refrigerated room. When she got back, the Dummy was gesturing to another cart, which Frisk took and wheeled into a freezer room.

Calmness returned to the shipping room. The traffic light over the shipping slot turned green instead of red. The drones from the dummy storage room started to come back out and the spiders started working again. This time the miniature dummies went into the slot while dragging boxes.

Dummy looked at a clipboard on his desk. The silent punching bag opened one of the newly arrived boxes and started opening drawers and folders, sorting through the papers in the box, and checking off notes on multiple lists at an fast pace. Most impressive of all was the lack of any explicable mechanism by which the Dummy accomplished any of this work.

Frisk wasn't sure what to do with the empty box she held in her hand. Dummy caught her gaze and nodded to a poster on the wall explaining the importance of reusing shipping materials. She took the hint and put the box into the empty box pile. After putting away a few more boxes, she left and went back the way she had come.

Through the small frame of the window in the shipping room, one could see the human meeting the surprised goat mom just outside of the grocery store entrance, as they shared a hug and then walked away together.

The next day, in Snowdin Forest…

A partially blind dog equipped with a black eye mask and a pair of short swords at his belt was walking through the woods. He paused and sniffed the air. Whatever he smelled seemed to discomfort him. He turned around to return to his guard booth.

DEAR HUMAN!
PLEASE ENJOY THIS SPAGHETTI. LITTLE DO YOU KNOW, THIS SPAGHETTI IS A TRAP… DESIGNED TO ENTICE YOU!
YOU'LL BE SO BUSY EATING IT… THAT YOU WON'T REALIZE THAT YOU AREN'T PROGRESSING! THOROUGHLY JAPED AGAIN BY THE GREAT PAPYRUS!
NYEH-HEH-HEH,
PAPYRUS

Papyrus cackled proudly as he arranged the note and a plate of food on a wooden table in the middle of the snowy forest.
"uh, y'know bro… i actually heard that uh… a friend told me that humans actually really hate frozen spaghetti."

"Of course they do, Sans! That's what the microwave is for!"

"uh, but Paps… where are they gonna plug it in?"

"That's the second phase of the trap! Pay attention, Sans! I'll go over it again: after being enthralled by the scent of this exquisite, artisan pasta, the human will be SO desperate to heat it up and taste it, that they will come to our house and beg to use our electricity outlets to plug in the microwave! And then they'll be! Right! Where! I! Want them! And then… AND THEN!” His eyes turned sparkly.

"i dunno papyrus… i got a bad feelin' about this one… i think sh-they're just gonna get pissed off at ya."

"It's going to be OK, Sans! IT'S GOING TO BE OK! You just have to have faith in them! They may be walking down a winding road…. they may be lost in the forest… but the scent of my beautiful spaghetti will remind them… that there is still hope in this world!"

what the hell is he talking about

"They will fall to their knees, crying WHAT HAVE I DONE? They will count every one of their past mistakes on their fingers and beg me for forgiveness. And I, the Great Papyrus, will embrace them with all of my greatness and tell them that I STILL BELIEVE IN THEM! THAT IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO TELL HIM YOU LOVE HIM!"

what is this plot even

"Sans! This is no laughing matter! Everyone can be a good person if they try! I know EVEN YOU could make a really good human trap if you JUST BELIEVE IN YOURSELF!"

i'm so confused... is it my line now?

"heh, y'know, you're right. i should practice prank-calling them," Sans took out his phone and swiped around to select one of his new contacts.

Ring… ring

The other party said something in greeting.

"… hey. is your refrigerator running?"

Toriel was walking home from the flower gardens. At the hot dog stand, she saw Frisk talking on her cell phone. "Huh? Yeah, it's running just fine." Toriel smiled and they gave each other a little wave. Frisk shot an annoyed look at her phone, her coworker asking her if it was a prank call as Toriel continued on.

That evening, Frisk sat at the table with Toriel as they ate their red-leaf salads together and chatted pleasantly. Frisk told Toriel about her Vegetoid farming adventures. She had found an old caged hockey helmet in the marketplace and bought it for 12g. Then she had been able to gather vegetable cubes without getting hurt. She had also met some Wimsums at the gardens. They were regulars and they avoided the Vegetoids' attack phase by flying above its range and collecting the cubes during their resting phase.

They served themselves some slices of the golden flower-butterscotch pie after their main course.
"Mmm, tastes even better the next day!" Frisk said. "I should have stayed home to bake with you."

"That's alright, my child. I'm sure you had more exciting things to do."

"It was really cool actually! After class I took the Dummy back to the grocery store…” Frisk excitedly rambled about all the cool stuff she had seen behind the grocery store. "Did you know that most of the paper in the Underground comes from the Ruins?"

Toriel seemed a little confused and lost on the subject. "I'm sorry my child, I'm afraid I do not know much about that type of thing."

"Ah… that's ok. I guess I can't explain it well enough to make it interesting." Frisk started to wash her dishes in the sink

"I will take care of that my child. Don't you want to have a nice hot shower before bed?"

"Yeah, I do! Thanks Toriel!"

Toriel listened to the muted sound of running water under the stairs, combined with the splishing and splashing at the sink in front of her. When she was done washing the dishes and the water was drained away, she picked at some white fur stuck in the drain. She shook off her furry hands and then wiped them down a bit more on the white apron tied around her waist. That day she was wearing a purple dress with long roomy sleeves. A white patch with the royal emblem decorated the chest.

Stepping into the living room her gaze fell on the table where Frisk had left her phone lying about. Toriel hesitated, looking around herself with a hint of guilt. But she remained determined and slid into the chair. Nonchalant motions, as if she was just checking some uninteresting piece of information to factor into her plans for the next day. Two, three button clicks was all it took. A second entry in the contacts list under 'TORIEL' was labelled, 'VOICE'. She took a pencil and wrote down the number on a little tear of paper. She crinkled it into a little ball and squeezed it inside of her palm as she got up from the table and went off to her bedroom.

On Friday morning, Sans actually set an alarm to wake himself up. His papers were organized into a neat pile on his desk with a bullet-pointed agenda in his own handwriting sitting on top. He crawled out of bed, and nudged himself across the floor. His shorts snagged against the friction of the carpet and made his job even more difficult. With all the strength he could muster, he reached his arm up onto the desk… and tapped 'snooze' on the screen of his phone.

Three hours later, he woke up to find himself already placed at his sentry booth. "huh? I don't need this much coat…” he shrugged off the thick arctic-grade, fur-lined, blue winter coat to find himself in his shorts, the white t-shirt he had slept in, and a pair of black sneakers. He stood up and put the coat on the back of his chair and took a glance at his phone. "whelp, looks like it's almost lunch time. guess i'll go to Grillby's."

After lunch it was already the time of day that he usually spent talking to mysterious strangers behind mysterious doors.

"…so the neutron asks, 'how much will that be?' and the bartender says, 'for you? no charge!'” The lady on the other side of the door howled with laughter. Sans laughed along with her. "hey, it sounds like you're in a good humor!” he added.

"Hehehe…” Distracting her with jokes worked for a few minutes, but after all, she still seemed contemplative. "Hm… Might… might I ask you something, my friend? Oh, do not worry. It is not
another promise, only a question."

"well, that's fine. i'm not afraid of questions. although sometimes the answers may give me a run for my money."

"Hehehe. Well, I was wondering… err… you have not spoken through this door… to somebody other than me? Or… have you?"

"…"

"Err, door friend?"

damn… sorry old lady…

"well, yeah… sure I have." this is why I hate making promises…

"You… you did?" She sounded hurt.

"um, yeah? it was this other lady who went on and on about her bakery and her spiders. she liked to say 'my dear' a lot."

"O-oh. I see." She sounded relieved, but also a little annoyed. "Was there anyone else?"

"uh… nope. that's it. op, that's my bro coming…"

"Hehe, alright then. You should go and keep him company instead of talking to me all day. It is time for my walk anyways. Well, goodbye for now, my friend. Thank-you for being honest with me, by the way." Sans kept smiling, but his eyelight dimmed and he looked down at his feet.

"SANS! What's wrong with your face?! I swear that door is a bad influence on you! Come on, we need to go train with Undyne!"

The next day, the brothers were hanging out on a plateau building snowmen of themselves. At least Papyrus was.

"is this part of the puzzle too?" Sans had started to clump the snow together in a pile. At that point he realized it made a convenient resting place for his body, which was still sore from the training-session-gone-snowball-mayhem from the previous day.

"It is, brother! For you see, the human will be so impressed by my snow sculpting skills, that they will ask to hang out with me and have me teach them to build snow Papyruses too! Nyeh-heh-heh-heh! Nyeh! Hmm… It is great, but still not quite as GREAT as me! There is… something missing…"

"oh, i gotchu bro." Papyrus looked down to Sans's snow lump, but the smaller skeleton was gone.

"Nyeh?"

"heh," came Sans's voice from behind Papyrus.

"Yeh!" He jumped and whirled around. Sans shrugged with a goofy grin as he held some sort of red material in his hand.

"Wowie!" Papyrus squealed with delight and took the object, but looked a bit confused when he realized that it was not a soft, cloth scarf like his actual one, but some sort of limp, flimsy, red exercise band made out of rubber. "Heh?!"
He put it on the snow-figure anyways and stared at it, perplexed, trying to decide whether or not this addition to the art piece was meeting his standards. Meanwhile, Sans was sitting on the ground next to his… attempt, sucking on a packet of ketchup. Pausing for a moment, he turned his body just enough to reach over and crudely squeeze his name onto the lump of snow.

"Sans! Get your phone!"

"got it right here," he smiled, holding his ringing phone in his hand and not doing anything else. The display read, 'unknown caller'.

"Don't just hold it! Answer it!"

"ok," he thumbed over the green call button. "heya… hello? …anyone there?"

The pickup had quite a bit of background noise, and he heard some breathing from the other side, but no reply. They hung up. The skeletons looked at each other and shrugged.

On Sunday, Papyrus was relaxing on the couch, watching his favorite show on TV—the only show on TV, Mettaton. Sans had been watching with him but had fallen asleep, pressed limply against his brother's arm. A plate of barely-touched spaghetti lay on the floor in front of the couch.

"Sans."

"Sans wake up!"

"nnnnngyougetit…"

"It stopped! You missed it, brother!" Sans remained unresponsive. After a couple of minutes, the phone started ringing again.

Papyrus picked up the phone and tapped the green call button. "Nyeh?! Hello mysterious caller!"

"Hello. Is Sons there?"

"I'm sorry, you must have the wrong number! This phone belongs to my brother Sans!"

"Oh yeah, he told me he had a little brother. That must be you!"

"Yes, I am! I am the Great Papyrus, the greatest brother in all of the Underground—no—the ENTIRE WORLD! Nyeh-heh-heh!"
The voice on the other end giggled. "Wow, your brother must be one lucky guy to have you."

"Indeed, he is, mysterious caller! Who else would carry him to work when he sleeps in?! Who else would make sure the fridge is always filled with the finest, silken spaghetti, cooked by me, MASTER CHEF PAPYRUS?!"

"Hehe! That sounds really delicious! So… can I talk to him?"

"Unfortunately, my lazy brother is unresponsive at the moment. I tried to get him to wake up and answer you before, but all he does is sleep!"

"Well, do you know if he's completed his work yet?"

"Uh, work? What is that?! Is Sans supposed to be doing something?! IS HE PROCRASTINATING?! Don't worry, mysterious caller! Everything will be OK! I'LL MAKE SURE OF IT!"

"Ok! Thanks so much! Bye."

"Byeh!"

Eventually, Sans woke up of his own accord. "mm… timeisit…"

"Sans! Some person called! I talked to them! They said that—THEY SAID, UH… Are you supposed to be working on something right now?"

Sans halted his movement of rubbing his eyes and froze. His eyesockets snapped open to their full size, his eyelights burning brightly in his skull, the left one taking on a blue tint.

"OH SHIIIIITT!" he yelled. Suddenly he dashed up the stairs to his room.

"Sans?"

The door slammed open again and Sans ran out of the house with a clipboard under his arm and a piece of toast clenched in his teeth. he ran around town, knocked on doors, interviewed passersby, asked Grillby a bunch of questions, spied on the teenagers in the woods, jotted down notes on a fold-out map of the Snowdin area, and teleported up to twelve times per hour, and a song that might play when you fight Sans was blasting over this scene. He popped into the house and sat on the floor, scribbling out a letter, sealed it, popped into Hotland and shoved it in the mail slot of a facility that was closed for the day, then he teleported to the Snowdin River ports and drew some quick sketches. About four hours later, Sans teleported back into his room, said "nah, too messy in here," grabbed a stray piece of paper that was trying to escape into the tornado of trash in the corner, and threw the stack of papers onto the living room floor. "Sans?" "coming!" He read Papyrus his bedtime story and tucked him in and turned off the lights, and then he ran into his room and grabbed his laptop and sat on the living room floor and copied over pages and pages of data and then realized, "wait, the library's closed now, " so he went to bed and set 5 alarms, and they worked. in the morning he teleported to the library and picked up a few books and teleported back home, and then he spent a bunch of hours analyzing a database with a program on his laptop and then his alarm went off again so he went out and grabbed a burger from Grillby's, and stood in the town center and made some phone calls, teleported to a back alley and bought a bunch of 6-hour-energy drinks from an alley-gator, went to the Royal Lab and borrowed some tools, teleported to the Snowdin tunnels and took some measurements and notes, teleported back home and worked on his computer some more.

Sans was still sitting on the living room floor working on his laptop when Papyrus came back from his patrols.
"Brother?" Papyrus looked sadly at the untouched plate of spaghetti that Sans ignored as he sat in the avalanche of papers and books. "Nyeh… I guess I can read to myself tonight!"

Sans refused to let that happen and took a break to do Papyrus's bedtime ritual properly. But Papyrus lay awake as the typing continued late into the night. His brother came in and out of his room a few times to use the printer. Papyrus pulled the covers over his skull and tried his best to pretend to be asleep.
Heartache

Toriel sat at her desk in her room and tried to think of some new jokes to write in her diary. *hmm... snowmen... snails... skeletons... What does a snowman... no, that is not good...*

She rested her cheek on her hand and tapped her pencil on the notepad. She leaned back and stretched in her chair. She opened the pencil drawer under her desk and fumbled around for an eraser, pausing as her finger grazed over an old photograph.

She idly prodded the papers past each other so that several sepia photos in the pile came into view. A child with glasses and long brown hair. A child wearing an outfit straight out of a ballet class. A child wearing a stained apron, posing with some fried eggs in a cast iron pan. She shut the drawer and wondered what Frisk was up to during her time off.

Walking through the courtyard, Toriel heard quaint chatter at the hot dog stand. Frisk and Buffet were sitting at a table. Allens was standing behind the counter and changing a pot of coffee. Irene was sitting at another table, feeding barbeque sauce to her pet Moldsmals. Hot dogs were grilling and a couple of brown-spotted Froggits were waiting in line.

"Greetings everyone! Nice day today."


"This has really become such a nice place to relax," she remarked.

"Yeah, even when I'm not working I hang out here because my friends are always stopping by. Or work here," said Frisk. She took a sip of her own coffee. Buffet was having golden flower tea. One of her tiny hands traced circles in the side of her armchair. Frisk folded her hands over a piece of paper on the table and rolled her shoulders.

"So... Frisk... do you have any plans for today?" Toriel asked.

"Uh, yeah actually I do!" Toriel tilted her head in interest. "I'm going to visit... Buffet's bakery. She invited me to take a look around and show me some stuff." Buffet's eyes flickered and reacted to Frisk's words.

"Ah, I see my child. You two have become quite good friends, have you not?"

"Yeah, she's been kind of a mentor to me."

"I suppose I just saw something sweet in her. Don't fret, dearest! I won't steal her away, although you must admit, the idea is tempting. Ahahu!" Frisk giggled. Toriel laughed along with them and sipped her coffee.

"Well then, I am going to the flower gardens now. I shall see you later. Have a nice time and be good, Frisk." They all waved goodbye to her as she went on her way. As she stepped out of earshot, she let out an unsteady sigh.

*Everything is alright. Buffet must have borrowed Frisk's phone... But Frisk still answered it, so she did speak to him!*

She recalled the other day when Frisk had received the call. *Why didn't he tell me... No. She must*
have gotten a phone call from some other person. But then, why doesn't she have any other contacts?

"No," she whispered to herself. "I am just being silly, I'm sure it's nothing…"

Toriel turned the corner and ran head-first into a pair of Wimsums carrying blocks of mushroom wood. As they flew by, their feet collided with her head. Toriel's momentum pushed their bodies back and the wood blocks dropped on the goat monster's head and tumbled over the floor. The blue Wimsum sat on the ground with wide eyes. The pink one's wings buzzed frantically. She hovered in place and her lip trembled and tears began forming at the corners of her eyes.

"O-oh, I—"
"m-ms tori"
"b-boo-hoo"
"I-I am sorry, I wasn't looking—"
"sniff, sniff"
"sorry tori, sorry, sorry—"
"I will help you pick them—"
"oh god oh no oh man…"
"S-stop!" Toriel commanded meekly. The Wimsums tried their best to stand at attention. The blue one was hyperventilating and the pink one was crying. Toriel took a breath to keep her voice steady.

"Calm down, there you are." She handed them each their pile of wood and smiled sweetly and gently patted them on their heads. She watched them fly away towards the market. She sighed.

What is wrong with me?!

She stood in the grassy garden under the Ruins pitfall. The golden flowers were wilting and the air in the cavern was cool. She closed her eyes and tilted her face towards the dim sunlight. Snowflakes blew in from the outside and flickered in the light as they melted against the walls. One particularly determined flake made its way to the bottom and landed on the tip of her nose. She opened her eyes.

It was a prank call.

"Um, Frisk? Uh… miss… Buffet? um…" Allens stared at a business card on the counter and pinched the edge of the wood. "Maybe you should like… you know… stop lying to miss Toriel?" They were expecting to hear that, but it still hit them like a sack of bricks. "I mean… she's gonna find out soon anyways right? There's like, no way you're going to hide this from her."

Frisk helped herself to a cupcake and ate it decisively. She sipped a cup of coffee and set the mug down on the table with a decisive 'plonk'.

"We'll tell her."

"Yes my dear, absolutely right. We'll speak to miss Toriel about this tomorr—"

"We'll tell her today," said Frisk. "Right after we meet with—"

Ring… ring

"Hello?" Frisk stood up followed by Buffet. "Let's go!"

"knock… knock…" The voice mumbled followed by soft knocks on the door.

"Who's there?" said Buffet.
"… um…"

Frisk said, "Sans."

Buffet said, "Sans who?"

"It would make a lot of Sans to open this door and meet like normal people."

"heh… nice… yea, m' laptop's not gonna fit through the crack 'n the door anyways…"

"You have a laptop? Scrumptious!" said Buffet.

"that good?"

"Ahem… she's just excited because we're a little… technologically challenged over on this side," Frisk explained.

"well... at least you have nice handwriting."

"Ahuhu, thank you sweetie."

On the other side of the door, Sans yawned widely.

"So… as long as we just hold the door open… he should be able to come in. Right?" said the child's voice.

"I suppose so, assuming there are no ancient traps or strange surprises in place here," said the older woman's voice.

He felt his eyesocket-lids drooping as his cheek pressed against the door.

"The papers went through fine," the child added. "Uh, so should I just…?"

"Yes, go ahead and open it!"

"Ok then! Actually gonna open the door now... Heh, here goes nothing."

Sans snapped to attention and slapped his cheeks with his hands. *huh, it's go time? ok, game face on! gotta make a good first impression on the human…*

As the door was creaking open, he was thinking, *oh crap, i forgot to prepare a prank… what am i gonna do?*

Frisk pushed open one side of the door. Bright light reflected off of the snow and blinded her as a gust of cold air rushed in. The spider baker shivered and backed away from the draft.

"Hi," Frisk greeted, though she couldn't quite see what she was greeting yet as she squinted and adjusted to the light. After a minute he came into focus.

"Oh my," said Buffet.

"You're little!" Frisk exclaimed.

"so are you." Sans was wearing a blue hoodie with a white t-shirt underneath. He had on shorts and pink slippers, a bookbag thrown over his shoulder. There were dark gray circles underneath his eyes, but he wore the biggest smile Frisk had ever seen.
"yea, so, hey there. nice ta finally meetcha. i'm sans. sans the skeleton!" He beamed and extended his hand for a handshake.

"Hi I'm Frisk," she said and took his bony hand. There was a little glint in his eye. She felt a sudden, dizzying pull throughout her entire body as he grabbed her hand tightly and yanked her forward. She fell into the snow with a surprised cry as the door slammed shut behind her. She stared blankly, confused and frozen. Sans stood with his hands in his pockets looking awfully proud of himself.

"What… why?" She squeaked in a tiny, forlorn voice. She got up and pounded on the door with her fists. "Please let me back inside!"

"Huhuhuhu!"

"Buffet!"

"Ahuhu, alright I will. But you had better not pull that one again, dear little skeleton. Then we will all be stuck on your side, and I'm sure Muffet won't be pleased to hear about me freezing to death. Hehe." She grunted from the effort of pushing open the cold, heavy door with her frail spider arms. She gladly let it slam shut again the moment that Frisk and Sans were inside. Shivering from cold exposure, she put her hands up the human's sweater sleeve to sap her precious arm heat. The girl felt the cold shock and squealed in surprise.

"Let's step into the light over here…" Frisk said and led them to the spotlight in the center of the room. Buffet looked through the folder.

"Oh my goodness…"

"Wow, so much information!" said Frisk.

"Indeed my dear. This is the completed market research?"

"yup."

"This is a population center analysis showing the best location for the outpost, even accounting for future expansions?"

"yup."

"This is a design for the outpost in the forest and a preliminary construction plan for the tunnel?"

"yup."

Frisk said, "You pulled an all-nighter and you had a 6-hour-energy drink exactly 5 hours and 59 minutes ago and you're about to pass out?"

"yup."

Frisk panicked for a moment and caught him as he fell down.

"Are you alright?" Buffet asked her.

"Yeah, he weighs less than a bag of flour."

"Hehe! Do you think that brother of his carried him here?"

"Yeah, the Great Papyrus," Frisk remembered. They both burst into giggles.
Frisk asked, "Do you think his face ever stops smiling?" They laughed even harder.

"Here, let me try…" Buffet started to reach for his smiling face with her third pair of arms. They were giggling so hard they were beginning to cry from laughter.

"Are you all finished?" A cold voice spoke from the inner doorway behind them. The girls froze. They turned around to face the Caretaker of the Ruins silhouetted against the purple light of the basement hallway. The moisture on their cheeks glistened in the stale sunbeam, but there was no longer anything funny about the situation.

"Frisk. Miss Buffet. I am… SO disappointed in you. And…" Toriel glared sadly at Sans. Her hands began to glow. The light reflected off of the tears forming in her eyes.

"To… Toriel?" Frisk started.

"My child. Please take… your friend and go upstairs immediately. I have to do something."

"W-wait! What're you—"

"I will not ask you twice."

She charged up a huge fireball in her hands. It was not the usual gentle orange color, but a burning yellow plasma. Frisk carried Sans and Buffet held on to the folder as they all ducked for cover behind the enraged goat woman as she released her power. The deafening explosion drowned out all their senses for a moment. They felt their bodies shake with a series of earth-shattering thuds and rumbles.

When the dust settled, Frisk saw a giant pile of hot, glowing rubble where the Ruins Door had just been. If there were any holes, they were filled up with smaller particles as they caved into the pile and cemented into the partially molten rock, sealing it up all the more. They stood and stared in shock at what had just happened. Frisk was truly afraid. She did not believe that Toriel would attack her… physically. But she would have much preferred it to the argument that came next.

"Frisk… don't you trust me?" She said shakily. "Don't you know… that if you leave these Ruins… they—Asgore will kill you?"

"But, Toriel, I wasn't going to leave—"

"Do not tell me what I should believe you were going to do, my child!" She yelled, her voice breaking and tears starting to fall. "I have tried so hard to protect you! I have done everything for your sake! It has been so long… You can't understand how many humans—children I have seen… they all left to be slaughtered like… like animals! I let them go! I won't make the same mistake again! You are not like the other children, Frisk, I can't lose you too! If I let you open the Ruins, you will be exposed to people who wish to use your life for their own sake!"

"What about the monsters Toriel? The Ruins that you take care of? What about what they need?! They need to be connected to the rest of the Underground! And they need you to be their leader!"

"You have no right to lecture me on my duty Frisk! You've been sneaking around behind my back since the day you came here! How can I help you when everyone is lying to me?! Especially you!" she yelled at Sans. "Is this your idea of a joke?!"

"Wait, no… that was… that was my fault! I told him not to tell you that I was sneaking out to this room."
And I told you to protect her, did I not?! And instead you are bringing her closer to Asgore!

"Toriel, you're yelling at someone who can't respond! He's asleep!" Frisk said, holding his limp body up for emphasis.

"Pretending to sleep while you all laugh at me? What a tasteless prank. Perhaps I was wrong. You're just like everyone else out there."

Frisk swallowed the verbal abuse and tried to reason with her. "He really is asleep, Toriel! He was up all night working! That was our fault, too. Toriel… I'm sorry…"

"Ahem, dears…"

"Please stay out of this, spider." Toriel was beginning to calm down, but glared at Buffet nonetheless. A few crumbs of dirt landed on Toriel's shoulder and in Frisk's hair.

"I really think you should—"

"I said be silent…"

"MOVE!" Buffet urged them and pushed the entire group to the side with all of her tiny strength. A giant chunk of ceiling crashed to the ground, narrowly missing their heads. Shattered chunks of rock bumped against their legs. Buffet had made her point and could not do much more to help them now. She ran through the door and down the hallway. Realizing the danger they were in, Toriel and Frisk paused their argument and followed after her. Frisk tripped because she had Sans, who was very light, but still unwieldy for her size. Toriel scooped them both up easily and hurried them to safety. They ran to the courtyard and all the way to the large, sickly black tree. Toriel looked on as the right side of her house collapsed into the ground. A cold feeling of regret welled in her chest. Frisk buried her head into the caretaker's shoulder and sobbed.

"What have I done? My child… I'm so sorry…"

"I'm sorry, Toriel, I'm sorry!"

You're just like everyone else out there.

She gasped and loosened her grip on Frisk. The human got back on her own feet and looked up at her and waited. She glanced hesitantly at the sleeping skeleton she carried against her other shoulder. His eyesockets were closed and his peaceful smile showed he was completely out, blissfully ignorant of all the drama around him. Toriel's eyes began to soften in forgiveness, but the memories flashed through her head.

Was there someone else? uh… nope. that's it.
don't worry, i'll keep an eyesocket out for her.
There could even be someone hiding in plain sight.

Her hands twitched. That must have been barely a couple of days after Frisk had moved in with her. Toriel flinched and averted her gaze. She quickly pulled Sans away from her shoulder and handed him off to Frisk.

"I think… it would be best for me to stay away from you for a little while."

"But Toriel, I—"

"Please, Frisk! I am so… I cannot believe… the things I said to you… I almost hurt you. Please, just,
stay with one of your other friends for a while. I will still be here if you need my help with anything. Come back if you need to retrieve something. That is… if you can find it," she said, looking at her ruined house with shame.

"But, what about the tunnel project—"

"Do whatever you want."

Frisk stared at Toriel's back as she retreated. Tears rolled silently down her cheeks. They were getting Sans's jacket wet. As terrible as she felt, she had more pressing things to do than cry. She hoisted him up a bit higher over her shoulder and started walking back towards her hot dog stand. She was not looking forward to the inevitable landslide of questions from her friends and neighbors, but she was filled with determination anyways.
The first thing he saw was the dimly lit, purple stone ceiling. Sans sat up and looked over his sides and around himself. A green quilt with hearts and flowers fell from his chest and covered his legs. He was in a cushy, reclining armchair next to a wooden table with his bag placed on top of it. There were other tables and pieces of indoor furniture, even a couch, set up in front of a wooden booth with a pink-laced banner. He wasn't sure what this place was supposed to look like normally, but it appeared to be closed for the day. He shifted his weight in the chair and it slid backwards a bit on rolling wheels. He felt down the sides for the lever which made the chair straighten, and he rolled the quilt up into a ball. He saw his slippers on the floor by the table, so he got up and stepped into them.

"Squish."

"nycheh!" he cringed in surprise and disgust at the cool, slippery sensation of a gelatinous substance squeezing itself into the crevices between the slippers and his foot bones, soaking into the fabric of his socks. The slippers stayed stuck to his socks when he tried to shake them off. He ended up losing the socks as well, leaving his feet bare and slightly sticky.

"ok," he shrugged. "hm… i should probably try to figure out where i am… wonder how long i was out for?"

He felt for his cell phone in the pockets of his shorts and his jacket. Not finding it there, he reached into the crevices of the chair cushion and pulled up the thin, rectangular touch-screen device.

"oh. gee…"

21:58
October 14, Tuesday
43 missed calls

PAPYRUS
PAPYRUS
PAPYRUS
PAPYRUS
PAPYRUS
PAPYRUS
PAPYRUS
UNDYNE
PAPYRUS
UNKNOWN C
PAPYRUS
PAPYRUS

A bead of sweat formed on Sans's head as he scrolled through the list. He paced away from the tables and noticed some signs on the corner of the wall.

HOME STREET
Toriel's House ^
Market →

"toriel? that name rings a bell…” He heard some footsteps coming from the direction denoted by the 'Market' sign. He was surprised to see a young human wearing a striped sweater come shuffling towards the stand.
"Oh, Sans, you're up…"

"huh? oh, you're that human kid i've been talking to through the door. what was your name again?"

"You forgot? It's Frisk. I let you in through the door. You must have been half-asleep even then." She sighed.

"hm, well let's see, last thing i remember is… i was walking through the forest… and then uh… huh? are you ok? you look down about something."

"Yeah… I don't know whether to call you lucky or unlucky for sleeping through it all. Actually, maybe amazing would be the right word." In hindsight, the depth of Sans's slumber gave Frisk pause for thought. "How can you even sleep through all that?! I mean not just the noise, but we carried you out of there and passed you around a bunch of times…"

Sans smiled and shrugged. "guess i was just bone-tired."

"Well, anyways… what happened was…" she reluctantly drew in a breath to start explaining, when Sans's phone went off.

ring ring ring

Frisk let out her breath and stared at the ringing phone. "Ah. That's been going off all day today. I think you should probably answer it."

"you think so?" She nodded.

"you're absolutely sure about this?" he said, smiling.

"Yes!" Frisk said more firmly.

"you're not really sellin' this to me, kid. maybe you should write down a list of pros and cons—"

"Stop messing around already!" She pressed the green call button for him.

"heh… heya. what's up?"

"SANS!? Hey, he answered! SANS, ARE YOU OK?! ARE YOU HURT?! WHERE ARE YOU?! WHAT HAPPENED?! WHAT WERE THOSE LOUD NOISES?! WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DOOR?! WHEN ARE YOU COMING HOME?!"

"uh… i dunno… hey, maybe frisk can tell you," he chuckled and handed the phone off to the confused girl who took it automatically.

"Huh?!" she squeaked.

"yeah, go on. talk to my bro. it'll cheer ya right up, i pr-i mean, trust me."

"H-hello?"

"Nyeh! The mysterious caller again! So, your name is FRISK?!! You wanted to hear my beautiful voice again so badly that you just HAD to steal away Sans's phone?! Frisk, I understand how you must be feeling right now! Really, I do! But you really should not take away peoples' cell phones when their brothers call them! Some people consider that to be bad manners!"

Frisk was a little confused, but the excessive level of passion and enthusiasm in his voice made her
giggle in response. "Well, Sans was the one who gave the phone to me and said I should talk to you instead. Right now it looks like he's busy… doing absolutely nothing," she looked over at Sans who was sitting in his chair, picking sock fluff out from between his foot bones.

"Yeah, he tends to do that!" Papyrus agreed. "I still can't believe you got him to do something productive for an entire day! That in itself is pretty amazing! Like, in our house, he leaves his socks lying around EVERYWHERE, ALL THE TIME, and I can NEVER get him to pick them up!"

"Wait, what? Oh my god, you're right! He's doing it to me, too!" Frisk nodded vigorously and agreed. "Sans, pick up your socks! …Don't pretend to be asleep!"

"You SEE what I have to live with, Frisk?! DO YOU SEE?! Sometimes I wonder what he would do without such a cool guy taking care of him! Nyeh-heh!"

"Hehe!"

"SO… …When is Sans coming home?!"

"Oh… um…" Her voice became small again. The phone shook in her hand as she tried to think of a good answer, but there was nothing to say besides the truth. "He um, probably not tonight? The entrance is kind of… exploded? But we're um… they're about to start working on a new way out, so um… it could take a while, I'm not sure how long…"

"probs at least two or three months, maybe longer if there are any complications," said Sans.

"WHAT?! REALLY?! Can't you just… you know? Come home?!!"

"well, that would depend on if i can get back to that door."

"Uh, Sans… it's not just the door. The whole corridor to the Ruins exit caved in, along with half of Toriel's house," she gestured as she spoke. Sans kicked his chair across the floor on its wheels to see around the corner, following Frisk's gaze across the courtyard and noticed the collapsed side of the house.

"oh."

"I don't think you can just walk back to that room."

"uh, well that sucks… if i have no idea what the part from where i fell asleep to where i am now looked like, and we can't go back down there now, then i don't know exactly how far it is… i need the whole map in order to take a shortcut, you see…"

"Does that mean you can't come back?! So then…"

"B-but, like I said, they're building a new tunnel out of the Ruins, so it's just for a little while! You'll see him again soon!" Frisk tried to reassure him.

"But, three months? Well… I guess I can manage… until then…"

"NGAAAH! Papyrus! Gimme the phone already!" A new voice commanded from the background on Papyrus's end. The woman reminded Frisk of one of her gym teachers from elementary school.

"Why are we talking to this PUNK instead of Sans?! You listen here, you little… 'Frisk' person… I don't know who the hell you are or what you're threatening him with, but I swear, ON MY NAME as Undyne, Captain of Asgore's Royal Guard, if you hurt my friend, I will FIND YOU! I don't care
how many tons of rock you are buried under, I WILL DIG MY WAY TO YOU WITH MY BARE HANDS, AND I WILL FIND YOU, AND I WILL PIN YOUR BODY TO THE GROUND WITH SPEARS, AND KILL YOU SO HARD THAT THEY WON'T EVEN BE ABLE TO VACUUM ALL OF YOUR DUST OUT FROM THE CORNERS OF THE ROOM, BUT I'LL STILL SWEEP UP EVERY LAST BIT OF IT, AND GIVE IT TO ALPHYS, AND WE'LL MAKE YOU INTO ICE-CREAM AND FUCKING EAT YOU FOR BREAKFAST. YOU GOT THAT PUNK?!!"

Undyne must have been imagining that Frisk was some kind of scary, black-tentacled blob monster (wearing a striped shirt) keeping Sans in a dark dungeon full of chains and torture devices.

Sans was covering his face and trying not to let the phone in Frisk's hands pick up on his laughter. Frisk, however, calmly held her end and responded politely to Undyne's angry ranting. "No, I did not kidnap him ... He's actually here for work ... Oh... Ok ... Ah, is that so? ... Yes ... Yes, Sans is fine ... So Papyrus is staying with you then? ... That's good ... Yes ... Yes, I understand ... Ok ... Yes ma'am ... I promise I'll take good care of him while he's over here ... You too ... I'll tell him you said 'hi'."

She hung up and gave Sans back his phone.

"nice going. so, you're gonna take good care of me? that's great, 'cause i'm starving."

"Me too. Want some hot dogs?"

"yes please."

"Um, it'll take the grill a while to heat up. Sorry for the wait."

"hey no problem. i'll be here all week."

"Heh," Frisk smiled lightly in response. "I don't think I'm gonna be able to sleep for a while anyways." She put on some water for tea and sat down at the table while they waited.

"you still haven't told me what happened."

"Right. Well, you know Toriel?"

"the lady i always talk to through the door?"

"Yeah... so I went down there with Buffet earlier today."

"the spider lady who gave me the survey?"

"Yes, and then I let you in through the door, and then... and then you came in normally. Then we started looking at the stuff you brought together and then you—"

"woah, woah, slow down there, kiddo. what was with that look? what'd i do, huh? did i getcha?"

"You wanna know what you pulled? Me. Right through the door! I was so scared I thought I was stuck in Snowdin for a moment!" Sans started laughing, and so did Frisk. "And now you're stuck here on my side! I'd call that karma."

"heh! i'd call that hilarious. i regret nothing."

"Hehe, well you sure know how to lighten the mood." She stood up and took a keychain out of her pocket. "Although, you probably won't laugh when you hear what Toriel said to you while you were
asleep… Uh so, how many hot dogs do you want? They're about this big…” she asked while using her fingers to illustrate.

"one 'dog is fine. my stomach's about this big," he said while pulling up his t-shirt, showing off his middle where all he had was a spine.

"O-okay."

Frisk unlocked the storage room where the foods were packed away for the night. She came out with her arms full of two plates, two sausages links, sauce bottles, teacups and buns on top of the plates. She managed to fit the key and turn it again even with her hands underneath all of the items. 

\[\text{tssssssssss}\] The delicious smell of grilling meats filled the room. She noted, "I hope we don't wake up the neighbors." She poured some tea for them. Sans took a sip. He couldn't help the image of the king's face and the sunny courtyard that flashed through his mind. Frisk finally relayed the full exchange from the door room to Sans.

"oh… ouch. that is pretty harsh. i guess you could say that she overreacted. but, i dunno… it's not wrong to say that you'd be in danger outside the ruins. papyrus would probably try to 'capture' you and end up playing with you instead, but undyne… if she knew you were human, kid… she might have actually done that stuff she said she was gonna do. i think she might even be capable of busting through here if she were determined enough. she's pretty strong."

Frisk stood by the grill and flipped over the hot dogs. "Well, I hope she doesn't… with the state of the walls around here, and that recent blast… I don't wanna how much damage another angry woman could cause to this place." She finished cooking and plating their dinner. His eyes lit up with delight as she approached and set them down on the table.

He looked curiously at the white and brown sauces she had put on it before taking a bite. Frisk tried to focus on her own meal, but couldn't help staring at him.

\textit{How does his mouth work? Huh, well he looks happy.}

"mmm. kid, this might be… the best hot dog in the entire underground."

"Really?!"

"yeah," he chuckled. "tastes way better than a water sausage."

"Wha—!" She reeled at the insult. She looked down at the table and ate her food silently, contemplating possible retorts.

Sans finished the last bite of his hot dog. Smiling, he looked her straight in the eyes without trace of his earlier sarcasm and said, "thank you frisk."

She paused in the middle of the bite she was chewing and blushed. She swallowed and said, "Y- you're welcome…"

He picked up one of the bottles of sauce and said, "what kind of ketchup is this?"

"Oh that, it's barbeque sauce. It's similar to ketchup, but it's made from a lot more different vegetables and spices. That one is a recreation of a sauce from my hometown. It was served with a lot of popular street foods in the area… um?" She ceased her rambling and looked on in confusion as he opened the cap and started chugging the bottle like a can of soda.

"ah," he said as if it were refreshing. "so, how much do i owe ya for this stuff?" He said, fiddling
with a tiny coin purse that he took out of his pocket.

"What? Oh no!" Frisk pushed his hands back so he stopped what he was doing. "You don't have to pay me! It's after hours right now…"

"huh… ok." He regarded the half-empty BBQ sauce bottle. "frisk?"

"Hm?"

"put it on my tab."

"NO, you don't have a tab, you're my guest here so just take it ok?!" She yelled while frantically waving her hands around. Sans imagined that her head was engulfed in bright orange flames.

"kid, you don't have to… but thanks," he smiled gratefully.

She hugged a knee to her chest and muttered, "welcome." Sans happily guzzled the rest of the bottle.

Food and its enjoyment provided a welcome distraction from uncomfortable topics, but after a few more minutes of relaxing, Frisk's mind drifted back to the unfortunate events from earlier and she let out another sigh.

"Ugh… We're gonna have to do something about this whole mess with Toriel…" she admitted reluctantly, tilting her head towards the house. "Wanna go for a walk?"

"you're putting it off? am i influencing you already?"

"I'm not putting it off. It's normal to give things some time to settle down… right? Besides, it's really nice and quiet out at this time of… evening."

"heh, ok. show me around then."

They walked through a dark, confusing, spiraling maze of corridors full of glowing mushrooms serving as night lights. "A guy I work with lives around here," said Frisk. "Wait, this is house number 3? No, this is the Migosp's side…"

"frisk… you do know your way around here, right?"

"Of course, I know exactly where I am going."

"Hiya Frisk," said a green Loox girl with orange horns. She was wearing a lighter green skirt and she was taking her pet Moldsmals for a walk. "And sleepy skeleton," she nodded to Sans.

"hey," he said.

"Are you looking for our street? It's this way," she offered and led them in the opposite direction that they had just been walking.

"Thanks!" said Frisk.

After a short walk, they were in a room where the walls were full of small windows glowing pink, green, and blue from within. The edges of the room were decorated with gardens of red bushes and blue mushrooms. There were some completely normal bugs buzzing around the foliage. Black dots against luminescence. The green Loox stopped walking and glanced around, indicating their arrival. They stood beneath a tall, glowing mushroom street lamp.
When Sans and Frisk had stood still for a few seconds, the two Moldsmals started to glow in spots of green and purple. Their bodies undulated vertically and they bounced closer to Sans.

"heh?" He shrugged and looked at them, unsure of what to do.

"Pet them," the green eyeball monster suggested.

"uh… ok…" Sans smiled nervously, trying to act casual as he put one hand on each Moldsmal and rubbed their skin a bit. The back of his neck tingled as the thick slime coated his hands and seeped into every contour of his carpals. The Moldsmals glowed pink and bounced faster, before seeming to calm down. Sans lifted his hands up, drawing a trail of slime. He shot at look at Frisk and she quickly looked away, one hand over her mouth as her cheeks puffed up in stifled laughter.

"well… they're certainly a colorful bunch… they're just uh… oozing with love," he laughed half-heartedly, and wiped his hands on the arm of Frisk's sweater before she could stop him.

"Geh! Sans!"

"come on human, you want some love, don't ya?" Frisk tried to run away from his slime-covered hands.

"I work in these clothes!"

"i thought it was after hours?"

"Yeah but tomorrow!"

"i'd worry more about today if i were you."

They bickered while running circles around the eye monster. She tried to turn her body around and keep her eye fixed on them, but the spinning confused her. She spun faster and faster. Sans stopped and waited for Frisk to come back around the other way so he could grab her other sweater sleeve. Irene was so dizzy she fell flat on her back with a small cry of "oomf!" A hard object fell out of her pocket.

"woops. didn't mean to make ya drop this." Sans picked up the blue coin which was worth 5g, and handed it back to her.

"Thanks!" Irene giggled and put it back in her pocket, neither monster paying any mind to the slime that trailed between their hands and flicked all over their clothes, while Frisk silently grumbled, holding her contaminated arms out at an angle away from her body.

Sans suddenly looked at his hands closely and narrowed his eyesockets suspiciously. "hey wait a sec. this slime is… the same slime that was all over my shoes."

The prone Loox giggled again in response and Frisk started to explain, "That's because earlier today, these guys came by while you were sleeping…"

Earlier that day, Frisk had been running her stand together with her light blue Loox friend. The crash from Toriel's house had caused most of the lunch customers to run away, but Irene, a regular and now friend of Frisk's, was not deterred. The Moldsmals were checking out the sleeping Sans. They pursed their openings into narrower tips, like pairs of lips, and prodded the pink slippers with interest. Frisk took notice and stepped over to intervene.

"Oh no, honey… those aren't for you…" She pet them on their rims and gently tugged the slippers.
out of their mouths, both footwear and human limbs coated in the gooey slime. The Moldsmals glowed pink and jiggled excitedly. Thankfully, they became more interested in each other and they made some distance from the tables to bounce and bump into each others' slimy bodies instead. She put the slippers on the floor beside the table and went back to working.

"so that's why… wait, did you say your name was 'Irene'?'" Sans said with a hint of a smirk.

"Yes?" She sat up and answered.

"what was the name of the other monster that works at your place?"

"Allens," said Frisk.

"his name is 'a lens'?'" he laughed. "you guys got any family members?"

"Why yes. Allens has quite a large family. There are uncles and aunts… his four younger siblings…"

Irene had somehow acquired a family photograph for reference. It showed Frisk's employee looking his usual round, monocular self. Four other smaller Loox monsters in varying shades of sepia were lined up to his right. Irene went through them one by one.

"That's Blinky… and that's Unica… and that's Mona… and that's Lidya." Sans grinned and snickered all the more at each name.

"nice! so… allens is a big bro too, huh? heh, I bet he's always keeping an eye out for the little ones!"

"Yes, well you know how little siblings are when they've got their sights set on mischief." Irene and Sans giggled.

Frisk looked unamused and said, "They're nothing compared to the trouble that older siblings cause."

He said, "hey come on, aren'tcha glad you got such a great friend to lense you a hand at your restaurant?"

She crossed her arms and thought for a second. "Of course. Eye am very pleased with his work."

Irene said, "Hehe, me too!"

"well kid, Loox like you are getting along great over here," Sans said and winked. They all giggled together.

At that moment, another Loox who was a color between purple and indigo, had shorter horns than Allens, and an eerie black iris with a white ring around the pupil, came along and tried to join in on their fun.

"Heeey. I'm Loox Eyewalker," he said. "… Don't pick on me."

The laughter died down between the three and they stared at him, confused.

"Huh?" said Irene.

"i don't get it…” said Sans.

"I said don't pick on me!" 'Loox Eyewalker' shouted. He blinked some angry tears at them. The tears on the rim of his eyelid expanded into bubbles, as if made of soap, and flew towards them. Irene was a little further back, and the Moldsmals were off to the side, but Sans and Frisk stood in the line of
"What the—" they both said. Sans was totally not expecting anything like that to happen and out of pure instinct he teleported away to a safe corner of the room. Frisk would have noticed and said something to the effect of 'wow you can teleport?', but she was too busy getting hit in the face by the bubbles.

"Nng!" She cried and put her arms in front of her face for defense. They popped and burned her cheeks. At the same time a painful sensation shot up her nose like a very strong horseradish, causing her to leak snot and tears. "Ngyah!" As she stood disoriented, Sans pulled her back by the arm and Irene applied some healing magic to her face.

"W-we're not picking on you…” Frisk tried to explain.

"Ivan! Stop bothering the human and come do your chores this instant!" came the voice of an another, older, female Loox from a nearby window. She was the same purple color as him, but with a red iris and the beginnings of wrinkles in the corners of her eye.

"Ugh. Yes, Mother…” said the indigo Loox whose real name was Ivan and reluctantly trudged off to his house. Now that one made Sans, Irene, and Frisk start laughing again.

"And you kids, keep it down out there!" she scolded them. "It's way past your bedtime! Get back to your homes and go to bed!"

Sans, Irene and Frisk all gulped and said "Yes Mother!"

It was past midnight, but Sans couldn't sleep yet since he had only been awake for a couple of hours. He leaned back in the reclining armchair that was his home for the time being and scrolled through his phone, browsing through Undernet and posting annoying puns. Chuckling lightly, he used a slight touch of blue to nudge his chair a few inches, while he raised his phone horizontally with Frisk in the camera view as she stood and contemplated the half-wrecked house across the dark courtyard.

nah… they don't know she's a human yet. He thought and lowered the phone without doing anything.

Frisk sighed again. Sans said, "wanna see some pics?"

"Yeah." She came over and leaned her elbows on the armrest.

"Ooh, that must be your brother."

"yea."

"And another photo of him… and another… and another…” She raised her eyebrow. "Do you have any pictures of… anything else?"

"'course i do. here's our snowball fight from a few days ago."

"Which one is Undyne?"

"that one."

"What is she supposed to be?" Frisk squinted at the photo.

"a fish."
"Hm… I can't tell underneath all the coat." The human-shaped monster in the photo was wearing a dark-gray winter coat over armored leggings. The white fluff around the hood obscured most of her features except for a bit of her blue skin and sharp yellow teeth.

"Are those dog monsters?"

"yeah, they aren't dog animals. we have those too, though… huh?" He looked curiously as Frisk was hastily scribbling down something in a notebook off to the side while muttering, "Snails, goats, fish, clams, and now dogs too…"

She said, "Hold on a sec, I'll show you some photos too!" She leaned over the counter and pulled out a more modern-looking cell phone than the larger model sitting on the wooden surface.

"got pics from the surface?" he said curiously.

As she turned it on, her face fell in disappointment. "Huh, only 20% battery? It was like 50% last time I turned it off…"

"batteries can leak over time."

"Oh."

"you can't charge it?"

"I have a cable for it, but the power plug is different here."

"if that's all, i might be able to find something for it…"

"Really? You could do that?!" Her face lit up as she spoke. "Could you get it to call the Surface too?!"

"uh..." he shrugged. "let's not make any promises i can't keep now..."

"Ah, right." She sat back and tried to curb her enthusiasm. "Sorry, that was a dumb thing to ask..."

"don't worry about it."

She trailed off and went back to staring at the house. He glanced up at her occasionally as he went back to looking at his phone. He noticed a few minutes later when she came out with some extra blankets and pillows. She gave one to him and put the rest on the couch for herself.

"Goodnight," she said.

"nighty-night," Sans said. He smiled vacantly and went back to looking at whatever distractions the Underground's tiny computer network had to offer him that night.
The alarm on Sans's cell phone went off at 7 am. Frisk got up and walked over to his table and turned it off. Her soiled sweater was crumpled into a ball beside her couch, and she was only wearing her black polo and blue jeans. She stood nervously in front of the door to the house, before opening the door and stepping towards the kitchen. Toriel was sleeping in her reading chair.

Of course she is… her room is trashed, and so's mine. She thought while glancing at the rubble blocking off the hallway.

Toriel woke up and said, "My—Frisk. Um… good morning." They smiled politely.

"H-hi, um, good morning Toriel."

"Did you need—"

"I need to—"

"I mean, how was your—"

"Actually, I just came to use the bathroom! Aheh… it's the only one in the Ruins after all… as far as I know."

"O-of course… my child."

The atmosphere was unbearably thick with tension, but she really did need to use the bathroom. After she finished and exited the house again, she wondered what to do with her Wednesday. Some spiders crawled on the ground next to her.

"Oh…" she smiled and followed the spiders around the corner and down the stairs to the market. Buffet was waiting for her next to the grocery store.

"Good morning Frisk. I'm sorry for my mistake yesterday. Ahuhu, no… I should not apologize for getting caught… It would be better not to have led you to deceive Toriel in the first place."

"I helped too," she shrugged guiltily.

"Still, I feel that I am partially responsible for destroying your house… I know that you were just covering yesterday when you said you wanted to visit my bakery. But if you'd like to visit for real, we can head over there now. I'm going to be busy meeting with the Whimsuns today and I may be needed to assist with some things in the coming weeks. I'll be sure to prepare extra batches of cupcakes and buns in advance, but I feel it would be for the best to show you around anyways, just in case I need your help, or in case you want to bake something, or even if you'd just like to come by for any reason!"

She trailed off saying, "It's not like you'd be getting in my way at all even on a normal day when I am there… My bakery could probably be used by two or three people at once…"

"Wow, you mean that for real?! Yes please, I'd love to see!"

"Then come along, my dear!"

Sans was sitting on the couch in his house in Snowdin, sleepily curled up under a pile of light blankets. The scent of fresh bread filled the house. Papyrus came out of the kitchen wearing pink
oven gloves and carrying a tray of home-made hot dog buns with crisp, crackling crusts. He set them down on the wooden counter underneath the pink-laced banner and then ran over to him.

"Sans, wake up! Come on, we gotta go make up with Toriel!" he said excitedly and shook Sans by his shoulders.

"gyuh!" Sans opened his eyes to reality and it was Frisk instead of Papyrus. The area around the shop was now full of life. The background lighting was much brighter, painting the walls a pleasant lavender instead of dark purple. Coffee and tea were brewing. The blue, sharp-horned Loox was there, sorting new hot dog buns into woven baskets covered in pink, green, and white dish towels. The baskets sat on the shelves attached to the wall behind the stand. A group of 3 Wimsums were having a breakfast of seaweed salad and golden flower tea lattes served in mason jars. Other monsters walked across the hallway to and from the market.

"Sans, Sans! Wake up!" said Frisk. She was standing beside the armrest, holding a wad of slime-stained clothing.

"frisk, frisk!" he said, mimicking her. "'sup pal? you ready to go see toriel?"

"Yes!"

"you wanna go talk to her about the whole mad-at-us thing and cheer her up? tell her some bad jokes and get her laughing again?"

"Yes!"

"and you don't know how else to get the laundry done?" he said while peeling his blue hoodie off the ground and tossing it on top of the pile of clothes in Frisk's arms.

"That's right!"

"knew it. alrighty, i'm up." Sans got up from his chair and rolled his quilt into ball.

"Really Sans, there are customers here!"

"ok, mom." The Whimsun trio chuckled at their banter. Sans folded up his quilt and stacked it up neatly on top of his chair. The only clothes he had left now were his t-shirt and shorts. But at least he still had pockets to put his hands in.

Sans stood in front of the door to the house and knocked on it while saying, "knock knock!"

The woman inside made a surprised noise. Soft footsteps approached the door. "Who is there?"

"sans."

"Sans who?"

"sanse you won't come out, can I come in?" The woman giggled and opened the door with a hesitant smile on her furry goat face.

"Hello, my friend."

"heya." woah she's tall.

"Err… this is a little awkward. I did not intend for us to meet for the first time in the middle of such an embarrassing argument. I am sorry for trapping you here in the Ruins due to my stupid actions
yesterday."

"hey, don't worry about it. for me, it's just a vacation from my guard post. been a while since i went somewhere new anyways."

"Well then… let us start over with a proper introduction. Hello, my name is Toriel."

"that's good. i would be worried if it was anything else, 'cause it says 'Toriel's house' on the sign back there. hey, maybe i should put a sign on my place too. Sans' Chair," he said with a dramatic flair.

"Hehehe! Oh my. Are those your clothes, small ones?! You must have gotten up to some messy adventures! Here, let me take those for you!"

They followed Toriel inside and down to the basement, where Mother Nature had thankfully Spared the staircase and the bathroom. Sans said softly to Frisk, "so, she's not a skeleton."

Frisk giggled and whispered back, "Did you actually believe me?"

"hey, i wasn't actually joking about my hint," he said and winked.

"Haha! Hey Toriel did you hear that? I actually tricked Sans into thinking you were a skeleton!"

"i didn't believe you believe you, kid, i gave it like 50-50."

"Hehe! How silly of you, little ones!" Toriel flashed a smile at them as she turned the faucet handles on the bathtub. Frisk started chattering away about her visit to the spider bakery. Toriel nodded and listened while she added some more articles of her own to the dirty clothes pile.

Sans zoned out from their conversation, observing the mess where the corridor was blocked off by the partially collapsed floor of what was once Frisk's bedroom. Trying to move any of the main supporting pieces of rubble didn't seem like a smart idea. For all he knew, the instability could reach all the way to the surface. A major landslide was not outside of the possibilities. The bed and bookcase had slid down on top of splintered planks of wood over the diagonal chunk of stone foundation. The furniture stopped against the wall, and a lot of items were scattered on the ground. Extra shirts which were mostly striped, a wallet, some old shoes, sheets of paper, books, pencils, a toy knife…

"It's like a whole different world behind the grocery store, there's tons of secret passages and stuff! She had mixing machines. And a cart-in oven! And the spider caves were kind of creepy but also amazing! Did you know that cider is made in giant cylinders that are like… this tall. Err, taller than this room, I mean."

"here ya go," said Sans, coming over with most of the dusty clothes that he could find.

"Thank you, Sans," said Toriel. She took the clothes and dumped them in the tub which was slowly filling up with water. "Well, I will be occupied with this for a while now," she said. "It will be pretty boring… I'm sure you can find a more interesting use of your weekend than to watch me wash clothes."

"Yeah, sure," said Frisk.

"ok," said Sans. They walked back upstairs and stopped after the maybe-dead tree in the courtyard. They stopped and stared at each other hesitantly for a second.
Sans said, "so… is that what her expression looks like when she's happy?"

Frisk looked down and said, "No…"

"hmm. fake smiles and bottled up feelings, huh?"

"Yeah, she tends to do that," Frisk nodded and agreed.

"she didn't really talk about the argument at all after that one apology."

Frisk sighed and said, "She said it would be best for us to stay away from her for a while. I understand she's feeling bad, and I'd like to give her her space, but unfortunately…” she looked pointedly at the house.

Sans filled in, "…there may be practical consequences to that. yea, i get what you're saying, so how about we go get her to vent a lil'?

"You're right, we need to get her to open up."

"spill the beans."

"We're her only friends! It's up to us!"

"let's go apologize and let her yell at us all she wants. that tends to make people feel better."

"Yeah, let's do this Sans!"

"yeah!"

They marched back to the house with their flawless plan, filled with determination.

Toriel had just come from the kitchen with a plastic container of laundry detergent, and met the two by the front door. She smiled in confusion and raised an eyebrow as they repeated most of what they had just discussed to her.

"My friends, what are you talking about? I have already forgiven you completely! As soon as I… caused that destruction, I already realized that I had overreacted. Besides, I could not stay mad at someone who is so cute when asleep," she teased and poked Sans, who seemed fine with that. "I am perfectly fine now, so there is no need for you to worry!"

Then why are you looking away? Sans and Frisk thought.

"that's good. it's good that you're fine. right frisk?"

"Yeah, right!"

"we'll see you around then."

"Yeah, we'll be around!"

They went back to the round table next to Sans's chair at the restaurant.

"no worries. we got this. we just need to push her a bit more, k?"

"Ok."

Toriel was in the yard between her house and the wall of the courtyard. She was pinning up clothes on a line to dry. Sans and Frisk casually stood around the tree and talked so that Toriel could overhear them.
"so, frisk… you excited for the new tunnel we're building to connect the ruins? y'know, the one
that'll put you in mortal danger of being captured? i wonder what'll happen when my bro, who you
already talked to on the phone several times, finds out you're a human?"

"Oh man, that sure sounds dangerous, Sans! I hope the Captain of the Royal Guard who I also
talked to doesn't come and kill me for my soul or anything!"

"You do not have to worry about that, my child!" Toriel hastily interrupted. "If a guard comes to
attack you, simply run away and I will protect you!"

"But, Toriel, what if you are busy… err… baking pie?"

"Then Sans will protect you!" Toriel said as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

Frisk and Sans hunched over their table and whispered about their next plan. The monsters coming
by for lunch were entertained by all of this. A Migosp said, "I'm starting to root for them." A
Wimsum bowed its head in prayer.

Asgore, the King of the Underground. A large monster resembling Toriel, but of the bearded, purple-
cape-wearing, male variety. In a lush garden of golden flowers where warm sunlight beamed from
the ceiling, he cast an ominous shadow as he towered over the single, travel-weary human. "Howdy,
human! It's a beautiful day outside today," he said. "Birds are singing… flowers are blooming…
perfect weather for a game of catch!"

"Oh boy, that sounds like fun Mr. Dreemur! I'll go get a ball."

"Oh… There's no need for that, human. Your soul will do just fine." Asgore used his giant spear,
which was also a bone, to shatter the Mercy command. His left eye twinkled blue and gold, and a
bunch of little vertebrae bones that were also on fire appeared in the air, ready to attack Frisk.

"Aah! Someone help me!" she cried.

"Stop right there you horrible beast!" 'Toriel' shouted in purple Comic Sans MS superscript. She
valiantly threw herself into the line of fire to defend Frisk, who looked like she was trying really hard
not to laugh. "I won't let you harm my innocent child!"

"What, Toriel?! It cannot be! How dare you side with a human over me, the leader of your own
people! I had always hoped that you would come back to me, but now I see that you are a traitor to
all of our kind! You and your precious human should be burning in hell!"

"Stop, stop, stop!" said the real Toriel, back in the Ruins, in the clearing between the courtyard tree
and the hotdog stand. Frisk was kneeling on the ground. Sans had a little crown made out of paper
taped to his skull, and was sitting on top of Irene for height while wearing Frisk's indigo, gold-
fringed couch blanket as a cape. In the space between them there were a couple of conjured
vertebrae bones floating in the air. Bravely defending Frisk was a single, tall bone with the two
halves of a hotdog bun stapled to its head for ears, and a face badly drawn in barbeque sauce. Sans
had been making it bounce around while trying to imitate Toriel's voice. Some onlookers were
chuckling at the amusing skit.

Toriel said, "My friends, do you honestly think I care what Asgore thinks of me? I have never
thought that the policy of harvesting human souls is anything but disgusting—revolting! And if I had
known he was capable of such cowardice before, I would never have married him in the first place! I
am not afraid of him, and I will gladly stand between him and the two of you if he gets any ideas
otherwise! And that aside… Sans, that impression was completely out of character. Not that I really
care if you defame Asgore, but I don't want to confuse Frisk with false information."

Meanwhile Irene sensed that Sans was finished with his prop and began helping herself to the hot dog buns.

They sat back at their table across from each other with their chins resting in their hands. "whelp. That was fun at least."

"Yes Sans, it was… but can you do something about all the bones on the floor?"

"i can," he replied.

"So… will you?"

"such an action does indeed fall under the set of all of the potential behaviors available for me to act upon in the event that you may desire for me to—"

"Get rid of the bones on the floor right now or I'll… I'll… call your brother."

"you don't have his phone number."

"You're right, I don't."

"yeah, you don't."

"What is Papyrus's phone number?"

"it's XXX-XX-XXX."  

"Thanks," said Frisk, typing the number into her phone.

"…damn, i didn't think you'd catch that all in one go."

"You do realize that I remember orders for a living? See those two monsters waiting by the counter?" she gestured with a shrug of her shoulder to the brown-and-pink Migosp and the teal-colored Loox. "The Migosp ordered a cinnamon latte and a red leaf salad. The teal one is waiting for a hot dog with pickles and no mayonnaise. And a glass of water."

Sans stared at her for a few seconds, then said, "oh yeah. well, joke's on you. that was undyne's number anyways."

"Hmm… I don't think it was," said Frisk. She looked him in the eyes with a patient smile.

"…i gotta give ya credit kid. you're pretty good at seein' right through me. which is weird because i still have my shirt on. it's almost as if you've done this song and dance before. hey, what's with that look? am i right?"

Frisk muttered under her breath, "I hope they never meet."

"what was that?"

"I said uh… Please get rid of those bones, seriously. They're small and pointy and sharp, and not everyone around here owns a pair of shoes."

Sans looked around under the tables and noticed that she was right. He complied and made the bones on the floor disappear.
Buffet walked up to their table. "There you are, dears. You forgot your croissants!"

"I did?" said Frisk as the blonde spider woman plopped a small wooden tray stacked with spider croissants onto their table. They were a deep golden brown with little flecks of black from spider meal. "Well, thanks then. Guys want some tea to go with them?" she said, standing up.

"Yes please," said Buffet.

"Coffee for me," said Sans.

Frisk came back with their caffeinated drinks and tried a bite of a spider croissant. "Wow, they're so… buttery!" she said. Flakes spilled out of the bite and got all over the table.

"uh, they've got kind of a funny taste to them. it's not bad, it's like… nuts or something?" said Sans.

"The spiders must make them high in protein," said Frisk.

"these are really good. are you gonna start selling them?"

"Unfortunately, no. The butter in the recipe is too expensive to sell them at a good profit. I sent a telegram to Muffet trying to convince her, but I am worried she will not listen to me. She can be stubborn and overly attached to her ideas. At least she usually follows my pricing advice."

"But she invented most of your recipes, right?" said Frisk.

"Well, the cupcake frosting is my own."

"so, she's the creative and you're the brains… wait. excuse me. did you say telegram? what year is it again? do you guys not have phones?"

"Err, well you see, I—"

"Buffet does not have her own cell phone because every time she saves up enough money to order one, she spends it on upgrades and farm equipments instead! And since I've been letting her share mine, she'll probably never get one," Frisk explained while Buffet waved her arms in embarrassment.

"Hey, I need that humidity control system! Dummy's been pestering me for more worker spiders for weeks, and all of my farms are already at maximum yield!"

Frisk giggled. "Sorry, I'm curious now… what does it look like for Dummy to pester someone?"

"Ah, well…" Buffet recalled standing on the wooden boardwalk of a cave full of spider webs. The stalagmites and stalactites, and plenty of small tunnels in the walls created additional surface area. It was a moist environment lush with moss, ponds full of slimy algae, which bred thick swarms of tiny insects. Points of soft lighting in green and yellow provided visibility. Dummy stood next to her on the boardwalk and peered up at her with a blank expression. Some hours later, Buffet was hanging from a thread on the ceiling, dumping a large bowl of fresh spiders into the chute of a tall spider cider brewing vat. Dummy stood on the floor with his stoic stare fixed upon her. On another day, Buffet was on her way up the stairs to visit Frisk's shop when she spotted Dummy staring eerily at her through the window of the shipping room.

"Stalker?!" Frisk looked taken aback while Sans chuckled at this. "That makes me remember the day I came here… I met him in the hallway, but I didn't know he was alive at that time. I guess he's cute… in a creepy way."
"He stares into your soul," said Buffet, eliciting snickers.

"hey guys… look behind you," said Sans.

"Hm?" "Huh?" Buffet and Frisk turned around in their chairs to see Dummy standing perfectly still directly behind them, staring with his unceasing, black button eyes.

"AAH HE'S RIGHT THERE!" They screamed while hugging each other. Dummy seemed satisfied and moved backwards towards the market.

"was that stop motion?" Sans wondered. But nobody knew.

**ring ring ring**

**ring ring ring**

"Hello, Sans?! Dr. Alphys asked Undyne to ask me to ask you to ask Frisk to ask Dr. Alphys if… NYEH! I MEAN! YOU LEFT A BIG MESS IN THE LIVING ROOM! And Dr. Alphys wants her stuff back! So what I'm saying is…"

Sans held the phone away from his face and softly cleared his voice, "ahem."

[ACT]

→ * Flirt [size=12 font="Curlz" font_color = "magenta"]
"Hiii Papyrus, hehe! It's me Frisk… I've been waiting for you to call again! I wanted to hear your voice again so badly that I begged Sans to tell me your phone number, but I-I just couldn't work up the courage to call you, after spending all night looking at your photos…"

Frisk started to protest, "Sans what—"

Sans said in his normal voice again, but forcefully enough to speak over her, "hey, you talkin' to my brother, kid? you better not get any funny ideas, or else…"

He pushed Frisk away as she frantically tried to make him stop this embarrassing routine. Then 'Frisk' added, "Oh, Papyrus! Sans is trying to keep us apart!"

Papyrus, standing in his house in the middle of the living room, surrounded by piles of scratch paper and library books, heard some scuffling in the background of the call. A girl's voice protested, "Oh my god what are you doing?! I do not sound like that! Sans stop it!"

"hey, woah, calm down there, buddy. here ya go." Sans chuckled and stood up. "if you wanted to talk to Papyrus, all ya had to do was ask," he said.

Papyrus's jaw opened and closed as he tried to think of a response. "Frisk, I'm… flattered?! But! That was a very strange and desperate attempt at flirting! Are you feeling alright? Do you need to talk to someone about it? CAN YOU TALK TO ME ABOUT IT?!"

She groaned, "Ugh, that wasn't me saying that stuff!"

Sans walked away towards the counter to order some grub, once again leaving Frisk to deal with his phone calls.

"There's no need to hide your feelings from me, Frisk! It's all very clear now! YOU'RE COMPLETELY OBSESSED WITH ME! I THINK THAT YOU MIGHT EVEN LOVE ME MORE THAN I DO! Frisk, I… I don't know if I can deal with the pressure of trying to match your
"level of UTTER DEVOTION!"

"Hehehe, calm down there buddy. We still haven't even met in person."

"SQUEE, I KNOW! I CAN'T WAIT!"

"heya," Sans said to Allens.

"Hi! Wanna order something?"

"my mind's telling me no, but my bones are telling me yes."

"We have healthy food too. Like, salad."

"hmm.. you know what, yeah. that sounds nice. i'll have a salad. i usually just eat junk food, but i'm turning over a new leaf," he said with a wink.

"Hehe! You're kinda funny dude. So like, which one do you want?"

"there are multiple kinds of salad?" He asked as if he were legitimately surprised. "uh… just give me the best one then."

"You got it." He put some pre-cooked chicken pieces and some rectangular strips of vegetables of various colors onto the grill. Across the room Frisk was saying, "ugh I know. I just had to practically fight him to get him to pick up his bones off the floor. … … … … well did you try topping it with a half a liter of ketchup? … Hehe!"

"so, how much is that?" Sans asked while taking a little coin purse out of his shorts.

"eight-fifty."

"850 gold?!"

"No dude! 8.5 gold."

"oh, you use halves… wait what? you actually make a living from that?"

"I dunno, Frisk seems to know what she's doing, and she seems to be getting a lot of advice from Miss Buffet, so… I think it's going OK." Over at their table, Frisk was saying, "a quiche, really? hehe… for how long? …three weeks?! Ok seriously Papyrus, you don't need to ask permission for that. Just throw it away! … … Hahaha!"

Allens took a bowl from underneath the counter that was filled with a bed of lettuce and red herbs, and used a spatula to put the grilled pieces on top of it, and then added croutons and drizzled creamy ranch dressing over the whole thing.

"that actually looks pretty good. thanks." He handed him 9g and said, "keep the change."

"Thanks! Enjoy."

Sans sat back down by Frisk and Buffet with his salad and took the bottle of barbeque sauce sitting in the center of the table and started emptying half of the bottle onto it.

"Oh… " Frisk responded to the phone while looking at Sans and giggling softly. "Yeah … Don't worry he's fine … Sure, no problem."
After hanging up, Frisk looked up and said, "Sans, if you keep consuming my barbeque sauce at that rate… then I'll have to make more barbeque sauce".

"oh, yeah. sorry 'bout that," he said and put down the bottle.

"Huh? It was just a joke… You can have as much as you want."

"i want this much," he said.

"Ok then," she said. "So… Sans… I heard you tried to to bake something…"

"oh, that," he said, looking down at the table. "it was actually supposed to be a… pie. before when i was talking to toriel through the door, y'know… she tried to explain her favorite recipe to me. i didn't really… heh heh heh, i know, i'm so funny," he shrugged as they smirked at him.

"That's so cute," said Frisk.

"That's atrociously adorable," said Buffet.

Sans blushed a little and ate his salad for a few minutes of silence. Frisk finally spoke up again and slowly said, "Um… Would you like… to learn… how to make butterscotch pie?"
Sans walked up to the counter of the grocery store and set down the cartons of butter, cream, milk and brown sugar. There was an orange Froggit squatting behind the counter, further down than Froggits tended to do, looking at some rows of organized wooden tags in a cabinet against the wall. Sans didn’t want to interrupt the monster, who seemed busy checking off a list with a pen held in its tongue. But, after a couple of minutes had passed it still had not looked the other way or noticed him.

"heya… 'scuse me…" he looked behind himself and saw the human and the spider baker standing over in another corner, passing the time with casual conversation.

"um, hey, can I buy this stuff please?"

The monster finally registered the request and turned around. "Of course, custome—ribbit!" the grocer croaked in surprise when he saw Sans and hit his head on the drawer open above him.

"Gyaah! A-another human? U-uh, do you know Frisk? Are you a hunter?! Oh god, please don't hurt me…" he cowered under the front counter as far as he could hide himself and shook.

"hah?!" Sans tilted his head in confusion. "you must really not get a lotta new faces around here." Frisk walked over and went behind the counter and helped the Froggit stand up.

"Oh, Mr. Coco! That's just Sans, silly! He's a totally normal monster."

"yeah look, there's nothin' to be afraid of. i'm just a regular, ordinary pile of bones."

"O-oh, I see! I'm sorry, I overreacted there. Never seen a…"

"skeleton."

"—one of those before. You look more like Frisk than any of the folks around here." They considered that the Ruins monster species were comprised of mostly geometrically shaped monsters, blobs of jello, and the 6-and-a-half-foot-tall Toriel. But Sans stood at almost the exact same height and proportions as Frisk, though slightly broader.

_He has a good point_, they thought.

"Also, I may or may not have just reread the entire series of 'Monster Exterminator', the next volume's coming out this week you know…" Mr. Coco trailed off. "Anyways, ribbit, ribbit," he croaked, clearing his throat. "Those items—15, please."

Sans paid for the groceries and then Buffet came over when they were finally finished. "We'll be in the bakery. This way, my dears!" she led them through the door to the right of the counter.

They turned left, walked down the hall, and went through the third door on the right. This led to a larger and taller hall, which curved to the left and descended. The walls were carved out of the lavender stone and the floors were lined with worn wooden planks. Electric pipes, ventilation grates, and spider webs lined the high ceiling without regard for aesthetics. A catwalk connected some of the rooms on the second floor. They went through the door at the end of the hallway, which finally led them into the bakery. It was a room with a gray tiled floor, white walls, and a very high ceiling. There was a large wooden table next to a machine with a long canvas belt in the center. Brewing vats stood by the door as they walked in. Oven to the left, refrigerators to the right, and a long metal counter with shelves above, extending all the way up to the ceiling. Spider webs were used to secure some pipes and machines in place on the walls.
"you guys i don't know any fire magic," said Sans, thinking of Grillby.

"Neither do we," said Buffet. "But my oven emulates fire magic artificially. The heating process will enhance and preserve even the most ordinary of recipes."

"Anything you can bake with fire magic, you can bake without," said Frisk. "The magic just adds HP to the final result and gives it a longer shelf life."

"Quite convenient for the food business," said Buffet. Frisk opened the closer of the two refrigerators and took out just one layer of a stack of square egg cartons.

Sans noticed the large, light-yellow blocks wrapped in paper and said, "hey, how come I had to buy more butter if you already have so much?"

"Oh, those are blocks of margarine made from golden flower seed oil. Fresh butter is much better for home baking," said Frisk.

"i see."

"You don't have a stovetop, do you?" she asked.

"I do, right here!" said Buffet. She put a double hot plate on the table and plugged it into an extension cord on the ground. She brought them some pots and bowls and spoons. Frisk wrote down the recipe from her head on a piece of paper. "I wonder what I should do with all the extra egg whites…" she thought out loud.

"Ooh, I've got it, how about you make these Spider macarons," said Buffet, holding a book open to a page with a recipe.

"That sounds awesome! I'll try that!" said Frisk. Two of Buffet's other hands held some pieces of cloth that she handed to them. "Here, my dears. You ought to put these on."

"Yeah Sans, if you get any more of your clothes dirty, you'll have to borrow some of mine."

"i hope i don't have to do that. i'm really not that into stripes."

They ended up wearing ruffly aprons which each had an image of a spider on the chest. Sans took the blue one and Frisk took the pink one.

"I'm afraid I must leave you, sweeties, I have another meeting to go to now. Frisk, if you would not mind, could you mop the floor for me when you are done?"

"Yeah sure, no problem."

"Oh, and please take this spare key. You can keep that from now on. Don't forget to lock up."

"Ok."

"So like I was saying, we only need the egg yolks for this recipe… hm?"

Frisk looked confused as Sans cracked all of the eggs into the same bowl. Then he raised up his hand and made the egg yolks turn blue and pulled them out and let them all drop into the other bowl. Frisk was amazed and a little annoyed at his laziness.

"It looks like it worked…" she said, eyeing the remaining whites suspiciously before putting them away in the fridge. Before they moved on to anything else, she wheeled an empty metal rack into the
oven and turned it on. It emitted a low hum as the rack inside slowly rotated in circles.

"This big thing takes a while to heat up," she said. "So… pie dough…"

After working the butter and flour into crumbs, and then mixing in the water with his bare hands, Sans had created a ball of pie dough. It took about five minutes after that for him to finish picking and scraping all of the dough from between his bones.

Frisk said, "Heh… we'll have to get you a pastry cutter instead." Sans rolled out the dough, while Frisk sprinkled extra flour on it.

"Hmm… I know she has potato starch, but I can't find it…"

"could be she doesn't use it much, so it's on the top shelf."

"Ugh, there are no ladders in here. She must use webs instead. How are we gonna get up there? Can you get it down?"

"no, i can't see it. but… maybe you can go take a look for me."

"What do you muAAAH!" she yelled as a blue platform appeared underneath her and elevated her into the air. She flew up the 2-story-high wall. She thought her head would smack into the ceiling, and shut her eyes tightly. Instead the platform supporting her disappeared, and a sudden force took over her body. She felt her insides do flip flops as she rolled head-first against the surface, coming to a rest on her back.

She slowly opened her eyes and sat up. "O-oh, what just happened… Huh, I'm blue? That's interesti-KYAAAA WHAT THE HELL?!" She jumped at screamed at the lamp that was hanging from the ground. She slowly reached out and gave it a tiny poke with her hand. It teetered and dangled upwards. Frisk squealed and clamped her wrists against her chest and froze, afraid that the world might implode if she touched anything else. To her right she saw shelves full of ingredients stuck to the ceiling. Bags of white and black powders hung half-open and were not spilling.

As she gulped and slowly began to come to terms with being upside-down on the ceiling, she heard a voice above her asking, "are you just gonna sit there all day?"

Sans was standing on the upside-down floor. His left eyelight was glowing a steady blue, while his right one was at half its usual brightness. But it was the annoyingly innocent smile on his face which earned him a glare of disbelief.

Again he asked casually, "so… is it up there or what?"

It was. She reached out for the box, hesitated, and poked it. When the world did not implode, she picked it up with two hands, feeling extremely uncomfortable at the sensation of holding its light weight down as it tugged upwards.

She gulped and said, "U-uh, y-yeah, I g-got it… I thinkKYEEH!" She shut her eyes again and could do nothing but trust Sans's actions as another platform brought her down from the ceiling, using the same gravity technique to control her landing on the floor. As she rolled over again, the box of potato starch turned upside-down and a cloud of fine white powder burst out of the box and coated her. She coughed a bit as she caught her breath.

Sans took a step back back thinking, did i take it too far? nah… that was great. i think. He tried his damnedest not to burst into laughter as she slowly stood up, glaring through the powder on her nose.
"Sans. Why."

He shrugged. "i just wanted to lift your spirits, kid."

She stood by his side as he stirred a mixture of egg, sugar, cinnamon, and potato starch together in a bowl. She stared indifferently as he pushed his arm to the limits of his physical strength. "Stir harder, Sans. Harder! The more you stir, the better it will be!" A drop of the mixture splashed and hit her in the face. He paused and looked at her. "Calm down, Sans. Don't go crazy."

"i'll try to keep it under control. what's next, teacher?"

"Heating up a bunch of different stuff." They used the hot plate and the pots to heat up butter and cream and milk and then set those aside. They melted some brown sugar until it was bubbling and frothing. Sans stirred it constantly to prevent it burning.

"This is the basic process of caramelizing sugar. As you keep cooking it, the water goes away and the temperature increases. If you put a little drop in a glass of cold water… you can tell how hard it's going to be when it cools." Sans fished out the little piece of caramel with a fork and tried it.

"neato. it's pretty soft."

"Let it go a little longer then."

They finished combining the batter and poured it into the pie crust. Frisk put the pie onto a metal tray and then slid the tray into a slot on the rack as Sans held the oven door open for her. After she closed the door and set the timer, they stared at the single pie on the single tray in the middle of the rotating rack.

"huh. it looks kind of lonely. i almost feel guilty using this huge oven just to make one little pie."

"I know what you mean!"

As Frisk worked on her macarons, Sans bent down and unplugged the hot plate. He looked at the plug curiously for a second before he stood back up. He hung around and watched her use the floor mixer to whip egg whites and sugar into a meringue. She scraped the sides with a piece of plastic and mixed in spider meal that was ground so finely that it was gray instead of black. She paused to take the pie out of the oven and set its tray down on the metal counter. Then she piped circles of batter onto more trays lined with baking paper, until she had filled almost 7 trays.

The entire rack of macarons was wheeled into the oven. While they were baking, Frisk picked up the heavy mixer bowl and put the entire thing upside-down in the dishwasher. Sans was glad he didn't have to do any of that. Afterwards they assembled the meringue cookies using Buffet's pink cupcake frosting as filling.

They tried some of the gray-and-pink macarons. "Mm, that's sweet," said Frisk. It was crispy and chewy, and also little earthy. The filling gave them a cool, satisfying texture.

"can't eat another bite," said Sans after eating just one.

"Let's call Toriel," said Frisk. She showed Sans her contacts list so he could copy the number onto his phone too.

"…huh. i already have this number on my phone? weird..." He called it and waited.

Ring... ring
"Hello, this is Toriel. It is so nice of you to call me, my friend."

"hey, toriel… it’s me… sans. i wanted to tell you that… frisk and i made—" he paused as Frisk nudged his shoulder. "—i mean i made a surprise for you. is it cool if we come over in an hour? … nice… see ya then."

Toriel hurried as she tried to tidy up the remainder of her house. Even though she had only been eating leftovers, there were still two days of unwashed dishes piled up in the sink. Neither Toriel or Frisk had bothered to put away all of the books and papers on the table. Oh goodness, her socks were lying all over the living room! Then there was a lot of dust to sweep out of the hallway. When she heard a knock at the door, she quickly straightened and opened it.

"Hello, my friends… oh my, that smells wonderful! It could not be… you didn’t…" her eyes widened as she eyed the shallow wooden tray covered with a cloth.

"Toriel, can we come in?" said Frisk, who was bearing a pot of tea.

"Ah, o-of course my child!" Toriel replied hastily. As they stepped over the threshold, she suddenly remembered that she was still holding the broom in her left hand. She quickly threw it to the side with too much force. The wooden handle snapped as the broom hit the pile of rocks in the hallway.

"Oh, uh… whoops," she laughed awkwardly. "Come, sit down!" She brought them some plates and cups while they sat down at the table. After they were all served, Toriel tried a piece of the pie that was just cooled down to the perfect temperature.

"Ah… it tastes just like my very own butterscotch pie… did you really make this all by yourself?"

"well no, frisk taught me how…" He noticed the slight twitch in the goat-woman's lower eyelid as he said that.

"He did it all by himself!" Frisk confirmed. "Do you remember the steps?"

"yep, i could probably make it at home now, though my oven's not that fancy."

"It sounds like you're having a good time staying in the Ruins. I'm glad to hear that!" said Toriel. "Although I wanted… nevermind! Mm, this is delicious!" she followed up her bite of pie with a hasty sip of tea, scalding her tongue.

"um… toriel," Sans started.

She blinked and said, "Yes… S-Sans?"

"what did you want to say just now?" he said. Frisk looked on in suspense.

"I, nothing!"

"you wanted… to say nothing?"

"Err, yes! I wanted to say nothing, Sans," she said, with a hint of a blush on her cheekbones.

"Toriel, stop it already! You need to talk to us!" Frisk finally lost her patience and spoke her mind. "I know you're pretending not to be upset about what happened yesterday… but like it or not, things are changing around here, and it's going to be pretty busy and crazy and I know that you might not like all of the changes! And I know that maybe you don't want to talk about it, but… Well, I don't mean to be mean, but just thinking practically, it would be really bad if you blow up something
again!" She hesitated as Sans and Toriel looked at her. "I mean… not that I think you are going to do it again…"

Toriel slowly turned her gaze away and took another bite. "It's not like that… That's not what I... It's just… no. No, it's stupid…"

"i won't think it's stupid, come on... i know you like that pie, but what's eating you?" he said with a wink.

"it's stupid…” her laugh cracked as she spoke on the verge of tears. "it's stupid how perfect this butterscotch pie is!" Frisk and Sans raised an eyebrow at each other. huh?

"It's not fair," she sniffed. "I wanted to… be the one to… teach you how to make my butterscotch pie!" They gaped at her. "And I wanted to be the one to tell you about the human, not to find out that you already knew each other! I wish you would have told me that you talked to her! How could you just go behind my back and sneak around doing projects with her that you knew I wouldn't approve of?! Why Sans?!" He looked down as she ranted through a big spoonful of pie. "How could you lie to me?! You were the first person I thought I could trust in such a long time! And you're supposed to be an adult, are you not?! An adult man does not lie to an adult woman about the child that I am taking care of! Just because she is a little mature for her age and hard-working, that is not an excuse for you to go around acting the same age as her!" Sans could almost hear the 'thud' of Toriel's fireballs striking him dead-center on his 1-HP soul after every one of her sentences.

He pushed his chair backwards and stood up. "i… didn't know you that it hurt you so much. i'm sorry, tori."

She blushed at his humility and at being called 'tori'. "You know, err, now that I put it all into words, it all sounds so stupid… please, let us just forget about all of this…"

"nah... you're right. i was a jerk to you. you deserve an apology. i am truly, honestly sorry, tori."

Toriel was unable to stand Sans acting this apologetic. It made her so embarrassed that she just wanted to put an end to the entire argument, and so she stood up and grabbed him in a full embrace. He made a sound of surprise that was muffled under the the layers of soft fur and fabric. Frisk thought their hug was so cute that she felt butterflies in her stomach.

"Please, stop… Please, let us just put all of this behind us. Come my child, you too." Frisk pointed to herself questioning. Before she had even stood up all of the way she found herself pulled into the hug. It was so soft and warm and cuddly, it made her forget about everything else, and she was perfectly content to stay like that for as long as Toriel would have it.

"Honestly… this is all a little new to me," she confessed. "I know I said that I have cared for many children, but I have never been angry at one before."

"guess you've never had a teenager then," said Sans. They all laughed together as Toriel squeezed them harder.
Frisk sat up on her couch and stretched and flexed her arms above her head. The scent of freshly brewed coffee filled her with determination. She went inside the house and received her morning greeting in the form of one extra-large goat-mom hug. "Hehe, Toriel!"

"Good morning my child!" They sat down at the table together and had pie and coffee for breakfast. Some extra old albums and folders had been added to the piles of books and papers on top of and under the table, as well as a few video cassette tapes and a bag of sewing materials. "I cleared out two of the drawers for you to keep your things in. It's really too bad about your room. I hope you are sleeping alright out there. It is not too cold at night, is it? How about Sans?"

"Don't worry Toriel, I'm fine. And Sans can probably sleep through a tornado. I'm just looking forward to having a normal day for once!"

"As am I my child! Have a nice day then, and be good!"

"Ok, I will!"

Frisk went to the grocery store and bought some ingredients and then prepared a new batch of hot dogs, taking down the ones that were finished curing in her food storage room. It was around 9:30. A fat Wimsum with light-yellow skin and a blue-gray t-shirt flew in from the market and stood by Sans's chair, trying to get his attention. Frisk noticed them, but she was busy bringing out dishes and boxes of cupcakes and macarons for the day.

The Wimsum took a deep breath and blurted out, "Good morning!" He smiled proudly at this accomplishment, though he yet to receive a response. Frisk tidied up her couch and then came over to do the same for Sans's area, consolidating the items scattered all over the floor into one neat little pile next to his chair.

The stranger was looking between the two of them hesitantly. Frisk picked up the white t-shirt off the ground and asked him, "Did you need some help? You wanna talk to Sans about something?" He nodded.

"Sans, wake up," she said while stuffing the shirt underneath his blanket. He just grabbed it and curled up in a different position in his sleep. She shook his shoulder, but to no avail. "Do you really have to wake him up now?"

"We'll get started building a lot faster if he does," he said. "Considering these blueprints, we could really use his help to finish the rest of the planning stages. None of my boys have this level of education in engineering… or anything else. And we need to get in touch with the construction company on the outside that he referenced in his notes. I think he wanted us to e-mail them, but we don't have a computer…"

"Say no more," said Frisk, holding up her hand to silence him. She grabbed Sans's quilt and pulled it off of him in one motion.

"gyuh!" He jumped and hugged the balled t-shirt against his bare ribcage. "hey kiddo, we're only rated T here."

"You're not here to sleep, Sans! This person wants help with work! So go. Help them. You. Freelader," she whispered accusingly.
He tensed self-consciously. "n-no… how could you… accurately describe my circumstance?" he said and ended the line with a nonchalant shrug.

Frisk gave a small laugh and tossed him his hoodie and slippers from the clothes line. "Here."

"thanks," he said and snuggled back into his chair underneath the blue hoodie. Frisk noticed a table that had been neglected the previous night and hurried to clean it up. Then she went back behind her counter and checked over the inventory and accounting from her days off.

The stranger introduced himself as 'Mason' and restated what he had just said before Sans woke up. The sleepy skeleton said, "ok, i'll lend ya my phone. i'll be up in 10."

The middle-aged Wimsum said, "Thank-you, oh and, sorry to wake you."

"hey no problem."

Frisk went inside the house for a moment to change her clothing. When she came back Sans had fallen back asleep in his chair again after Mason went back to the market, but she had her own business to worry about. There were already three Migospa, a Froggit, and a Loox waiting for the stand to open and there was still prep work to do. She took out her cutting board and drove her scissors into the center of a large parsnip-flavored Vegetoid cube, pushing down with force.

Just then, Allens showed up with his youngest sibling trailing behind him. "So this is the dumb hot dog stand, huh?"

"Come on, Blinky. Don't follow me to work, lil' dude."

"Woah, look at all the Migospa here!" the smaller, darker blue eyeball monster sneered. "And look at that dumb human trying to cut a vegetable with scissors. You must really suck at cooking!"

"Hm?" Frisk looked at him as the cube split roughly in two along the grain.

"Hey, don't be so mean to my boss, lil' bro."

"Ugh, what kind of Loox calls a human 'boss'? I bet you're in love with her."

"Of course I'm not!"

"Al and human-y sittin' in a tree—"

"We're not in love!" Frisk said.

"Hey, Frisk! It's OK!" he shushed her, taking her aback with his sudden assertiveness. "Look Blinky, if you go away, like… I'll give you a cupcake! Here."

Blinky blinked a few times, then grabbed the cupcake. "I'm gonna tell Auntie how much you love kissing ass to Migos," he said before running away.

He sighed. "Oh… dude… I'm really sorry about that. You ok, human?"

"…oh! Yeah, I'm fine," she said and smiled. "That was, um, good job with that!" She looked at the line of customers. "Well, let's get started, huh?"

"Ok!"
"Are any of you guys gonna order salad?" Three hands were raised. "Ok then, you take the orders Allens, and I'll keep cutting."

"Sure."

Mason came back in the middle of the lunch rush to check if Sans was awake yet. He bolted out of bed and threw on his clothes and grabbed his bag and followed the Wimsum off to the market.

A fold-up table had been set up in the market square near the far wall. This table was the temporary office and gathering location for the Wimsum Construction Team. Two other Wimsums were sitting at the table. One was holding Sans's phone in his tiny, trembling, thin black hands and on the verge of tears. The other one was looking over the blueprints with a hopeless expression.

"Guys, this is Sans. He'll be working with us," said Mason.

Sans walked up to the table and said, "hey fellas, whats wr—"At the first word he uttered, the Wimsum holding the phone burst into tears and threw himself into the smaller monster's arms. "I c-c-can't!"

"can't what?"

"I-I don't wanna call these guys in Hotland. What if they hate me? What if they think I'm stupid?! They've probably all been to high school and I'm just stupid Ruins trash! They're gonna laugh at me. My God, what am I doing? Can't even make a simple phone call. I'm so worthless!"

"what-no you're not! buddy, don't say that about yourself! i'm sure you can, uh…" he trailed off, not sure how to console the self-deprecating monster. The one sitting at the table wedged his forehead further into his tiny black palms and muttered, "this'll never work on our budget…"

"hey listen to me. it's gonna be ok. you're gonna do fine."

"How would you know that? You don't know about all the times I've screwed up. Did Chief tell you it's my fault the door to the grocery store fell off and broke into a million pieces?"

"whell," he sucked in a breath and channelled the spirit of his younger brother what would paprus say at a time like this? "i don't care about that. I know that anyone can do a good job if they try. and what I saw when I came in here was you trying, really hard. that means you're bound to do a good job. so don't give up, because… I believe in you."

The workers at the table looked at Sans as if that was the most inspiring speech they had ever heard in their entire lives. Mason coughed and cleared his throat, and the others looked at him expectantly.

"You can do it!" he said. He seemed pleased with his contribution.

After work, around 6 pm, the party of four went to the hot dog stand and ordered some spider ciders. They sat around Sans's table and drank and laughed the evening away. The broody Wimsum and the teary one took turns adding coffee, soda, cream, sugar, salt, barbeque sauce, and each type of tea to a mug that had a bit of cider left in it, until they had created a disgusting blend of everything. They played rock paper scissors to decide the victim and the crybaby Wimsum had to chug the entire thing.

ring ring ring

ring ring ring
"he, heya p'pyrus…" Sans answered his phone, half-drunk. "h-hald on, i really can' talk now. 'sthing's almost outta batteries, and that, the thingy i ordered, tha' probs won't get here 'ntill monday… jessa 'few… yea, 'm sorry… take care bro… you too."

"Alright you guys. I'm closing up and it's time for bed," said Frisk. Sans was already fast asleep with his face planted into the table, so she put him in his chair and tucked him in.

"Uh-uh, don't drink and fly you guys," she said and tugged the Wimsums down by their hands. "There you go," she patted them on the backs as they staggered over to the staircase and held the railing on their way down. Then she took the mugs from the table and went to finish cleaning up together with her coworker.

Morning. Mason woke up automatically at the first hint of brightening lights through the window of his apartment. He looked in the mirror and cried at his reflection for a few minutes. Then he took a walk to the waterfalls and sat down near the trickling water streams in the cold, dim room. Breath in… breath out… i'm fat and ugly… he blinked and shook the thoughts out of his head. Closing his eyes again, he continued. Breath in… breath out… He showed up for work in his t-shirt and boots, with his mouth closed in its usual controlled expression.

Work involved removing most of the iron beams in the design plan and getting everything to work with stone masonry and reinforced dirt. "That should do it, I hope they approve it," Mason said, sending the e-mail with the last of the laptop's battery power. "Now we just have to wait for them to survey the land and finish their estimate of the distance."

Sans said, "i wouldn't expect a reply until monday. i've worked with those guys before, they won't touch their e-mail three minutes after 5 o'clock."

"Oh. I guess we'll just have to wait. Wanna grab a cider with us?"

"huh, again? ok, if you want to."

So they went drinking again and sat around Sans's table. The quietest Wimsum whispered something to the mildly-intoxicated skeleton and he nodded. He got up and walked up to the counter. "H-hey, Frisk. you should come join us!" he said.

"Eh, join you? But I'm busy…"

Allens encouraged her too, saying, "You should take a break, human. I'll be fine here."

"Well, if you insist," she smiled reservedly and accepted.

After a few drinks she became the loudest and craziest out of them all. "'nd that'sh how humanz have BABBIES!" she finished explaining and the others said "Ew!" while laughing with hoarse voices.

"H-hic! Hey, Sans…” Mason said with his face half-pressed against the table, grabbing the sleeve of the blue sweatshirt. "How d'you do that Sans…"

"do whut?"

"S-sumiile."

"h-how do I, how do i sumile. like thiis," he said and pulled the corners of Mason's mouth outwards until they stretched across his face in a perfect Sans Smile (TM).

"Wooah!" The other three applauded in amazement.
When it was time for the stand to close, Allens stood by the table looking at the five of them. "Hm… maybe I shouldn't have said that."

After encouraging the three Wimsums on their way back to the market, Allens returned to the table and and put the quilt over Frisk and Sans, who had fallen asleep in the same chair. He put a blanket over them and said to himself, "I'd better go tell Miss Toriel she won't be coming over for dinner tonight."

*bump… b-bump… b-bump…*

Sans stirred and turned on his eyelights. The human was fast asleep next to him. Her head fell into the space behind his back as he sat up. It was almost uncomfortably warm. He climbed over the side of the armrest and felt the cool relief of the sweat evaporating off of his legs.

"heh… poor kid'll have a bad time when she wakes up."

* Stick around
→ * Do not

He wandered away from the restaurant and realized that he was actually all alone with no one talking to him for the first time in over three days. His strained smile relaxed as he buried his hands in his pockets and walked through the winding rooms of glowing mushrooms and ponds with sleeping rocks. He walked down a staircase in a grand entrance hall, and through a long, dark hallway where a cold breeze blew in his face, carrying an earthy scent. He was surprised to see Toriel sitting there in the patch of wilted flowers.

"Oh, Sans! Hello, my friend. You are up very early."

"yep. weird, huh?"

"I have seen that you and Frisk are very busy lately… you must be working hard. I am very proud of you!"

"thanks tori," he said. "you could always help her out too if you get lonely."

"Oh… That's alright. I would probably just get in her way."

They stood in silence for a few minutes. "it's kind of breezy and nice in here," said Sans.

"Yes. I love it here. I come here every day to check if anyone has fallen down."

"fallen down from where? …oh!" he noticed the long hole leading to the Surface. "gee… that musta hurt for that poor kid."

"I don't want to think about that again!" Toriel winced and turned her head while pressing her ears down with her hands.

"sorry."

After another few minutes of silence, Toriel said, "During the summer months, this room is filled with golden flowers… Although it is nice in the winter as well." Sans recalled having had a similar conversation in a similar room, looking up at the sky, together with a different towering goat monster. More minutes of silence passed. He wanted to feel more enthusiastic about hanging out with Tori, but he just couldn't think of any good jokes to say.
When he got back to the hot dog stand, Irene was there talking to Frisk. "You're working today, human? Don't you know it's a holiday today?"

"It is?"

"Yeah! You should come over to our street. I'm having a big party. Everyone will be there! You can bring food too if you wanna be cool."

"That sounds like fun!" said Frisk. She turned to Sans and said, "Hey Sans, Irene's having a party today."

"so I heard. that sounds party nice. whelp, hope you kids have fun," he said and plopped into his chair, ready to relax the day away.

"Don't you want to come too?" asked the green Loox.

"i'll pass. I prefer to spend the weekend dedicated to my hobby of not going to parties."

"We'll have music and dancing."

"is that supposed to convince me?"

Frisk pouted and said, "Sans, come on! Don't be lame. Be a cool skeleton! Like… your brother!"

"nyeh. alright kiddos. just gimme a minute, and i'll be over to deposit the brewskis," he said with a wink.

"Yay!" they cheered.

Sans smiled and looked around the crowd with dim eyelights. He was standing in a wide, dark room, sporadically lit by the multi-colored mushroom lamps. *where did they go?*

He couldn't see too far over the shoulders of most of monsters. Snippets of the conversations of strangers caught his attention, whenever he could make out the words over the deafening music. Every bass hit sent a powerful vibration through his body that threatened to knock him off his feet. A squad of rowdy children ran too close and forced him to dodge. He could smell alcohol on the breath of a lot of monsters. He found himself gazing in no direction in particular, when he suddenly realized that he was staring at a dancing, pink, Loox girl. He wasn't sure if she had been staring back at him when she looked in his direction, but he quickly found himself something else to focus on anyways. Was that white blob a ghost? It looked a little familiar.

*well… i've been standing in this spot for about 15 minutes so I guess I'll walk back over to that other area again.*

By evening, Sans just marched away from the party, not even caring if Frisk or anyone else noticed. He walked back to the entrance of the Ruins. His eyesockets closed and he sighed. The beads of sweat on his skull evaporated into the freezing cold air. The sky above was black with tiny sparkling stars visible in the clear mountain sky.

He plopped down on the grass, not really caring about the melting frost seeping through the fabric of his shorts. The cell phone that he had borrowed at some earlier point tumbled out of his pocket. He picked it up and stared blankly at the contacts display for a few minutes before selecting 'PAPYRUS'.

*Ring... Ring...*
"HELLO STRANGER! THIS IS THE GREAT PAPYRUS SPEAKING! FOR WHAT PURPOSE DO YOU SEEK MY CONSOLE?!"

"it's me."

"SANS! Hello, brother!" Sans could vividly imagine Papyrus's smile deepening.

"heya."

"Did you finally manage to charge your phone?! BUT WHY DID YOU CHANGE YOUR NUMBER?"

"actually i borrowed frisk's. used up all my batteries at work, and still waiting on that adapter…"

"WHAT?! It's true you're actually working hard at something?! SANS I'M SO PROUD OF YOU! I told you you could do it if you try!"

"yep, you sure did. so… what've you been up to?"

"Well I'm actually at home today! I thought I'd give Undyne some time to train without me bothering her! She's SUPER AWESOME AND NICE to me, but I think she might be getting a little TOO obsessed with being nice to me, and plus I didn't feel like following her to Alphys's place to watch kids cartoons, so I gave her some space! But we did lots of great stuff together! We made so much spaghetti! I think I'm getting really good at it! Sans, I've got a really good feeling lately! I feel like any day now, I'm going to find a human! AND THEN I'M GOING TO CAPTURE THEM! And then, when I capture them, I'LL BE SO POPULAR! I will bathe in a shower of kisses every morning! I'm going to have SO MANY FRIENDS! SO MANY FRIENDS THAT I MIGHT EVEN BE ABLE TO CONVINCE ONE OF THEM TO HANG OUT WITH YOU!"

"heh. that sounds awesome. so… what else didja do today?"

"I'M SO GLAD YOU ASKED! Today when I was patrolling the forest, I found a lot of cool little flags in the ground! I have no idea how they got there, but they make really cute decorations! I put some around my puzzles, and then I put one on top of the spaghetti I made you for when you get home!"

"oh no! no, papyrus. don't pull out any more of those, k? just leave 'em where they are."

"Oh. OK IF YOU SAY SO! SO ANYWAY, AS I WAS SAYING ABOUT UNDYNE…" Sans leaned against the wall and listened to Papyrus talk for a long time.

Papyrus lay underneath the covers of his racecar bed, still fully clothed and curled up comfortably on his side. His cell phone lay on the bed, nudged between the sheet and his cheekbone, shining blue light onto his face. "…and then the gingerbread monster took the snowman piece to school with him every day. the snowman made lots of friends, and after a while they started coming to visit him on their way home from school. and the gingerbread monster was very happy because he had made a snowman very happy too. the end."

"Yay! I love stories about having lots of friends! That was great!"

"are you all tucked in now?"

"Yes I am! Good-night Sans! Please come home soon, I miss you!"

"miss ya too bro. sleep tight."
Salads were quickly becoming the most popular menu item. On Sunday, Frisk worked alone. And all she had to cut vegetables with was a pair of scissors. It wasn't that hard for the lettuce and herbs, but the salads with grilled root vegetables on top were more popular than those without. She started prepping an hour earlier than usual, and she still could barely keep up with the flow.

At lunch time Sans and Mason came by and had hot dogs. Frisk was relieved at the easy orders.

"Wow Sans, your new friend's got you waking up early enough to actually eat lunch… on the weekend. That's impressive."

"not as impressive as the power of your determination against those vegetables."

"Haha, thanks!"

"hang in there, kid," he said with a wink.

After lunch Sans disappeared to somewhere else for the rest of the day. Frisk did not have a moment to rest. Even when there were no customers, she was busy catching up on cleaning. In the afternoon she saw an unusual quarrel between monsters. The teal Loox and the brown Migosp were together again. A lighter brown Migosp came along, pounding her feet rather furiously. "There you are, Mabel! I told you I didn't want to see you together with that boy anymore! We're going right home right now to have a word with your father!"

"Grandma, stop it! You're making a scene!"

"No, the one making a big fuss is you! Now stop arguing with your elders and come home with me, right now!" the older monster said and grabbed the granddaughter by the wrist. She dropped her hot dog on the floor and pouted as she was dragged off down the hall. She shot an apologetic glance at her friend before she went out of sight.

"Sorry, you'll have to wait a minute," Frisk said to the green Froggit who has next in line. "Ribbit," he croaked. She picked up the squished hot dog off of the floor. "I'll eat that," said the teal Loox.

"Seriously?" Frisk raised her eyebrow in a slight expression of disgust. "I can make you a new one. Think about how many bare feet have walked over that spot today."

"Don't care," he said. "My momma says a little dirt's good for you."

"Well, if you insist. Here, enjoy. If you get sick I'll give you free food for a week."

"You're on, human."

"That wasn't a challenge!"

"I'm kidding," he said as he hopped onto the counter stool. "I just really feel like eating a squished, dirty hot dog right now… pretty accurate representation of how I'm feeling at the moment."

Frisk finished up two grilled chicken salads and gave them to a pair of white Wimsums, and then the green Froggit asked for a spider cupcake. She sighed when there was finally a pause for her to lean her elbows on the counter. The teal Loox said, "One of those days, huh?"

"Yeah."

After work she went over to Toriel's kitchen where they had snail-and-chicken hamburgers for dinner. Sans said, "want some bbq?" Frisk nodded and tipped the bottle over her burger. The cap fell
off and sauce poured all over her plate. She put the bun back on and picked it up and took a bite as if nothing weird had happened.

"so, how was your day?" said Sans.

"fine," Frisk said with her mouth full and her lips coated in barbeque sauce. A pair of teardrops rolled down her cheeks without her permission. Toriel hugged her and Sans patted her head.

"There there, my child," Toriel cooed.

"it's gonna be ok," said Sans and stroked her hair. She nodded. He kept patting her head until it stopped being comforting and started being annoying.

"Mmph," she grumbled as her hair started to get frazzled. "Saaans, I'm fine."

"it's ok," he said and kept messing up her hair.

"Stahp," she said and started to squirm and giggle.

The next morning, Frisk was using her scissors to cut up strips of vegetables for the day as usual, and Sans was leaning against the counter across from her, resting his head in his hands. Snip. Snip. Snip.

"huh…" he said. "that looks like a pretty slow way to go about things. papyrus and undyne usually just punch all of their veggies in one blow."

"Oh, I didn't know they have claws too."

Sans tilted his head. One of them must have been missing something there.

She sighed. "I don't have any proper knives to cut with. Toriel doesn't have any in her house, and I haven't been able to find any for sale to order from the capital."

"huh. well, if i recall correctly, they did collect a lot of scrap iron to melt down a couple 'o years ago… so you're sayin' if you had a knife, you'd be able to cut those things faster?"

"Well, duh! At this rate I might have to get rid of the salads. But everyone seems to love them, so I don't want to."

"hmm…" Sans put his hands in his pockets and stood up a bit straighter.

"What are you doing?"

His eyellites flickered and a small white object dropped onto the counter. Frisk took it curiously. It looked like a knife made out of bone. She tried using it to cut the carrot-flavored cube.

"It's really dull," she said, sliding the wedge uselessly against the orange material.

Sans said, "yeah, it's a work-in-progress. but, knife try huh?"

He tried again. The next one was super crooked, and not even worth testing. The one after that had a blade that was sharp, but the size of a fingernail. The next one was too brittle, and the tip of the blade snapped off, hitting Frisk in the face below her eye. Toriel healed Frisk and hugged her and gave Sans a look of disapproval before returning to her house. The next blade was way too thick and Frisk couldn't drive it through the food easily. The next one cut well, but caused a scary, bubbling, pink goo to spawn on the surface of the food. "gee, what did that vegetable ever do?" Sans wondered. A pile of his failed attempts to conjure bone knives built up on the edge of the counter. After a while he
finally made one that she was satisfied with and gave her three of them. With the new tool in her hand, she was able to cut all of the carrot into perfect thin strips in record time.

"Wow, it worked! Thank you so much!"

"anytime kid. next time you're stuck with something, just ask for help."

"Ok!"
Papyrus Fights a Bulldozer

Visage adjusted the red cap resting between his horns. He peered out over the small crowd of monsters in yellow hats. They were gathered outside his school on the eastern wall of the marketplace. "Greetings, young people! What are you all doing out here?" said the elderly teacher. "Class does not start until 4 o'clock!"

"Ahem. Good morning, Master Visage. We're here to start excavation," said Mason. "Have you cleared out the building yet?"

"Why on Earth would I want to clear out my building?"

"And why under the Sun, do you want to do that?! It's a perfectly fine building with very nice classrooms for students to practice shooting fireballs! Among other things."

"I know," Mason admitted. "But I want it to be a tunnel now. So... please start packing up your office ok?"

"But, this school has served as a sanctuary of learning in the Ruins for over 120 years! It has stood here since the headmaster before me! How can you expect me to just stand aside and let you destroy it?!"

"Don't worry," he reassured the old teacher. "We'll help you move the desks."

"That's beside the point! You can't just waltz in here and kick me out of my own building! As an eyeball, I am outraged! Hey, what do you think you are doing over there?! Stop marking up my wall!" he pointed and yelled at the purple Wimsum hovering along the stone in a steady descent, tracing a vertical line with a thick, black marker. A short skeleton monster wearing a green hat and a blue jacket was aiming a tripod with a leveling laser at the wall.

"Look you old Loox," said the disgruntled Wimsum standing next to Mason. "We already told you all about the plan last week. Stop being such a pain in the eyeball!"

"What are you talking about, you flying bedsheet?! This is the first I've heard anything about this!"

"I gave you a letter last week, ya wrinkled old tennis ball! You looked at it and said it was 'fine'..."

"Oh, that's what that was! I thought you were asking me for feedback on your GOD-awful handwriting, and I said 'fine' just to make you feel better. Did you really expect me to make out a word of that, you one-winged mattress-protector?!" As the insults flew back and forth, the laser operator had pulled out a little memo pad and was taking notes.

"Then you shoulda asked if ya didn't understand it, you impious, walking test—"

"Now, now Miles, yelling at him isn't going to solve this," Mason tried to calm them down. "Ahem. Mr. Visage, we've been planning this tunnel for a long time now and we really would like to get started today. Everyone will be very happy if you stand aside."

"Who in the Underground is 'we'? Who decided all of this?"

"I did," said the voice of a pig-tailed spider baker. She walked through the crowd and stood before
Visage, carrying the Dummy in her arms. "With the support of all of the merchants in the Ruins. They are all looking forward to the expansion."

"Dummy, not you too?! But don't you like my classes?! Don't you want to guide eager young minds on their journey to creating perfect, beautiful, blazing balls of fire?!" Dummy wiggled in Buffet's arms. He somehow ended up by the side of the schoolteacher, gazing with sparkling black eyes.

"Don't be unreasonable now, Dummy," said Buffet. "You know how important this project is. Remember when the last human fell? Do you really think we will survive another disaster without help from the outside?"

"Well…" Visage seemed to remember something and contemplated for a few moments. "If this all means so much to you, why don't you get the order from a higher authority?"

"And who is that supposed to be?" said Miles. "Who has the authority around here?"

Buffet and Mason turned to the smiling skeleton in blue. "what?" he said.

Not too long ago, Allens had informed Frisk of his plans for the coming weeks. "Mr. Mason asked me to help out with the excavation. He said they need like, all the ice- and fire-casters on deck. It's supposed to take about two weeks to dig through."

"Ok, I'll have to hire someone else to fill in for you then."

And so Frisk was sitting at the table across from a brown monster with pink stripes. He almost looked a little like her. "So, Mr.… Brown… tell me a little bit about yourself."

"Well, I live in the Ruins, and I'm a Migosp. And… well, that's pretty much it."

"Ok. Do you like… to cook?"

"Cooking? Y'mean that stuff my girlfriend does before we eat dinner every night? Uh, I think I tried it a few times."

"Ok, well that's a good start. You'll have to try a lot of new things if you work here," she nodded. "How do you feel about… customers?"

"Well, customers are, I guess they're good. I mean, can't have a store without 'em, right? But, I've been wondering though… do some of your customers, like… live here? I mean who's that weird guy who's always here?"

"What weird guy?"

"Y'know, that little guy with the blue shirt… I mean does he live here? He just kinda showed up. Where'd he come from? Don't you think he's kinda creepy?"

"who's kinda creepy?" said a voice behind the interviewee. He turned with a start to see the skeleton monster in question.

"I-uh-I was talking about… some other guy!"

"Mr. Brown, Sans is my buddy. If you don't like him you're gonna have a bad time working here," she said while raising her eyebrow.

"I-uh, gah! Sorry for wasting your time!" said the embarrassed candidate. He stood up, bumping the edge of the table which caused a bit of coffee to splash out of the mugs on the table, and ran away.
down the hall.
"did I interrupt something?"

"Nah, just a job interview. It's ok though, I have a lot more coming up. So… are you taking a break?"

"nope, just on my way over to tori's," he said and walked away towards the house.

"No?" She said, confused by his reply.

"Hiya, Frisk!" said a familiar, friendly voice.

"Oh, hi Irene! You wanna work with me?"

"Yeah!" Irene sat down in the chair that Mr. Brown had just left and took a sip from the abandoned mug of coffee.

"That would be pretty cool…" Frisk said, smiling. "But you aren't gonna bring those guys with you every day, are you?" she pointed to the two Moldsmals idly jiggling next to them.

"I can't?"

"Err… well, maybe if they could just stand in the hall in the same place all day…" She hesitated as the jello monsters bounced closer to her knees and threatened to coat everything they touched in slime. "And not shoot any bullets!" The Moldsmals were beginning to exhibit the symptoms of excitement, Frisk and Irene appeased their demands for petting as each girl rubbed the rubbery skin of one of the pudding blobs. Toriel and Sans passed by and snickered at them. Frisk blushed and stood up to get a towel from the stand. "I'll… let you know my decision later, k?"

"Ok," Irene said, standing up and wiping her hands on her skirt.

Frisk had been waiting for the next monster to show up for a while now. She stretched her arms across the table, drumming with her fingers and leaning her chest into the rounded edge of the wood. She tilted her head on the table and noticed the odd party of monsters coming in for a lunch break. Mason, Miles, and Sans were a daily sight, but this time they were joined by Toriel, Buffet, and even the old magic teacher Visage. After they had ordered their food, the group of six sat down around a table. Frisk curiously listened in on the meeting.

"So, what do you think, miss Toriel?" said Mason.

"Just Toriel is fine. Now, I understand the importance of your tunnel project, but it mustn't come at the expense of our children's education."

"My class is scheduled to begin in four hours," Visage urged. "Where am I supposed to teach if you destroy my building?"

"My friends, have you considered your own responsibility to Mr. Visage's students? After all, you are determined to put their interests aside for your own."

"It is in their interests as well," said Buffet. "True, business owners such as myself plan to benefit directly from access to the larger market, but if you consider what opportunities will be open to the young students soon, this is really a project for everyone!"

"Nonetheless, you can't make excuses for the sacrifice you are asking others to make for you. If your
hearts are truly set on this, it is only fair that you do everything in your power to help Mr. Visage and his students to continue their classes. Have you prepared a suitable compensation?"

"Yes, we have…" Buffet started. "Would you like to renegotiate that?" she asked the old schoolteacher.

"I don’t really care how much it is," said Visage. "All that matters is the survival of the institution. I can sleep in a box for all I care! Tell you what—build me a new school! Yeah, that's it! If you build a new school, you can do whatever you please with those dusty ol' classrooms. I don't care if it's a lot of money or a little. However much it costs for the new school is the right amount!"

"I like this plan as well! Do go on," said Toriel.

"It's going to be a while before we can get started on that though," said Mason. "We need to finish the current project before we think about taking on a new one."

"Yes, HCT is already on our payroll," said Buffet. "We can't slow down the tunnel development. Plus, the community will benefit more by having one piece finished, rather than two things half-way built for four times as long."

"Don't you mean twice as long?" said Toriel.

"No," said everyone else at the same time.

"Oh… well then, shall we decide on a temporary location for the classes until the new school is built?" Toriel suggested.

"That could work. What do you have in mind, ol' gal?" Visage leaned in with curiosity.

"You know, I've thought of becoming a teacher myself for a long time now…"

"You have?! You, Toriel, Caretaker of the Ruins? Teaching children… your magnificent fire magic?!" Visage's eye widened as far as his tired old lid could allow it.

"W-well, I was thinking more along the lines of language or history… but, whatever they want to learn I suppose. There is quite a lot of empty space in the yard here…" Visage nodded enthusiastically.

Frisk lifted her head up and straightened her posture as she saw the indigo Loox with the dark eyeball approach the hot dog stand. "Heeey," he drawled. "Loox Eyewalker here. Sorry I'm a tad late." He offered her a quick handshake and slumped down in the chair across from her.

"You were supposed to be here 40 minutes ago," said Frisk, irritated. "I've been waiting to get this over with so I can actually manage to eat some lunch before the next guy shows up."

"Yeah, well, got caught up in traffic, y'know how it is."

"There's no traffic here, Ivan."

"Ack, I'm sorry, ok?! I had to help my mom with stuff!"

"She can handle it herself. Come to your appointments on time, next time! You can't expect me to believe that your mother would force you to do chores with her rather than going to your job interview on time?!"

"Heh, human please. I could easily get hired anywhere I want. You should be grateful I decided to
show up at all just to make you happy. If only you'd try a little harder to sell this job to me, instead of complaining, you mighta had a shot at getting’ me."

"Ah, I see. Poor little me."

"So… do you think I'll get the job?"

"No way. Stop wasting my time and go home!" she snapped. The group of monsters at the other table paused their discussion to snicker at them. "hey kid, ever heard of Mercy?" said Sans. The others laughed. "you know you can Spare them when their names are yellow, right?"

"Not when they are tardy," said Buffet, prompting more giggles from the group.

Ivan had just about gathered enough of his dignity for the walk home, but he growled at the laughter of the other monsters. He turned and glared. "H-hey, are you guys picking on me?" he said darkly. He blinked and his eye started to water with a soapy substance.

Sans stopped laughing and put his hand on Frisk's shoulder. Everyone's attention was on him, expecting him to say something cool. So he said, "hey pal, don't start with this again. didn't you hear the human tell you to go away? quit being such an eyesore." Ivan turned a slightly lighter shade of purple before promptly making himself scarce.

Toriel pinched her fingers together and tried not to smile too hard. She stood by Frisk's side and said, "Come my child, won't you take a little break and sit down with us?" The large goat monster put the young human in her lap and hugged her as she squirmed and looked embarrassed in front of the other monsters. "Toriel, come on!" she giggled.

Sans pushed his plate towards her with a hot dog that had only one bite taken out of it. "here, you can have mine. I'm full." Addressing Toriel and Visage, he said, "so you guys'll work that out from here, right? 'k then, glad we got all of the arguments out of the way," he let out a sigh of relief.

finally. some time to relax... no more drama to bother me, Sans thought as he kicked back in his armchair, time to catch some sweet z's.

Ring... ring.

Allens picked up the cell phone from its charger on the countertop, where a piece of paper labeling it as the 'office phone' had been taped to the wood. "Yo," he called across the room. "Sans, it's for you!"

The skeleton caught his balance on the edge of his seat, hands clasped in front of him as the z he was trying to catch floated up out of his grasp and disappeared. "coming!"

It was a beautiful day in Snowdin Forest—mild, clear, and just a little bit breezy. Squirrels were chattering, early-winter mushrooms were fruiting… It was a perfect day for constructing puzzles! The forest sentry Papyrus stomped through the crunchy, settled snow. After weeks of evaporation, it was only ankle-deep around his red boots, and he could easily run if he wanted to. But he had some large panes of glass to carry, and even though the paper packaging said 'shatter-proof', he didn't want to take any chances.

The snow was never quite as sparkling white as it was in picture books. Soft magical lighting shone from a layer above the pathways and reflected off of the icy ground, coloring the world a dull blue. But those living here were accustomed to it. Their minds could fill in the suggestion of a cloudy day
on a snowy mountainside, as long as they didn't accidentally glance up at the wispy gray, low-hanging clouds, or the lifeless cave walls whose darkest shadows were pitch-black.

Papyrus greeted the guards with friendly smiles as he walked by. "HELLO GREATER DOG!" he said and pet the obediently sitting white dog head poking out of a huge kneeling suit of armor. The dog head barked twice and the giant creature rolled over into a snowpuff as Papyrus continued on his way. "HELLO LESSER DOG!" He said as he passed a bipedal dog working on a sculpture of itself. The Lesser Dog gave a "woof!" in response and continued its artistic endeavors. "HELLO NICE CREAM GUY!" "Hi Papyrus." "HELLO BLIND DOGGO!" "G'Morning!" The mask-wearing dog hastily shifted to sit more upright at his station and held the dog treat he was smoking under the counter. Papyrus continued on his walk further and further away from town, coming to a small clearing on the path. He observed the well-crafted sentry station as he passed. He pondered who could have built that. Oh yes—it was that soon-to-be very famous Royal Guardsman—none other than himself, the Great Papyrus!

But, little would the legend-writers of the future know that before he had risen to glory as Captain Undyne's second-in-command, he had been a master puzzle builder! He put the glass panes down next to his brother's abandoned sentry station, among a growing pile of building supplies and tools and boxes of items. Down the path just beyond the station was a small bridge closing the gap over a pit in the ground. A wooden gate framed the bridge and the edges of the cliff, creating a gap between thick, vertical beams of wood for the traveler to pass through. On the other side of the bridge, Papyrus had already cleared out and smoothed a large rectangular area of the ground.

Papyrus hooked the finger of his red glove underneath the cover of the book sitting on the counter, Advanced Puzzle Construction for Critical Minds. The pages fell open to a bookmarked diagram showing how to install a dungeon door. A slight breeze came along and blew the pages over his hand. "Nyeh!" Papyrus summoned a pair of bones to clamp the book against the table and make it stay open. "Nyeh-heh-heh!" He smiled, filled with determination.

Many hours later, he stepped back and flicked a bead of sweat off of his brow. "Nyeh-heh-heh-heh! This puzzle will be sure to stump the human! They will be baffled! I'll have to try really hard not to give away the answer!" There was now a door in between the gate columns that were touching the bridge, so one would have to solve the puzzle in order to proceed. He had added an inner square of polished wooden floor inside the larger puzzle space. This area was encased in a large glass box, like a museum exhibit. On the side of the box, there were two separate openings. Each opening was connected by a wide pipe to the inside of the box. One of the pipelines led down into the ground. The other led up the wall, along the ceiling, and ended in an opening pointing down over the center of the display area. There were a bunch of strange items lying on the ground inside the puzzle area. Some resembled simple geometrical shapes, and others looked like everyday objects, but each item was unique from the others and they all looked about the right size to insert into one of the pipes.

"I'll leave the door unlocked until it's finished! I don't want anyone to get stuck! Nyeh-heh!" He cackled proudly and put his hands on his hips, admiring his work. He tapped on the open page of a notebook in his hand with some diagrams and sketches on it. "All that's left is to add the programming to make it do what I want! NOW HOW DO I—oh..." His shoulders slumped as his gaze fell on the empty sentry booth. "Sans does that part."

The next day, he went over to Undyne's house and told her about what he was working on. "Hm? How do I program my puzzles? That's EASY! ALPHYS DOES IT FOR ME! We're goin' over there right now, AND YOU'RE NOT GETTIN' OUT OF IT THIS TIME!" She roared and kicked open her door.

"PLEASE DON'T SUPLEX THE SKELETON!"
"NGAAAH!" Undyne held Papyrus above her head with both arms, which turned them both into a towering mass of doom as they ran through waterfall. Children, ghosts, and wild snails zoomed out of the path of the two 6-foot-tall monsters as the captain's heavy platemail boots stomped through the marsh and into Hotland. The whole area was glowing red from lava. Panting, she dumped Papyrus onto the ground in front of a large, orderly facility right on the main path.

"HMM… A MYSTERIOUS SCIENCE HOUSE," said Papyrus, scratching under his chin.

"THAT'S ALPHYS'S HOUSE!" said Undyne. "HEY, WHY DON'T WE CALL EVERYONE OVER AND WATCH ANIME?!"

"ANIME? ISN'T THAT A KIND OF CARTOON FOR SMALL CHILDREN?" Papyrus said as he got up.

"OH MY GOD! ANIME ISN'T JUST FOR KIDS! IT'S DEEP! IT'S EMOTIONAL!"

"H-hello?" said a small, nervous voice from behind the door.

"IS CRYING LIKE A BABY HOW YOU EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS?!!"

"Ummm…"

"IT IS IF THAT'S HOW ANIME MAKES ME FEEL!!"

"H-h-hi? I-is that…?"

"OH RIGHT. WE'RE AT ALPHYS'S HOUSE!" Undyne stepped in range of the automatic doors and they slid open. "HI ALPHYS!"

"O-o-o-oh. My god," a yellow dinosaur monster wearing a white lab coat and glasses stood in the doorway. She stood in a bent-over posture and was shaking with so much anxiety that she was nearly biting her fingers off. "U-Undyne?! I didn't expect you to come over! I haven't showered, I'm barely dressed, it's all messy, and… o-oh, wh-h-ho are y-you?" she seemed to cower backwards before the tall cape-wearing skeleton.

"HELLO! I AM PAPYRUS."

"HE'S MY FRIEND, I BROUGHT HIM OVER HERE TO MEET YOU."

"ARE YOU REALLY DR. ALPHYS, ASGORE'S ROYAL SCIENTIST?!"

"I-i am, but—"

"WOW! SO YOU MADE METTATON TOO?!"

"Y-yeah, I did, b-but c-could you—"

"WOWIEE! THAT'S AMAZING!"

"HEY PAPYRUS, YOU SHOULD WATCH ANIME WITH US. I BET YOU'LL LIKE IT MORE THAN METTATON'S SHOW."

"C-could you guys—"

"NO WAY UNDYNE! I ADMIT I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN ANY ANIME, I MEAN MAYBE I ACTUALLY WOULD LIKE IT! BUT IT'S NOT BETTER THAN METTATON!"
"UNLESS—"

"THEY MADE AN ANIME—"

"ABOUT METTATON?!", They said simultaneously.

"You guys are hurting my ears!" Alphys shouted as loud as she could. Papyrus and Undyne stopped talking and looked at her, stunned. She looked at them in shock at her own outburst. She covered her mouth with her hands and started to tear up.

"W-wait, Alphys!" Undyne reached for her shoulders.

"I-I'm sorry I yelled at you…"

"It's OK Dr. Alphys! You're great at yelling!" Papyrus said encouragingly.

"Alphy please don't cry! Here, punch me as hard as you can, wherever you want! Then you'll feel better!" Undyne stood with her arms wide open awaiting punishment.

"Me too!" Papyrus said and imitated Undyne.

"N-n-no! I-I don't wanna p-punch you guys! I-I'm fine," she sniffed. "Just uh, c-c-come in, ok?"

"So uh, w-what did you come over here for?" Undyne and Papyrus stared at each other in confusion. Alphys stammered and spoke in a rush, "N-not that you need a reason, I-i mean if you don't have a reason than it's ok for you to just hang out but if there's something you wanted to do here then you can tell me I mean… uh… h-heh…"

"Why did we come over here again?" Papyrus asked Undyne.

"I dunno," Undyne shrugged.

"M-maybe you… is there something you n-need help with?" Alphys suggested.

"OH YEAH THE PUZZLE!" "PAPYRUS YOUR PUZZLE!" They exclaimed. They caught the Alphys's wince and exclaimed more quietly, "Sorry!" Papyrus explained more to them and showed them his notebook.

"Damn Papyrus… this is actually really cool," Undyne said, looking through his sketches. "W-wow, it's really creative!" said Alphys. "So here, uh, these two pieces will combine?"

"Yeah!"

"And then they grow like this…” Undyne traced the logic on the page with her finger.

"Yeah!"

"B-but, if they don't have that p-piece then it opens up the other route," Alphys added.

"YES!"

"L-let's go to my computer," she said. "It should be simple enough to write the logic in Puzzle Maker…” Alphys opened up a development program on her computer and started writing the script for them. They tried to follow along. Undyne was the first to get bored, and after 15 minutes she went to sit on the couch and play some video games. 20 minutes later Papyrus nodded off and caught himself just before his head fell down onto the Royal Scientist's typing fingers. Alphys said it was
OK, so Papyrus joined Undyne on the couch and started beating her at the video games.

Another fine day. Forest sentry Papyrus was once again walking along the path away from town.

"HELLO GREATER DOG!" He called and gave the Greater Dog a magic bone to distract it from following him.

"HELLO LESSER DOG!" He waved at the smaller dog monster and its snow sculpture. "IT'S REALLY COMING ALONG," he encouraged.

"HELLO NICE CREAM GUY!" "Hi Papyrus!"

"HELLO BULLDOZER!" he yelled cheerily. He smiled at the crowd of monsters gathered around his sentry station as he passed.

He finished screwing in the computer chip into its hidden panel in the puzzle's framework. "Now, I should test it to make sure it works properly!" He was about to replace the panel over the computer chip and turn on the puzzle, when he heard a sound in the distance going beeeep… beeeep.

"What… WHAT WAS THAT?!" He jumped up and sprinted back to his sentry station. "STOOOOOOOP!" he yelled and jumped in front of the station. He stood fast before the large yellow machine and the 6 monsters on the ground wearing orange hats.

*Papyrus blocks the way!*

"Whaddaya think yer doin', skullhead?!" yelled the machine operator, a purple tentacle-head girl wearing a red backwards-facing cap.

"Outta the way, you idiot!" yelled the leader standing on the ground, a black coffee wisp with a white cotton-ball mustache.

"I, the Great Papyrus, will not let you destroy my sentry station!" Papyrus declared.

"It's just a cardboard box, ya big dweeb! Get out of my way!" yelled the girl in the machine.

"Foolish Hotlanders! This isn't just ANY cardboard box! It's a masterwork of hybrid paper-pasta engineering! Every joint is hand-stitched together with sturdy screw-shaped rotini! IT'S MADE… OF CARDBOARDHYDRATES!" One of moles started to laugh a little, but a diamond-head nudged his shoulder to get him to stop. "This booth is far more than would appear to you who are unlearn-ed in the ways of the forest guard! It is the very the center of my operations! A haven of respite for my daily patrols to protect this precious winterland and all of the Souls who dwell within!"

The bulldozer operator and the leader shared an impatient look. The operator put her hands on the controls again and started to inch the machine forward.

"HALT, BULLDOZER!" The bulldozer started to lower its wide blade. "HEY, QUIT MOVING WHEN I'M TALKING TO YOU!" Papyrus summoned a sturdy wall of bones in front of the machine, and a light-blue attack over the control panel, preventing her from progressing.

"What the hell man!? Let me do my fricken job!" she shouted back.

"NO! SANS AND I MADE THIS TOGETHER!"

"Oh my god! Are you his stupid brother?! SANS IS THE LEAD ENGINEER ON THIS
"WHAT?" Papyrus grew eyeballs out of shock. "NO! YOU'RE LYING! SANS WOULDN'T DO THIS!"

And so, having removed himself from the presence of other people to an empty hallway in the Ruins, Sans found himself on the phone with a distressed brother. He kept the lights in his eyes on, however dimly, for his own sanity as he lightly held the clunky old cell phone to his ear cavity.

"heya. what's up bro? …huh?! what's wrong?"

"Sans, there's a bunch of mean guys trying to tear down my sentry station! They won't back off! What do I do?!"

"uh… let them?"

"WHAT?! It's true, you're in on it too?! I can't believe you would do this!"

"wait! papyrus… it's not like that… you see, they're uh… they're not really destroying your sentry station, they're just…"

"They're what, brother?!"

Sans felt the sweat bead on his head, hearing the accusing tone.

"They're building you a new one!"

"Oh… Really?!"

"yeah!"

"You mean… they're adding the southeast-coast-style star-chef kitchen I always wanted?!"

"ahem. YES. THEY ARE." The Hotland Construction Chief heard Sans's voice through the phone and rubbed his fingers against his forehead. You cannot be serious...

"Even the stone oven?!

The wisp tried to get a line in saying, "Do we really have t—"

"YEA. COURSE THEY ARE, BRO. so you ok now?"

"Yeah. I guess so!"

"that's great! hey, so… maybe you could help 'em out a little for me?"

"Oh! You want me to apply my masterful decorating skills when it's done?!

"uh… sure!"

"I can, really?!"

"You have got to be kidding m—"

"YEA PAPS, 'COURSE YOU CAN."

"Yay!" Papyrus cheered happily.
"besides that, can you make sure the dogs don't bother them while they're working? can ya handle that?"

"Yes! I can do that easily!"

"remember, the faster we finish this, the sooner I can come home."

"Oh! In that case! I, the Great Papyrus, will make SURE that NOTHING GETS IN THEIR WAY!"

"awesome. thanks bro."
Frisk sat at the interview table and stretched out her arms while interlocking her fingers together. *Ah, finally. It's quieted down and I can meet with the rest of the applicants in peace. No more annoying friends to bother me. Or?* She blinked and regarded the Wimsum sitting across from her.

"Ah, finally. It's quieted down and I can meet with the rest of the applicants in peace. No more annoying friends to bother me. Or? She blinked and regarded the Wimsum sitting across from her. *Wait a minute, isn't he…"

"Monroe? You want to work here?" *Doesn't he already work in construction?"

"Ahem, yes." *He still has his hard-hat on…"

The purple Wimsum fiddled with the ruffled edges of his skirt-like body and peered out from under the brim of his hat with as much confidence as he could muster in his wide black eyes. Frisk asked him some standard interview questions and smiled politely while nodding along at his responses. "… and so, I believe you should hire me because I can work quickly and reliably. I will strive to learn everything quickly and not make any mistakes, which I know is important for you to uphold the reputation of your brand during the coming busy period. My past experience in construction demonstrates that I can handle working in a stressful environment, while taking on a lot of responsibility. If you give me a chance, I won't let you down."

*That was actually a pretty good speech though… She tilted her head and asked, "Is this a prank?"

Monroe broke into giggles and he said, "Yes."

Frisk chuckled lightly to herself as Monroe went back to his own job. *Ok then, I guess that was kind of funny. No big deal, the next person should be a regular, ordinary applicant…* Her brow knitted as Buffet the Spider Baker walked across the room and sat down in the seat across from her. She smoothed out her dress and adjusted one of her pigtails with a little twirl of her hand.

"Are you… serious?"

"Well of course I am serious, my dear. Just have a look at my resume—I've got a whole *web* of references!" Buffet said while handing Frisk a piece of paper.

"Huh…” Frisk tried to take the paper from her. Instead of letting go, the spider woman pinched her end as the human tugged on it. The white paper unexpectedly unraveled into a long string of spider silk. "Gaah!" she flinched and pulled her hand back in surprise. She shoved her chair backwards with her thighs as she stood up. "Can you people *please* stop bothering me and let me look for some actual employees?!"

"Oh Frisk, don't be so strung-up! If you hire me, I'll bake you my new recipe for hot dog brood."

"Hot dog… brood?"

"Yes. It's like hot dog bread, but it's more *egg*-cellent!"

"Grr!" Frisk clenched her fists by her sides, while Buffet and some of the onlookers laughed.

After a few minutes, the next interviewee came in and sat down in the chair and folded his arms behind his head. *NO! she thought.*

"heya… you look frustrated about something," he said, barely hiding his chuckle.
"Gee, I wonder what that could be!? Couldn't possibly be because of who is sitting across from me right now!"

"hey, kid, that's no way to greet an old pal. i'm sitting here just like all of the other applicants. don't ya believe that everyone deserves a chance?" Frisk sighed and composed her expression.

"Look, I get it… but I'm really trying to get some work done here. Don't you have anything better to do?"

"who says i'm not here to get anything done?"

"Like what? You want me to pat you on the back and say ha ha ha, very funny Sans, how original!"

"Is that the first question?"

"Are you sure you want to play this game with me? I think you're really not gonna like what happens next." Heh, I'm gonna ask him all the hardest and most deeply personal questions possible…

"oh… so my life just a game to you? if that's how you feel, then…"

"Wha, that's not what I meant!"

"i guess we never were friends…" His expression made her imagine that her heart was a harp, and he was severing its tight strings with a wire cutter, making them rebound and hit her in the face.

"I'm sorry! I'm so sorry, I didn't mean it like—heh wait! Why the hell am I the one apologizing here, when those are the FAKEST tears I've ever seen in my life!"

"they're not fake. i'm crying with laughter, 'cause you're so funny it's teer-ing me apart." Frisk sat dumbfounded, blushing slightly and biting her bottom lip. She stood up and started to wander away from the restaurant, indicating the amount of done she was with this. "getdunkedon," Sans muttered.

"What?"

"nothing."

She sighed while slowly shaking her head. She took a few steps down the empty hallway and saw a white-caped Froggit waiting in the shadow of the wall. "A lovely afternoon, fair lady," he greeted, dipping his posture and lowering his head in some sort of curtsy. Frisk gasped as a green stem grew in length from within his cape and bloomed into a red rose before her eyes.

"Wow! Is that for me?" She wrapped her fingers around the stem and detached it easily from the Froggit. She smiled and said, "That's amazing! What's your name?"

"I go by Sebastian. You must be miss Frisk, the recently fallen human, about whom I have heard a great many things. I have arrived today in regards to your summons for an employment interview."

"Wow…” she blinked and stared at him for a moment. "Oh! I'm so sorry to leave you sitting out here in the dark! I hope you haven't had to wait for too long due to less serious applicants dicking around and wasting my time," she said pointedly.

"eh," Sans grunted as Frisk dragged the chair he was sitting in over to the other table.

"Just gimme a minute and I'll… put this… where it belongs!" she said as she lifted the chair and shook him off into his armchair.
"this is my life now," Sans mumbled through the cushions.

"Fair human, I have not yet seen a creature who possesses such grace as you do in handling skeletal pranksters," Sebastian said, which made Frisk smile and laugh out loud.

"you really think flattery is gonna get you very far, froggy?"

"And how far has it gotten you?" he rebutted. "Flattened into your bedsheets, lying in a garden of yellow carnations." With a hand-wave-like gesture of his cloak, he made a ruffly yellow flower bloom on a short stem that grew right out of Sans's rear end.

"aw, i've been decorated? that's some real nice magic you're petal-ing there, pal. it'd sure be a blooming joy to have you around every day." He plucked the flower from his shorts and winked.

Frisk leaned back with one elbow resting on the counter. "So… are they fighting or joking?"

"I have no idea," said Allens.

"So, Sebastian…" Frisk called. He stopped bantering with Sans and turned his attention to the human in charge. "Is there any particular reason you want to work in food service?"

"The goal is to deliver sustenance, and put a smile on the face of every hungry monster, is it not? 'Tis a charge that I will humbly accept with the deepest pleasure." She took a moment to process what he had said.

"Are you ok with our working hours? You can take some breaks, but what you see on the sign is generally what I do."

"Does a flower tire of the sunlight? Does a fish tire of the sea?" Frisk and Allens looked at each other and smiled.

"Well, you seem like a pretty good guy! The only thing I'm worried about is whether you have the physical capability to do this job. It's pretty important to be able to grab and pick up lots of things. And I don't understand how you can do that…"

"That will be no obstacle for me, my lady," The Froggit said. He closed his eyes and hummed.

Frisk's eyes widened in surprise as a pair of furry arms shot out from inside his cloak, resembling cat paws. He spread the arms apart, materializing a long woven chain of bluebells between them. At the same time, his tiny closed mouth grew into a wide smile matching the shape of the flower chain. He twirled his cat-paw-hands around so that he pinched the ends of the garland, and magically extended his height as he draped it over Frisk's shoulders. The onlookers were impressed and gave him a round of applause.

"Woah, that's so cool!" Frisk said as she smiled and blushed.

"Are you gonna hire him?" asked Allens.

"Yeah! Come on over to Toriel's house tomorrow morning and we'll give it a shot!"

"good luck on your tu-toriels, my friend," Sans added. "if it all works out for you, i'll get to hear even more of your flowery language."

"Thank-you, good sir. I shall do my best to nurture this blossoming opportunity." Frisk was giggling at their exchange.
"great! i'm root-in' for ya, pal. so, you better work hard... 'cause I wouldn't want ya to get nipped in
the bud. especially now, when you've just sewn the seeds of—"

ring ring ring

ring ring ring

"—success..." Sans clicked the answer button and held the phone up to his face. "heya."

"Hey. It's Brew," said the Hotland Construction Chief. "About that kitchen we're adding to the
tunnel station..." Sans sat up straighter in his chair. "My accountant wants to know how much it's
gonna cost. So, think you could e-mail us the plans?"

"the... plans?"

"Yeah, it wasn't in the original design, but you added it in, right?"

"um... yeah."

"So?"

"actually... I just need to make a few, uh... final edits," he said.

"Ok then. Can you send it in soon then?"

"yep, definitely!" He hung up the phone and looked up at Frisk who was scrutinizing his phone call.
"what?"

"Hmm... that expression you're wearing..." she smirked.

"'Tis the expression of one who has not yet begun the task," Sebastian finished.

"Procrastinating again I see," Frisk nodded. Sans didn't respond, but he grabbed his bag and then
took his laptop from where it was plugged into the wall behind the counter.

"Dude, you heading off?" said Allens.

"yea." Sans shrugged and smiled. "don't think i'll get much done here." He enjoyed a cool and
refreshing walk through the Ruins. After a while he found a nice, quiet room to sit in. He let out a
sigh as he leaned against a pedestal and started re-examining the blueprint for the Snowdin Forest
tunnel station. "hn," he grunted as he stretched his arms and wiggled his spine. He jumped as he
heard the sound of glass scraping against stone. He looked up at the bowl of candy teetering
dangerously near the edge of the pedestal. He put it down on the floor and looked back at the papers
and flipped open his notebook to a new page.

An hour later he had filled up the page with doodles of stars, telescopes, perspective-plotted rooms,
and scribbled-out sketches of skeleton faces. He kept taking pieces of candy and eating them out of
boredom until he got a stomach-ache. A pile of six candy wrappers were scattered around the floor
by his side, and he had shoved the bowl into the furthest corner of the room. He started looking over
the schematics again until he got so bored that he fell asleep on the floor. He woke up to the
brightening of the room lights the next morning. "hokay... let's actually try to get started on this." He
turned on his laptop and observed the clock in the corner.

[9:20]

"oh shit, i'm late..." He closed the cover. The next moment, he walked out of a hidden alley in the
marketplace and greeted the others.

Everyone was wearing their safety hats as they dismantled the giant stone wall, while trying to do as little damage as possible to the rest of the architecture. Miles and Monroe hovered in parallel and fired their magical precision lasers along the guidelines. Once detached from the structure, the cut slabs of stone swung from thick ropes of spider silk, controlled by Buffet, who was crawling on the ceiling. One time, a large chunk of stone unexpectedly broke into two pieces. Sans caught the loose slab with his blue magic before it could fly off and kill someone.

Back in his self-designated work room, he lay on his front and tilted his skull from side to side, staring at the empty project file open on his sketch-up application as his eyesockets drooped closed. He caught himself from falling asleep with a jolt. He pulled out his cell phone from his pocket and called Papyrus.

"You want advice on how to design my dream kitchen?!"

"I KNOW I KNOW!" came Undyne's voice. "IT'S GOTTA HAVE A HOT FRIDGE!"

"I THINK IT SHOULD BE AT LEAST THREE STORIES HIGH!" said Papyrus.

"DON'T FORGET THE SPEAR RACK!"

"AND IT HAD BETTER BE DOG-PROOF!"

"YOU SHOULD MAKE THE FLOOR OUT OF ICE TO SAVE ON MATERIAL COSTS!"

"OH MY GOD UNDYNE THAT'S THE BEST IDEA EVER! WE'LL BE ABLE TO SLIDE AROUND IN IT SO MUCH FASTER THAN A NORMAL KITCHEN!"

"OH MA GOD PAPYRUS I HAVEN'T BOUGHT A PAIR OF ICE SKATES SINCE I WAS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL!"

"ME NEITHER, WE SHOULD GO GET SOME NEW ONES! OH AND SANS, MAKE SURE THE COUNTERS ARE AT LEAST 5 FEET TALL OR ELSE CHILDREN MIGHT BE ABLE TO REACH THE KNIVES AND HURT THEMSELVES."

"OK WE GOTTA GO NOW, SEEYA PUNK."

"GOOD LUCK SANS!"

"uh… thanks guys. that was very helpful, bye," Sans said and hung up. *they were yelling so loud into their phone I couldn't understand a word they said.* He sighed and took a look at his laptop screen. He glanced over to the corner, and magicked the candy bowl across the floor towards himself. He popped a white one into his mouth and contemplated.* come to think of it, that was a pretty close call on the site today. maybe I should really get back into practicing my magic more diligently. I mean, someone could get hurt next time if I don't!*

Toriel hummed to herself, walking along through the sparsely populated outskirts of the Ruins. As she turned the corner in the dim corridor, she saw a blue glow coming from the monster candy room. She stopped in the doorframe, hands clasped in front of her dress. Sans was casting long chained patterns of white bones and blue platforms back and forth across the room. All the while he kept up a protective ring of spinning blue bones around himself. He levitated pieces of candy and flung them between the holes in the pattern. Cylinders of white bones appeared around each piece when they landed on the wall. Some thicker white bones appeared and crushed each of the clusters. He suddenly stopped and de-summoned all of the attacks when he heard a pair of soft hands
enthusiastically applauding. The flattened caramels fell down along the edge of the wall.

"tori?"

"Hello, my friend. I didn't mean to interrupt you, please continue."

"uh, that's alright. i'm not really getting anything done anyways."

"Getting what done? Are you developing a new technique?"

"oh, that just now? nah, that had nothing to do with it. I was just, err… exercising a little."

"Hehe, alright then." She offered her hand to him. "Would you like to walk with me?"

"ok."

Toriel's large, fluffy paw closed around Sans's hand and half of his wrist. They walked through the halls and down the staircases.

"so I thought i'd sit by myself in that room, hoping some good ideas would turnip… but as it turns out i'm beet."

"I'm sure you can whip up something if you try, Sans! Dishes not the time to give up!"

"heh!" he snickered. "are you sayin' you got a good counter-argument for me, tori?"

"Hehehe! Really now, my friend," she pulled her warm hand back and Sans reluctantly let go. She scratched her cheek and said, "You know… why don't you just ask Frisk for advice?"

"huh, her?"

"She told me that she has worked in restaurant kitchens on the Surface, mostly with her father. I'm sure she would know what one is supposed to look like."

"yeah well, isn't she kinda busy getting into the swing of things with her new working buddy, though?"

"Don't be silly, Sans! I'm sure she would go out of her way to make the time for you. Why, do you not wish to ask her for help?"

"nah, it's not that. it's just that i kinda annoyed the shit out of her the last couple o' times we spoke. wasn't really planning on asking her for a favor the next minute…"

"Oh ho ho… have you been pranking my sweet child while she's trying to work?"

"hey, I can't help that she's so cute when she's trying to sound dangerous."

"Goodness, you're right! It's so adorable when she tries to act all grown-up! Remember how embarrassed she got when I put her in my lap in front of everyone!?"

"haha, yea! you shoulda seen her last time she got wasted."

"Hehehe!"

Sans glanced around the corner near the hot dog stand. Frisk and the new Froggit were standing together behind the counter. "heya," he said as he walked up to them. "Hey Sans." "Greetings."
“Hey, so… I’ve got some questions for ya.” He twiddled with his fingers as he leaned on the wooden surface.

“For me?” said Frisk. She turned to her new coworker for a moment and said, “I think you’re fine, but just gimme a call if you need help with anything.”

“I shall.”

She sat in her chair at their table with her knees curled up, sipping on a cold drink through a straw as she listened. Sans explained to her about how Papyrus had been upset about having shis sentry station torn down, but the older brother had come up with a brilliant spin on it to make it sound more exciting for him.

“Ah. So basically, you put your foot in your mouth and created more work for yourself.”

“Basically,” he said and shrugged.

“Hmm, I’ve got an idea!” said Frisk. “I might have some photos on my Surface phone that you can use for reference. And I can fill in what else I know from there.”

“Sweet.” A few minutes later, Sans had his things set up on the table and Frisk was flipping through her photos and pointing out some ideas. “I could change the shape of the wall here a little bit,” Sans pondered.

“If it’s going to be built like an igloo, aren’t you going to have to keep the ice blocks insulated from the heat?”

“Oh yeah, we should plan the ovens and the chimneys first… Hey, who’s that guy? You got a big brother or somethin’?”

“Him? Nah, that’s just some guy I used to work with.”

“Huh. I guess some humans just look alike.”

After a few minutes of working together, Sans started to get pretty into the project. He had less and less questions and soon Frisk got up and went back to her job while he typed and clicked and sketched away. Blip! Blip! Sounded the smartphone. “Meh… it’s dead now.” He kept working on his project through the evening. When his laptop ran low on batteries, he moved to the wall behind the counter and the hot dog stand workers had to step over his legs. Frisk brought him dinner. Toriel came by and gave him a cup of red herb tea and some head pats. But he barely moved from his position and kept working on his design until several hours after Frisk had gone to bed.

That same Thursday morning that Sebastian had begun working at the hot dog stand, the Wimsum group was busy moving out all of the furniture and belongings from the school. It was morning, before Frisk’s opening time. Mason asked her, “So, do you still have a lot of extra space in that storage room?”

“Well, I haven’t really filled it all up yet…” she unlocked the door and showed him the large room. On the far end there was a refrigerator, a dishwasher, a counter area where most of the dishes and cups were kept, several crates of food supplies, and a few boxes of other miscellaneous items. There was a long silk rope that stretched across the middle of the room from one wall to the other. The curing sausages were clipped to the silken strand in bundles. All of those things only occupied about one-third of room.

“Oh, great! It’s mostly empty. Would you mind if we put some extra desks in here? It’ll only be
"Err… sure, I guess." She lent him her spare key and went back to focusing on her work. It was almost 11 and a couple of monsters were waiting to order food. All of the tables were decorated with small flower arrangement pieces. *Let's see how this goes…* She thought and curiously watched her new employee handle everything.

A pink Loox girl wearing a white skirt stepped up and said, "Hi can I have a hot dog?"

"You certainly may. And what may I get for you, young lady?" He asked the next monster in line, who was a sky-blue Loox with childish doodles drawn on her thick horns.

"I want a hot dog too!"

"How fortunate that I am capable of cooking two at once then." *Is he gonna be able to keep up this level of charm for the whole day?* Frisk wondered.

Sebastian opened his mouth and stuck out a pale-pink tongue. With the squishy, flexible gel-blob on the tip of his tongue, he picked up two raw hot dogs from their tray and put them on the grill. Frisk’s eyes were wide with shock. He used his tongue to grab the spatula when he flipped the hot dogs, and squeezed the same appendage around the sauce bottles. He held the plates in his orange cat paws as he stretched his body in an hovering arc over the counter so he could reach the short Loox children. And when he took their gold coins, he used a long, tabby cat paw.

To assemble a salad for the next customer, who was the orange Froggit Coco, he used his shorter cat paws to grab the pre-cut ingredients from their bins and put them in the bowl. And then he used his tongue to squeeze the dressing bottles again. Coco paid by using his own deep-red tongue to hand over his gold coins. "Thank-you," he said. Then he hopped away with the salad on his head. Frisk's jaw hung open as her eyes darted from one customer to the next. But no one seemed to notice anything weird or unhygienic. She couldn't make out a single gesture or expression that might have indicated disgust or discomfort. *Froggits are weird…* she thought.

As they ran their food stand, Visage's group of magic students came by and assembled in the yard. During the class, a stray ice blast hit the ceiling. Frisk sighed in relief that it had not hit her or Sebastian instead. But as it began to melt, it dripped over the grill and created a lot of annoying steam. She went to her storage room to try and find something to use as a suitable tool to scrape it off, but tripped over the desks on the way. She rubbed her side as she snuck past the magic class. She emerged from Toriel's house with one of the long-handled gardening tools. A while later, another stray ball of fire flew towards the tables and almost hit a yellow-green Froggit child eating a salad, but Dummy intercepted it. Frisk gasped and stared as Dummy slowly turned his stuffed horse-head towards them. Soot clung to the fabric in his front, and one button eye was hanging off by its threads. Without no further comment, he whirled around and went back to the student group.

"He took that rather well," the white Froggit commented.

"I really don't know if this is going to work out," said Frisk.
Greater Dog chomped down on the bone in his mouth as he bounded across the snow, kicking up flurries as he skidded to a stop in front of Papyrus. "GOOD BOY!" He ruffled the fur on top of the large monster's head. He gave an excited bark in response. Papyrus tried to reclaim the bone, but Greater Dog clamped his jaw down even harder around it. "Nyyeh! Let go!" Greater Dog wagged his tail excitedly and bent his head down with the bone.

"Let me try!" Undyne joined in and tugged the other side of the bone. "Nggah! Come on already! Don't you want us to throw it again?!" Greater Dog nodded his head while growling in a positive tone. "THEN LET GO! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!" The dog bounded out of his armor and ran away from them in a wide arch, spawning dog-made blizzards. Undyne got mad and threw a bunch of spears at him as he passed in front of some trees. "thud thud thud thud!"

"Oh..." They heard a wavering voice. As the snow settled they noticed someone floating against the tree. The Greater Dog and his armor suit both whimpered and hid inside of snow poffs.

"WOAH!" Undyne called. "Y'alright there?!" The white blob hovered beneath the branches. Blue spears pierced straight through its body and buried themselves into the thick bark. An empty black HP bar was displayed above the monster's surprised face.

"Hey Undyne, isn't that your neighbor?! WHAT WAS THEIR NAME AGAIN... UH... SPOOKY BLOO BLOO?!!"

"NAPSTABLOOK I THINK."

"Um... you know you can't kill ghosts, right?" Napstablook said. His eyes were pinned to the ground where a snail had fallen out of the bucket that floated alongside him. "I just lowered my HP because I didn't want to be rude..."

"WHAT'RE YOU DOIN' OUT HERE ANYWAYS?!!" Undyne asked.

"Uh... just heading over to the Ruins—"

"WHAT YOU CAN GO TO THE RUINS?!!" she said. "DO YOU KNOW WHO 'FRISK' IS?!!"

"Oh, the hu—"

"DID YOU SEE SANS?!!" Papyrus asked.

"Uh... you're shouting at me... awkward..."

"Woops, sorry!" said Papyrus.

"Dammit, this keeps happening..." said Undyne.

"I can't help it, Undyne. Whenever we're together, you enrich my masterfully-crafted dialogue with fish-powered amplification!"

"HEY IT'S NOT MY FAULT! YOU EVEN WRITE YOUR LETTERS IN ALL-CAPS!"

"WELL, I NEVER TALKED THIS LOUD UNTIL I STARTED HANGING OUT WITH YOU!"
"OH YEAH, WELL ALPHYS SAID I NEVER WAS THIS SHOUTY UNTIL I STARTED HANGING OUT WITH YOU!"

"ARE WE FIGHTING NOW?!"

"I DUNNO. I GUESS SO! ON YOUR GUARD!" They started fighting and transformed the pristine field of snow poffs into a battleground of bent spears and splintered bone attacks. Napstablook, who had been trying his best to think of a socially-acceptable parting phrase, took the opportunity to leave without anyone noticing.

The hot dog stand was bustling. The line of customers had not slowed down much after lunch, but continued in a steady stream. Luckily, Sebastian had picked up the job very quickly and contributed greatly to Frisk's food preparation speed with his high dexterity. Once she had gotten used to his unusual methods of interacting with the environment, they worked together like a well-oiled machine.

Buffet came up to the counter and gave Frisk a wooden crate covered in a pink-checkered towel. "Here are your cakes dear, just as we made them last time!"

"Thanks a bunch!"

"Make me one too, will you?"

"Yeah."

She placed each dark-brown, custard-shaped cake onto a plate and ladled a streak of vanilla sauce and a blob of chocolate sauce over each one. She topped each plate with a few fresh apple slices. Frisk carried two of the plates to the round table full of familiar faces, while Sebastian carried the other six plates—one on his head, two in his tongue, and one in each of his three cat-paws. He squashed his body to table-height while they distributed the desserts to their friends.

"Hey guys. Thanks for sampling my new recipes! I hope you like it!"

"My child, why don't you take a break and have some too?" said Toriel.

"Can't, too busy. Maybe next time."

Monroe licked some of the dark chocolate sauce off of his spoon. "Mm! It's kind of bitter, but that makes me eat it slowly. It feels rustic and homely... He imagined being a little kid and playing in the dirt on the Vegetoid farms. A torrent of warm rain poured down over the parched earth. Mm! The other sauce makes it all sweet and cozy! His eyes glistened as he enjoyed the combination of the chocolate and vanilla sauces. Oh I forgot that there's cake too... now I'm out of sauce. Woops. He felt a tear trickling down his face as he lamented his mistake.

Miles cut open his cake with a spoon and saw the burst of half-baked chocolate lava come oozing out of the little mountain. His face broke into a rare smile as he ate. "Heh, human sure knows her chocolate." Monroe was sitting next to him and attempting to absorb the remaining leftover streaks of chocolate sauce on his plate against the slices of apple. Sans and Mason already finished theirs and leaned back in their chairs with the white pupils of their eyes transformed into little hearts. "I didn't think I liked chocolate so much," said the heavy Wimsum. "me neither," said the small skeleton.

"These fruits taste quite... nostalgic," said Toriel.

"They are apples, shipped directly from the Royal Apple Garden," said Buffet.
"Oh, really?" said Toriel.

A crashing noise followed by some curse words came from the storage room. "Oh my…" the spider put a hand over her mouth. Sans and Toriel imagined Frisk tripping and shared a look of pity. Sebastian went over and switched tasks with her.

"I'm not clumsy," she sighed in the doorway. "It's just a mess in there!"

"I know that you are as graceful as any, sweet human. But every seed must thrive in its own soil. Therefore let us proceed as makes the job easiest for the both of us."

His speech cheered her up and made her giggle as she went back behind the counter. "Fine then. I suppose you are way better at not tripping over unfair amounts of clutter than I am."

"My dear, I do hope you are considering a third helping hand," said Buffet. "Expanding your menu will be very difficult, as you are now. You are coping admirably, but it's only going to continue on like this during the construction."

"Yeah, and then we'll have even more customers from the forest," Frisk nodded in agreement.

The next morning, Frisk, Toriel, and Sebastian stood just outside of the house. A Migosp with a brown, rectangular body that pinched inwards at the waist shyly stepped out of the doorframe. A pink ruffly apron with a black spider in the middle was tied around her waist, covering her lower half. Her plushy antennae curled and uncurled over her flat head. "Well… what do you think guys?"

"Aw, it's so cute!" Frisk said and hugged her.

"It was made for you, my lady."

"How adorable!" Toriel clapped. "Good luck with your work today, children!" She hugged both of the girls and went back into her house.

"Are you ok? You're all red!" Frisk said as they walked over to the hot dog stand.

"Aheh, I'm fine! She's just really cuddly is all!"

"I know, hehe!"

"You're lucky to be so close to Toriel."

"So… can you hold a knife?" Frisk looked doubtfully at Mabel's brown pincer-claws.

"Yes, I can." The Migosp's claw disjointed and slid down her wrist, revealing a more dextrous hand. She grabbed the bone knife and cut the cucumbers in half length-wise and then into half-moon slices. She cut the large carrot-flavored Vegetoid cube into more manageable chunks. Then she used her claws to shave off thin strips of the orange material, held the strips together like a stack of paper, and scissored her claws through them, causing streams of delicately julienned carrots to rain over the cutting board.

"Wow, that's better than I could do! Make sure your claws are nice and clean when you use that technique."

Mabel blushed at the praise and said, "Ok, I will."

Sebastian swept around the tables, grabbing chairs into the air with his tongue as he used his cat arms to hold the broom. There were some dishes left undone from the previous day, so Frisk took the
opportunity to show Mabel how to operate the dishwasher. They tiptoed around the mess. "It's not usually like this." The monster pressed the handle of the lid down and jumped in surprise at the noise. "Ah, it's loud!" On the way back she forgot to be as careful walking and stubbed her toe on a desk. "Owo… I'm ok, I'm ok…" she grinned at Frisk reassuringly.

Her fidgeting antennae gave away her anxiety as she stood ready to take the first orders at 11:00. Frisk whispered to her, "Look, it's just Sans. He's not even a real customer, so don't worry about what you say." Mabel thought, *What's she talking about?! I'm more nervous BECAUSE it's her friend!*

"hey," he said. "do you have any hot cats?"

The Froggit conjured a branch of thin, five-petaled white flowers out of Sans's nasal hole. Frisk said, "Sans! Don't tease my friend! It's her first day, look how nervous she is! Just make him a hot dog," she said to Mabel with a dismissive wave of her hand.

"O-ok."

*heh, they got so defensive!* Sans thought. He pulled the branch of flowers out of his skull with a slight wince of disgust. "musky…"

"I-is it ready now?" she whispered to Frisk. *Wait, why am I asking? It is obviously ready! But what if I'm wrong?*

"Yeah, it's fine," she said. *I need to be more confident!* Mabel scolded herself internally as she went to drizzle barbeque sauce over the hot dog. But she forgot to retract her claws and snipped the soft plastic bottle in half, drenching the entire plate in barbeque sauce. Her soul did rapid vertical flips, and her face froze in dread. But before she could say anything or attempt to apologize, the short skeleton accepted the plate and beamed with sparkling eyes. "thanks!" Frisk and Sebastian didn't criticize the mistake, but laughed.

Frisk found a pair of old black leather shoes in Toriel's house that she thought might fit Mabel. "They're shaped for human feet, but…"

"Thanks! They fit just fine!" the Migosp said. Huh? She looked at the floor where her footsteps caused crumbles of dried soil to fall out from between the soles of the shoes. She used her claws to pick out the large chunks from the crevices, and then smacked the bottoms together, making a lot more dried, dusty dirt rain down over the floor.

"Oh, sorry! I didn't notice they were so dirty!" Frisk said while sweeping up the dirt. "But you really need some foot protection for this kind of work."

"Yeah, I know. Thanks!"

Undyne observed the excavation sight in Snowdin Forest. The clearing was unrecognizable from before. Piles of snow and dirt were piled high along the treeline. The purple tentacle-headed high schooler operated a crane that pulled up mouthfuls of earth and dumped it on the sides. The diamond-head monster was overseeing a conveyor belt system that helped to handle the excavated material. Two volcano monsters were standing inside the pit and explosively blasted away a huge chunk of the wall with a duo thunder attack. "Woah, wicked sick!" Undyne thought the explosions were awesome. "YOU'RE DOING A GREAT JOB!" She yelled at the Vulkins. They heard her and glowed hot pink in excitement. They involuntarily emitted extra bursts of lava. The lava made the snow evaporate and cloud the pit with steam. The newly formed rocks created additional material for the excavator to deal with.
"Hey, don't encourage my Vulkins!" the black wisp heading the operation yelled back at her. "It's really not very helpful!"

Undyne shrugged and turned to Papyrus. "I thought you said they were building a new sentry station?"

"They are, but I think they have to dig the tunnel first," he said. "Actually… I know that Sans went out of his way to make me like the new station. And I'm… grateful for that and all, but. I get the impression that to these Hotland guys, the building is just an afterthought. All they really care about is the tunnel."

"Well, that's still pretty exciting isn't it? We can go to the Ruins soon!"

"Yeah and I can finally get my brother back," he said with a tinge of longing.

"Don't be sad, ya silly skeleton! You're not allowed to feel lonely as long as I'M here for ya!" she said and playfully punched his arm. He smiled and nodded, "YES CAPTAIN! IT IS BUT A MINOR INCONVENIENCE FOR THE GREAT PAPYRUS!"

"THAT'S THE SPIRIT! Wait a minute…" she said, stroking her chin in deep contemplation. "GREAT PAPYRUS!"

"YES?!"

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?!"

"I think so! 'Cause I'm thinking right now that whatever you're thinking right now… is probably something SUPER AWESOME TO BE THINKING RIGHT NOW!"

"WELL YOU'RE RIGHT PUNK, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WAS THINKING RIGHT NOW! So like, you know how we used to put Sans by the Ruins door right?"

"Yeah!"

"But now the Ruins door is all exploded and stuff."

"Yeah!"

"And once this tunnel thingermabob is finished we can go into the Ruins."

"Yeah…"

"So like, what's the point of having Sans sit back over there? The human's gonna come through this way now!"

"So what if we just put the first sentry station in the Ruins!?!"

"Yeah, if the Ruins is gonna be open, we should just capture them right away as soon as they come in from… wherever they come from! Why wait for them to get all the way out here?! We can stop them before they have the chance to hurt ANY innocent monsters!"

"Undyne about that… I've been thinking… maybe you should put me further ahead instead of Sans. I mean, just imagine if the human came in and my brother found them first. I'm sure he would make a weird first impression!"

"Uh, yeah! I bet he would! But you'll be there to straighten it all out afterwards, right?" Undyne gave
a forced laugh as she looked away to the side. *Not that it really matters what they think of you since they’re going to die anyways... But with Sans first in line you'll never have to see that...*

"Of course I will! But actually..." He scratched his chin and contemplated. "Sans will most likely be sleeping at his station so when the human comes... So I'll probably end up capturing them myself anyways!"

"I'm sure you will..." she mumbled. "So, what do you think about that... Frisk person?"

"Can't wait to meet her!"

"Do you think she's tough?"

"I don't know! She could pick up my brother so she must be a little bit strong."

"Uh, Papyrus... a baby could pick up your brother."

"Maybe she's a strong baby!"

"Strong enough to be our Ruins sentry?"

"I don't know Undyne... Isn't she a little young to be the first in line against the human?!

"But you know, she seemed really straightforward when I talked to her that one time. Maybe we could just tell her to not engage the human and call me right away instead!"

"Yeah, you're right! If Frisk ever found a human, she would probably not do anything reckless, and call us right away! Unlike Sans! He might do something weird like... prank them, or... promise to protect them, or something!"

"BRRR! Can we train already? I'm getting cold just standing around here!"

"OK!"

"Race ya to town! Last one has to... um..."

"DELIVER A FLOWER TO THEIR CRUSH!" Papyrus shouted and took off.

"WHAT?! PHF-NO WAY IN HELL!" Undyne sprinted after him at her top speed.

A customer ordered a classic salad. Mabel took a glance at the menu. "That'll be 8 gold. Thanks!" She put the proper toppings in one of the bowls of lettuce and topped it with vinaigrette dressing and handed it to the customer. "Have a nice lunch!" she said.

"Good job, you're getting the hang of it!" Frisk said. The Migosp blushed and looked down. "I'm just gonna go over to the store for a sec to pick up a few things. Are you good here?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"Great! See you in a bit."

After Frisk left, another customer came along and ordered a spider ball salad. Sebastian was in the middle of topping some plates of hot dogs. Mabel took some deep-fried black-sesame spider balls out of the glass food-warming box on the countertop and topped the salad with them. "So, a salad, a hot dog, and a soda..." She thought out the price in her head and was about to tell the green Loox what it was when Sebastian pushed a hot dog plate forward across the counter and said, "The total is 19,
Lady Loox.

"Thanks!" Irene giggled playfully and took her food over to her table. She broke the hot dog in half and gave each half to one of the Moldsmals.

"Um, Seb… why did you charge them 19? I thought it would cost 18?"

"Ah, that is because the spider-ball salad costs 9, not 8."

"O-oh, I see!" That wasn't written on the menu. But I guess the ones with more fancy toppings cost more.

The next customer, a white paper-printing Migosp, ordered the chicken salad. Frisk came back from the grocery store just as she saw her new employee charging the customer 9g for it. After he left and sat at his table, Frisk came back behind the counter and said, "Actually, the chicken salads are supposed to cost only 8.5g." An awkward silence loomed for a few seconds. "Well, I guess I'll just go—"

"Sorry, I messed up! I'll go fix it right away!" Mabel blurted out. She walked up to the white Migosp who was eating his salad. She hesitated to interrupt him, but she felt too guilty about overcharging him. "E-excuse me, u-um, sir… The truth is, err… the food you ordered, um, I charged you too much for it, and I owe you this back!" She shoved her hand forward with a 50-cent coin. As he accepted it, she looked up and noticed that everybody in the room was staring at her. Her whole body started to turn red.

The white customer said, "Uh… thanks but, are you going to just stand there or…?"

"Oh! I'm sorry!" she said and hurried back to the counter.

"Hey, Mabel…” Frisk started to say.

"I'm sorry!" she said.

"Calm down. Err… maybe you should take a little break?"

Mabel wandered past some hallways where other monsters were hanging around until she found a quiet, deserted room. She sat down on the bench and let out her tension in a sigh. She sniffed the air and noticed the lump of cheese stuck to the bench. "Ew!" She moved to the other side of the room instead and slumped down against the wall next to the mouse hole. "Well at least I'm away from all those people…"

"yee, I know the feeling, buddo." She looked up in surprise as the hoodie-wearing skeleton walked into the room. "well, must be nice having the room to yourself. I'll keep going and find my own mousehole."

"It's ok… I can share."

"oh. how nice of you." He took a look at her expression. "everything goin' ok out there?"

"Uh… it's ok…"

"is something wrong?"

"Um, no… not wrong, but… Well, I don't know how to say it, but…"

He put a hand on her flat head and patted her. She unexpectedly started to cry. Sans flinched his
hand back in surprise. "Aah, oh god why am I crying, oh no, I didn't mean to…"

"Hey! What's going on here?" Another male voice shouted from the other side of the room. They looked up in surprise. A teal Loox who wore a white collared jacket was standing in the archway and glaring at the scene.

"Ox?" Mabel called his name.

He noticed the gleam of the tears on her face. "Get away from my girl!" He shouted and jumped at Sans. The surprised skeleton sidestepped the teen's fist as it swiped the air.

DID HE JUST CALL ME HIS GIRL?! Mabel blushed deeply and put her hands on her cheeks.

"uh, woah. care to cool it with the fisticuffs, pal?" Ox punched through a barrier of bones as Sans jumped backwards.

WAIT THATS' NOT IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW! Mabel yelled at herself internally. I can't have mine and my boss's best friends fighting over a stupid misunderstanding! "STOP!" she yelled and ran in front of Ox. His hands touched her body before he could completely stop his momentum.

"Mabe?!" He pulled back, looking embarrassed.

The girl explained the situation. Ox scratched the back of his head and smiled guiltily. "Oh, so you were having a hard time at work. Sorry 'bout that dude. I meant no offense."

"none was taken."

"So what happened?" Ox asked her.

"I don't know how to explain it… it's not that any of the things that I have to do are particularly hard, but there's a lot of them and it can be confusing how to not to make a single mistake. Frisk and Seb are kind of confusing too. They don't have all the prices exactly right on the menu. And they just seem to assume what to do without having to ask each other about it all of the time. But if I ask Frisk for help too much then she starts to pay too much attention to me and then I can't concentrate on what I'm doing 'cause I'm just thinking about all the pressure of her watching me, and… guh, this sounds stupid…"

"no it's not," said Sans. "that sounds like a pretty normal thing to me."

"It does?!!"

"yea! I can talk to her for you," he offered.

"What?! No! You can't tell her all that awful stuff I said about her!"

"kid, I don't think what you said was anything she'll get mad over. besides, i'm not gonna make you sound bad."

"But, I can't just make other people handle my problems for me. I should be able to tell her myself."

"Mabe, you've been trying by yourself a lot today! I really could hardly believe how hard you're working. It honestly makes me kinda proud," said Ox. She flushed at his praise and stared at the floor. "Look at it this way. If you just chill out here and focus on feeling better, then you can get back to work and help out the others sooner!"

"I guess that's true."
"k, so i'll be back in a little while. i'll just leave you two lovebirds alone then," Sans winked and left the room as the younger monsters panicked and shouted some cliché denials.

Frisk leaned against her counter across from Sans and had her chin in her hands. "I guess she has a pretty good point about the menu prices. But what should I do to be a better leader? I wish my… I wish I could talk to someone more experienced about it…"

ring ring ring

"heh, I got it. whoever's calling me has the perfect advice."

Frisk facepalmed. "Sans please."

ring ring ring

"what? it's not really a joke. it could be Papyrus, Brew, Tori… does Asgore have my number…"

ring ring ring

"Or you could just answer it before they hang up?"

He looked at the display. click. "heya… Undyne."

"Hey pipsqueak!"

"Hi Sans!" Papyrus called from the background.

"'sup guys."

"Soo… SANS…"

"yes… CAPTAIN?"

"Are you havin' a good time over there?" she said sweetly.

"yup."

"Good, good. That's nice to hear. This is a friendly reminder that, although you are stuck in the Ruins and thus on temporary unpaid leave from your job as a Snowdin Forest sentry—you do intend to resume your job as a sentry when you return, yes?"

"yea."

"—so as I was saying, as your commanding officer, it is my duty to remind you that even though you are away, you are still responsible for informing me of any humans that you may happen to come across! And, ahem—" she shifted a glance at Papyrus, "—capturing them, if you are able to."

"ok."

"Are my orders clear?"

"crystal clear cap'n."

"Good!"

"…"
"So, have you found a human yet?"

"hm… I dunno… hey, maybe Frisk can tell you." Frisk's hands automatically accepted the phone. She stood there confused. The other end was silent for a while. "Did. He. Just." Undyne's voice was laced with fury.

"Yeah, he just walked away," said Frisk.

"Huh… is that so…” she said in a dangerous low voice, before suddenly perking up. "I guess I'll just have to talk to you instead!"

"I told you, Frisk is way more helpful," Papyrus nodded.

"Guys, I don't mind but I can't hold the phone and work at the same time so Imma hafta put you on speaker."

"Woah, sounds busy there! What are you doing?" Undyne asked.

"Working. At my restaurant."

"YOU HAVE A RESTAURANT?!" They both exclaimed.

"Uh… yeah? Haven't I mentioned this before? Hasn't Sans told you or something?"

"Sans never tells anyone anything!" said Papyrus. "What kind of food do you make?! Do you have spaghetti?! Are you better than Grillby's?!"

"Uh, Papyrus, there's no way she can know how she compares to Grillby's if she's never been there."

"Oh yeah."

"I'll have to try it some time!" said Frisk. "I sell hot dogs and salads. And some coffee-shop-type drinks, and also some pastries that my friend bakes. I'm adding chocolate cake and snails to the menu as soon as the new people I just hired get settled in."

"Are they hot dogs made out of real meat, or are they water sausages?" Frisk dropped the handful of gold coins she was just exchanging with a customer. "Papyrus. That's not funny. Never say that again." She smiled at the customer and said, "Woops! Sorry 'bout that!" No more people were coming to order food at the moment. "Hey Undyne, you're like… a captain right?"

"Yeah! You wanna be a sentry, punk?"

"That sounds dangerous. Actually I was wondering if you have any advice about something…"

When Sans came back from wandering around together with Mabel and Ox he saw Frisk flipping some hotdogs as Sebastian was preparing some drinks. Papyrus's voice was blasting from the cell phone on the countertop. "sometimes DIFFERENT people need a DIFFERENT KIND of friendship! Just keep that in mind and listen to your friends and you'll be well on your way to becoming a great person LIKE ME!" Undyne chimed in, "Can we talk about capturing humans again?! So Frisk, remember what I said about how they are very dangerous! If you see any humans, you should call me or Papyrus or Sans right away! Don't go near them by yourself, ok?!"

"Ok," Frisk nodded.

"kid, what're ya doin'?!" Sans hurried over and cut off the call. "you can't just broadcast Undyne and Papyrus to the whole town! what if someone were to call you 'human' while they're listening?"
"What's the big deal? They're gonna find out when the Ruins opens anyways."

"that's not… you can't just… ya gotta be more careful with them. this is different than with tori, ok? Undyne is the Captain"

"of the Royal Guard, I know! You're the one who made me talk to her in the first place! You're always doing annoying stuff like that for fun, and now I'm the one who is being careless?"

"in this case, yes!"

"Maybe I should call her back and tell her I'm a human!"

"no."

"Yes."

"no."

"Yes."

"no."

Ox said, "Well, that derailed into some really immature melodrama."

"Indeed," Mabel nodded. "I forgot that Frisk is just a kid like us."

"But is Sans more like her parent or her friend?"

"I'd say older brother…"

"Uncle?"

"That's weird."

Visage was once again hosting his magic class right in between Frisk's hot dog stand and Toriel's half-demolished house. "Now that the firecasters have had their finals, the rest of you kids can continue to practice on your own. And since the advanced ice users are also busy with the construction, we'll spend the next few weeks focusing on lightning and healing magic!"

Frisk delivered a plate of two hot dogs covered in apple chutney to a gentlemanly Migosp wearing a top hat. On her way back she called over to Visage, "And don't forget, as we agreed, you'll always be aiming at that wall over there, right?"

"Ehehe, of course child! But hey, look on the bright side! If someone does send a little accidental spark flying your way, then the healers can get some practice as well!"

"I don't care about your healer students mister Visage. Just please, don't use my customers for your target practice!"

"Hehe! Don't worry child, I was just kidding! That's what we have Dummy for!" As he spoke, the pink Loox girl was casting a weak lightning bolt on Dummy. "Hold on, Lash! Your breathing technique is off again!" He went over to give her some pointers.

Toriel was coming home from her walk through the hallways. Accompanied by a floating white ghost monster, she walked up to the stand and greeted her hardworking child. "Blooky! Hiya!" Frisk giggled and waved. He looked around and swayed from side-to-side in the air.
"Hi… um… it's busy today, huh…"

"Yeah, it's gotten pretty crazy lately! Careful you guys," she warned her coworkers. "If you let foods touch ghosts, they turn soggy!"

"Oh yeah… I leaned about that a while ago…" the ghost blob blushed a little.

"Is that why the last snails you gave me were so much more delicious than usual?" said Toriel.

"I tried to be careful… Hey… it's R.D. over there…"

"Who?" Frisk said.

"The one inside the training dummy…"

"You know Dummy?"

"Err, yeah… he's my cousin… we used to live on the farm together but… I guess he really likes that body… that's cool I guess…"

"What do you mean that he's inside the training dummy?" Mabel asked.

"Well he's inhabiting the dummy and using it as his body… because some of us like to be corporeal…"

"So he's a ghost like you?" said Frisk.

"Does that mean that those attacks don't really hurt him?" Mabel wondered. As they glanced over towards the magic class in session, there was a loud thunderclap and a flash of light.

"Just so, well done child!" Visage praised the girl. Dummy's head had a dark stream of smoke rising from it. His button eyes seemed to reflect more light than usual, making him appear dazed. Toriel cried out in pity at the sight. She ran across the room to come to the defense of the poor, abused creature.

"Oh no, young one!" she scolded the pink monster. "That is not right! The dummies are not for fighting! They are for talking!" Dummy sagged a bit in her arms. "Look how sad he is!" Toriel emphasized.

"Is he actually OK?" Frisk wondered as she looked over from where she was working. Mabel loaded up a tray of four spider ciders and walked out to the tables.

Toriel was continuing her efforts to prevent further attacks to Dummy. "Come now… we do not want to hurt anybody, do we?" she patted the two Looxes on their backs. "Why not set up some straw targets on the wall instead? I saw one for sale in the marketplace last week!" She was trying her best to stay positive and diffuse the tension, but Dummy was lying on the ground and the students were tiring of her aimless shenanigans.

At the same time, a Migosp child was just starting to get the hang of his ice bolt as he fired it at his friend, Robbie. As the magenta Froggit hopped around to dodge, they accidentally lost track of their orientation. A concentrated burst of cold magic shot through the air and struck the ground under Sans's table just as Mabel was bringing them their evening ciders. "Yaah!" she cried out as she slipped on the icy floor. Nooo! she thought in despair. She watched the drinks fly above in slow motion. When her head struck the ground, her vision temporarily blacked out and her eyes shut tight. But when she opened them, to her amazement and relief, there was no broken glass or puddle of
cider on the floor. The mugs were all floating in the air surrounded by a blue glow. "Nice catch man!" said Miles.

"Oh no, are you alright?!" Frisk ran over and helped Mabel up and checked out the spot where she had hurt herself.

"Gaah, I'm so sorry! Please excuse me! It was an accident!" her body turned red as she desperately apologized. Sans flicked one of his fingers and made three of the glasses slide smoothly across the table. He plucked the last one out of the air for himself and took a refreshing sip. "What accident? I didn't see anything go wrong," he said with a wink. Mabel smiled and joined the others as they laughed off the incident.

"Alright, that's all I can take of this," said Frisk. "I'm gonna go talk to them about finding a new location, so this won't happen again." As she patted her friend on the back, she was filled with determination.

As it turned out, the old professor was equally regretting his own choice of location. The Caretaker of the Ruins valiantly protected their preferred target practice victim from harm. Besides being scolded by Toriel and Frisk, the students were constantly distracted by the temptation to buy food from the restaurant that was right next to them without so much as a door or a wall in between.
The handheld camera records a yellow, female Misogp with a body that widens towards the bottom and curls upwards at the corners. Dark eyebrows frame slanted, red eyes. She has pink borders, and a body marking of three triangles.

"Hello Underground. I'm Kate Tela, bringing you the latest events in the Ruins! Earlier this year, in August, the human child Frisk appeared in the Ruins and started her now-famous restaurant, Frisk's Hot Dogs. As talented at naming things as our own beloved King, this proactive youth started from nothing, and now employs up to three monsters and serves over 80 customers a day."

[Coco, Froggit. Grocer.] "80 a day is pretty good traffic for our area. To put it in perspective, my store receives an average of 143 customers per day. Ribbit! Frisk's restaurant is still very new, so it's impossible to say how well it will be doing, say, one year from now. As a fellow business owner, I would say that her venture appears to be thriving and successful at this time."

At the hot dog stand. The reporter narrates, "But, little did this inexperienced, yet determined young entrepreneur imagine—Daddy, point the camera at me when I'm talking!" The image shifts to the side and Kate comes into view as she continues her speech. "Ahem, little did she imagine that her greatest obstacle so far would come, not in the form of a human-monster conflict, not due to a costly mistake in the course of their daily work, but from her very own, most closely trusted friend and tenant. The very same brilliant mind who is currently spear-heading the development of the Ruins Trading Tunnel."

A low, chuckling voice adds, "don't you mean, bone-heading?"

The camera shifts past Kate and shows the skull of a smiling skeleton monster from the chin upwards. It pans down to frame him properly as a young girl's voice says, "This isn't the time for puns, Sans!"

The camera pans again to the human speaking. "How am I supposed to open today with THAT?!!" It follows her outstretched arm to her pointing finger, to the familiar elements of the room as they come into view. The counter under the pink-laced banner. The spider delivery system. The cozy living-room furniture. The decorative flowers atop the tables. The ancient, dormant, black tree. The self-sustaining tornado of trash.

"HOW did it even GET like that?!!" The human demands angrily.

We cut to a different shot.
[Sans, Skeleton. Tunnel designer.] "hey, that's the wrong font." The pink caption with black text floating over Sans updates its format to white background, blue text, and Comic Sans MS typeface.

"Is that alright?" Kate asks.

"yeah."

"Now go ahead and introduce yourself."

"ok. well... i came to the ruins 'bout three weeks ago now to work on the new trading tunnel. I studied science and engineering stuff in college. I do a little bit 'o this and a little bit 'o that. although most of the time, when I don't have a project to work on, I just do nothing."

"people call me lazy. i've never been what you would call, a neat monster. but i've always kept my
messes under control. although my current living space is just a chair and that little corner of the table that I think counts as mine? but i'm very grateful to my awesome friend for giving me a place to live. as you can see, everything is contained within my area. it's never been a problem."

"There's a GODDAMN TORNADO IN MY—"

"Miss Human, we'll record you next! Please be patient!" Kate says.

The construction site. Monsters in the background are excavating a giant hole in the ground where the wall used to be. Sans stands in the foreground, wearing his green hard-hat. Other monsters in the background wear yellow hats as they work on the excavation. Spider webs and flying Wimsums haul rubble out of the pit into a huge pile against the left corner of the room. Some windy sounds are heard, followed by the jolts of stone cracking.

Sans says, "originally my friends buffet and frisk had asked me to gather some data for the project, because I was the only one on the outside they had contact with. I could tell from the scope of what they were planning that they didn't really know what they were doing. so I saw the opportunity to help them along, as well as connect them with more experienced and qualified builders. I wouldn't say that structural engineering is my specialty, exactly. however, this sort of job has always been in high demand in the underground, so i've found myself working on a lot of similar projects in the past."

The small human in a striped purple sweater wanders near the pit. Sans walks off the right side of the screen and appears again from the left side of the screen walking up to his friend as he puts a hand on her shoulder. "kid, what're ya doin' there? that's dangerous."

"What? I'm just looking."

Zoom in. The large Wimsum Construction Chief hovers over and plops a green helmet onto her head. "You can look all you want, but you have to have on the proper safety gear."

"Oh, ok. So what are they doing?"

Sans explains, "well, the first group of monsters shoots a buncha ice over the area we want to destroy. then the next group blasts the chilled stone with fire magic. the change in temperature causes the stone to break apart from the thermal expansion. then miles and mon' use some spear magic to loosen it up. right now they're hauling up the rubble by hand, but as soon as they finish the pit we'll switch to something more efficient."

Mason adds, "they've got about one more meter to go, and then they'll start digging to the side."

Kate walks into the left side of the frame. "Mr. Sans, since the design phase of the project is finished, and you don't appear to participate in manual labor, what is it that you do here?"

"I mostly just hang around. I'm s'posed to be doing daily inspections to make sure that everything is lining up and going according to plan, as well as spotting for safety. but mason's got it pretty much covered. they haven't even needed my help since that one incident, which is great 'cause I love doing absolutely nothing."

Kate speaks to the camera. "Although Sans claims to spend the majority of his time 'doing absolutely nothing,' his friends have told me otherwise. They claim that Sans has been bringing home an unusual quantity of purchased items lately."

[Frisk, Human. Restaurant owner.] "It all started last week when they started the excavation. I had just hired Sebastian and Mabel to strengthen my staff. We were swamped with more demand than
we've ever had before. I've been told that it's because the construction workers are using a lot of magic so they are very hungry for food to replenish their energy. It's been challenging, but exciting at the same time."

"Sans and I have been sleeping outdoors because my bedroom in Toriel's house was destroyed. I usually pick up after him, but lately I have been so busy that I stopped paying attention to what he was doing with his area. One day he just came home with some library books and put this little toy on my counter for decoration. I thought it was cute at first." The view cuts to a shot of the countertop. A small bean-bag teddy bear with a candy-cane patterned textile sits leaning against the support column. "Then customers started to complain about all the socks on the ground. I tried to get him some boxes to organize his things in, but he hasn't bothered to do it yet."

[Mason, Wimsum. Wimsum Construction Chief.] "Oh yes, Sans has been shopping in the market place every day lately." There are two arch-way openings on either side of where the school used to be, dividing the entire back wall of the market square into thirds. Follow Mason as he hovers through the passage on the left. The back section of the market is the same size as the front. There are just as many apartments and workspaces built into the walls. The center area is filled with tented stands and small individual houses in a long, winding pathway.

"It was fun showing him all of my favorite shops. He said that everything is really cheap here. I guess it's pretty useful to catch up on shopping then. But unfortunately, he stored everything in a pile on his table, which made it pretty squished when we went for our evening drinks."

Back to Frisk. "As you can see, Sans's table is basically a war zone." Pan over the table full of items. "Customers had already started avoiding it since about four days ago. I think someone even spilled their cider, but no one can clean it up with all of the junk in the way. Why'd you even buy all this stuff anyway Sans?"

"well we are running low on printer paper at home. and it has been a while since I got new socks. hey, I wonder if they sell ink cartridges here…"

"Why do you need so many gel pens?"

"so I can [font color="cyan"] write my dialogue in [font color="salmon"] different colors."

"[font color=Foreground1] What are all these wires and thingamabobs?" Frisk says.

"i'm gonna use those later."

"Did you buy Froggit slippers?!" Sans's feet are nestled into big, cushy, green Froggit slippers. His other slippers and sneakers lie scattered over the floor in the background.

"they're cute."

"They are," Frisk admits. "But… what about all these mugs?"

"oh, I thought I'd give those to my friends as souvenirs when I get home."

"What about all these little bean-bag animals?"

"also souvenirs." He points to a brown lion with a fluffy mane. "this one's for grillbz." A yellow-and-black striped fish. "this one's for undyne." A reindeer and a blue jay. "those ones are for asgore." A ladybug. "that one's for papyrus."

"Oh! Does Asgore get two because he's big?"
"woah, frisk, really? that's pretty insensitive of you to say."

"G-! Um, but Sans, how are you going to give them to them now when they are all covered in cider?"

"kid, have some faith in them. they're all coming clean before they go home." Badum-tss~ And zoom in on Sans winking to the camera.

[Toriel, Goat Mom. Caretaker of the Ruins.] "I can sympathize with Sans. My own house has been a complete wreck since I destroyed the Ruins door. I still haven't even finished gathering all of the belongings from Frisk's room that could be salvaged. Now, the amount of items that Sans has accumulated and the state of his living space may not be so extreme that it would normally be considered as a case of compulsive hoarding, but—"

"compulsive hoarding, geez lady I only bought like ten—"

"Mr. Sans, it's Toriel's turn to talk," Kate says.

"but, under these circumstances, since your messiness is interfering with my child's business, it has reached the point where you must begin to take it seriously. Wouldn't you agree, my friend?"

"well… yeah, but… yeah I guess." He shrugs and looks away.

"And how does the tornado of trash affect your business, miss Human?"

"I attempted to open as usual today, but there have been a lot less customers. I keep seeing monsters glance our way and then walk past, or look around the corner and then go back. Clearly, the tornado of trash and the mess on the table is driving them away. In fact, I'm sitting here interviewing with you now because my coworkers don't even need my help to serve the reduced amount of customers." A green Loox sits at a table and picks up her hot dog to take a bite. The napkin under her arms flies off and gets sucked into the whirlwind.

"When did the tornado first appear, and how did it make you feel?"

"When I woke up this morning, I felt a strange breeze on my face. When I saw the tornado I was shocked and horrified. At first I didn't realize that Sans was responsible for creating it. But as I examined it further, I couldn't help but notice that it feels like it's made out of his magic."

Kate speaks to the audience, "We decided to contact Sans's family to see if they could shed any light on this issue."

[THE GREAT PAPYRUS. Sans's brother.] Frisk calls Papyrus on her phone. An overlay of a photo of the skeleton's face is displayed in the upper-right-hand corner. The caption under it has white background, red text, and Parchment typeface. "WHAT? A SELF-SUSTAINING TORNADO OF TRASH?! Yes, I have seen this mysterious phenomenon before! Weird stuff like that tends to happen around Sans! I think it might be a subconscious act of rebellion against all of the work we've been making him do lately! My lazy brother can't handle that much pressure! He probably finds comfort among the messes he's made as a sort of coping mechanism! I always have to clean up after him in our house too! You should see his room, it's like another world in there! A world where they don't know how to vacuum! There's even another to—"

"ok, that's enough." Sans interrupts. "no need to pick my bones guys, i'm gonna take care of it today."

"Promise?" says Frisk.
Focus returns to the reporter for the last time. "That concludes this week's report. I'm Kate Tela, the Ruins Reporter, and I'll see you next time. A shout-out to our sponsors at MTT!"

Frisk and Sebastian distributed the dinner plates to their friends once again. "One for you too. Enjoy your time off, my lady. I'll let you know if we need any additional hands in the garden."

"Oh my, you actually made snails!"
"oh wow, you actually did make spaghetti."

Toriel and Sans stared at each other for a moment before chuckling. Sans tried some of the red stuffing of the snails. "oh, it's not tomatoes?"

"I know," said Frisk. "I thought I wouldn't be able to get my hands on any bell peppers, but I did!"

"yeah, great job, you managed to find 'em!" said Sans, pretending to know what she was talking about. After eating snail spaghetti they all raised their glasses of spider cider and said, "Cheers!"

Across the table, Miles suppressed snickers. "what?" said Sans. At the prompt, the one-winged Wimsum lost control and burst into laughter. "Oh man, I still can't believe it… you actually made a tornado of trash. Pfuahahah!" He pounded the table with his fist.

"ugh… that video's not actually going on TV, is it?"
Frisk said, "I think so... I'm pretty sure she already sent her files to MTT."

"eeh…” Sans stared down at his plate. "maybe i'll just stay here in the ruins…” The others laughed at his embarrassment.

"No," said Frisk. "You can't sleep in a chair forever."

"just watch me," he said and winked.

"Don't worry Sans. If she kicks you out you can move in with me," said Mason.

"thanks buddy."

"So when are you actually gonna start serving all this new stuff?" Miles asked.

"Soon as you guys get rid of the desks in my back room," said Frisk. "There's not enough space to make those dishes behind my counter during peak."

"Oh right… I put those there…” He looked away.

"heh, you guys are just as bad as me," said Sans.

Miles folded his arms and said, "No, you're still worse." Frisk yawned widely and sunk into her chair.

"i may have made a worse mess, but at least mine is gone now."

"...Touché."

After their dinner and drinks, Toriel led Sans and Frisk down the halls. She held their tiny hands in her huge ones on either side. Sans peeked at Frisk and hid behind Toriel's skirt when she looked back. He looked at her head from behind Toriel's back and dodged her glance once again. She had
barely enough energy to laugh at his japes and let out another tall yawn. "tired kid? me too," he said, catching her contagious yawn as she nodded into Toriel's sleeve. "how come tori's so alert? she drank like, a barrel of cider. shouldn't ya be all… y'know, drunk?"

"What do you mean, Sans? I only had six glasses. What about you?"

"I barely even finished one."

"Same," said Frisk.

"hey, would ya look at the time," Sans was looking at his phone screen. "i should prob'ly give my bro a call… he gets pretty cranky without his bedtime story."

"Ooh, a story…" said Frisk.

"Sans, do you miss Snowdin? Or do you truly want to stay here in the Ruins?"

"don't worry guys, I was just kiddin'. i'm goin' back home soon."

"I see. And you Frisk?"

"Hm?"

"Are you happy living here?"

"Yeah." She grinned and hugged Toriel's arm. She reached across and tugged on Sans's sleeve. "Sans… call already, I wanna hear…"

He held his phone in his hand and said, "Aren't you too grown-up for bedtime stories, pal?"

"Isn't Papyrus older than me?" she said. They sat down on a bench in the fungus hallways. Their faces were lit by spots of blue and green.

"That is nonsense, my friends," said Toriel. "Being 'too old for a bedtime stories' is merely a superstition spread by lazy people who are not creative enough to tell bedtime stories."

Ring… ring…

"Hi Sans!" said Papyrus.

Sans said, "ok guys, you all ready?"

Frisk, Toriel, and Papyrus from over the phone all said, "Yes!"

"k here goes. *yawn* one day, there was a… little skeleton who was… too lazy to tell a bedtime story."

"Sans!" Papyrus complained.

"Can't you try a little harder than that?" Frisk pleaded.

"hm… I guess I could just recite fluffy bunny again…" he muttered.

Toriel took the phone and said, "Now now, my children, Sans has had a long day dismantling his trash tornado, and he cleaned up his table very diligently. Why don't we give our friend a break, and I shall tell you a story instead. I am Toriel, by the way. It is so nice to finally talk to you, Papyrus."
Your brother has told me so much about you."

"Wowie! Are you the mysterious door lady?!"

"Well, I used to be. But since I have destroyed the door, now I am just the mysterious pile-of-rubble lady."

Sans chuckled. "pssst. tell him a joke," he urged her.

"Saaans, don't change the subject…" said Frisk.

Toriel giggled and said, "Ok, I've got one. Hey, Papyrus… what does a skeleton tile his roof with?"

"With bedtime stories!" he said. Sans and Toriel made disappointed noises, while Frisk grinned in triumph.

"Very well then… gather around, my friends." Her tiny friends were already nearly asleep against her arms.

"A long, long time ago, a human child fell into the Underground. Injured by its fall, the human cried out for help…"

"Is this going to be a scary story?!" Papyrus asked.

"Don't worry, it will get better." said Toriel. "A monster child found the human and befriended them. He took the human back to his house where his parents"

Click.

"Err…" She trailed off in surprise, because the dim evening lights from the mushroom lamps in the room had just turned off completely. The room was pitch black except for the lights in Sans's drooping eyesockets and the glow of the cell phone screen.

Sans jerked awake and looked around. "uh… tori, is it supposed to do that?"

"No… I am not sure what just happened. It looks like our electricity turned off. Our phone call has been cut off as well."

He took the phone and saw that she was right.

Papyrus was lying in his bed, confused. "Uh, hello?! Why did you stop?! Are you having writer's block?!" he said, but no one responded. "Hello? Sans?!"

He pulled the phone away from his face only to see the red symbol for an ended call.
A warm, glowing ball of light appeared in the air before Toriel's outstretched arm. Sans stood up and stretched in an attempt to stave off sleepiness. "way to light up my world, tori," he said.

"What should we do now?" she said.

Still holding on to the tall goat monster's hand, Frisk slapped her own cheek with her other hand, determined to stay awake. "We should go check on the stand," she said. "I dunno if Mabe and Seb went home yet."

The monsters in question had actually been about to leave when the lights had gone out. Currently the two employees were standing still next to the edges of tables. "I suppose we'll just have to feel our way home," said the Froggit.

"I-uh, ok, yeah. I guess we'll have to…" said the Migosp.

"Fear not, Lady Mabel. Simply hold onto my cape, and I will stay by your side until you get home first."

"Oh look, a light!" She let go of his cape and made a noise of relief at the glow of the floating fireball coming from around the corner. She ran up and hugged Frisk.

"Are you guys ok?" said Frisk. "Did you finish cleaning up?"

"Yeah," Mabel said. Sans went over to the counter and unplugged his laptop charger. He checked the screen of the Frisk's cell phone on the counter.

"no signal here," he said.

Toriel pulled out her phone too. "Mine is still not working either."

The spider baker appeared from another dark corner of the room. "Hello my dears," she said. "Good to find you all so quickly. Well, the light helped."

"Buffet!" said Frisk.

"Miss Baker, do you have any idea what is going on here?" said Toriel, her eyes narrowing slightly.

"Well, the electricity is out, but I suppose you noticed that already," she huffed. "I promise you, I did not do anything to cause this."

"Sorry, I didn't mean to accuse you," Toriel said in a softer tone. "I was only thinking about how you seem to know quite a lot about the inner workings of this place. Perhaps you would be able to suggest the best plan of action."

"Oh, hehe. Yes, in that case..." Her pigtails bounced as she cleared her throat before speaking. "Ahem. So my friends, as you may have all noticed... we have a wee incident on our hands here..." Everyone nodded in agreement. "Um, so... The first thing I think we should do is to search for any monsters who are lost in the dark and take them back to their homes."

Sans said, "sounds good, but what about the power? shouldn't we fix that asap?"

"I already checked the main switches and they haven't been touched. So I'm not sure how long it will
take to find out what is wrong and to fix it. But, Mason is in no state to help you right now, so you might end up wasting hours trying to figure out something that he could tell you in a second."

Frisk jerked her head back up when she found her face buried in Toriel's sleeve. "Are you tired?" whispered the caretaker. The girl shook her head vigorously and stared ahead, determined to pay attention.

"well, that makes sense," Sans agreed. "speaking of those guys did they get home ok?"

"Err… no. They all fell down the stairs," she admitted with a wince. The others hurried over across the short hallway and looked around the corner and down the stairs to see the inebriated Whimsum trio in a heap on the floor.

"Hey Sans… look…” Mason mumbled. "I've hit rock-bottom." Sans snorted with laughter. He appeared by his friend's side from the opposite direction and coaxed him out of the pile of wings and cloths, as Toriel gently lifted the other two off of him. They sat on the steps as she healed their bruises with glowing green hands.

"Excellent, miss Toriel!" Buffet said. "I heard some other scuffles and accidents around here too. I hope no one fell into the pit while I was gone." The other monsters hanging out in the market square at that time of night were all gathered around the few fire and lightning magic users who could produce their own balls of light.

"I understand," Toriel nodded. "I'll stay here and help you get everything sorted out."

"Then perhaps we will have Sans take the others to their homes and then do a search of the halls?"

"sure," he said.

Buffet continued, "I'll call all the leaders and merchants to a meeting tomorrow morning. Frisk, perhaps you should lock up your things and get some sleep. I'm afraid there is not much you can help with right now."

"Oh…” Frisk looked down.

"Wait!" said Toriel. "I think Frisk and Sans should stay together. I don't want her sitting outside by her hot dog stand all alone in the dark." Plus Sans looks like he will fall asleep any second now.

"Ok!" Frisk perked up and nodded, filled with determination.

Sans shrugged and said, "come on kid, let's get to it." The party of four left Buffet and Toriel. They went back up the stairs and passed the hot dog stand.

"It's so dark, I hate this…” Mabel said as they walked further away from the light reflecting off of the walls from the marketplace.

"oh, right. sec guys." Sans put his hands in his pockets and turned his eyelights into blinding blue headlights.

"Yay!" Frisk and Mabel cheered.

"woops, now I can't see."

"Huh?" said Frisk. "Why not?" said Mabel.

"ever tried shining a flashlight directly into your face?" He turned towards her.
She squinted at the bright light and said, "Oh. Well, what if you turned one of them off?"

Sans turned off his right eyelight and said, "amazing. how come you're not me?"

Mabel walked close to the others looked around. Her own claws and arms looked black. All of the mushroom lamps were off, removing the most familiar location markers. "Wow, I can barely recognize anything. Everything's blue..."

"other colors are sold separately," Sans said and winked. The girls yelped as the room turned pitch black for a moment.

"AAAH!"
"OPEN YOUR EYE!"

He opened his eye again and said, "woops, my bad." He yawned widely, causing his eyesockets to narrow. The light dimmed dramatically again, making his friends shift uncomfortably. Sebastian was amusing himself with changing the color of his rose pin to see how it reacted under the cyan-blue light.

Mabel said, "Oh, finally! I'm home!" There was a faint yellow glow coming from the window on the wall. It cast long, dark-blue shadows off the tall flowers in the garden bed. She ran up to the door and waved her friends goodbye.

A few rooms later, they heard a familiar voice echoing through the halls. "Hello? Is that you guys? Frisk?!"

"Is that you Ox?!" she called back. "We're over here!"

"Ok! I'm comin' guys!" he shouted back. They heard his rapid footsteps.

Frisk yelled back, "Ah, don't run in the—" They heard soft tripping noises followed by an "Ow!" "—dark..."

They came around the corner and saw that the teal Loox had tripped over a bench. Frisk clasped her hands and knelt by him. Sans said, "slow down pal, we're not goin' anywhere."

"What are you doing out here?" Sebastian asked.

"Oh, I was just looking for my cousin, Ivan. His mom was worried about him so I said I'd go find him."

"But you can't make your own light, can you?" said Frisk.

Ox's eye widened as he realized his mistake. "Oh... yeah... you're right, I can't. Woops." He grinned and rubbed the back of his head. They sighed and shook their heads. They took the well-meaning young monster back to his own home. A few minutes later they found Ivan too. The black-eyed Loox's mother forced him to utter an embarrassing "Thank-you guys for taking me home," to the other three.

As they moved on, they followed some cries for help to find a stranded light-green Froggit child, so they took him home too. When Frisk lagged behind, Sans poked her. She snapped to alertness and walked faster to keep up with them. When the blue light dimmed, Frisk poked Sans and he turned up the brightness again. A bundle of purple peppermint blossoms were stuffed into her front jeans pocket. They finally arrived at Sebastian's apartment on Rocks Rd., where most of the talking Rocks lived. Unsurprisingly, the entrance to his building was surrounded by well-tended flower gardens.
He bowed and bade them a fair evening.

In the next room, they almost missed the old lady sleeping on the bench. She was a tiny, square-shaped Migosp with a little knitted shawl around her shoulders. When the miniature woman woke up and got down from the bench, she was just barely taller than the level of the seat. She lightly held onto Frisk's arm with her dull claws. After *slowly* escorting her back to the mushroom halls, they had to go all the way back to the corridor near the monster candy room again to continue their sweep.

The flickering blue light in Sans's eye was dull and his hand was sweaty and sticky as Frisk pulled him along. They came upon another floating fireball. "am I actually asleep right now…" Sans mumbled. Frisk muttered to herself, "Am I hallucinating?" Since they both saw it they must not have been. It was a floating fire-based light source accompanying the magenta Froggit, Robbie. He had a shiny, teal-colored tumbled stone on his head, and a Vegetoid floating by his side.

"Ribbit! Ribbit! Um, hi guys! Ribbit! Are you um, are you searching the halls too? I already checked this corner! So if you guys like, already covered the rest then I guess we're done here, hehe."

"good," was all that Sans could say in his current state. Robbie was flattered anyways.

"Kyeheh! I'm gonna take this Rock back to their street ok? H-hehehe! U-um, um, F-Frisk, can you uh, take this Vegetoid please?!!" As he requested the mundane favor, he blushed an even more saturated hue of magenta and spoke in the manner of an avid fan asking a celebrity for an autograph.

"Ok," she responded automatically.

"It goes on the Vegetoid farm," he added.

"Yeah I know," she nodded and yawned.

"Ribbit! Thanks, ok bye!" The Froggit smiled blissfully and darted out of the room with the fireball zooming after him. Frisk and Sans sighed and trudged down the hall at their slower pace.

"Just one more run," she said.

"mk," Sans mumbled. Frisk stopped and look behind them, where it was hard to see if the dark-purple beet Vegetoid was still following them. "Hello? Are you still there?!" She saw a movement out of the corner of her vision and whirled back to see the smiling Vegetoid spinning in the air, a streak of light-blue teeth flashing by every time it turned. "Come on now," she said. She urged both monsters along as they went back through the dark hallways. They walked over a room of soft ground. Frisk felt her foot fall through an opening between the leaves. She gasped and felt the sinking sensation in her chest as she lost her balance and fell forward into the pit.

When she oriented her senses and looked next to her, Sans was sitting next to her on the floor blankly staring forward with dim blue light shining from his eye. "Hey… are you ok?" she asked hesitantly.

"n." He made the bare minimum amount of noise necessary to indicate that he was still conscious. Frisk used Check on him. Her tiredness temporarily vanished, to be replaced by shock.

"Whu…” she stared with her jaw hanging open.

"?"

"one?!"
"m."

"But, you, what" she stammered. She sighed. "Nevermind that now. Let's just get back."

"m."

"Wait, where'd that beet go?" She stood up and looked around and went into the passage that led back to the upper floor. "Huh?" She looked back and saw the blue light wasn't following her. She went back and tugged Sans to his feet. Her eyes adjusted to the ever decreasing light levels. The red leaves looked black against the dark-blue floor. She gripped her barely-awake friend's hand and carefully led him over the correct path. A few rooms later, she stopped and looked around. "Uh… I thought I passed the old spider bake sale room already… Let's go back." She turned down a different route as she came back to the junction, but after a few more rooms things looked even less familiar. There was a loud crashing sound as she accidentally knocked over a ceramic container full of metal tools.

"Augh, crap, I'm sorry!" She blurted out in apology to no one in particular. She bent down and pushed the whole mess against the corner of the wall with her forearms. Her actions echoed through the cool hallway, making her self-conscious of her volume. It smelled like leaves and soil. She stood up straight and dusted her sleeves off while looking around and trying to decide which way to go. "Hmm…"

The light vanished completely, leaving her in darkness. "Ah! Sans?!" She turned around and felt through the air until she found his shoulders. "Wait, are you actually sleeping standing up?!" She felt him sway backwards. She made another noise of panic and pulled him to lean against her instead. She stood still for a minute just hearing the sound of her own pulse in her head.

She used one arm to support her him and the other to feel for the wall—one further away from the pile of sharp things. It was colder and moister than she had anticipated. She managed to drag them both into a sitting position against the wall. She curled up her knees to her chest and stared into the darkness. A tiny droplet of water falling somewhere made her hold her breath and listen intently. The faint rustling of leaves. She felt for his jacket to make sure he was still there. Her fingers brushed against the fabric of his gym shorts, and she heard the loud jingling of a keychain.

"Oh! His cell!" Hope shined within her. She reached into his pockets, but felt only a ring of house keys, the velvety texture of a wallet, and no cell phone. She imagined how it might have fallen out when they had tripped into the pit earlier. I can't find my way back there right now. She called into the darkness, "Hello?!" But nobody came.

Frisk heard some windy, whirling noises before her. Panic welled up in her chest as the noises grew louder. I'm just going crazy from the darkness! she thought. But it sounded like someone was playing static into her ear, until it suddenly stopped and became quiet again.

"VegeToiD OFFers a HealthY SNack!"

Frisk could see again from the enormous multi-tiered ring of fizzling red-orange energy balls forming around the carrot Vegetoid, which had transformed to three-times it's usual size and bared a slobbering jaw full of razor-sharp spiked teeth. The spiky bundle of leaves on its top looked black. As the bullets flew towards them, she grabbed her sleeping friend and pushed against the ground with her feet, twisting her body to hit the floor with her shoulder blade. "SANS WAKE UP!" she screamed in his face, but he did not.

The deformed Vegetoid's pupils glowed green as it cooled down from its attack. From somewhere behind the carrot monster, a mutated turnip Vegetoid bounced forward and cracked the stone floor
with the weight of a wrecking ball. The white part of its skin was black instead, and the lighter bits were illuminated in the green light. The turnip's leaves had turned translucent with dark black veins, and its eyes were glowing yellow. One of them winked while the other widened into a circle.

Frisk rolled over Sans. A large glowing yellow needle shot out from the turnip Vegetoid's eye, penetrating straight through her upper arm, stopping and dissipating a centimeter away from the sleeping skeleton's skull. The magic spread through her limb and caused pain to erupt down her back. "SANS PLEASE WAKE UP!" She shouted desperately and shook him by the shoulders, but he did not.

She thrust her other arm under his knees and stood up and started running. She saw the walls in front of her flash red as the powerful magical attacks struck the ground behind her. Black spots of soot trailed after her pounding footsteps. "HELP!" She shouted. And someone came.

"Frisk!" The woman's voice shouted back. Frisk sprinted towards the light as fast as a small girl carrying a small skeleton could sprint. When she saw her guardian's face, tears sprung from her eyes.

"Toriel!" she cried. The water blurring her vision prevented her from seeing Toriel's angry expression as stood between them and the bloodthirsty Vegetoids. She tanked the magical projectiles and punched the carrot monster mid-bounce with a flaming fist. She snapped her other fingers and ignited a wall of flames. The turnip Vegetoid did not care and flew through the flames. Toriel was surprised, but grabbed it by its burning leaves and slammed it down onto the ground. With every impact, Frisk involuntarily stepped backwards. As she began to calm down from her adrenaline high, the pain in her arm became too great and she fell to her knees.

Toriel kept throwing back the Vegetoids as they kept flying at her. "What is the matter with these creatures?! I keep Sparing them, but it's not working!"

Frisk said, "Keep trying! We can't let a Vegetoid die!" Toriel finally had to take down the wall of flames as the enlarged and enraged plant monsters were losing too much HP from flying through it.

"I think they are getting tired," She said as she pushed them away again. "They seem to have run out of bullets." Finally, the turnip monster stayed on the ground and fell asleep, followed by the carrot soon after. They shrunk back to their normal size and changed back to their usual colors. Toriel's floating light made it easy to see again.

"I am glad I got here in time." She sighed in relief. "Buffet warned me that the darkness might cause —Oh my child, you're hurt!" She cried with worry as she turned around. "Oh, you poor things! You must be so exhausted!" Just as she was about to take Sans away from Frisk, the child pulled him closer and turned her body away as a pink glow shined in her eyes. Toriel whirled around and saw the gigantic, floating beet Vegetoid whose entire body was glowing red-violet except for its empty, black eyes.

"EAT your GrEEnS!" it said and shot a steady stream of small green pellets towards them. Toriel blocked some of them with her large body and shot back a small spread of fireballs to cancel out the green bullets. The beet Vegetoid had no recovery time on its attack and simply kept on firing after Toriel's wave. "eat YOUR GrEEnS!" it repeated. She had to grab it out of the air and stun it until it stayed down like the others. She positioned her light source over the unconscious vegetable monsters. Finally, she could relax and take care of her small friends.

Toriel kneeled and let Frisk lean against her side. The child closed her eyes as the soft healing hand gently brushed against her wound. She let Sans's head rest in her lap and wiped the fresh red liquid off of his face with a handkerchief. She picked up both of her short friends and held them against her shoulders like sleeping babies.
When they passed the food storage room, Frisk gripped the fabric in her fist and mumbled.

"What is it my child?"

"Fridge... meats going bad... must cure..."

"Shh, just rest now Frisk. I'll find one of your friends to help me take care of that for you."

"Recipes 'r on the wall..."

"I know, tired one."

Frisk's eyes closed and she started snoring in Toriel's arms. The caretaker stood over the couch at the hot dog stand and hesitated. She went into her house and put her sleeping friends down in her large reading chair. Frisk stirred and said, "Sans' phone fell out..."

"Where?"

"First pitfall puzzle..."

"Shh, I'll take care of it." She patted the human's head as it leaned into the skeleton's shoulder and fell back asleep. She clasped her hands together and smiled at how tiny and cute they looked. She went back outside and picked up the green couch and tried to stuff it through her front door, but it was too cumbersome and annoying, so she settled for putting it outside, directly underneath the living room window. She dragged Sans's chair on its wheels and rolled it into the house. "That will have to do." She put Sans in his red armchair, left Frisk in the blue reading chair, and designated the green couch outside as her own sleeping location for later. Finally, she left the house and closed the front door behind her.
Darkness Looms

[the previous/same night]

Undyne was making Alphys play the human as she narrated her heroic plan to save the Underground and free all of their kind. "Stop right there, that's good! Here's where I'll say Stop right there, human! They'll freeze up in the grass and I'll give them a second to hope that I didn't notice... BUT I DID NOTICE! Then I'll throw spears at them!" She actually did summon a volley of glowing blue spears aimed at Alphys's hiding location in the grass.

"Eek, don't shoot me!"

Undyne unsummoned the spears with a slight sigh of annoyance. "I'm not actually gonna hit you Alphys. I was gonna make them land around you."

"B-but, I don't want you t-to, um... destroy this seaweed."

"Huh, this boring old grass?"

"Y-yeah! It's u-um... it's under scientific p-protection, you see..."

"Oh. OK THEN! That sounds really serious! I'LL PROTECT THIS GRASS WITH MY LIFE, I SWEAR!" They continued through Waterfall on their way to the Royal Lab. As they approached the jagged rock formation that created an ominous archway just before the beginning of Hotland, the guard captain disappeared and left her scientist friend to nervously pace forward, looking back over her shoulders. "U-Undyne?! W-w-where did you go? Ah!" She cried out in surprise when she suddenly noticed the silhouette atop the rocks, blackened against the red glow of the cavern in the distance.

"Seven. Seven human souls and [font color="red"] King ASGORE will become a god. Six. That's how many we have collected thus far. Understand? Through your seventh and final soul, this world will be transformed. First, however, as is customary for those who make it this far..."

What custom? Alphys thought. "I shall tell you the tragic tale of our people. It all started, long ago..." Alphys looked on in suspense.

"No, you know what? SCREW IT!" Already unbalanced from tilting her neck upwards, Alphys cried out in surprise and fell down on her bottom. "WHY SHOULD I TELL THAT STORY, WHEN YOU'RE ABOUT TO DIE!? NGAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH! YOU! You're standing in the way of everyone's hopes and dreams! I'm not gonna let you hurt anyone else now! A knight in shining armor has appeared. And all the pain you inflicted on the fallen... Every hope, every dream you've turned to dust... I'm gonna send right back through my spear! Understand human?! Everyone's been waiting their whole lives for this moment! When everyone puts their hearts together, they can't lose! I'll show you how determined monsters can be! Step forward and face me, IF YOU DARE!"

Neither of them spoke for a minute. The wind howled. The splash of a small animal jumping into water was heard in the distance. "Well, how was it Alphy?!"

"[font color="black"] Uh... W-well, um... Y-you um... you forgot the tag after 'King ASGORE' so the rest of your d-d-dialogue was uh... r-red after that... "
FUCK!

"I-it's ok, I already changed it back for you... B-b-but, um... y-you uh, you had a lot of energy! And p-passion! You're like a hero from my an-human history books!"

"REALLY?!"

"Yeah, I r-really liked how you s-s-subverted expectations there, and u-um... delivered a powerful v-vision of h-hope."

Undyne tilted her head and thought, Sounded like praise. "I've got more! For the fight! Listen?!"

"Uh, ok..."

"If they try to Spare me I'll be like: Mercy?! Hah, YOU want to spare ME?!"

Alphys said, "O-oh, that's r-really in-character."

"Pshaa!"

*Undyne flashes a menacing smile.

She displayed her best shark-toothed grin, which made Alphys put her hands on her cheeks as they started to turn red. Noticing the reaction, the fish monster said, "Hmm, maybe it's still too friendly..."

"This next one is so cool! Check it out!"

*Undyne suplexes a huge boulder, just because she can.

"OH MY GOD WHAT ARE YOU-"

*Undyne throws the boulder off a cliff.

Alphys curled into a ball and closed her eyes and ears tight. The boulder fell into the abyss. Several seconds later, there was a huge crash that sent a shockwave through the ground beneath them. Shaking, she got back to her feet and put one hand on her hip and pointed with her other finger. Her face was red, but this time for a different reason. "Undyne! G-get down from there right now!"

The captain was taken aback. She had never seen her friend actually get upset with her for anything. She jumped the 30 feet down to the ground and landed in the middle of the path, scattering a bit of dirt into the air. "Um... maybe I did get a little carried away there..."

"What if someone was d-d-down there?" said Alphys.

Undyne looked down into the hazy black valley beneath the walkway and twirled her ponytail around her finger. "I didn't... think about that... sorry."

"It's ok, just be more c-careful from now on, ok?"

"Ok! Well, hopefully no harm was done... So do you think the ice-cream is done yet?"

"It should be."

"Awesome!" Undyne grinned and grabbed Alphys's hand without really thinking about it and started to merrily stomp onwards. The Royal Scientist felt a spark of elation rush through her, which vanished as soon as they heard another loud crash. Undyne said, "Woah, what was that?!" They
looked back and glanced around the open cavern.

Alphys gripped the taller monster's blue hand with a hint of worry. "I don't know..."

In the Lab, they sat on the couch with bowls of fluffy, pink ice-cream, while a cartoon from the human world played on the large TV screen mounted to the wall. Undyne held her bowl up to her face and violently gobbled and slurped her frozen dessert. She noticed Alphys staring at her in utter disbelief. Alphys's hand slowly raised a spoon of ice cream to her mouth and put it back down in the bowl, gently. Undyne grinned with little glowing red blushes on her cheeks. The pink food framed her mouth. She put her bowl down in her lap and took one proper spoonful of ice-cream at a time. For some reason, Alphys burst into laughter. It sounded so refreshing.

Later Undyne was about to fall asleep on Alphys's couch and Alphys was about to go to some other room to tuck herself in for the night, when the guard captain's cell phone rang and vibrated on the coffee table. Click. "Yo, Papyrus! What's up punk, do you have any idea what time it is?! ... Huh? ... Sans is what? ... Slow down, I can't understand what you're saying. ... Did you say Toriel? ... That's the name of the Queen, dude... Well, former Queen at least, I think ... They what?! ... Ok ... Look, I'm at Alphys's place right now. Do you wanna come over? I mean, is that..." Undyne glanced at Alphys, who nodded in approval. "Yeah, she says it's ok, just come over and we'll figure this out, alright? ... Ok. ... See ya in a bit."

Frisk opened her eyes to pure blackness. It took her a few minutes to realize she was awake. She didn't know how many times she fell back asleep before she finally stirred and sat up to a mild headache. She stretched and yawned. "Mmm, timeisit..." She blinked. "Where am I?"

"beats me. i'm totally in the dark," responded the voice to her left side.

"Then why don't you just turn on your... oh." Sans snickered and made his left eye glow blue again. Frisk giggled and sighed.

"oh, looka that. we're in tori's house." They stared at the wall, agreeing that they were in Tori's house. "how'd we get here?"

"Well, your light was too low and I uh... I took a wrong turn..." She mumbled when she admitted her mistake and twiddled her thumbs in her lap. "Then when you fell asleep, I couldn't see anything, and then we got attacked by some crazy Vegetoids."

"huh, attacked by vegetables? but. why?"

"I don't know, I think it had something to do with the darkness. They seem to be sensitive to low light levels. They were huge and scary-looking, and really, really angry! And then they shot a million things at us, and one of them almost got you!" She rubbed her left upper arm where she was surprised to discover that the tear in her sleeve had been stitched up with a thread. "Then I carried you and ran away, and then Toriel came and saved us."

Sans stared blankly and said nothing. Frisk said, "What?"

"darkness-triggered were-vegetables."

"Uh-huh."

"that's a thing."

"Apparently."
"ok."

A soft, yellow light shined upon their faces through the window. Sans stopped using own magic for light and they went out to greet Toriel. Her eyes looked droopy, but she walked up and caught them both in an unexpected hug. "Frisk! Is your arm alright now? Oh dear, I forgot about the blood stain here." She bent down and pinched the fabric between her fingers. "Perhaps we can find something to wash that out later… Are you alright Sans? I couldn't tell if you were hurt or not. You should thank Frisk for bringing you home safely last night!" She said pointedly.

"thanks buddy."

Frisk folded her arms and looked down. "I wish you would choose better times to fall asleep."

"i'll have to sleep on that one."

"Sans!" she insisted, and he was surprised at her serious and almost wavering tone. "Really, what if that thing had hit you? You only have 1 HP. Do you want me to have to make that call… to your brother?"

"ok, ok! calm down. 'm sorry, ok? i'll be more careful next time."

"There now, my friends," Toriel said. She yawned widely and sat down on the couch in front of her house. "We should not speak of such depressing things first thing in the morning." She sunk into the green couch and said, "We've got a long… day ahead of us…" Her eyes drooped shut. Frisk and Sans smiled and patted her shoulder.

"You mean we've got a long day ahead of us."

"get some sleep tori. it's our shift now."

They left Toriel to sleep and walked the short distance to the market. She let her light out as she drifted off. Sans used his own to light the way with a beam of blue. He held a spider cupcake in one hand and a half-eaten spider donut in the other. Frisk carried a cup of coffee.

"she looked like she hadn't slept a wink," said Sans.

"Yeah. At least she got your phone back." Frisk checked the screen and saw that it was 10:23. "Here." Sans stuffed the rest of the donut into his mouth so he could take his phone. He turned his eyelight off as soon as they stepped down the stairs and into the light provided by other monsters. "let's get ourselves some flashlights soon. 'cause…” He bit off half of the cupcake. "nom… all this lighting is really tiring me out," he said with a wink.

A group of monsters, some familiar and others not, gathered in the center of the market square. Some stood on benches or rails. Some were not attending the meeting, but they wandered nearby and listened in out of curiosity. A pair of teenage Froggits bounced on the spider web which had been placed over the pit near the market's dismantled dividing wall. The purple Whimsun observed them with worry, prompting his one-winged companion to step forward and tell them off. Buffet raised herself on a web to better look over the crowd.

The homeless teacher Visage said, "What's the hold up, lady?! Can you tell us when the lights're coming back on or not?"

"I am just waiting for everyone to show up. It soothes me to see Elder Helen here," she said and glanced at the grumpy old Migosp who was Mabel's grandmother. "But I had so hoped that Aunt Iris would come as well. And now I see farmers are late to the party. Oh, and where are those
Frisk muttered, "She looks kinda nervous and stressed." Sans whispered back, "not too tired though."

Elder Helen said, "Look the human's here. Just start already!"

Frisk shared a small smile with her mentor. "Very well then," Buffet said. "Let's all remain calm and think about things one at a time. Our power went out at about 9:00 last night. There is no cell phone or telegraph communication. The only available light sources must come from magic or candles or flashlights." A couple of fire-based lights floated in the room, although they were not quite as nice as Toriel's. The spider baker herself held a diffuse oil lantern in one of her hands. Mason had a flashlight and came over to stand next to Frisk and Sans. "Toriel and I investigated all night, but could not find any immediate problems. But, I am sure that my friends can do a better job of that today." She nodded at Mason and Sans. "In any case… lacking light, electricity, and the usual flow of customers may render many of your businesses unprofitable until these things are fixed, but that judgement will be up to you."

"Ahem…" Mason hovered up next to Buffet to make an announcement, and stopped there to have a staring contest with the crowd for about 10 seconds. He finally took a deep breath and said, "Construction's canceled for now." He sighed and set himself back down, mission accomplished. The meeting began to break up into groups of people having conversations relevant to their own affairs.

Buffet came out of the crowd and said, "We also installed some new locks on the Vegetoid rooms last night. Here's a key for you, Frisk."

"Thanks. Should I just open as usual?" she wondered.

"Well, it's not as if people are just going to stop wanting cupcakes and tea. Do your best to keep it running as normal! That will lift the spirits of our friends while we get this fixed."

"Ok!"

Irene came up to Frisk and asked, "Can I help you today?"

Frisk thought, That's right, she can use fire magic. "Sure."

Mason said, "Hey Sans, let's go check out the breaker room."

"ok."

Before they left, Mason turned to Frisk and gave her a green hard hat with a bright headlight strapped to its forehead by a thick, black band going over the top and around the rim. "Here Frisk, take this," he said. "It'll protect your head while you… cook."

She giggled and accepted it.

Sans and Mason walked down the curving, sloping hall towards the bakery. Mason unlocked a door on the side. "These are all still in the on-position," he said and started flipping off the switches.

"got any blueprints?" Sans asked.

"Nope. Not for the main lines, at least. This stuff was all built ages ago. There's some newer rooms and additions of course, but the base structure is ancient." He went through some drawers and
shelves, looking for tools. He picked up a voltmeter. Sans found a magnet on the wall, and opened a closet which contained some gear.

"Great!" said Mason. "I found a stud finder." He turned to around to see Sans in his classic winking, hands-up-shrug pose, except he had on red rubber gloves and held differently-sized wire cutters in each of them.

"So I guess we should start by figuring out which of these breakers is the lowest level, and then we can trace the main line backwards, and see if we can find any places that still have power."

"ok."

Frisk and Irene and met up with Allens, Sebastian, and Mabel at the stand.

Irene created some lights to float in the air, although they flickered like candles in the wind. A line of customers was already waiting. "Is it open already?" "I couldn't make breakfast at home today."
"Hurry up, I'm hungry!"

Frisk checked the time on the 'office phone', and it was 11:30. "Very soon everyone!" she responded to the complaints. "We're sorry for the delay!"

Irene used fire magic to heat up the coffee and tea. Sebastian decorated the space with peppermint and indigo tiger-lilies that looked shiny and romantic in the dim light. They used some of the classroom desks to create another counter that wrapped around the corner to the storage room. Allens and Frisk worked the grill and the stand and served up hot dogs, salads, and plates of snail spaghetti. Irene got told off for using her apron to wipe up a table spill. Frisk handed her a towel instead. A sign notified the public that the spider delivery service was temporarily out of service. The Moldsmals hung around under the old tree and emitted occasional decorative, but relatively harmless bullets. Mabel felt as she waited the tables, that the whole restaurant was like a beacon of comfort in the looming darkness.

Frisk loaded up a wooden tray with three hot dogs and some drinks. She said to Allens, "I'm going over to the store. I'll take lunch and get our weekly shipment on the way back."

"Ok. Wait… here. I saved you the last piece of 'scotch pie. It's like, your chef's treat, or something, reward-like."

"Hehe, thanks!"

As the human left and he turned back around, he caught sight of a small blur of black in the foreground of his vision and jumped in surprise. On second glance, it was only a trio of spiders descending from the ceiling and scattering off across the floor to wherever. He sighed and said to himself, "O-oh, it's just those."

"Allens," a voice said close to the other side of his head and made him jump again. But it was only Mabel.

"Sorry, didn't mean to startle you!"

"H-heh, well, that's pretty easy to do right now."

"I know!" she agreed. "I hope they get it fixed soon. I'm so glad I have this job to take my mind off of how spooky everything is right now. Do you know if we have any more carrots? I'm running out."
"I dunno. Ask Seb if there's, like, any in the storage?"

Frisk went into the bakery hall and found their handymen investigating the walls. Mason shined their flashlight into an open panel on the wall and said, "It looks like the connection that feeds into the bakery is in here."

Sans squatted and looked at the screen of the stud finder. "Comparing to the reading from those little wires, there's something big underneath the floor here."

"Maybe it's the main line?"

Sans used his eye-light to see the notebook on the floor as he scribbled something down. He noticed Frisk and his light brightened at the sight of the food she had brought them. "Oh, hey there. So glad you came. I was feelin' really blue until you showed up." He turned off his blue light and winked at her as she put the tray down on the floor. A drop of sweat rolled down his forehead as he picked the hot dog that had the most sauce on it. "But enough about me, power you doing?"

She bit her lip and tried not to laugh as she looked to the side, taking a sip of tea. "I'm fine. How's it going over here?"

"Off to a good start I'd say. I think we're cable-ble of figuring it out."

"Sans! Take this seriously."

"I am. Lighten up bucko. I've got ampere ability to make jokes and solve all your problems at the same time. Come on... I see you smiling." She was and she hated it. Mason was giggling though.

She sighed. "I have to go pick up my weekly shipment as soon as our lunch break is over. As for your job? Be a little more conductive!" She retorted before relaxing and sitting down to enjoy her own portion.

Carrying the empty tray and glasses back, Frisk closed the door to the bakery hall behind her. It was cool and silent in the hallway and in the shipping room to her right. She went inside and found everything eerily still. "It's so quiet in here. Hey Dummy, where's all the stuff?" She noticed that he didn't have any light source. "Are you working in the dark? ...Hello, Dummy? Err, R.D.?" She tried the nickname that she remembered Napstablook using before. She waved her hand in front of his face a few times and used Check. "Eh?!"

She came back out behind the counter at the grocery store. Buffet was there discussing with Coco. An uneasy tone of concern. Buffet turned and noticed her. "Frisk, there you are! I am not sure what's going on, but something has broken down in the shipping room."

"Ribbit! Nothing's come in or out of the slot all day. And Dummy just stands there. Ribbit! Did you see it?"

"Yeah," Frisk said. "I was just in there. It's really spooky, there's... no ghost haunting it!"

Buffet said, "Oh dear, where could he have gone?!"
Another Promise

Ivan (a.k.a. Loox Eyewalker) stepped up to the entrance of the apartment where he lived. Candle in hand, he opened the door to the familiar scent of boiling potatoes.

"Hi," he sounded disappointed. His mother peeked out from around the corner of their kitchen room. "What's the matter Ivan? Did you get the cream I asked you to?"

"No. Actually… they sold out," he admitted reluctantly.

"Oh…? That's odd, for them to sell out. I've never seen that happen before. Are you sure you didn't just spend it on monster candy instead?" she asked her son suspiciously.

"Actually… I heard the manager talking with that spider lady and they were sayin' stuff like she was having trouble gettin' more flour for her cupcakes… Then that human girl came out too and they started talking a lot about stuff not working and supplies not coming in or something…"

The Loox woman's bottom eyelid squinted in concern. "I guess we're just having potatoes for dinner then. Stay here and watch them for me. I have to go do something."

"Ok."

"You know how to extinguish the fire plates, right?"

"Yes mother," he said and rolled his eye.

Ivan's mother went to the grocery store and found it packed to the staircase with monsters. "Just what is going on here?" she wondered aloud.

"Cornia!" A familiar voice called. "Auntie Iris!" She greeted in response.

"What's all this commotion about?"

"They're saying that the supply line is down and no one has any idea when the next shipments of groceries will come in! Once the word got out lots of people started to rush over here. You'd better buy what you can too, before it's all gone!"

Monsters elbowed and squished each other and crowded around particular shelves in attempts to get to the most popular and fastest-selling items such as eggs, dairy, candy bars, and prepackaged dinners. Many housekeepers were hoarding canned snails, vegetables and wheat flour. The store was not that large in the first place. It was easy for the aisles to become clogged.

"Excuse me, human!" said the brown, striped Migosp to the familiar restaurant owner who was currently tending the grocery store counter. "Are you sure there aren't any more fruits in the back somewhere? Do you have kiwis? Apples? Anything?!"

"I don't know!" she insisted. "Our colleagues are working on it right now, you'll have to be patient. Hey, don't push!" She yelled over the crowd to some monsters by the refrigerated aisle, which was leaking its melting ice onto the floor. She handled the customers as diligently as she could, frequently glancing to the employee door in the corner. Finally, it opened and Mason stood, covering most of the doorway.

"Mr. Mason! How's it going, anything?!" Frisk called over the noise. Sans peeked out from behind
"Not sure yet. Coco and Buffet are still working on it. Oh, actually here he comes now." He stepped to the side and let the orange Froggit through. Coco's bowtie adjusted itself, but he kept a neutral expression.

"I have to go back to my stand!"

"Ok Frisk! I'll take over here, Ribbit!"

"Thanks," she said. She started to move away from the counter, but when she tried to get around the corner, there were many monsters, heavier and taller than her, blocking the way, and the atmosphere was stressful. Mason picked up Sans under one arm, and Frisk under the other, and flew low across the room. The crowd parted as nearby monsters pushed each other to the side to avoid getting hit by his bottom half. He took them out of the store and put them down at the top of the staircase.

Mason said, "My friendship comes with a sizeable advantage."

Sans said, "thanks pal. you're a well-rounded individual."

Frisk added, "Yeah, you were a really big help."

Sans and Mason patted Frisk's shoulders and ruffled her hair. "good one frisk." "Nice!" "that was well-timed." "Good job!"

"Aah!" She giggled and tried to shrug off their overly enthusiastic response.

"Hello Frisk," said a voice from behind. She turned to see Sebastian. "We have run out of bread. Did you bake any new ones?"

"Ah, no…" Her light-hearted expression from their banter faded away. "We were out of flour."

"You are out of flour? Did you not get the shipment?"

"Um… no."

"No?"

"It was, err… it's not working." Frisk said.

"The shipping is not working?" She nodded. "So… how will we operate without deliveries?" Sebastian asked. The four looked questioningly among themselves. But nobody came forth with an answer.

Frisk said, "Well, we still have that new batch of hot dogs from last night! Although they haven't cured quite as long, but that's ok. Reduce the price to 4g since we don't have buns."

"We are low on spaghetti as well."

"Ok. When that runs out we can use the rest of the snails to make… a big pot of snail soup!"

"So, we shall sell out what we have remaining in stock, but what then?"

"Uh… I'm not quite sure what comes next," she shrugged nervously.

"Well, that would be…" Mason trailed off and glanced at Sans who glanced back and said, "i dunno,
"Hey, we still have vegetables, right?!" Frisk said. "Maybe we can get some more from the Vegetoid farm, and then we can still have salads at least!"

"But what about tomorrow then?" Sebastian asked.

"And the day after that?" Mason added.

"and after that?" Sans finished.

As they were discussing the situation, they heard Allens's name being called by a pair of little Loox children who came running in from the dark hallway.

"Yay, it's lights!" said a little girl voice. "Al? Al?!

"Where is he?!" said a little boy voice. The youngest of Allens's siblings looked around the populated room impatiently. He spotted Frisk and then opened his mouth to call out to her, but then thought twice about it.

"Ahah!" The small, shorts-wearing Loox girl approached Frisk without any second thoughts. The boy began to protest, "Wait sis, don't—"

"Miss Human! Um, Frisk?!"

"Hi there," she addressed the child who had the word 'cool' written on one of her thick horns. The boy, Blinky, grabbed his sister's hand and regarded Frisk with suspicion. He asked her curtly, "Do you know where my brother is?"

"I do believe he was busy washing the dishes," Sebastian answered. "Since there is no electricity, we must do that by hand… or should I say 'by tongue'? 'Tongue and cheek'?" He trailed off and contemplated his clever dialogues. "Actually, I should probably go and trade tasks with him…"

"Unica, right? What's wrong?" Frisk asked the girl who seemed to be getting more upset with every second that passed without being able to say something. Blinky seemed reluctant to talk to anyone but his brother, but Unica blurted out, "There's fighting over the veggie room!"

"!" Exclamation marks appeared over everyone's heads.

"Err, what do you mean?" Frisk asked for further clarification. Unica spoke in a confusing rush. The details were muddled, but the message was clear. "Uh, ok so like, I just went there together with Blinky and Lash, but there were some Migos already there, and then also the Grandma and Grandpa farmers, and they were all like arguing about giving them the keys and it seemed kinda serious, and then like Ivan and Ox showed up too and then someone said something and they started arguing and shouting too and… Me and Blinky got scared and so we came over here…" The boy added, "Hmph, I didn't get scared, I just wanted to stick together with you." Off in the background, Mabel looked up at the mention of the familiar names as she snipped some lettuce leaves with her claws.

"I didn't immediately sure how to respond to this news. Sans said, "so, if the shipping's down then you can't get any food or supplies or anything else from outside the ruins. and now it sounds like your farm is… maybe, sorta, kinda, under attack? or…?"

Hearing it put so bluntly, Frisk stood up straight and looked around at everyone. She muttered a reminder to herself to, "Think about things one at a time." First, she smiled at the young Loox girl and said, "Hey, thanks for telling me that! You did the right thing. Why don't you and your brother
have some treats, and stay here where it's safe, okay?"

"Ok!"

"Seb, uh… go ahead and do those things and uh, do your best with everything."

Sebastian exited the scene by twirling in billowing circles.

"So, uh… about that conflict. Yeah…" She looked around. "That sounds bad. How do we stop them from fighting…" She imagined putting Mason or Buffet or Sans, or even herself in the middle of such a dispute. She shook her head at each possibility. Each of them was severely lacking in either the fighting department, the speaking department, or both. "Maybe if we all went together?"

Sans said, "i dunno about gettin' in the middle of all of that…"

Mason said, "And if we go do that, who's gonna work on the actual cause of all the problems over here?"

Frisk paced and thought out-loud. "If this sort of thing happened on the Surface… I would call the police, but this is the Ruins! We don't have that here! Everyone always just wanders around and does whatever they please, so how can we stop someone from fighting?! We don't have anyone who can just… come in and tell people what to do… and force them to… obey…" She trailed off as she looked across the room through the flickering firelights, beyond the silhouette of the black tree. "Aha!"

Frisk stood before the Caretaker of the Ruins who was sleeping peacefully on the couch in front of her house. "Um…"

Mason went over to the wall to continue his investigation. Just an inch to the right of the damaged area around Toriel's house, he unscrewed a hidden panel in the wall and exposed some wiring coated in various colors. "Ooh, I'm surprised this wasn't already destroyed with the Ruins Door… but that wouldn't bring down the entire cell phone network anyways, since there's a few more of these."

Sans was in-between paying attention to what both of them were doing. He stood next to Frisk and said, "hey."

"I don't want to wake her."

"frisk. do we need tori's help?"

She closed her eyes and sighed. She opened them again, filled with determination and said, "Yes."

Toriel opened her eyes. "Frisk? Mmm… good morning!"

"It's after 8 PM."

"Oh goodness," Toriel rubbed her eyes while sitting up. "Hello Sans."

"hey," he replied. He gestured to emphasize the notebook under his arm and said, "i gotta go look at stuff." Toriel nodded and looked at Frisk again. The human picked up a cup of coffee from some spiders that carried it across the floor, and offered it to the drowsy goat woman.

"Oh-ho, why thank you." She accepted it and took some sips. She looked around. "It's quite busy in here."

"Yeah, I know. It's so weird, it feels almost like a normal day, but,"
"What is the matter, my child?"

"Toriel, some kids came and told me that some people are uh… fighting."

"What? Who is fighting? Where?" She said and looked more alert.

"They said, by the Vegetoid rooms. I think it's um, some people from the Loox and Migosp clans who were trying to force their way in there or something…"

"But, Buffet and I just installed locks there today! I mean, last night. What if someone accidentally puts out some of the lights? Or lets them out into the darkness? Or hurts them?!"

"Yeah, and some of them already got beat up last night!" Frisk nodded and shared Toriel's concern.

Toriel said as she stood up, "She told me that the Vegetoids and her own spider farms are the only significant sources of food in the Ruins besides imports, so I'm sure I must go now and protect them!"

"Oh yeah, we don't have imports now either," Frisk added.

"O-oh…" Toriel paused and said, "Well, things sure have derailed quickly while I've been sleeping."

"Sorry. I feel awful having to wake you up just to complain about everything…"

"That's quite alright, my child. Problems do not just wait around for it to be a convenient time for us to deal with them. The situation here seems to be getting out of hand, so let's all do whatever we can!" Frisk nodded.

Just as she was about to head off, Toriel once again paused and said, "Frisk, are those spiders trying to get your attention?" She pointed to the ground and made a ball of light to better illuminate them.

"Come here?" Frisk translated the sign in a questioning tone. "She's telling me to come. Wait, what does that one mean?" The spiders circled around Toriel's feet. "Bring Toriel too?"

"You can listen through those, right?" said Toriel. "I must go now and resolve that dispute."

Frisk read, "Enemy incoming? I don't know what she means by that, but she really wants us to come right now."

"huh, us too?" Sans looked down at the spiders as they crawled around his slippers.

"If only I could be in two places at once?!" Toriel said in a half-joking manner, wringing her hands nervesly. Frisk looked over to the restaurant table where Allens was taking a minute from work to talk to his younger siblings. She ran over to them.

"Allens!" She called. "Err, actually…" she had second thoughts about what she was about to ask him and glanced away.

"What's it?"

"Um, you heard about the trouble, right?"

"You mean about the fightings and stuff? Yeah, these guys were just telling me too…"

"I thought maybe you could go and… hmm," her brow furrowed in unease as she looked at him. But won't they think that's biased, sending someone who's in one of the clans? I could ask Seb. She
looked over at the caped Froggit who was just coming out of the storage room carrying two trays of vegetables with his paws, and a crate of saucers with his tongue. No, it needs to be someone they would know that Toriel knows, and he hasn't been here as long.

"I don't want you to do anything dangerous. But... if you go over to the farm, maybe you could just tell them that Toriel is coming soon. And if they don't behave, they'll be in big trouble with her!"

"Sure!"

"O-ok... be careful!?"

"Sure, I'll be careful," he said and left. Frisk stared after him with an intense feeling of guilt building up in her. Mason was already on his way around the corner. As Toriel followed him, she turned her head and smiled back at Frisk in approval.

Sans clapped Frisk on the shoulder and said, "hey, why the long face? that was a pretty good move. you're doin' great!"

"Well, I don't feel great!" she said. "Telling other people to go near fights... ordering them around like chess pieces..."

"pshyea, no kidding," he grinned. "'m glad you got that one covered. i'd hate to be in your shoes right now." She perked up a little, not expecting that he would empathize so strongly with that. He added, "c'mon let's go." She nodded and followed them to the market.

The crowd at the store had diminished, but there were still at least 15 or 16 monsters—far more than the small space was meant to accommodate. The demographics of the desperate shoppers had shifted from earlier in the day. Most of the middle-aged housekeepers from the more organized families had gone home, leaving a higher ratio of men and younger monsters. As they stepped across the threshold, Frisk said, "Hey wait a minute, isn't this store supposed to close at 8?" She dangled her keychain in her hand, ready for use.

As Sans stepped into the store, his foot bones were suddenly exposed to the unpleasant sensation of cold water soaking through his soft slippers. He stepped away from the puddle, but it was all over the floor. He ended up in front of Toriel, who was saying, "Yes, that's right. Everyone, please go home now! We have business to attend to." Three or four monsters were intimidated by Toriel and listened to her, but many others ignored her. She said to her friends, "Hold on, what are those children doing over there? They do not work here, do they?"

She gestured to the group of 4 teenage monsters loitering behind the counter by the employee entrance. There was a Froggit with an angular green face and a tattered brown cloak. A peach-colored rock sat on his head. An egg-shaped Whimsun hovered and held a wooden bat. Frisk thought she recognized the fourth monster as the white Froggit who had bumped into her on her first day in the Ruins.

Frisk said, "No, you're right. Hey, what are you guys doing?" The white Froggit looked at her and said, "Human?! Lemme in here, I wanna talk to the manager."

"I'm sorry, but we don't time for that. We have work to do, so whatever you want can wait for tomorrow."

The green-skinned Froggit's true face was covered by his brown cloak, but little white eyes peeked out from the torn holes. With a lazy expression he said, "Look man, I just wanna buy some candy. Got any sprinkles or somethin'? Here, give ya an extra half for it." He jingled some change beneath
his cloak.

Frisk shook her head and said, "There's nothing back there for you. I told you, the shipping is down. We don't have some secret stash."

The ovular Whimsun fluttered his shapely, downy wings. "Jow' man, it's no use arguin' with dese greedy shopkeeps. If ya wanna bribe her it's gonna take your whole week's allowance."

"Excuse me, 'greedy?!' We're trying our best here…" Frisk was saying at the same time as the rock on the cloaked Froggit's head made some rock noises, and its mount complained, "Peachie's hungry…"

This exchange caused the other Froggit to lose his patience and he shot out a light-gray tongue at the hand in which Frisk held her keys. "Ech!" She tightened her grip in time to hold on to them, but that caused her to also be pulled along as the troublesome monster reeled in. She stumbled forward and got caught on the edge of the counter where she braced herself. Sans grabbed her shoulder.

"let go."

They all quieted for a moment. The egg-shaped Whimsun's instincts initially told him to urge his ally to obey, but on his second glance he dismissed the soft-spoken skeleton.

"Don't mess with me, short stuff. I've got a Real Bat."

Sans nodded. "good to know. didja also know you've got a Real Bad Attitude?"

Peachie made a granular noise and used their most powerful attack. A single, pink-tinted pellet moved through the air and approached the pair.

Toriel had had enough of hesitating. She swooped her right arm around to gently push her small friends, while her sleeve absorbed the damage of the shot. Sans noted that his options for dodging were limited by the confined interior space and the excessive amount of people inside of it. Frisk felt her heart race at the threat. She backed up a little closer to him. Mason followed their example and blocked them in from behind, creating a Sanswich. Toriel lead them all around the counter.

Egghead quieted again and hovered an inch further back into the corner with his own friends. The towering goat monster's footstep made an unusually loud squelch from the water soaked into her fur. At the same time, he honestly thought her eyes were on fire. The offending party cowered and hurried away from the door. Since Toriel was blocking their way out, they clumsily climbed over the counter and tripped over each other as they hastily made their exit.

She let the other three through. As Frisk unlocked the door, Toriel addressed the rest of the standbys. "Well? What are you all standing around for? The store is closed now." They all obeyed and left the store.

Frisk tried to open the employee door, but it was stuck. The manager's dampened voice said, "Ribbit! Are they gone? Hold on a second." There were some heavy scraping sounds. Then he said, "Ok!"

They opened the door and walked around the waist-high bookcase that stood against the wall, and stepped over the bundle of torn-down spider silk in the corner. They continued down the hall and went into the shipping room.

The oil lantern hung by a silken thread in the middle of the room, illuminating tendrils of dust. The spider baker was looking at a chart on a clipboard, while she held a few other papers in her spare hands. The light glanced off of her long blonde pigtails as she turned to face them and said, "Hello my friends. Thank you for taking care of that…"
Frisk stepped into the room first, but Sans stopped her from running in too far. Addressing Toriel and Frisk he said, "careful guys. we left that floor panel open." Frisk looked down to where he was indicating. A rectangular depression exposed a thick cable hooked up with a transformer and a set of thinner cables running through the floor. A sticker inside the lining of the panel read, 'DANGER: High Voltage.'

"I am glad you're alright," Toriel agreed. "But I really need to go over to the farm now, as you know."

Buffet nodded and hesitated to contradict Toriel, but Frisk noticed her expression as if she had more to say. She asked, "Are you watching now? What's going on over there?"

She gasped and put a hand over her mouth and said, "Oh my. Allens just froze the door shut."

"He, iced the door…" Frisk's voice quavered with unease as she understood that the person she had sent was, indeed, doing something risky and dangerous.

"They have not broken into violence just yet," Buffet assured her. "But they are still arguing."

"Baker," Toriel turned slowly as she hesitated to leave the room just then. "Do you think this situation will lead to a loss of life?"

"Oh, dear…" Her eyes looked sad as she let out a calming sigh.

Sans read her expression as a 'yes', and prompted her further, "how likely?"

Her second pair of arms fiddled with the edges of her skirt. "Well, I would say… for every day that continues on like this… if nothing is improved after 3 or 4 days it is practically guaranteed. It has already been almost 24 hours and people are already fighting over resources." Once she began speaking she became more confident. "I believe that we must immediately implement a plan to fix the root cause of the problem. It is hard to ignore things like clan conflicts in the halls, but if we let those distract us from our long term solution a second longer, then we may not improve the situation fast enough to prevent a terrible tragedy."

Toriel nodded, "I see. So let's review everything we've done and learned so far."

"Yes. As you know, nothing is coming in or out of the shipping slot, none of Dummy's drones are moving or doing anything, and he has disappeared so we cannot even ask him about it. As for the power outage… Dear fellows?"

"uh well," Sans took that as his cue. "we haven't found anything that looks broken inside all of these buildings. this cable on the floor here looks like it feeds into that shipping slot and so that's probably the source of your electricity. makes sense that whoever built that thing would also put the power cable through it."

Mason continued, "So that means our power line is most likely damaged from somewhere outside the Ruins."

Buffet nodded, "But without being able to even communicate with the outside, we won't be able to find out anything, or order anyone to fix it."

Toriel said, "So you're saying we need help from the outside. Well then, we'll just send someone and… err… How will they get outside?"

Buffet asked the engineers, "How fast do you think we could complete the trading tunnel?"
Sans said, "hmm, well if we modified the design to make it more narrow, we could get it open a little
faster. but it would still take another week or so. and there's no way to send that plan to the guys on
the other side. actually, i don't know if they'll even bother to keep baring their end if i don't answer
their calls."

Mason added, "Plus we'll have to work around not having any of our electric tools."

Coco added, "Excuse me, Ribbit, but don't you guys use a lot of magic and abilities for digging too?
What about… food? There's almost nothing left back here."

Mason said, "Gosh, you're right! They won't be able to dig for more than a couple more meters if we
don't get any new shipments! They'll use up all of their energy in 2 or 3 hours and then that'll be
that."

The discussion was making Frisk nervous. She subconsciously closed her fist around Toriel's sleeve.
"Don't be afraid, my child. We will solve this."

Frisk said, "I don't understand how this all happened so quickly! Even if the shipping stopped this
morning, we don't normally run completely out of all of our food in a single day. Just this morning I
was making hot dogs like normal, and we were all getting along and trying to work together and
have a good time, but… all of a sudden people are fighting, and breaking into the stores, and it's like
a whole different place..." They all contemplated that for a second.

Toriel responded, "Well, what is happening right now is unusual, so people are going to behave
unusually."

Buffet said, "Indeed. People probably bought up everything they could because that's what everyone
else was doing."

Frisk said, "So how are we gonna get help? There's no door, and no tunnel, and no phones, and no
telegraph."

Mason perked up and said, "Oh, I know!" He flew over the panel and patted the wall above the
traffic control lights above the shipping slot. "We still have this shipping slot! Let's just send some
spiders through it!"

As Sans was putting the cover back on the floor panel, he winked and said, "way to think outside the
box."

As Mason was grinning back, Buffet interrupted again. "I'm sorry to rain on your parade, but I don't
think that will work. This shipping slot connects us to a warehouse near the Capital. The range of my
spider control is nowhere near that far, and even if it were, it would be far too slow to communicate
through only letters."

Mason said, "Oh. I guess then… wait! I've got it!" He hovered in the air. "I'll just go through it and
—oof!" He tried to fly into the small square-shaped opening, but his large, flabby body got stuck in
the opening. Everyone cringed a little at his folly. Toriel grabbed his legs and tugged. He popped out
of the slot and the momentum of both heavy-weight monsters caused them to stagger backwards.
Toriel bumped into the edge of Dummy's desk and toppled over stacks of paper.

Frisk rushed to her side. "Toriel! Are you ok?"

"I am fine, my child," she grinned while rubbing the spot on her back.

Frisk giggled at Mason, "You're a little big to fit through there!" Coco gathered up the papers as the
others gathered their bearings.

"huh, i'm not."

"Eh?" said Frisk. They all looked over to the corner to see Sans's green slippers sticking out of the small, dark passage.

"My friend, you must be joking, right?" Toriel laughed nervously. Sans pushed himself out of the entrance and stood up on the ground again.

"i mean, if there's no other choice i guess we gotta send a monster through it. and hey, it looks a little bit like i might be cut out for the size of this operation." He shrugged.

Despite his calm facade, Frisk looked suspiciously at the slight twitch of his hoodie pockets where his hands were buried. "That sounds really scary. You really want to crawl on your hands and knees through a tiny little tunnel like that?"

"i'd really rather not," he said, still grinning. "i'd rather stay here and eat hot dogs."

"Well, there are no hot dogs left," she said and looked down. "But someone else should at least go with you!"

Toriel said, "Absolutely, you should not do this alone."

Buffet added, "Do you even have a plan once you get to the Capital?"

Sans shrugged. "i was thinkin' of just coming back here to see what the next step would be." They all sighed knowingly.

Frisk stepped forward and said, "Ok then, I'll come with you."

Buffet said, "Oh, excellent idea! You already know all about running the Ruins and managing supplies."

Toriel's face fell a little in disbelief. Frisk replied, "I don't know that much…"

"Oh don't be so modest, my dear. With your experience in the food industry, and Sans's knowledge of the construction projects, you two will be able to get a lot done, even if you are unable to call us!"

"Excuse me, what are you all talking about?" said Toriel. "Frisk cannot leave the Ruins. Have you forgotten?"

Frisk looked down nervously as she realized what it was she was asking of Toriel. "But, I understand, but… we can't go on like this. You said we all need to do whatever we can, right?"

"if things get shaky i can just bring her back," Sans said.

"No, it's too dangerous! Frisk is still only a human child! Isn't there anyone else who could go with Sans?"

Frisk responded before she could stop herself, "Maybe if you hadn't destroyed the Ruins Door."

Toriel narrowed her eyes in response. "My child, do not try to—"

"There's some trouble outside the store again!" Buffet blurted out.
Toriel paused her argument and said, "Huh?"

A yellow-green Froggit with a heart-shaped face, and a frilly, pink neck collar hopped among the empty aisles. He nudged an empty bin and batted his long, black eyelashes at the red apple that came rolling out from underneath. "Teehee, I knew it." He picked up the apple and hopped towards the exit.

"D-did you just steal that?" said a pink Whimsun just outside the door.

"S-stealing? Oh no, boo-hoo!" wept a light-blue Whimsum accompanying the first one.

"Wow, you're such a scumbag!" Yelled the same white Froggit who had challenged Frisk earlier. "Tryin' to take advantage of people as soon as things get a little confusing?"

The pretty-eyed Froggit whined, "Don't judge me, you jerk! There's none left, I was hungry! Hmph!" As he complained, he accidentally dropped a handful of costume necklaces made of cute wooden beads in various shapes.

The white one said, "I knew it! I saw you take those from the other room too!"

His egg-shaped friend was with him, and said, "Man o' man how low can ya go?" He fluttered up close to the yellow-green Froggit. This scared him and he shot out a couple of fly-shaped bullets. Egghead hovered backwards and hit the bullets with his bat. He was too close to his own ally and accidentally hit him in the head with his swing.

As the situation was escalating, Toriel burst out of the employee entrance. She shot a fireball that struck the ground. Before dissipating, it briefly burst into crackling flames and sent a wave of heat to act as a clear warning to all of the quibbling monsters. Frisk and Sans and Coco poked their heads out from the doorway to watch. She commanded the pink and blue Whimsuns. "You two. Go home." She turned on the teenage ruffians. "And you, didn't I already deal with you earlier?"

When they got back to the shipping room, Frisk said, "Toriel, I'm sorry I said that…"

She looked guilty and replied, "I… it did upset me, but, you're not wrong…"

Buffet started to say, "Oh, things are getting dicey over at—Err, pardon me." She retracted her interruption.

"The farm, I need to go help them," Toriel said anxiously.

Frisk continued, "I know you're worried, but, I really should go and work with Sans, so that I can help everyone. Isn't that the right thing to do? Everyone here will get hurt if we don't fix things soon."

"But… this is unbelievable. Frisk is a human child. The last human Soul Asgore needs to break the barrier. That temptation… How can you all think this is a good idea? There must be some other way!"

Buffet said, "With the size of that passage, I am not so sure about that. Someone with Frisk's skillset, who is also as small as a child, and not to mention we must trust this person to crawl an inch behind Sans for three hours? I might be able to squeeze myself through there, but…" She gave it a try. Her muffled voice continued, "Oh dear, I really can't move my limbs enough to crawl forward…" Sans and Frisk pulled her out. When she was back on her feet, she looked down at them and said, "You two do make a good team." Mason and Coco nodded. Toriel was acting aloof.
"Toriel," Frisk grabbed her sleeve. "I… I'm scared." Toriel hugged her back. "I don't like this." She sniffled. "I don't like this fighting. We need help. We're gonna starve if we don't do something. Or I guess… we'll kill each other over the last scraps?" She shuddered at the thought. "Like the farms? I don't want that." She lowered her head and clenched her fists in Toriel's shirt.

"I don't want anything to happen to you. I can't bear it."

"I don't like fighting," Frisk repeated. "I don't want this. Toriel... It's so dark everywhere. Please."

Bitter tears fell from the older woman's own eyes. She hissed, "How can I refuse?! I know it, this is all my own fault! If I had not destroyed the Ruins door, you wouldn't have to do this. I don't want to lose you Frisk! But what right do I have to stop you?! If I had been doing my duty, instead of making everyone afraid of me," she glanced at the pig-tailed spider, "I should have known not to do a foolish thing like destroying our only other connection to the Underground. And now because of my own mistakes, you're in as much danger inside of the Ruins as outside of them."

Toriel released Frisk and stood up straight and tall. "I am done with this. I am done with being selfish. I am not just here to protect Frisk. I am here… for everyone. I am the Queen." She declared. Tears were still rolling down her cheeks, and her eyes were red around the lids, but she didn't show a shred of shame for her emotional display.

"So, as the Queen, I order Frisk and Sans… to leave the Ruins," she said and blinked away an extra set of tears, "Yes, leave the Ruins and find us help. You're the only ones around here who are competent enough, and also with your small bodies you can fit through that passage. As much as I hate to let you go, you are the best qualified for the job. Everyone else seems to believe that." She nodded at Buffet and Mason and Coco. "I trust their judgement. I will stay here. And we will try to keep the situation under control for as long as we can." She concluded. Sans and Frisk weren't sure if she was glowing from a subconscious use of her fire magic, or if that was just the holy inspiration that surged through their own minds.

"Now Frisk, while you are outside of the Ruins, you will be in danger under Asgore's law, and you will visit many new places you could get lost in, so you must—" "m not going to get lost," Frisk muttered. "Frisk!" Frisk quieted and listened at attention.

"Now is not the time for that. You are going into unknown territory, so be good and listen to Sans, do you understand?" Frisk nodded. "Yes Toriel."

"Sans," Toriel said. "Protect Frisk."

"ok."

Toriel knelt down and embraced Frisk.

"I love you, Frisk."

"I love you too, Toriel." Toriel leaned close and whispered into Frisk's ear, "Oh and, I know I keep saying how I'm worried about you getting hurt, but also, Frisk, since you're going with him, please please promise me you'll take care of Sans, 'cause you know…"

"I know," Frisk rolled her eyes and nodded in agreement.

"Oh, and Sans…" she stood back up.

"If. Anything."
Happens.

To MY

SWEET, INNOCENT,
AMAZING, BEAUTIFUL,
PERFECT, LOVING LITTLE
GIRL

FRISK,

...Then we won't be friends anymore." She ended sadly, as if it were simply a matter of fact rather
than a threat.

"!" Sans hastily nodded.

Toriel hugged Sans. And then she hugged Frisk again. And then she hugged them both at the same
time and held them tight.

"Toriel," Buffet urged.

"I have to go!" Toriel stood up and ran out of the room.
Let's Stick Together

The same night the power went out in the Ruins. Toriel had stayed up the whole night working. Sans and Frisk had patrolled the dark halls for stranded monsters, one by one, until there were none left.

At the same time…

The automatic door slid open. Papyrus stepped onto the tiled floor of the Lab. His waterlogged boots created a squelch with his steps. The top of his shoulderpads and his scarf were darkened with moisture.

Undyne was sitting on the floor and hugging a pillow as her body leaned into the coffee table. The credits roll of a TV show was playing on the screen. Her drooping eyelid opened a little more as she glanced at him. "Did you forget to grab an umbrella again?"

"CAPTAIN UNDYNE? IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO GRACE MY CURRENT STATE OF WATERLOGGEDNESS WITH A FITTINGLY CLEVER LITERARY DESCRIPTION?!"

Undyne was barely awake enough to process Papyrus's dialogue, let alone respond to it. Her eye looked off to either side as her mind drew blanks. "Uh…" She scratched the long wrist sleeve of her sky-blue pajama shirt which had sharks on it.

Alphys hesitated, then spoke up, "Um… y-you look like you're, um, s-s-soaked… to the bone?"

Undyne showed little reaction. Papyrus smiled with his mouth hanging open as if he were about to laugh, or even retort, but no sound came out. Alphys bit her lip and started to sweat.

"It's just not the same…” Papyrus took out his cell phone and redialed the top entry from the log of recent calls. The screen was entirely filled with red X's followed by his brothers' name.

Click. "Howdy! The number you're dial-ling is not in service. Although, why you expected a number to be able to serve you, I am not sure."

Alphys was standing between the coffee table and the door with the bathroom sign on it. "I guess you're uh, t-trying to call your… your b-brother?"

"Yeah, I've been trying to call him for about 3 hours now!"

Undyne chuckled a little and said, "But, come on Papyrus, this is your brother we're talking about… he probably just forgot to charge his phone and let it run out of batteries. Or maybe he's just too lazy to pick up right now. It's like past midnight."

"I've tried to call Frisk and she doesn't pick up either."

"WHAT?!" Undyne jumped awake and stood up. Her loose hair fell in a red curtain over her eye-patch. "That's weird! Maybe you're right then. There's something… fishy going on." Her eye narrowed. "Wait, I've got an idea!" She stood up and went over to the computer. "Alphys put cameras all over the Underground. So let's use 'em to take a peek at what's going on inside the Ruins!"

"YAY! GREAT IDEA!" Papyrus stood by her side as she clicked away from the fullscreen video that was streaming an image of a semi-spherical house with fish decal. The program switched to a selection of video feeds displayed in a grid.
Alphys, who had moved a few steps closer to the bathroom door, said, "Y-you guys, there's no... c-cameras inside of the Ruins."

Undyne glanced at her and replied, "Oh." Her finger absentmindedly scrolled on the mouse wheel.

Papyrus said, "HEY! What's with that missing one?!"

"There's a missing one?"

"W-where?!!"

Papyrus pointed. "The information transmitted by this particular camera, is rather lacking I think!"

Undyne said, "You're right, it's just a big black rectangle!"

Alphys said, "Huh, that's weird." She reached over Undyne and took control of the cursor. Undyne jumped a little as Alphys's hand brushed against her own, and scooted the wheeled chair back to give her space to stand. Alphys was preoccupied with reading the various informational pop-ups and settings panels.

"This is the camera that's s-supposed to be right outside the Ruins Door."

"You mean the Ruins Pile-of-Rubble?!!" Papyrus suggested.

"Y-yeah, that. Hum... W-When did they last call you?"

"EXACTLY 3 HOURS, 14 MINUTES, AND 15 SECONDS AGO, as of the beginning of this sentence!"

"H-heh, that's pretty precise..."

"It pays to be informed!" he declared.

Alphys nodded. She had rewound the video until the image of a long, snowy path bordered by tall, dark woods appeared in the display.

"Ok, that's a, a pretty weird uh, c-coincidence. That's exactly the same time as when this video cut out. I think you're p-probably r-right that there's something weird going on..." She glanced towards the bathroom door once again as if she still wished to excuse herself from this gathering.

"SO, CAN WE GO CHECK OUT THE CAMERA RIGHT NOW?!!"

"Papyrus, maybe we should let Alphys get some sleep."

"N-no it's ok," Alphys reassured them. "I uh, I agree with Papyrus." She muttered to herself under her breath, "They should be ok for a little while longer."

Alphys started packing up a messenger bag with some tools and measurement devices. Papyrus and Undyne stood nearby as she rummaged through her closet and pulled out her dark-olive, hooded winter coat.

"Ngaaaw," Undyne yawned.

Alphys smiled nervously at her. "Uh... y-you can stay here and, s-sit on the, I mean um, s-sleep here if you want to..."
Undyne stood up straighter and put her hands on her hips and said, "Pssh no way! I'm comin' with you guys, duh!"

"Heh," Alphys glanced again at Papyrus who was also starting to show dark circles under his eyesockets, despite his energetic demeanor. "I think I know j-j-just what we n-need right now…"

Alphys took some of the leftover icecream and blended it together with some espresso from her refrigerator. The three of them stood in a circle and chugged down their pick-me-ups.

"FIRST!" "FIRST!" Papyrus yelled, followed by Undyne who then voiced a disappointed "Guh!" They waited another minute for Alphys to finish hers.

"Ok let's go!" The three of them exclaimed simultaneously and set off.

An hour later, they arrived at the last stretch of path on the fringe of Snowdin Forest. Along the way, Undyne had stopped at her house to pick up her dark-gray winter coat, which hung over her thighs.

They came across the door blocking the way over the small bridge. "HUH THAT'S STRANGE," said Papyrus. "My new puzzle appears to be lacking power! So I can't unlock this door."

Undyne groaned, "You made it lock by default when the power's out?!"

"WORRY NOT, COMPANIONS! I, THE GREAT PAPYRUS, WILL SOLVE THIS DILEMMA SO THAT WE MAY ALL PROCEED! N… Nyeh!" He summoned four long bones that created another bridge over the gap to circumvent the puzzle.

The women looked at the new construct doubtfully. Undyne said, "You're still a novice in structural bones, aren't you?"

"DON'T WORRY, UNDYNE. IT IS PERFECTLY SAFE!" Papyrus assured them and ran over the bone bridge. The force of his footstep made one of the center bones bend when he put his full weight down on its midpoint. When he touched down on the other side of the cliff, the flick of his boot caused one of the outer bones to roll a few turns so that it now branched off diagonally from the rest of the bridge.

"SEE? SAFE AND SOUND! I WOULD ALLOW A CHILD TO CROSS OVER IT!"

Alphys pointed out that, "A child would have a way better chance of survival." She looked very unwilling to walk across the structure.

"NGAAAAH!" Undyne picked up Alphys. She bounded over the bridge, making only one impact with her boot in the center of the bridge. The two inner-most bones snapped in half as she propelled their mass away and had them land with an explosion of snow on the ground next to Papyrus. Alphys had her hands clamped over her face as Undyne set her down.

"Papyrus… Let's get your brother back soon so that he can give you some more lessons."

"YES CAPTAIN."

They continued on to the end of the path. Alphys looked amazed at the the state of damage to the Ruins entrance. "W-wow… I've seen this on camera, b-but up close now… it's really…" she trailed off. Her eyes wandered upwards and focused on a big crack in the natural part of the rock above the collapsed slabs of wall.

Alphys slowly turned and made eye contact with her companions. "Uh, U-Undyne…"
"Huh? What is it?" she replied, eager to help.

"W-well, I was j-just inspecting the state of this, uh, c-c-collapse, and. Uh. J-just to be safe, I think I should t-tell you that…"

"I SHOULD DIG THROUGH IT? OK, CAN I START NOW?!"

"CAN I HELP?!"

"NO!" Alphys shouted and beads of sweat appeared on her face. "I-i-i-i-uh… I-I wanted to s-say, uh… the opposite of that!"

"Huh?" "NYEH?"

"Y-yeah! Uh, y-you see this wall is pretty now uh, th-this terrain is really delicate, so uh… n-never try to dig through it. Either of you."

"Oh." "Oh." "Ok…"

Alphys pulled the camera out of the bush and looked at it. She stuck a device into an outlet on an undamaged part of the wall which had just had two cables plugged into it. "Ok, it looks like this line is dead. Um… P-Papyrus?"

"?!

"D-did you connect your new p-puzzle here too?" She gestured while holding up the plug of the second cable.

"Yeah! I don't think there's any other outlets in the forest!"

"Yeah, me neither." She took some pictures with a fancy camera and put it back in her bag. She plugged the cables back in and put the video camera back on its perch. "Ok guys, that was short but I think that uh, w-we've learned all we can from here, so... yeah." She said and set off back in the direction they had come from.

The taller monsters followed some distance behind Alphys. The night wind was howling, obscuring the sound as Papyrus noted to Undyne, "Wowie! She really takes control once she gets into it!"

She glanced at him from under her furry hood, and nodded.

"You must be a good influence on her!"

Her eye widened. "Huh? Me?!" She looked away from them and said nothing else.

When they got to the bridge again, Undyne simply picked up Papyrus and Alphys and jumped over the gap.

When they passed in front of the house of the skeleton brothers in Snowdin, Alphys pivoted and said, "S-so, g-guys, um, I have to go back to the Lab and uh, y'know, stuff…"

Undyne shrugged. "Are you sure you don't need any more help?"

"Y-yeah. S-s-sorry, to cancel our, um, s-sleepover thingy…" She paled a little before their disappointed expressions, but she couldn't ignore their symptoms of exhaustion. A glance at her phone told her the time was 3:45 AM. "A-actually, you guys can help b-b-by uh, going home, getting some sleep, and d-doing your jobs as normal tomorrow!" They stared at each other
awkwardly for a few more seconds. "And I'll c-c-call you if there's anything else," she added.

Undyne perked up at that. She turned on her subordinate and shouted, "SENTRY PAPYRUS! YOU ARE TO REPORT TO YOUR POST TOMORROW AT THE USUAL TIME!"

"YES CAPTAIN!"
"AND DO NOT SKIP YOUR REPORT, OR YOUR AFTERNOON TRAINING!"
"OKAY!"

Finally back alone in her Lab, Alphys hastily grabbed a new bag of dog food and, after several tugs, ripped it open with her claws. She entered the "bathroom door" and tapped her tail against the floor of the elevator as it descended. The ventilation system whirred in the background as she trotted through the facility. Half of the lights were burnt out or flickering, but no one had bothered to change them.

"H-h-hey guys, s-sorry for the wait, heh. C-come on guys, it's f-feeding time!" She sweated and forced a smile onto her face as her voice bounded off the walls of the True Lab. "Heh, hello?" She slowed down her pace as she approached the end of the hallway and turned the corner. She gasped.

Three beings were climbing on the vending machine. The appearance of these creatures was hard to describe. Various bleached-out body parts of different monsters were glued together by a sticky, gray slime. Just by looking at them, the attention of one's own thoughts would split between the different Souls inside of them. Dozens of voices were fighting to occupy the focal point of the listener's audio processing faculties.

A tall, leggy being, whose shape resembled a bird, pecked at the display case, causing cracks to form in the glass. A shorter creature, dominated by the image of a Snowdrake and what may have once been Vegetoids, rubbed its body up and down against the button panel on the right hand side of the machine and moaned—whether in pleasure or in pain, Alphys was not sure. The third otherworldly creation, whose lower body consisted of a lumpy fish monster, opened the ring of jagged protrusions decorating its head, which were simultaneously insect eyes and fish teeth. It dragged their sharp tips down the dull metal side of the vending machine, scraping and creating an agonizing sound.

"I-I b-brought you g-guys f…" The tall bird's head rotated 180 degrees without moving any other muscles. It opened its jaw, screeched at her, and started an encounter.

*, cried a swarm of tiny butterflies, which flew towards Alphys. She took a step backwards and held out the bag of dog food. "H-here, h-have so—g-hah!" She coughed as a few of the butterflies landed in her mouth before realizing that they could fly into the bag instead. A queasy, green blush appeared across her face. The other two chimeric horrors were uninterested in using any attacks, but approached anyways.

* It's so cold.

The Snowdrake-like creature shoved its body against the corner of the vending machine as it came over to them. The machine toppled face-down, sending broken glass flying over the floor. The creature came up close to Alphys's right side as it buried its head in the bag.

* Smells like sweet lemons.

The more aquatically-attuned being approached from her left and pressed up against her as it joined
the others. Alphys shut her eyes and froze in place. A nudge made her step forward. She bit her bottom lip and withheld a cry as a sharp tip penetrated the curve of her foot. She hurled [SPARE] commands at them.

Alphys continued through another hallway. Her hand pushed off against the wall and her tail thumped against the ground for extra support. The dog food bag cradled in her other arm draped high over her head and shoulder as she limped into the next area. A conglomeration of dogs ceased its attempts to devour the bed and cheerfully locomoted to the food source.

"G-good boys and g-girls," she said with a strained smile.

She continued, deeper into the lab, following the sounds of something going 'thunk' against the wall at irregular intervals. As she passed one of the many black screens decorating the hallway, a green text flickered on its display.

* And I called all of the families and told them everyone's alive.

A round thing zoomed over Alphys's head. Its many faces expressed themselves in diverse ways as it erratically changed directions and smashed against the walls. Its long rat-like tail ribboned in the air as the thing shot itself into the ceiling light, which went out with a spark. It blinked and swirled its tendrils and made an Amalgamation noise.

* drew near!

60% of the faces went straight for the dog food bag that was dropped on the floor, while the other 53% inserted themselves into Alphys's inventory.

"A-a-ah!" Alphys shook out the pockets of her lab coat and stepped back as Bad Memories B through 🆔 fell out and rolled over the floor. She quickly backed up into the room behind her and shut the door.

The next day, Papyrus and Undyne did their normal guarding jobs as promised. Undyne tried to call Alphys several times throughout the morning and afternoon, but she did not pick up. Around 5 PM, the guard captain trudged home to her front yard. "Grrr!" She donned a toothy smirk and raised her fists, all ready to have a good time beating up her ill-tempered training dummy. "Huh, they're not here." She raised an eyebrow in annoyance. She turned around and walked over to the dump. Her eye twitched in further annoyance when she found no disagreeable dummy in sight.

Papyrus hummed and sang as he bounded through Waterfall on his jog. "LA LA LA LA LA, NYEH, HEH, HEH, HEH, HEH! HO HUM DOO DEE DUM, Oh yeah, Mettaton theme time!" He paused for a quick breather at the garbage dump and did some stretches. A tall figure lurked behind a refrigerator. An ominous shadow appeared on the cavern wall, overtaking the silhouette of the skeleton's arms reaching above his head. "Heh?!"

A heavy boot to the chest sent Papyrus crashing to the ground with a splash. Long blue spears drilled into the ground all around his body, grazing the edges of his thin limbs.

"Nyii!" He squeaked. The armor-clad figure towered over him. "Oh! HELLO UNDYNE!" He waved cheerfully with the extent of movement allowed to his wrist. "How are you today?!"

"Listen carefully, Sentry. I have come to entrust you with a very important task."

"Ok?!"

"Yesterday, when we were hanging out with Alphys, I accidentally left a… document at her house. I
need you to go there and… retrieve it for me. Do not attempt to open it or decipher the contents. You are to avoid raising any suspicion on Alphys's part. Why don't I just go get it myself, you wonder. I'm afraid I cannot tell you any more, it is very sensitive information. Should anything go wrong, the consequences will be grave. I trust you understand."

Papyrus nodded, "I understand everything, Undyne."

"Excellent. Huh, w-wait, everything?!!" Undyne gaped, suddenly flustered. "What do you mean, how much do you understand?! No, wait… you know what, nevermind that now! JUST DO AS I SAY AND GO GET THAT LE-DOCUMENT!"

"Understood, Captain!" Papyrus saluted and took off.

Alphys opened her eyes to darkness. She shifted her position where she was snuggled into a beanbag on the floor. She checked her phone. Her eyes squinted against the bright screen which reflected around the room, revealing contours of the TV set and the shelves of video casettes in the room.

Saturday, Dec. 13, 3:00 PM.

There was a long list of missed calls from Undyne and a couple from Papyrus. Her back ached from the unhealthy sleeping position, and the room was far too cool for her liking, but she couldn't bring herself to get up. She curled up and sunk further into the large cushion.

'biup. biup. biup.' She groaned and looked annoyed at the phone which was decrying its lack of battery power. As she clumsily held it in her hand, she thumbed over the notification, '1 new voice mail'. Alphys had all the inclination to ignore the message, but she paused and looked curiously at the name of the sender, Papyrus.

"HELLO, MY NEW FR—I mean, hello! My new friend Dr. Alphys! Are you home right now?! And if so, how are you doing?! Please, let me know if there is ANYTHING that you need! You're ok, right? Heh… why am I asking, you wonder?! Because I want to know! I, the Great Papyrus, care about ALL of my friends and ask them questions like this all the time! For my own personal curiosity."

A weak smile dragged at the corners of her lips. She crawled out of the chair. The floor was cold and unkind against her skin. She pulled a spiral notebook off of the shelf, and then she left the dark room.

She plugged her phone into the wall next to the desk she stood at. She wrote a few short paragraphs in the journal. After reviewing her work for a few minutes, she tore off another piece of paper and copied a few of the sentences. She hissed at the pain in her foot as she stepped away from the desk, but pressed on anyways.

She stepped back from the wall and observed the newest screen which was cycling through sentences of green text.

ENTRY NUMBER 22
* Was late with dinner. Subjects were very, very upset.
* I should come late again tomorrow.
* But they don't deserve that, even if I do.

"Heh," she grinned weirdly as she admired her work. "Just reading this makes me a little bit s-sick to my stomach." Satisfied, she shrugged and walked away. She took a wide broom and swept up the broken glass near the second elevator. She unlocked the back of the machine and pulled out a bag of popato chisps. "Huh, they must have made a typo."
She shrugged and started eating the chisps for her 'breakfast' as she rode the elevator back up.
"Hey, I know this seemed like a good idea an hour ago, but I'm really starting to question my sanity here—is this really the best idea?" Frisk wondered as she crawled forward behind Sans. The ceiling was only an inch above their heads. Her elbows would hit the walls if she bent them out too far. Her backpack uncomfortably balanced on her lower back, and she could barely even see anything because Sans was wearing their light source strapped to the hard hat on his head, which was even closer to hitting the ceiling with every movement.

"an hour? buddy, it's only been like 20 minutes tops."

"What… ok." She swallowed her disappointment and kept going. She frowned uncomfortably as she listened to the sound of his kneecaps clunking against the floor.

"doin' ok back there? That's my line… she thought.

"we should be somewhere under the forest now so the cold might be seeping in here."

"Yeah. The floor's sapping the heat from my hands a lil' bit, but I'm fine."

"oh, sorry to hear that. wanna borrow my froppers?"

"What… what are 'froppers'?"

"it's what i'm wearing on my feet right now. they're slippers shaped like froggits. so they're froppers."

"Ew. No Sans, I don't wanna put my hands inside your stinky bone-sweat slippers."

"hey pal, that's not nice. don't snap at Hippy and Hoppy. they don't like that."

"You named your slippers?"

"froppers," he corrected.

"Hm!" Frisk bit her lip and crawled forward. "Sans…"

"yes?"

"Are we there yet?"

"…no."

"Found anything broken yet?"

"nope."

"How 'bout now?"

"no."

"Ok… Are we there now?"

"no."

"Are we there now?"
"no." He grinned patiently.

"Are we there now?"

"you're not gonna win this one kid."

"Are we there now?"

"no."

Another hour passed as they kept crawling.

"sure you're ok? we're somewhere underneath waterfall by now, we can take a break if you want."

"Are you just speaking for yourself? I'm fine, pay attention to your job 'cause I sure as hell can't see a thing back here," she said in a more snappy tone than she had intended.

"aw… you wanna turn with the light? i can use my eyes for a bit…"

"No Sans, please save your energy," she sighed. "Sorry, I didn't mean to complain so much. I came to help you but all I've done so far is be annoying. Maybe I should have stayed…"

"huh, no way kid, you've got it all wrong. you're not being annoying, your talking's the only thing keeping me from going insane right now."

"Oh. I thought we were both already insane. Glad one of us is alright at least," she grinned.

"heh… well, good news is, once we're done here i can take ya back to the ruins or wherever in an instant, so we won't have to come back this way again."

"Ok!" She smiled and nodded. "So… what do you think of the shipping tunnel so far?"

"hm, well there's not much to say about it. it seems super straight, and considering how the boxes kinda slide through it, it would make sense that it's like this the whole way through. there's no bumps in ground that they could catch on. so far i haven't seen anything w…" He trailed off. "ok. that's weird."

"What is it?"

There appeared to be an interruption to the smooth, continuous coloration of the walls. Some kind of dark patch on the floor and shininess on the ceiling. He squinted as they continued. "there's something funny going on way up ahead. i can't say 'till we get a little closer."

As he crawled up it became apparent that the dark area was a break in the floor, and the reason for the weird way the light bounced off the ceiling became clear.

"what the…"

"Can I see?"

Sans pressed against the wall so Frisk could get up a little further and see past him. The break in the passage had created a gap that was at least one of their body lengths. The cables running through the floor were taught across the gap, though they hardly made it look any safer. As they inched forward, the angle of their vision allowed them to see further down the passage on the other side of the gap, which was slanting by at least 30 degrees.
"welp, there's our problem."

"It's like the tunnel just broke in half or something."

"yeah, it snapped like a banana."

"…What?" Frisk at him in confusion.

Sans shrugged. He stuck his head out and looked up at the ceiling between the broken ends of the tunnel. "hey, there's some collapse in the ceiling here. the pieces are pretty big, i can almost see through the holes…"

He gripped the edges of the stone passage and pulled himself further up to get a better look.

"Sans be careful!" Frisk scooted up closer, reached around him, and braced her arm against the wall. The way her voice reverberated gave some hint as to the depth of the drop that they hung over. "I know these cables don't have power, but it still sounds like a long way down, so—"

"shh!" He hissed. A faint murmur rang throughout the cavern. "didja hear that echo? i think there's a room up there. hmm, maybe…"

"What?"

"shh!" He shushed her again, smiling with his pointer finger over his teeth. He looked up at the jagged arch of boulders and sent a light-blue bone straight up. It disappeared into the ceiling. A moment later, they heard a faint muffled voice. He grinned. "there's probably an echo flower up there! you know what that means?"

"Huh?"

"hang on, one more…" He did his light-blue bone trick again, this time softly counting out the seconds under his breath until they heard the muffled echo again.

"haha!" He laughed again and turned back to her, beaming. "frisk! i know where we are now! there's a room up there, exactly 10 meters above us. so soon as we finish investigating this tunnel, we can get out of here!" She stared and nodded.

"and then, we should have no problem getting to a room i recognize from there, and then i can take you to my home and—woah!" His grip on the edges slipped. She tried to catch him with her arm around his waist.

She squealed as they fell towards the gap, but her backpack collided with something other than the dubious cables. She opened her eyes again and realized that Sans had thrown out a pair of bones across the gap at the last second. She let out her breath and said, "Please don't scare me like that!"

They carefully traversed the bone bridge. Once they were in the slanted section, they braced themselves in awkward positions to handle the slope. They continued slowly. After a minute, they heard a rushing sound as they approached another major break. There was a wall of water streaming down across the opening. The severed cables dangled from the next section of the broken passage across the gap.

"can i get the current probe?" He said and shrugged off his hoodie, while Frisk started to open her backpack. His jerking movements as he shook his arms out of his sleeves caused him to slip and begin sliding down the slope. His soft slippers and gym shorts offered no grip. Frisk gasped and grabbed his ankle, but then she started to slide as well.
Sans waved his arm down at her. Her soul turned blue and her weight became perpendicular to the slope. "there we go." He draped both his shirts over her shoulders while her hands were occupied with holding on to him. "let's not get all of this stuff drenched."

He handed her the headlight hat as well, which she held in her other hand. He leaned through the waterfall and reached out over the edge.

"light up here frisk, not on my ribs."

"Well excuse me, I can't get it past your fat head!"

"just kidding, i can see fine," he chuckled at her reaction, while momentarily brightening one of his eyes as he attached the measurement device to the main power cable.

"can you pull us back a bit?"

"Ok." She shuffled backwards on her shins, dragging Sans away from the waterfall.

"that should be enough."

He looked forward and sent a glowing white bone towards the gap. It flew at a really slow speed and was positioned so that it would touch the severed ends of the power cable. It floated into position.

There was a blinding flash of light, a loud crashing noise, and a shockwave that burst through the air with enough force to push Sans back.

At the same time, Toriel and all of the monsters in the Ruins stopped what they were doing and looked up in surprise as the electro-magical lighting suddenly turned on for about 2 seconds before going out again.

The jolt interrupted Sans's concentration, but he quickly recovered and fixed the magic anchoring Frisk to the slanted floor. "woops, i better hang on to you or the same thing'll happen to us," he said with a grin and a wink.

"Are you ok?!" she gaped.

"frisk, do i look ok to you? i'm soaked to the bone."

"So original…" Frisk rolled her eyes, but smiled and handed him back his shirts. "What was that?"

"that was one of my attack bones. they're not too useful, but they are highly conductive. so what i just did was use it to complete the circuit…"

"With shocking results?"

"exactly." They giggled. Clothed again, Sans used some more blue magic to yank the little square probe from the cable and caught it in his other hand as it flew towards them through the waterfall.

"if that spark hadn't happened i was gonna check this thingy to tell us if there was any current flowing while the circuit was on," he explained.

"Oh I see. So, now what?"

He put the small tool back in their backpack. "well, one thing's for sure, this is not something that's gonna get fixed in a day. i could take some notes on the damage, but that's about all we can do here for now."
"Yeah. I guess we should prioritize finding some other way to get emergency rations to everyone, and then while that's going on the construction guys can start working on some new plan to fix this?"

"something like that. but let's worry about that later. for now kiddo… whaddaya say we get out of here?" He said and winked again.

"Yay!"

Sans was sitting on his pelvis and looking up towards the ceiling.

"Are we going to—" her speech got cut off with her own yelp as the tiny passage lurched and dropped several feet. Sans's hard hat knocked against the ceiling. Frisk hit her head and let go of his ankle for a second.

"grab on to me!" he shouted as they fell against the floor. She lunged and managed to grab him again. Dangling by the cables, the shaft slid down again and flipped, sending them both rolling upside-down just as Sans's eye glowed blue and they disappeared.

He slammed chest-first against a rocky floor. The noise was as deafening as if he had just teleported them inside a jet engine.

"huh?"

He twisted around again to glimpse above himself. The headlight glanced off random chunks of falling rock. His eyes went black and a row of 30cm-diameter bones flew into place forming a ceiling. Vertical bars and diagonal beams sprung up from the ground. The bones interlocked together, glued tight by the pressure of the boulders crashing against the ceiling and the soil and rubble lodging in-between the remaining spaces.

"hah…" he sighed in relief, just as a pile of rocks slipped in between the last moving pieces of the ceiling and buried his face.

Frisk's eyes were shut tight as the movement subsided. She lay on her back with her knees bent and her arm over her head still clinging to the skeleton's ankle. She opened her eyes, squinting against the settling dust, and rubbed her bruised skull with the other hand. There was barely anything visible except a few tiny refracted pinpricks of light on the newly-created bone ceiling. She heard Sans's muffled voice.

"What," she uttered breathlessly. She forgot about everything else and sat up, her eyes wide open and alert. She moved too fast and hit her head again against the ceiling and hissed, "Ah!" She crawled forward more carefully and felt lightly in front of her. She touched some rocks and some soft jacket. "Sans…"

She shrugged off her backpack, and then crawled up a little further. She picked off the rocks that were hiding the light until she saw that there was a really big one covering his face. It had been diverted slightly by the rim of the hard-hat, which had probably prevented its force from instantly killing him.

She sighed shakily. "I-I think this thing just saved your life… hats a relief! Hehe!" He's not laughing at my hat pun?!! Her smile vanished as a grunt of pain struck her ears.

The angle of the light didn't illuminate his face, but she could tell by the hand she found that he was tensed up defensively and trembling and probably not smiling.

"ng, uh, welp… guess that's it, huh?" He shuddered and said, "um, t-tell papyrus he's the coolest a-
and, t-tell tori i'm sorry and,"

"Will you stop being such a baby and shut up, you're not dying!" she yelled, despite not really being sure.

"i'm, not?"

"Yeah, you're gonna be fine, you've still got… more than 0 HP!" she cried. She reached around his head and took the hat so that she could shed some light on the situation. Sans had his hands covering his eyes. "Let me see," she said.

He wouldn't budge. "Sans let me see." She noticed something glistening red between the fingers of his left hand.

"Uh…” She cast a quick look around the bone cage because she had a strong instinct to examine the new environment, but she needed to focus on Sans first, so she snapped her attention back to him.

"Take your hands away, or I'll… have to use force," she said, hoping she wouldn't have to. She had to. She sucked in a breath, climbed over the small skeleton and easily pinned him down. When she grabbed his hands and pried them away from his face, he squeezed her fingers tightly. She tilted her head around to get more information out of her light source, and her face scrunched up as if she felt the same pain. His right eyesocket was shut tight and the left one had a very inconveniently-shaped rock in it. A trickle of red liquid seeped out of the corner. She tried not to panic as she saw how bad it was.

"Sans… I, I know I said you're not dying but you, every time you're squeezing your eyesocket shut you're digging that thing into your skull… that's got to come out."

"Sans, please relax… I don't have time to ask nicely," her voice quivered. "If you die…" she imagined the horrible prospect of being trapped in the little cage all by herself, breathing in his dust until she died too. No way.

She briefly remembered how one of her former classmates would put on her contact lenses. "Listen, I think… if you open your other eye… It'll make my job a lot easier." He actually listened and opened his eyesocket.

"Are you looking at me?" She asked because it was completely black. "Ok," she said.

She put her left hand on his forehead and reached for the rock with her right. Sans's breath hitched and he grabbed her wrist with both hands, and he had about the grip strength of a small child.

"Look at me, look at me," she repeated. He whimpered at the agitations that occurred as she was finding a good hold on the intruding object.

"On three ok… one, two, three!" She yanked.

"GAH!"

A splash of red liquid trailed after the rock as it came out. He shut his eyesockets tight and covered the injured one with his hand again. His breathing got a little calmer. She kneeled next to him as her own stress response calmed down. She sighed and wiped a pair of tears from her eyes.

"Uh… is that a little better?"

"y-yea, a little… still hurts like hell, but i don't feel like i'm dying anymore. kind of surprised i'm still
here, to be honest.” She checked again and saw that he had 0.5 HP.

“Well, you’ve got one tough little hitpoint there.” His smile returned along with a twinkle of light in his right eye.

“Should I see if there’s any fragments left?”

“Ok.”

She shined the light closely into his left eyesocket, comparing it to the other one as well to see which of the crevices were just the natural shape of his skull and which were part of the injuries.

“Hard to tell with all of this red stuff in the way. I guess it’s… probably ok for now, maybe?” She said with a frank I’m-not-a-monster-doctor shrug. He turned his eyelights back on and the left one was a dull red.

“Can I see the light. Woah.” He held the hat and shined the headlight on Frisk’s face and saw double vision where one of her faces was normal and the other was completely red-tinted. He closed his eyesockets one at a time, comparing the images.

He turned his head to the side and put a thoughtful finger underneath his chin and said, “but which one is the real you?”

“Hrm!” Frisk’s cheeks puffed up in annoyance. Then she couldn’t help laughing, because the humor reassured her that he was ok.

She sighed. “Now that that is over with… What the hell just happened?!”

“I think I messed up my shortcut.”

“So, you really can teleport.”

“Yep.”

“Ok, so… this obviously isn’t where we were supposed to end up. But where are we? And what is this… room? You made this?” She said and ran a finger along the ceiling bones.

“Well, I tried to go up into the room above us, but we got flipped the instant I used it, so we must have gone the other way down… so we must be somewhere in that hollow beneath the tunnel. And this room is ‘cause, there were lots of rocks caving in on us. I got a pretty good look at them.”

“A little too good.”

“Heh. anyways, here.” He held out his hand and she took it. He focused for a second and then felt a sudden flash of pain in his eye and hunched forward and grabbed his head with his free hand. “Ow! Uh, lemme try that again…”

“Ngh!”

“… Ow!”

“Stop it! What are you doing?!”

“Uh, it’s… not workin’.”

“Your shortcut?”
"…yup."

"You mean… you can't get us back up?"

"…nope."

"Oh. So… we're stuck in here?"

"uh, well, let's not jump to conclusions, or panic. let's just… think about things one at a time. what we know, and what we can do."

"Right."

They ran the light over all of the sides of the cage. They poked their fingers into the dirt between the bones and knocked on the sides. Sans double-checked the stability of the room which he had designed and created in 0.5 seconds. Frisk pushed some of the rocks and dirt against the corners, making the 'floor' a little more sit-able. The cage was tiny and they had to twist and crouch in annoying positions to maneuver inside of it.

"Did you have to make it so small?"

"my bad."

"Is this ceiling gonna hold?"

"i think so, it's my strongest steel-grade structural bones."

"Is there any way to tell if there are any spaces or caves behind these walls?"

"i could throw out some bones and see if any of 'em make noise."

"Ok." They both closed their eyes to listen.

"whoops, that's not workin' either."

"Is anything working?"

Sans waved his left hand around at Frisk a few times. "nope."

"No magic tricks, and no way out then."

"hmm…" Sans brushed aside a layer of the dirt on the floor, revealing stone with a black and gray striped texture. "bedrock… not that either of us are moles anyways… and where would all the dirt go?"

"Hmm," Frisk's eyelids sunk and she rubbed her wrist with the other hand.

Sans tugged the tip of her sweater sleeve and said, "hey." She looked up at him and he smiled brightly at her. She stared at him in surprise for a moment. She felt her own mouth involuntarily trying to imitate him.

"don't be scared. we'll get out of here. do we have any items, or tools or,"

"Oh!" Frisk grabbed her backpack and unzipped it. "Mason gave me a candy bar! You can eat it and…" She pulled out a wrapped candy bar and looked disappointed. It was a surface brand she recognized. "Oh… I don't think this one has any healing power. Still, if you eat it, maybe you'll heal
"faster."

"ok." Sans ate half of the chocolate bar and offered the other half to Frisk.

"Huh? I'm good. You can have it all."

"don't be silly, you need to eat too."

"But... you're just a tiny skeleton. A human can go for a few weeks without food."

He regarded her for a moment and replied, "frisk, maybe that's true for an adult human of average weight."

"Fine," she said and blushed. She snatched the rest of it and took a stubborn bite.

She looked in her backpack again and found a little metal bottle. "Oh, there's water too!" She thought about it for a moment and started to slowly turn around and just barely snuck a glance at 1 pixel of the left side of Sans's—

"That's for you to drink and nothing else."

"Y-yeah, of course! Duh!" She took a sip and smiled. Their expressions said, I wasn't thinking about doing anything else with it.

and

you were thinking about doing something else with it.

She took out Sans's cell phone and checked the screen, and her eyes glanced away with expected disappointment.

"didja really think we'd be able to get a signal in here?"

"Worth a shot."

Sans changed the settings to prioritize power saving and said, "let's keep that off for now."

They both fell silent and tried to remain calm and think of what to do. After a few minutes of nothing happening, Frisk leaned back on the palms of her hands, tilted her head up a bit and screamed,

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

Sans clamped his hands over his ringing skull.

"HELP I'M TRAPPED IN A CAVE-IN PLEASE FIND ME!"

"... you done?"

"Yeah."

"that's actually not a bad idea, but can i get a little warning next time?"

"Sure," she said and took a sip from her water bottle. "So how did you mess up your shortcut anyways? Just because we did a little twist?"

"well yeah, I was all lined up at 40.6 degrees and 18.4 meters, but then my normal axis rotated 180 so the trajectory flipped vertically and we ended up 28 meters below the original target destination."
Frisk blinked and said, "Huh? That sounds like a math problem."

He grinned. "It is." She looked dumbfounded, but there was also a sparkle of curiosity in her expression.

"It's just... a calculation?"

"Well the actual teleportation is some magic that I can't really explain, but there's nothin' special about the parameters."

"Wow. I thought you would never explain anything like that about your abilities to anyone."

"Well..." he glanced around the bone cage which wasn't even big enough for them to stretch out their entire bodies. He winked and said, "I don't have anything better to do."

They sat up against one of the bone walls. Sans had their notebook in his lap and was sketching out the triangles, "So from where I was sitting in the tunnel, the destination was up 14m and ahead of me by 12m, so the angle was inverse tangent of 1.17, which is about 49.4 degrees. And since I was looking straight up like this the remaining angle would be 40.6. 'N then, the way we actually went was like thiiii... so you add up these two lines here and it's 28 meters up from us," he concluded with a gesture towards the ceiling.

"Which we will go. As soon as my eye heals." He said and smiled up at the ceiling. "Any time now."

Frisk giggled and said, "What's an inverse tangent?"

Sans looked at her in consideration for a second. He said, "Kiddo... what grade are you in?"

"Well, I was going into 8th grade, before I fell. Wait, you must have a different system here."

"Yeah..." he trailed off in thought. "And you've been working full-time at your restaurant since I met you."

"Hm?" Frisk wore an apprehensive smile and got the feeling she was under some kind of examination.

"Hey, maybe... nah, I shouldn't be the one to say this. Nevermind."

"What?"

"Ah, screw it. Frisk. I want you to make me a promise now, k?"

"Ok, what?"

"I know that Snowdin and Hotland aren't places that are safe for you right now, but... if that ever changes, and I have a feeling like it might soon, and we're opening the ruins again... kid, promise me you'll finish school."

"Oh."

"Don't get me wrong, you're doing a great job with your restaurant and stuff, and there's lots of other stuff you're amazing at, but... still there are things you need to know, especially with the kind of work that you seem to be interested in. Do you know about exponentials?"

"Huh?"
"compounding interest?"

"Huh?"

"quadratics?"

"Huh?"

"yeah…" he nodded at his assessment. "so waddaya say?"

"Ok, I promise!"

"nice!" He grinned in approval. "now," he twirled the pen around in his fingers and turned his eyes dark. "let's do some trigo."

Frisk felt her sines crawling on her back.
A blob about the size of a beach ball floated through the air. Its greenish glow shone brightly against the dark rocky walls of Waterfall.

A scruffy training dummy stood on top of a cooler with its eyes closed. Thick eyebrows twitched and furrowed as the glow illuminated its horse-shaped snout.

"Myah, tch, wha..." the dummy stirred and squinted at the glowing blob, which perked up in excitement at the attention. It bobbed up and down, as if nodding its 'head' vigorously, and inched closer to the dummy's face. The dummy teetered and fell backwards into the murky garbage dump stream.

"Bah! Ptu! What are you doing?! Dummy, dummy, dum..." He looked up and focused his vision on his assailant for the first time.

"DUMMY?!” He exclaimed in shock. "Ruins Dummy? What, what're you doing out here? Look... look at the time! It's late, late, late!" He said while gesturing towards a discarded toy clock. The clock had 'LATE' written on every hour position.

Ruins Dummy ignored the comment and flew in rapid circles around Mad Dummy.

"What?! What is it?! What do you want?!"

Ruins Dummy glowed.

"No, R.D., I don't understand what glowing means."

R.D. spun around, and spotted a cargo ship bath toy floating among the trash. He tried to pick it up, but lacked the control over his ghost form necessary for that action. He bobbed up and down in the water next to it.

"A boat? What about a boat?"

R.D. put a random soda can on the toy ship and zoomed it back and forth.

"River-boat person?"

R.D. gave up and tried something else. He floated next to a long plank of wood that was lying across some pieces of furniture. Affirming that he had the skeptical dummy's attention, he body-slammed the plank in the middle. He didn't have enough force to break it, but he did make it bend slightly in the middle, and the jolt caused it to roll over and fall and fall into the water, where it splashed and floated next to some soggy, stale bread rolls.

The corporeal dummy gaped. "WHAT?! ARE?! YOU?! SAYING?!" He stomped in anger and frustration.

R.D. tried to get Mad Dummy to pay attention to some broken lightbulbs piled in a plastic bucket. Mad Dummy raged and knocked them over.

"ENOUGH, ENOUGH, ENOUGH! Get lost you annoying blob!"

R.D.'s eyes turned into sad shapes and the glowy edges of his form quivered.
"Well, why not?! Is there some problem?!"

R.D. bobbed up and down.

"Then, why are you bothering me about it? You... DUMMY! DUMMY! DUMMY! Why do you people always think you can just dump all of your problems onto me! M.D. do this! M.D do that! Fix my company! Balance the royal budget! Fund the Lab! Listen to my idea! Listen to my stupid song! Look at my stupid show! Is this good M.D.? How much should I sell a Face Steak for?! How much should I sell a croissant for?! I don't know I DON'T EAT YOU IDIOTS! Hey M.D. can you come to my useless meetings where we sit on our phones for the entire day and talk about the newest screw Alphys made for my robot foot, and I'd rather be used as a punching bag for the next MONTH than have to spend one more second listening to all o' your BULLSHIT! DRIBBLE! Enough, enough, enough! I'm tired of dealing with everyone's problems,

SO GO! BOTHER SOMEONE ELSE!"

R.D. trembled nervously, tilting his body quizzically.

"I don't know—the King! Whatever! Just leave me alone!"

R.D. zoomed off into the wall.

Asgore was sitting at his table in the boxer shorts he had slept in, peacefully sipping his morning tea.

The little glowing blob entered a dark, dusty bedroom through the floor. With half of his body still partially submerged in the carpet, he peeked around the room. Deciding it was safe, he floated the rest of the way up into the middle of the room, dragging along with him the green-and-yellow striped sweater that had been on the floor. While paying more attention to the room below him, he floated against the hanging ceiling decoration. It made some plastic noises and twirled around, the black and white-green silhouettes of vinyl stars flashing through the air. The dummy ghost was startled and fell on the floor where he bounced a few times.

"Hello?" called a deep, jolly voice. "Is someone there?" Asgore put down his teacup on the table with a 'clink'. He stood up and went to investigate the noises in the hallway. He began to open the door to the old children's bedroom.

The sweater-clad ghost looked up at the turning doorknob and shuddered in panic. He dived into a dusty box full of old toys as well as a few socks.

Asgore paused at the loud sound of clutter. His fur puffed up. He turned the knob the rest of the way and pushed the door open. A beam of the morning glow from the hallway shined past his large body and spilled into the abandoned bedroom, casting his imposing shadow onto the floor.

A greenish glow was shining from the open toy box. The King said, "It's alright, you can come out. I'm not gonna hurt you, fella."

The box shook in hesitation. The glowing ghost floated up with two of the socks from the toy box accidentally clinging to his head, while dust stuck to the draping sweater.

The King stared.

The ghost froze.

"AAAAAAAA!" Asgore shouted.
R.D. made a noise like a muffled scream and glowed brightly. Asgore began to tear up from the emotions awakened by such a display.

R.D.'s eyes also bubbled up with tears.

"I-I'm sorry!" the King cried.

R.D. made an apologetic squeak, and flew through the King's belly and ran away.

Asgore stood stunned. His belly fur was wet with some strange liquid. The sweater and socks clung against his body as the cloud of dust settled.

"I need another cup of tea."

Meanwhile, Frisk and Sans were still stuck in a box.

As it had already been evening when they had set off, they were exhausted by now, but it was impossible to find a comfortable sleeping position in their dark, clammy, rocky little room. They tried to sleep upright against the walls and curled up on the floor and using the rocks and backpack as pillows. Sans tried to sleep with his back on the floor and his legs up in the air against the wall, causing his cushy slippers to dangle over his body. Frisk lay down diagonally on the floor and hogged all of the space. When she woke up she was shivering. It was pitch black since they turned off the light. She sat up a little and leaned against the wall, trying not to move too much and disturb the skull sleeping against her. A while later, he woke up again too.

"ugh…" he rubbed his head which was starting to feel a little tingly. Frisk gave a little start at the sound of her stomach growling. They both sighed and complained, "Hungry…" "hungry…"

Frisk felt the ground around them.

"i got it," Sans said and turned on the light.

He grinned calmly and said, "ok, i must have healed by now."

She smiled back as they grabbed hands. Sans tried to teleport them, but a pang of pain flashed in his head. He didn't have to say anything for Frisk to read his disappointment right off his face.

Still holding hands, Sans said, "are you getting cold?"

"Um… it's ok," she shrugged. She wasn't very convincing, and Sans draped his jacket over her shoulders and hugged her for warmth.

"come on frisk, this is no time to be proud. ya gotta tell me these things. let's survive this, ok?"

"You're right," she said. She shifted and squirmed a bit, and kicked the empty metal bottle on the floor.

"what's wrong?"

"…I'm getting thirsty."

"oh."

R.D. floated back along the Underground paths. He was not sure what to do next, but muscle memory had led him to the old family farm in Waterfall. Another ghost monster with a longer body popped his face in the window and wondered if the orb of light that had just flown through the yard
had been his imagination.

In the next hallway, R.D. jumped at a violent whacking noise and hid inside the wall. His eyes blinked and traveled along the length of the hallway. He peered cautiously into the next room. That was when he saw something that made him blush deeply. He darted through the floor and hid behind a bush to get a closer look.

It was the most beautiful sight he had ever seen in his life.

A tall humanoid monster—female from what he could tell—was pummeling Mad Dummy with her bare fists. Saliva sprayed from her lips as she shouted with effort. Sweat dripped down her face and her chest, which was covered by a tight black tank top. The scale oil glistened on her bare arms, whose powerful muscles rippled through the air as her knuckles dug deeply into the sewn leather seams.

The tiny ghost monster swooned with admiration, love, and longing… the longing to switch places with Mad Dummy. His eyes glazed over as he imagined her knocking off one of his button eyes with her fists.

He trailed off fantasizing about how he might convince his grumpy cousin to switch jobs with him. He would do alright in the Ruins, wouldn't he? Mad's dummy was poorly maintained, with stuffing falling out of the seams, but R.D. could patch it up for him! He had always kept his own dummy body in pristine condition—washing, stitching, patching, and replacing the fabric as necessary. Maybe he should start helping M.D. with his too. That way he won't make too bad an impression on his friends!

Speaking of the Ruins, hadn't there been something important about that? Something he wanted to tell someone? Well, whatever. The magnificent woman's next cry of exertion captured his attention once again. Perhaps he could tell her about it. In a few minutes. He just wanted to watch her for a little while longer.

Meanwhile, somewhere down below, in a tiny cage surrounded by packed boulders and rubble… A small girl and a small skeleton sat up against the wall and talked about stuff.

"Were you really planning on killing the first human to walk out of the Ruins door?"

"yup."

"I don't believe you..." she said, looking at him in a puzzling manner. His expression was serious. "But... you're so nice and gentle. How could you ever do such a thing? I even told you I was a human, remember? With your abilities, you could have just..." She trailed off as she recalled that moment. "And, you did... think about it. For a second. But, you didn't do anything."

"nope."

"But, why would you make a plan like that when you so obviously don't want to?"

"i told you i was a sentry right? kinda in the job description."

"Yea but, why would you even take that job then? Sounds like you were really setting yourself up for a tragedy."

"yea... whatever. i probably couldn't have done it anyways. just one smile from a good kid like you, and... hence 'where they stand'. well, what's done is done now. 'm glad you guys took that choice away from me." Then he glanced away from Frisk and looked at his open palm and said, "but still. i
really wasn't kidding… better me than my brother."

Frisk squirmed her legs. She bit her lip and looked at him sadly. "Sans…"

"what?"

"You shouldn't have to make a choice like that. It's not your job to take on everyone else's problems. If you're thinking about something like that again, then tell me next time, and we'll figure it out together, ok? I don't want you, to... to... you're not..."

"woah, hey, lookie here." He smiled and playfully nudged her shoulder. "don't cry ok? you're out of water. c'mon, let's talk about somethin' else."

She sighed and said, "Ok."

"heh," his smile turned smug. "after all, you're stuck in here with me. and that means... you've no escape from listening to my jokes."

"Eeh!?"

"and boy have I got a ton of jokes for you..."

"a skele-ton!" badum-tss!

"Grrr, hahahahaha!", Frisk laughed.

"oh crap, now you're crying from laughter..."

A while later, Frisk kept squirming and adjusting her position. Sans thought she must be trying to get warm and hugged her more. It was getting more concerning as the minutes passed.

"what?" he asked. She wouldn't meet his eyes.

"Sans..." she said in a really small voice. "Can you... please... go in the other corner..."

"?"

"And uh... turn around..." She gave him his jacket again.

oh.

"yea sure."

This is not how underground adventures are supposed to go, she thought bitterly as she dug a little circle into the dirt, creating a depression in her own corner. I can't believe it, I can't believe I have to do this... Her fingers shook in hesitation as she started to unbutton her jeans.

After she finished, she half-stood on her knees facing her corner as tears pooled under her eyes. A sharp odor filled the tiny cage. She looked behind to see that Sans was curled into a ball against the other corner and to her great respect, he even had his hood up and his hands clamped over his earholes. Even so, she kneeled there for a few minutes, staring morbidly at the corner which was hidden by black shadows. Eventually, the desire crawl back over to her companion overcame the shame she felt in doing so. She squeaked a little, causing him to turn back around.

"hey. frisk. buddy." he put his jacket back on her and squeezed her shoulders. She kept her head bowed and her fists clenched.
"it's no big deal. it's just your body, ok? look, i'm gross too!" He flicked some of the caked red residue from the lining of his left eyesocket, but she refused to look. She pressed herself against the wall as if she were trying to get them further away from the other corner. He grabbed her cheeks and rubbed her tears away with his thumbs.

"frisk, look at me. i'm serious. i need you need to calm down. we're going to get out of here, and then we'll be home and safe and you can make whatever emotions you want, but… that is not where we are right now. right now, tears are death. you're gonna last a lot longer if you're calm and smiling, and i need you to last as long as possible, 'cause every second you're alive is another second that someone could find us in here."

"No one's coming."

"they will. tori and buff are gonna notice how long we've been gone. our job wasn't supposed to take this long. and whoever works at the warehouse on the other side will know something's wrong with the shipping tunnel. there's gotta be all sorts of issues from this cave-in that people are gonna notice. someone'll come. here, i'll help you scream from now on. so stop crying, ok?"

She nodded but sobbed, "I-I'm sorry, I-I can't stop."

"shh, it's ok. just take deep breaths. hey." She could barely even see his face properly in the harsh glare of the headlight, but she could make out his gentle smile. She looked into his eyes and began to smile for a moment, but the scent of musky liquids invaded her nose as she inhaled deeply, and she broke into tears again.

"I-I'm sorry, I'm trying, I-I can't help it…"

Sans sighed and tried to think of a way to help her. He tried various expressions on her.

"please stop crying. pretty please with blueberries on top?" he said, while making big, sparkly anime eyes.
"i'm not gonna water this down for you. you're making a tear-ible mistake."
"blebulubulubuluh~!" tongue sticking out face.
"Do you wanna have a bad time?"

Nothing worked.

"i'm sorry, kid. i'd give ya some space, but there's none of that in here…" He could not think of a way to console her. "do you wanna learn some more math stuff?"

She sniffed and made a little noise and shrugged.

"we've almost covered everything to start energy calculations."

"What do you mean?"

"it's how about my energy cost scales with distance and carrying weight… eh, nevermind. it's weird to go on about my own problems when she's the one crying."

"Sorry, I'm interested, it's just, hard to think about that right… now… wait… What did you say? Energy cost… scales with weight and distance?"

huh, it's working?

"yeah. shortcut's energy cost scales with distance and the square of mass."
"Squared, but that means you've got to be careful with heavy objects… huh…” Frisk suddenly stared at Sans's face as if it were a missing puzzle piece. Wait a minute… This information he's teaching me is stuff I could use to help him! Maybe I could have told him how to get back outside when he first came here! If I learn how much energy he uses, then I'll be able to predict how many abilities he can use before he gets tired! And maybe I could do something about that tendency to fall asleep in dangerous places… Does he even realize what he's doing?

She looked at the typical expression on his face.

Nah, I'm pretty sure he just thinks teaching me this stuff is fun. Whatever. If this is what it means to take care of someone, I will learn everything there is to know.

She was filled with determination. "Yeah, let's do some more math stuff!"
Toriel approached the café corner where there was a rough line of about 20 monsters, and an additional bunch of monsters hanging out around the yard and between the tables.

She spotted the Froggit about to enter the storage room and called to him. "Sebastian!"

"Miss Toriel," he responded and twirled around to listen to her.

"How are your ingredient stocks now?"

Sebastian peeked inside the room and replied. "We have just run out of hot dogs, but there is a pot of snail soup on the way, one half-bucket of carrot pieces, and…"

Toriel raised her hand and cut him off saying, "I see, I see. Close the restaurant down for now and follow me, please." She repeated herself as she called to the monsters working behind the counter. "Mabel! Irene! You two as well, close the restaurant and come with me at once. I need your help."

"Where's Frisk?" Mabel asked.

"I'll explain that later. Please hurry it up children."

"Yes lady," Sebastian responded promptly.

"Yes lady!" Irene agreed and followed along.

Mabel was confused and hesitated to agree, but decided to go along with the others and obey Toriel. "Yes lady!"

The three café workers stuffed all of their ingredients and their money box into the storage room, served the last of the prepared meals to the last lucky customers, and apologetically explained to the rest whose hopes of buying dinner had been quashed. Irene raised her palm and closed her fist, extinguishing all but a few of the firelights around the room. Toriel nodded in approval.

Already the monsters were curiously standing across the counter near the storage room, enviously eyeing the workers running back and forth.

"Back away please." Toriel said as she parted the crowd with her presence and stepped around the counter. "Are you done here?"

"Yes," Mabel answered.

"Good, give me the keys please." Sebastian handed them over to her.

She glared at the ogling monsters and repeated herself again, "I said, back away please! Did you not hear the first order? There is nothing more to be gained from standing around here. It is nearly bedtime anyways. You may go back to your homes to sleep, or if you prefer I suppose you can stay near the lights in this room. I have to go take care of something. For now, all of you are to avoid using any magic, even for light. Remain calm and pass the time peacefully until things are fixed."

The monsters all backed away and looked too intimidated to disobey her. Good.

Ivan smirked in approval at the ice wall coating the door to the Vegetoid room. "Nice going Al! No one's getting in there 'till we say so now." Ox, the teal Loox with antlers, and Lash the pink Loox
with thick black eyelashes, stood by his side. Allens was closer to the door that he had just froze shut. Across from them were three Migosps: Kate Tela the reporter, and Danny and Marty the two owners of the paper shop. An old Whimsun couple stood behind the Migosps. Lighting for the scene was provided by Kate's neon green-and-yellow sign which hung the door displaying the text, 'Trouble Brewing at Pitfall Plaza!'

"Now you guys, stop being bullies and give them back their keys!" As Ivan spoke, Kate's sign changed its message to 'Bullies?' and pointed a glowing yellow arrow towards the Migosps.

"Hey, we're not bullies!" Danny the black paper-printer replied. "That's you guys, you're the ones scaring the farmers and forcing us protect them!" As he spoke as the sign changed its text to 'Bullies!' and pointed its glowing red arrow at the Looxes instead.

"We were just sent here to get some vegetables for our families," Marty the white paper-printer said, trying to keep the tone calm. "They're worried about the kids and such, you understand."

Lash the pink Loox said, "That's what I'm here for too! Auntie Iris told me to stock up for the week and make sure you greedy Migos don't take them all first!"

"Don't call us greedy!" said Danny.

The Whimsuns were looking increasingly worried as the argument continued. The light-green woman said to her light-red husband, "Honey, I don't think that ice is good for the Veggies… Oh dear, are they going to fight? Oh no…"

Marty said, "Hey now, calm down you guys. W-why don't we all just share, huh?"

Ivan sneered and said, "Oh! Yeah! Now you say that, now that Al showed up and we outnumber you!"

Allens tried to say, "Actually, I'm just here to…"

"So surrender now and give us the keys!" said Ivan.

Allens tried to explain, "Um, you guys, if you don't cut this out then Toriel is, like…"

"And Toriel is gonna come too!" Ivan declared.

Kate noted, "So, Toriel is officially siding with the Looxes then, is she?" The sign read, 'Migosps Abandoned by the Caretaker!'

Allens said, "Wait…" as Ivan replied, "That's right! So do as I say now, or else you'll be in big trouble…" His eye started to tear up.

Danny said in a panicked voice, "Abandoned? Oh, I-I've got to do something before she comes here! Now Ivan, s-stop that attack right now, young man! We're not intimidated by you!"

"Watch yourself Danny," Marty warned him. "These eyeballs aren't children anymore…"

"Yeah Danny! We're not little eyebabes anymore! Ox could kick all of your asses by himself! What's the matter Danny, afraid to fight me? Listen to white-out, Danny!"

"Shut up!" Danny got frustrated at the Loox's taunts and launched a small attack of three basic bullets, which flew across the room and hit Ivan and Ox.

"Now you've done it," Ivan growled and blinked a wave of tears in their general direction. His attack
burst into mist and blinded all three of them. Kate's sign turned blue and read, 'OW MY EYES! :-(

Another voice called from behind the Loox group, "How dare you attack my daughter?!" Two Migosps joined the fight. One was circular and wore a top hat. The other was shaped like a tall rectangle and wore a bowler hat. The rectangular one continued saying, "Let's go! Back me up, brother! Kate, get rid of that light!"

The room turned pitch-black. The only light came from the lines of cockroach-shaped projectiles crawling across the floor. "Ow, ow!" Ivan winced and stumbled back into his friends. There was a flash of light as Lash's thunderbolt struck the two gentle-Migosps.

"Go for her first!" All four male Migosps shot bullets at the pink Loox.

"Lash!" Ox yelled and pushed her out of the way. He closed his eye and grunted as the magical projectiles hit him. The hat-wearing brothers closed in on him. In near-complete darkness, he sidestepped a claw and sent the assailant to the ground with a pushing kick. Lash lit up the scene with her own ball of light. Ox blocked the next arm that came his way, turning the circular Migosp away from him as he raised his other fist in retaliation.

A brighter glow blazed from the hallway as Toriel's group came in. "Stand down!"

"OX, DO NOT HIT MY FATHER!" Mabel shouted. The young Loox's eye widened and he suddenly released the older monster and stepped back, looking down in remorse.

Lash hugged his arm and said with glee, "Wah, you're so cool Ox!"

Ivan added, "Kick-ass dude!" He smiled at the praise and looked up, but when he got another glance at Mabel's face he turned stone cold.

Sebastian glided in behind Toriel and raised himself up as much as he could to address everyone. "That is incorrect, my dude. The kicking of asses will now cease. Your Queen commands."

Whispers broke out around the room. "Queen?" "Queen Tori?"

Toriel looked over the monsters and tried not to show the apprehension she felt as she hoped that they would accept this declaration. The light-green Whimsun nudged her partner and whispered, "Gerbert!" The light-red Whimsun cleared his throat and looked up at Toriel.

"P-pardon me, Queen Toriel?"

"Yes, mr Farmer?"

"My wife and I are very concerned about the Vegetoids right now. I believe that that young eyeman's ice wall is lowering the temperature inside the room. That could limit their yield, which is already going to be lower than usual, b-because of yesterday..."

"Queen Toriel, if I may?"

"Yes, miss Reporter?"

"I am most grateful to you for stopping all of that boorish fighting," Kate said while sneaking a glance at Ivan and Ox. "I don't believe that anyone here really wanted to hurt each other, (aside from those rowdy boys)—"

"Hey," Lash narrowed her eye. "You..." Ivan started.
"—But, the fact still remains that all of us are quite worried. The grocery store was depleted and we don't know when it'll go back to normal. There are at least 6 small children on our street. I don't know how it is for Looxes, but Migosp infants cannot survive longer than a day or two without food. If we run out, then…"

"It's the same for us," said Lash. "I've got a little one of my own, and a bunch of my friends have eye-babes."

Toriel said, "I understand. First of all, let's get rid of that ice. Allens?"

Allens twiddled with his fingers and looked down as he said, "Um, actually, this type of ice wall is… I can't dispel it. It's just there now." As Toriel sighed, he added, "I'm sorry, I tried to help, I'm not really…"

"It's alright. I will just…"

Ox suddenly blurted out, "I guess we'll just have to melt it off with fire then, huh? Lash, can you melt it?"

"Huh, what're you talking about? I can't do fire."

"Oh, you can't? I thought that light was…"

Kate chuckled and said, "Your friend's magic is based on lightning, not fire. Only an amateur would mistake a sparklight for a firelight."

Lash clenched her fists and said, "No one asked you, Tela…"

"Silence!" Toriel commanded and they quieted respectfully. She raised her hand and ignited the air around the door. The ice began to melt away. As the monsters looked up at her, almost fearfully, her gaze softened.

"My fellows, I understand how frightening this must be. The last 24 hours have been total chaos. No one has any idea what happened. Rumors must be circulating like mad. And I bet all of this living by candlelight must be driving everyone crazy!" The monsters nodded and appreciated her empathy.

"Let me assure you all now, friends and neighbors, that everything is going to be alright. You needn't fear for your young children, or for yourselves. No one is going to starve. No one has to die. There is no need for violence. You are all good, bright young monsters. I don't want to see any of you do anything that you will regret." Ox shifted guiltily as she continued.

"Instead, I want you all to help me. As I said, the situation is under control, and if we all work together then probably we will all be fine! But, in order to make that happen, I am going to need everyone on-board with me, understood?"

Murmurs spread around the room.

"Yeah."

"Yes Queen."

"Ok."

Toriel raised an eyebrow and repeated, "Understood?!"

Sebastian led the response with an immediate cry of, "Yes lady!"

The crowd followed after his example and shouted, "Yes lady!"
Toriel clasped her hands and said, "Very good everyone! Now, communication and organization are going to be our tickets to success, so let me begin by explaining the situation. We managed to find a possible connection to the Underground, and I have decided to send out two people whom I trust very much to get help. You may know them as the human Frisk, and Sans the skeleton."

"Ooh, the human girl."
"Frisk left?"
"Why that weird guy though?"
"He does things?"

Toriel smirked a little and continued her speech. "In the mean time, our job is to wait and survive. I know that does not sound very exciting. But, that is the reality that we are faced with. First, everyone must conserve their energy. That means no more magic—yes, I know…" She rolled her eyes at her own floating firelights. After a moment, Buffet and Coco arrived on the scene with some cardboard boxes full of artificial lights.

"Thank-you, my friends," Toriel said as Buffet handed her the lantern she was carrying. Toriel and Lash then extinguished their magical balls of light as the monsters began passing candles and flashlights and spare batteries around.

"Next, we're going to have to work together to make the most out of our remaining resources and distribute them to those who need it most. Forget about money and trade for now. Let's prioritize helping the youngest and the weakest get through this. Does everyone agree? Does anyone object? Good then. This is what I need all of you to help with. Everyone here is a member of, or a close family-friend of the two biggest clans in the Ruins. Therefore I'd like you to convince your elders to get on board with our plan. And from there you will need to reach out to everyone you know and use your influence to help out the less well-connected monsters who did not hoard the grocery store yesterday." Some members of the crowd exchanged knowing glances at that.

"Before we begin, I would like everyone stand in a line with your previous 'side', or your species-type, if you will, and then step forward and shake hands with someone from the other 'side." She responded to the groans and said, "Yes, I know it sounds a little cheesy... but I do not care. Do it!"

As the monsters fulfilled this brief team-building exercise, Mabel and Ox awkwardly avoided choosing each other and ended up shaking someone else's hand.

The group broke up into subgroups discussing more specific agendas. Mabel avoided looking into the eyes of the other groups and paid decisive attention to her friends from the café.

Sebastian said, "Looks like we're in charge of supply management, food preparation, and rationing for the entire neighborhood. A typical day for restaurant staff. We ought to plant ourselves back at the café."

"Great, let's go over there now then!" Mabel said.

Buffet was shining a flashlight over her shoulder and said, "Don't be in such a rush my dear. Look like somebody would like to speak to you."

Toriel giggled at the pun as Mabel looked back and forth between all of them. "I-it's fine, we're fine! There's nothing to talk about!"

Toriel raised her eyebrow and folded her arms and said, "This is not the time to be harboring petty grudges my child. I won't have your personal dispute with this young man interfering with everyone else's tasks. You may come join us once you have worked out your differences."
"But, we don't have a dispute, it's not that, I mean, err..." Her excuses came out weakly as Toriel stared at her. She blushed and looked down as the others walked away. "Yes lady."

"Hey Mabe, check out this thing!" Mabel and Ox were standing around a corner to get away from the other monsters. He grinned and showed her a shiny, dangly object that he had found in the box. Its handle was a flexible and drooping rod. A shining ball of light glowed on its tip. It looked almost like a toy flower.

"O-oh, wow. That's pretty." She said as he waved it around in the air creating trails of light.

"Here, you can have it."

"H-huh?" She retracted the claw from her hand so that she could gently grab the handle. "Thanks..."

"Hey, I'm really sorry about earlier."

"Oh."

"I dunno what got into me... I'll never try to hit your dad again I swear!"

"You kicked my uncle too."

"Oh yeah, I'm really sorry about that one too! It's just that... I got angry when they tried to attack Lash, and Ivan was cheering me on too. But the Migosp guys were the ones who shot at us first..."

"Ox, I don't care what those other guys did! You're stronger than all of them, so you have to be more careful of what you do! You can't just go along with what Ivan says to do! Everyone knows he's a bully, so maybe you shouldn't hang out with him so much."

"Are you... telling me I can't be friends with Ivan?"

"...What?! No! Maybe? I mean, uh..."

"But, if I don't be friends with Ivan and Lash and protect them, then who else is gonna?"

"Uh... I dunno Ox? Maybe it's not your job to protect them? I get why you did, but... if you have to hurt other people who are also important to you, then what's the point?"

They looked at each other awkwardly for a second. Mabel twirled the light toy around and said, "Anyways, I'm sorry, I'm not trying to tell you what you can and can't do. It's just, I'm worried that you sometimes... you tend to go along with what other people say."

"I do? Really?"

"Well... yeah?"

"Oh." He stared at her wide-eyed. She felt prompted to explain more so she continued.

"Yeah, you do. You should be more careful of who you listen to! Try to think for yourself. Otherwise... people will take advantage of you. And if you do everything they say, you might end up doing something bad... and I don't want you to do something bad, because you're not bad. You're really nice and I li—I mean, you're my friend."

His eye sparkled with inspiration and he smiled cheerfully. "You're my friend too!" He said and hugged her. As he stood there with his arms wrapped around her exoskeleton, he looked uncharacteristically contemplative for a moment. "And... I think I—"
"WELL, I GUESS I FORGIVE YOU AND STUFF AND WE'RE COOL NOW, So we should get going and help out the others now, huh?!"

"Ok!"

"Here we are, my dear Queen Tori. A gathering of the spare sugar and flour from the pantries of everyone on my street." The Loox woman speaking was blue and wore a white thing that hung from her horns and half-veiled her body.

Toriel said, "I appreciate it so much, miss Iris." They pulled the cart up to the restaurant corner. The café workers and Ox began to unload and organize the items from the cart. The old Migosp woman, who had a narrower waist than her granddaughter, stepped forward and redirected their attention to the wheelbarrow behind her which was drawn by her two sons.

"Here is a considerable quantity of flour, sugar, and cooking oil, gathered from my street, queen Toriel."

Iris said, "My nieces and nephews are still gathering the cooking oil from our street. Unfortunately, there was simply too much of it to fit in the first wagon.

"There there, miss Iris, miss Helen. This is not a competition," Toriel softly scolded them. "I am equally grateful for every single contribution that everyone has made."

Helen sighed. "You are right. Forgive my arrogance, Queen Toriel. I will do everything I can to cooperate with Iris and help everyone out. In fact…" she looked over at the café team with a scrutinizing gaze. "Might I suggest that that young man go over to your street and help your neighbors haul out all of that heavy cooking oil you mentioned?" Mabel and Ox paused what they were doing and looked at one another in surprise for a second. Helen continued, "You don't work at the café with them, right? I'm sure they'll find more use for that strength of yours over at your home."

The pair began to respond. "That's like the same thing I'm doing right now…” "We're doing just fine over here…”

Iris opened her mouth about to add a line of her own.

Whatever. We don't have time for this, Toriel thought as she put her hands on her hips and forcefully interrupted them. "Yes, good-thinking miss Helen, very good, thank-you for that suggestion! Well, you'd better get to that then. Off you go!" She patted Ox on the back as he left the scene, somewhat confused.

"Back to the subject of the ingredients," said Toriel. "Hm... This looks like just what we need to make a big batch of cookies! What do you think?" she asked the spider baker.

"Dear Queen, those were my thoughts, to the teaspoon!" She pointed two of her hands at Sebastian and Mabel and said, "Let's have you two go to my bakery and begin on that at once. Try using spidermeal-raisin cookie recipe #3."

Toriel added, "Take the cinnamon from my house and add as much of it as you can while still making them edible."

Sebastian said, "All of it, then."

"All of this? How?" Mabel questioned him after she had retrieved the cinnamon and looked into the cloth bag hanging on her claws. There were 4 entire jars of cinnamon, plus half of an opened jar.
Sebastian said, "I will retrieve some special ingredients from my garden to add to the recipe. We can effectively neutralize the strong substances in this ground tree bark, releasing more of its latent energy into our hungry mouths."

Toriel said, "I'll come by soon to light the oven."

Toriel and Buffet went back to the Vegetoid farm to talk with the old Whimsun couple. Toriel looked over the chart Buffet handed her. The cover page flipped over the back of the clipboard read, 'Population and Production Analysis.'

Toriel raised her eyebrow and asked, "That's it? I knew that our local farms were not our primary food source, but still…"

The light-red old man said, "U-unfortunately, the Vegetoids cannot make as much in the darkness. They get some of their energy from the natural sunlight that shines into their room, but they also absorb quite a bit of the magical-electric energy that normally flows through the walls."

Toriel tapped her foot and said, "Is there really no way to increase the yield at all?"

"W-well, no I don't think so. If we try and force them to work any harder, they might faint from exhaustion…"

Buffet replied, "I too cannot harvest the meal spiders any faster without depleting the production brood."

"Hold on." Toriel narrowed her eyes. "What do you mean by that? It sounds like you could get a little more right away."

"Well, of course, I could get us one extra bag today… but what I'm saying is that after I did such a thing, my farm would be completely barren."

The old Whimsun woman clutched her partner's arm as she added in, "A-and, if the veggies faint then they'll make nothing…"

"But that would not kill them, correct?" Toriel pressed. "They will recover from that, eventually?"

"W-well, yes. But, the poor dearies will be out of commission for a w-week or longer…"

"Listen, miss… err…” Toriel scratched her cheek and admitted, "I am sorry. I do not know your names."

"G-Gill!" she replied.

"Gerbert," said the male.

"Well then, Gerbert and Gill, Buffet, look at this. The infant population will not survive that long at this rate. Even if we deny food to everyone with enough energy reserves to go a few days without, the rest will each only get a small meal and a few cookies each. But the baby Looxes, much like the baby Whimsuns, can not eat complex processed foods yet and require mashed vegetables. That means they will only get one more meal. And there is no real way to force Moldsmals or the naturally hyperactive Froggit children to conserve their energy. We could see as many as 40 monsters turn into dust by tomorrow night… and small children too! This won't do…"

"What do you want us to do about it, Toriel?" Buffet asked. "Should we push our farms to the limit today and harvest everything we have at the expense of having decreased—no, zero yield for the rest
of the week?"

"You do not like that idea?"

"It's a very dangerous idea, dear Queen. You're risking everyone's survival over the long run, just to save a handful of children."

"Well, that won't be a problem. Frisk and Sans will come back with help sometime tomorrow! And then everything will be alright!" Gill and Gerbert held hands and looked at each other with a sparkle of hope in their eyes.

Sometime tomorrow…

Frisk frowned and furrowed her eyebrows as she worked on the diagram in the notebook in her lap. Sans hugged her a little closer with his arm around her back and lightly touched her left wrist with his other hand as if encouraging her to take a break from writing.

"what's wrong kid?"

She tried to say, 'nothing', but it came out as a croak. She cleared her throat and said, "It's nothing new, I'm just r-really thirsty."

"woah, your voice is kinda raspy now too."

"Ye-ah… But, these problems k-kinda help take my mind off it."

"i see."

The cell phone sat on Frisk's thigh. The calculator app beamed light up at their faces. "So… theta is 10.6, psi is 32, and d equals 510 meters."

Sans said, "32 what now?"

"I mean, 32.0. Isn't that the s-ame thing?"

"nope. a deviation of .5 degrees at this distance could throw off the destination by several meters. look, our cage is only 1.18 meters long. don't forget your sig' figs kiddo. shortcut into a rock wall is not how i plan to go out."

"But, you won't a-actually take the shortcut if I'm wrong. I me-an, you wouldn't teleport us to our deaths just to prove a point…" She coughed and blinked as Sans stared back saying nothing. "Right?!"

"well… depends on if i bother to check your work."

"S-Sans you lazybones!" She giggled and nudged his shoulder. Sans chuckled, but he suddenly fell forward, one hand clutching his skull as black clouds blurred his vision. He barely registered the hand holding him upright by his shoulder.

"Huh?! What happened, are you ok?"

"uh… mm?" He shrugged and grinned as her face came back into focus. He grabbed her hand securely and stared forward in concentration. He failed once again to teleport them out of their prison. He huffed a little and looked down. She held on to his hand as he tried to pull it away.

"Sans…" He looked at her with a frustrated expression that made her hesitate to speak for a moment,
but she did anyways. "I think you should… s-stop…"

"?"

"Trying to do that… it's painful, isn't it?"

"what else am i supposed to do?" He sighed. "the second i heal enough to use my magic we'll get out of here, so who cares how much it hurts…"

"How much? You mean, it hurts a lot?"

"Well, not really."

"Has it been like that this entire time—" Frisk started coughing. Sans rubbed her back as she struggled to swallow.

"hey, it's not that bad. i'm sure it'll heal soon…"

[ACT]

→ * Check
→ * Sans

*SANS – 1 ATK 1 DEF HP: 0.4 / 1*

* Occasionally tells a good joke.

"You're getting worse! W-why?"

"iunno." He shrugged again.

"It must be because you're hungry! Your body just doesn't have any energy to heal with. You don't usually go this long without e-eating…"

"calm down. maybe you should stop talking so much…"

She ignored him and said, "D-darn, I knew you should have eaten the whole thing…"

"what? are you talking 'bout that candy bar you came with? c'mon pal, one more bite of that itty-bitty thing would not have made me healed by now."

"You don't know that! A tiny skeleton like you, it might have been enough! We could be out of here! It would have been the best chance, Sans why didn't you eat the whole thing?!"

"i can't do that."

"Why not?!" She gasped and her eyes scrunched up a little.

"kid… are you crying?" He adjusted the light. The edges of her eyes were red and her breathing seemed irregular.

She shrugged and said, "I-I don't know."

He continued more gently, "i'm sorry. but i just can't do that... how can you expect me to just not share one half of the last little scrap of food we have, in a situation like this? i'm the one who got you into this in the first place. it's my fault that we're down here. this is so unfair to you... you're just a kid, a lost human kid away from your home, and i'm the grown-ass adult who's supposed to be protecting you. but, for some reason, i'm always relying on you instead. and you're so kind and you
do way too much for me, but all i ever do is annoy you and hurt you. i'm sorry for making you put up with a useless loser like me... i don't deserve you."

"Wha..." She blinked her eyes uncomfortably and stared at him, bewildered. "What are you talking about? Sans, you're not a loser, and you do deserve it. You're so great, you're the co-coolest person I know!"

He shrank from her praise. "nah. my brother is way cooler than i am."

"But, you're like, super-magical-powerful, and you've got tons of awesome abilities, and you can teleport, and you're also like a genius and you're good at everything you do! And sometimes... you're even good at cheering me up."

"and i can't even get you out of here, so who cares?"

She looked upset again.

"heh. infuriating, isn't it?"

"S-stop it. Stop putting yourself down. This is pointless, let's stop arguing."

"...yeya. you're right. i'm sorry." He sighed and put on his cheering-up smile and hugged her close again.

"I-I don't, f-feel too good... God, it smells so bad in here."

"shh... don't worry about that. just try to relax."

Also sometime tomorrow...

The last cookie... Miles the Whimsun thought as he stepped across the room carrying a shallow dish containing cut-up pieces of dark-brown, caramelized cookies. And I have to give it to these annoying little kids... He stepped up to the crowd of Migosp parents and cute babies who hadn't developed those pointy tusks yet.

Man, I shouldn't have skipped dinner yesterday... I wish I could just gobble these all up right now, but I can't do that in front of all these people... He shook his head as the judgmental stares of Queen Tori and his own boss Mason bored into his back. As he trailed off in his own thoughts he accidentally turned his back to the baby stroller next to him as turned and gazed at the other monsters. He jumped when he felt a tiny claw latch onto his anxiously-fluttering wing.

"O-ow! Not my wing, man! Let go you little br... beautiful angel," he hastily corrected himself as the baby's almost equally-tiny guardian came up to him. The miniature Migosp had to stand on a stool to reach over the side of the carriage.

"No, no, no!" She said and gently tickled the baby's feet to get it to let go. "Be good Babe! No grabbing." She said and wagged her claw like a pointer finger.

"no gabbi." the baby repeated.

"Good Babe! Chey will give you a cookie!" Chey said and pinched one of the bite-sized cookie chunks between the tips of her claw and fed it to the baby. To Miles she said, "It's a good thing Babe's claws are as dull as mine!" She patted his arm and said, "Thank-you so much for helping, you're such a gentleman!"
"U-uh, yeah. No problem, ma'am... Whatever..." he blushed and grumbled.

Toriel looked on in concern. Buffet said, "It's not enough..."

"Yes, I know..."

"What should we do now?"

"How about all of the monsters we instructed to lay low in their homes and sleep this off?"

"The majority of them are doing just that."

"Well... that's tiring news."

"My Queen, it is not really news of anything." They exchanged a glance and a shallow laugh.

The day passed by agonizingly slowly in the courtyard, dimly lit by candles and the few permanent firelights. Everyone was stressed out by the sounds of crying children.

"Still no sign of Sans?" Toriel tapped her foot and looked around.

Coco croaked, "Shipping room's still as lifeless as it's ever been."

"What is taking them so long?!" said Toriel.

"Even if something were to happen to the cute human, Sans should have..." Buffet cut off her thought as some monsters approached them.

"Miss Queen Toriel, your highness, we need help! Look at my baby!"

"Is there nothing more you can do?"

The women in charge exchanged a worried glance. Buffet said, "There is nothing left. It is as I feared..."

"It's not enough?" Toriel looked around in despair as more parents and children cried nearby. She could sense all of their HP bars which were fading away before her eyes.

One of the adults rocked their child gently and sobbed, "She's going to die..."

Toriel steeled her gaze and said, "No, she's not! No children are going to die! Listen everyone, I will help you if you do as I say. You must all try your best not to cry now, as it is a waste of energy." She smiled at them all kindly.

"My friends and neighbors, I told you not to fight over the food. I promised you that no one would die. Frisk and Sans are working on the problem right now, and I'm sure that whatever is delaying them, they will solve it and come back soon. I have an idea. Please have everyone in need come towards me... Yes, take them out of the strollers so we can all fit..."

The monsters gathered around Toriel beneath the old black tree, which was now host to a number of healthy, young, climbing vines and flowers.

"All of the hungry children must now sit in a circle and hold hands. Big brothers and sisters, please help the smaller ones with this..."

The two toddlers closest to her hesitated to touch her gigantic paws. "It's alright," she said. They
gasped in awe at how relaxing and comforting it felt. Some of the parents standing in the row behind
the circle were busy helping their children comply with the orders.

"Very good everyone!" Toriel said and smiled encouragingly over the circle. "Now, just relax and
think of happy things. I will make you all feel better. Don't worry, this will all be over soon…"

A green glow radiated from Toriel and spread over the entire circle of small monsters. Green sparkles
danced in the air between their shoulders. Some of the adults murmured whispers of concern as they
noticed Toriel's HP tick down from 80 to 79.

Buffet frantically whispered to her, "Toriel, what are you—"

"It's alright," Toriel quietly replied to her a strained smile. "You see, everyone will be fine!"

One little yellow Froggit was slightly larger than the baby monsters by his side. He squirmed and
tried to let go of the hands of the smaller monsters by his side and leave the circle.

"Where are you going, my child?" The Froggit froze and looked up into Toriel's eyes which were
looking straight into his own.

"Q-queen, you're hurting."

"I am just fine. There is no need for you to worry about me, Bell."

The small Froggit squeaked as an orange blush circles appeared under his pretty eyes. "Q-queen
knows my name?!"

"Of course I know your name, Bell," she repeated. "Now, please sit down and be good. You're very
important to me."

"Q-queen!" He stammered in reply as a pair of bubbly tears formed at the corners of his eyes.

"Don't cry now, my child. Crying will waste your energy and then I'll have to heal you more. You've
got to be brave now, alright?"

Bell sniffed and held onto his neighbors' hands. He looked back at Toriel and said, "Yes lady!"

The huge and the tiny monster looked into each other's eyes, both full of determination. Toriel's
eyelid twitched just slightly as her HP ticked down to 78. The HP bars off all of the children filled up
completely. She smiled. "There you are, that's better. See? Everything will be alright!"
Would You Smooch a Ghost?

A purple-skinned teenager walked along the winding cliffs of Hotland. She wore a red baseball cap that sat at a backwards-facing angle over the thick tentacles on her head. She also had on bright yellow-green cargo pants with reflective stripes, hanging by suspenders over her sailor-style school uniform shirt.

She caught sight of a monster with a diamond-shaped head leaning against the wall of a building, looking at the screen of his smartphone. She walked over and said, "Hey."

"Oh, it's you, part-timer." He looked her over. "Why are you all dressed up for work? It's Sunday."

"That's what I'm trying to figure out. Do you know if we're even having work tomorrow?"

"Why wouldn't we?"

"'Cause we're a day behind schedule! How are we gonna get anything done? Did you manage to contact the project coordinator yet?"

"I don't know kid, that's not my job. Why don't you go talk to the boss about it if you're so concerned? I'm trying to watch Mettaton's show right now," he said and paid decisive attention to his phone. "I hate thinking about work on the weekends…"

She walked away from his discouraging attitude.

On another path in Hotland from which the MTT Hotel was visible, Brew, a monster made out of a black, wispy material was standing and staring down in concentration. His semi-liquid hands flexed and adjusted their grip around the replica robot leg he was holding and lining up with the golf ball on the ground. He pulled back for his final swing.

"Hey."

The tip of the boot struck the ball. It launched into the air, soared over the terrain, touched down and continued rolling. It got caught on a hill, where it rolled down the slope, away from the path, off the cliff, and into the lava.

"DAMNIT Danya, you made me mess up!"

She tagged along after him as he walked back to a vending machine on the path. A poster on the machine advertised:

**MTT Golf Course**
* Purchase a ball and play unlimited for only 50g!

The fine print near the bottom of the poster read:

* The MTT Golf Club is not responsible for lost or incinerated golf balls.

"Gonna buy me a new ball?" her boss grumbled.

"What?! Um…" Her black eyes quivered nervously as she started to reach into her pocket.

"Hey, I'm just kidding! Don't worry about it." He laughed it off insincerely and patted her on the back of her shoulder, while pushing a few of his own gold coins into the slot.
"Oh, ok." Her shoulders slumped as she sighed in relief.

"So, what do you want?" he asked as he retrieved the new golf ball.

"I was just wondering if everything's ready for work tomorrow? Did you manage to get a hold of the project coordinator?"

"No, I haven't managed to get a hold of him! That slippery little slimeball has been AWOL since Friday! It's a complete disaster!" His beady white eyes turned furious and steam rose from his boiling face. "I'm missing 2 days of reports and stone samples! I canceled the geoanalyst's appointment! I have to reschedule up to three weeks of work! Our project's on the verge of going under if I can't call him soon!"

"Huh," she shrank a little while hunching her shoulders. "But, this is urgent, so why are you playing golf instead of working on it?"

"Because why should I have to cut into my weekend to deal with this crap?! Gah, I'm so stressed out. I need another game to take my mind off of this…" He took another swing at the golf course. The ball fell into the lava again.

"TEA BALLS!"

"Isn't that just gettin' you more pissed off?"

"ARGH!"

"Sorry! Can I try calling him instead?"

"There's no point! It just goes straight to the messages! Look Danya, I really don't want to hear any more about that lazy skeleton right now, so why don't you go… ask his brother, or something I don't know. Just put a lid on it!"

She trudged along the path on the way to Waterfall. As she passed the Lab she thought to herself, Doesn't anyone else care about this?

"You there!"

"Huh?!" She jumped back as an armor-clad woman jumped out of a window from the Lab and landed in front of her.

"Just where do you think you're going? Didn't I tell you not to skip school before?!" She said in a dramatic, threatening tone.

"I don't have school today, stupid! It's Sunday!"

Undyne's eye twitched. "I… knew that!" She shouted and kept grinning. "Just making sure you know not to skip school, punk!"

"Ok, I got it." Danya nodded, trying not to give away the amount of fear she felt as Undyne's scarred face towered a head above her own.

"Good!"

"Can I go now?"

"Of course you can. But I'd better not catch you slacking off again… or else I'll beat you up!"
"Ngahahahahaha!"

As Danya walked past, Undyne said, "Hold on a sec! If you don't have school today… then why are you wearing your school uniform?"

"Because I feel like it!!"

Although flustered from her encounter with Undyne, she calmed down by the time she got to Snowdin. She had to ask around to find out where Sans lived. When she finally found it, she could hardly believe the size of the house. At first she thought the Gyftmas decorations looked good, but on closer inspection she noticed the tiny bones glued to the wreath on the door. Wow that's tacky.

She raised her arm to knock on the door. Her tentacles were so soft and floppy that she merely slapped the door without producing any loud noise. Now her suckers were stuck to the door. She wrapped her other limb around it and kicked the door with her boot.

"SO, YOU WEREN'T SATISFIED WITH BULLDOZING MY SENTRY STATION... NOW YOU'RE TRYING TO TEAR DOWN MY HOUSE?!!" Boomed the voice of the skeleton behind her. She whirled around.

"Huh?! No, I—"

"I don't care what you're authorized to do this time! I, The Great Papyrus, will put an end to your destructive behavior!"

"Why are you encountering me, you weirdo?!"

"I THOUGHT YOU COULD USE THE EXERCISE."

He shot a very easy attack at her. She yanked harder and released herself from the door in time to dodge the bones, but tripped on the edge of the porch and fell into the snow. "Guah!"

[ACT] → * Insult

"Jerkass! Moron! Thick-skulled bonehead!"

"I don't understand… Why would you berate yourself so loudly?! Is it because you don't think you're good enough to tear down my house?!!"

"I'm not here to tear down your house!"

"HEH! You expect me to believe someone who's skipping school?!"

"For the last time, I am NOT skipping school!"

"Then why are you wearing your school uniform?"

"Because this is my only clean shirt, stupid!" she yelled and slapped him in the face.

Papyrus stared at her in shock. Not because of what she said, or because she had hit him, but because she had only dealt 1 point of damage.

"Wowie! You're not very strong, huh?!" He scratched his cheekbone and looked slightly embarrassed. "It's not my style to fight weaklings. I guess I have no choice but to grant you pity!" He said and [Spare]d her.
She blushed at the insult and grumbled, "Well excuse me for not being as strong as a royal guard."

"OH NO! I'm very honored that you think that! But in fact I have yet to join the royal guard."

"You're… not a guard?"

"UNFORTUNATELY, I am still just a sentry! Surprising, I know! You would think that with all of the hard work I do they would have promoted me by now!"  "Nevermind, I'm sorry I asked."  "But the day will soon come when I, Papyrus, will finally capture a human, and fulfill my lifelong dream of joining the Royal Guard!"  "Stop talking."  "Cool! Powerful! Prestigious! Papyrus! (Did I already say my name?)  FORTUNATELY for you, you were lucky enough to meet me before my inevitable explosion in popularity causes me to be surrounded constantly by so many admirers that I would never deign to notice an ordinary monster like you. But now, your unforgettable purple face will always stick out to me from the crowd!"

"I don't care! Can you help me call Sans or not?!"

"HUH, SANS WHAT ABOUT SANS?! Did you talk to him?!"

"No. Have you?"

"He hasn't answered his phone in 3 days!"

"Ok then. See ya."

"Wait! Do you have any idea what's going on?! Are you guys gonna finish the tunnel soon?! Do you think he's doing OK?!"

"I don't know! Leave me alone!"

Undyne and Alphys were hanging out on the couch at the Lab, excited to begin watching the highly anticipated sequel to *Mew Mew Kissy Cutie*.

Undyne was just saying, "You haven't seen this one yet?"

Alphys fidgeted with her tail and mumbled, "I wanted to watch it t-t-together with you…"

*Pchnk.* They both jumped when the ceiling light above their head burnt out.

"H-hold on a second, I'll go f-fix it!"

Undyne sat still where she was as Alphys went up the escalator. After a few seconds of rummaging, Alphys made a surprised noise. Undyne ran up the down-escalator to check it out.

"What the h-heck happened?!

The drawer of the desk was open, but Alphys was standing back, biting her nails and staring in surprise at her ice cream machine. Both the substance inside and the runoff dripping into the bucket were a dark, shimmering shade of crimson.

"Woah, why is it all red?!"

"I don't know… No, don't touch it!"

Undyne pulled her curious hand back. Alphys quietly clenched her fists and looked up in anticipation as Undyne scanned the room suspiciously. She looked back at Alphys and shrugged. A single volume from the books on the shelf behind them poked out. White eyes faintly visible between the rows of media. The two women turned back towards the down-escalator and took a few steps.
"Eep!" Alphys yelled as they whirled around. There was a pile of DVDs and illustrated books scattered over the floor beneath the shelf. Undyne grabbed Alphys's shoulders and pulled her a little closer.

"Who's there?! Show yourself!"

A small, green-tinted blob phased through the bookshelf. Its eyes grinned proudly.

"It's just a little ghost," Alphys remarked.

"Did you do that?" Undyne asked, gesturing to the papers all over the floor.

The ghost nodded.

"So… why did you do that? ...Who are you? …Name?"

The ghost just blushed.

"Not very talkative are you?"

The ghost thought back to his friends in the Ruins. Visage would shake hands with new students the first time they came to the magic school. Buffet always shook hands with people she traded with. Coco shook the human's hand with his tongue the second time he met her.

The ghost's circular form lacked the appendages necessary for this common gesture of greeting. But he was getting used to being non-corporeal again, so he thought he could probably pull this one off. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

He faced Undyne while carefully manipulating his magic to make a long, slender appendage grow out of his body towards her. Perhaps a little stiffer than he had intended, and fingers were slightly beyond his skill level, but he was confident she would understand the message. His eyes beamed at her expectantly.

"W-what are you doing?!" Alphys blushed and covered her eyes, but peeked between her fingers.

"YOU WEIRDO!" Undyne shouted and threw out her arm protectively in front of Alphys. She impaled the ghost on 20 spears at once. It halted its movements. A glowing red blush spread beneath its eyes, which were smiling so hard that they shut. When it came out of this trance and looked around the room again, the two women were long gone.

The ghost from the Ruins floated around Waterfall aimlessly for a while. He eventually ended up floating next to a small, green-skinned reptilian monster wearing a pair of blue shorts and a blue school backpack. The child sat on the edge of a stream, and rambled on about his problems. Perhaps the fact that the mute ghost had nothing judgmental to say in return made him feel more comfortable about using him to confide in.

"…I think it'll go well. We have so much in common, I mean, we both go to school. The same school! And we both eat lunch… the same lunch! It's perfect! I want her to eat the same lunch as me for the rest of my life! But… how can I ever say that to her?! What if she doesn't want to? What if her friends all laugh at me? What if she never talks to me again?!"

He sighed and splashed his feet in the river. "I know I've gotta tell her how I feel. But how can I? I'm too afraid…"
"Oh, I know! I'll practice on you! If you don't mind."

R.D. stared and waited. Confused, but curious. The boy squeezed his hands together and went through a range of embarrassed expressions. "Uh… uh…"

Finally, he shut his eyes and blurted out, "I love you!"

R.D. knew he wasn't really saying it to him, but the pretend confession still made pink blushing circles appear under his eyes. The kid put his hands over his mouth and looked mega-embarrassed. He quivered for a moment, then took off without another word. The wind he kicked up as he ran by swayed the echo flower behind R.D.. The ghost took the echo flower and went to go find Undyne.

Papyrus was bummed out after his encounter with Danya. He curled up into a ball against the wall of his living room. "I miss Sans so much… If only I could burrow under that pile of rubble! If only I could float through the walls like a ghost…" Inspiration struck and he grabbed his cell phone.

R.D. found Undyne in the middle of her walk back to her house. She eyed him skeptically. "You again, huh?"

His eyes beamed from the brilliance of his own plan as he floated and held the blue flower, staring up into her face.

"Is there, uh… something you want…?" She asked awkwardly.

R.D. bobbed the echo flower. "I love you!"

Undyne stared in shock. "W-what?!" She was stunned for a moment, but she began to recall many things that now made sense. Instinctively feeling that someone was watching her. The ghost's actions around herself and Alphys.

"Oh. Wow. That's… adorable? I had no idea you… liked me? Well, I'm sorry, but I…"

Ring ring! The cell phone's screen revealed that Papyrus was calling.

"…have to take this! Hold on one sec. Hey what's up? … Yeah. … I know… … … Oh… OH…"
Her eye widened in realization as she listened. She glanced at the little ghost and nodded. "… … Papyrus, you're a genius!"

She hung up and turned back to her pining admirer. He shook the flower again, causing it to echo, "Papyrus, you're a genius!"

"Hey." Undyne's expression was a cross between a seductive grin and a homicidal smirk. The ghost monster was transfixed.

"Could you do me a favor?"

Frisk flipped back a few pages in their notebook. She took a deep breath and sighed. "Gonna check over our schedule again."

"ok," Sans said and tried to follow along as she listed the places they planned to go. But it was hard to concentrate on work because he kept noticing the way she licked her lips every minute and sighed every other breath. She inhaled deeply and rubbed her temple. "You know where Muffet lives?"

"…huh?" he snapped out of staring. "oh. yeah, i do."

She put down the notebook and sighed again. "My head hurts…"
"me too. when i get outta here i'm gonna get like, 5 burgers."

"I doubt you can eat more than one, e-even if you're starving."

"well, we'll find out." They laughed weakly. Frisk's nose twitched as she inhaled sharply.

"I have to go to the bathroom again."

"k. you do that and i'll get some more screaming done."

Frisk seemed uneasy for a while after that. Sans was getting concerned. what's going on? i thought she was over this after the first time, but now she's not calming down again.

"hey, what's going on? you've been breathing kinda hard for a while now…"

"I dunno."

"try to calm down, ok?"

She closed her eyes and tried to breathe more quietly and slowly. She suddenly gasped again, "I can't, it's hard."

"what's hard? …breathing?" he sat up more alert.

"Huh?"

"oh… no…" His eyelight dimmed as he looked around the cage. "there's no air exchange? i guess the walls are too tight? damn, i didn't even think about that."

"a-air? but, you breathe too right?"

"yeah but i don't use oxygen the same way you do…"

"H-huh. Oxygen?" She touched her neck and looked mortified. Sans was pulling on the bones making up the walls.

"can't i dig out an air pocket or something-DAMN IT! i can't even disappear my own bones in this state, are you kidding me?!" He clenched his fingers in the dirt. A hand tugged on his t-shirt and he turned back around. is there really nothing i can do?

"here, close your ears for a sec." He pulled the hood over her head and put her hands over her ears, then pressed his own hands against the sides of his own skull. His muffled shout rang through their heads.

"IF ANYONE CAN HEAR ME, HELP! I'M STUCK IN A CAVE IN AND MY FRIEND'S DYING!"

He turned back to Frisk and squeezed her shoulders. "you can't die! you have to meet my brother!"

"U-uh," Frisk swayed and clutched her forehead as she looked down. Sans couldn't think of anything else to do. She began to breathe even faster.

"Heh, Hehe!" she giggled.

"pal?"

"Hahaha! It's-it's ok! It's gonna be alright, Sans! You don't have to be a-afraid, 'cause, I won't turn
"Into dust! My S-Soul, heh! Should be! Plenty to h-heal you!"

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"Don't be sad Sans! You're gonna go home and see your brother again! Ok?! It's gonna be fine! See?!!" She initiated a battle and tried to provoke him to finish her off. But she was so weak that he was able to catch both of her wrists in the middle of her attack.

[ACT]
→ * Check
→ * Frisk

* FRISK – 1 ATK 1 DEF HP: 17/20
* Blood Oxygen Level: 65%

"Stop it, stop it, frisk! I don't want your soul!"

"HahAhaHAhaHA," she panted and her fists clenched around whatever pieces of clothing were in her reach. "REALLY, you'll sit here suffering for HOURS WHEN you can just take my Soul and then you can go home and s-see your brother and... AND THEN you can even break the, BArrier, HAHAAA! And then... you'll be ok!"

[Spare]

She tried to lunge at him, but he was still holding on to her wrists. Her weight toppled them over and he struggled to hold her back. Her grin fell and she gasped desperately. "S-Sans! Listen, when you get to the surface—"

"Kid, I don't wanna go to the surface without you!"

"SANS LISTEN TO ME! When, you get to the surface, you have to, find my Dad!"

"I don't—what?"

"Please find him his name is Hans Erik Jansson our business is called Café Frisk just like down here my apartment is on f-fifty-six Cross Street his c-cell ph-phone number is xxx-xxx-xxxx and it's also on my surface phone i-if you charge it up so tell him what happened to me and then you have to be his f-friend because he's all alone and he'll be very sad so please take care of him for me please..."

"But what about your mom?"

"SANS PLEASE PROMISE ME!"

"OK I PROMISE!"

[Spare]

The Fight ended.

Her face fell out of the dim beam of light, collapsing against. He held onto her shoulders and listened in horror as she hyperventilated uncontrollably.

He tried to activate his power but felt his eyesocket and head respond with a dull throb of pain.

"Come on!"

"Sans, s-smile."
He smiled. "it's ok buddy, im right here. GODDAMMIT WHY CAN'T I GET OUT OF HERE?!"
He slammed his fist against the floor, which hurt his hand a lot more than it hurt the ground. "isn't there anyone looking for us by now?! HELLO?! SOMEONE HEAR ME, PLEASE! HELP!"
"i can't get us out of here. why did i do this… i'm sorry… i'm such a dummy."
The wall of the cage in front of him glowed. He lifted his head in surprise. The round edges of the bones glistened and reflected the green-tinted light which grew stronger and spilled out into the room. A confused blob passed through the wall and looked upon the two trapped creatures. The rough circles outlining the monster's eyes widened as if it were terrified by their mere presence. Sans took a few seconds to gather his wits and utter something coherent to greet it with.
"uh, hey. c-could you—"
The ghost panicked and started to cry. Translucent globules bubbled from under its eyes. It shook its 'head' back and forth, in a desperate denial of… something. It shut its eyes and flew straight through Sans and out of the room.
Sans had also shut his eyes as the ghost flew through his face and drenched him in its sparkling tears. An invigorating energy surged through his body, especially around his injured eyesocket. He brought a hand up to his face and prodded lightly.
"wha… i'm all better? that thing healed me?" His left eyelight returned to its normal white color. "frisk! come on pal, let's get the hell out of here!" He grinned and teleported them.
He looked around the room he had landed in. There was an echo flower, a stream trickling into a pile of rubble to his left, and a wooden bench to his right. He looked under the bench. "hey, isn't that the quiche i made like… three months ago? why'd it run all the way out here? …it must have felt abandoned." Frisk didn't laugh or groan at his joke.
"eh… nevermind. let's just go." He gripped her shoulders and prepared to teleport again. "my brother is so going to Freak. Out. when he sees you."
He snickered and whisked them away.
Papyrus was lying on the floor in his living room. He let out a long sigh and heard it echo around the house.

"IT'S TOO CLEAN IN HERE!" he declared. He sprang to his feet and ran into his brother's room. He grabbed a bunch of dirty socks and threw them over the railing while shouting, "NYEH-HEH-HEH-HEH-HEH, HEH, Heh..." The socks fell around the carpet. "...heh!"

He stood there and stared at them for a minute or two, and then he went back to lying on the floor.

"NYEH!" He was startled by the sudden weight on his body and sat up immediately. He stared at his lap. Sans stared back with his normal smile.

"SANS!" Papyrus screamed and hugged him.

"heh! long time no see, huh?"

"SANS!" Papyrus repeated and squeezed him.

"heheh! i missed you too. hey, hey pap... hang on a sec. look over there." He gestured his head backwards. Papyrus focused his vision beyond his brother's shoulder and saw the other person.

"HNNG. OH MY GOD! SANS! IS THAT—!"

"hehe!"

"IS THAT A HUMAN?!"

"nah, that's just a jacket."

"Oh."

"hey, what's that on top of the jacket?"

"GAAD! OH MY GOD! SANS IS THAT..."

"pff, hehehe," Sans could barely contain his laughter at Papyrus's reaction.

"IS THAT A DEAD HUMAN?!"

"yes." Sans responded with his line before realizing what Papyrus had said. "wait. what?"

"HUH?"

"dead?"

"YES SANS, IT DOES LOOK RATHER ZOMBIE-LIKE."

"nah bro, she's not dead! i mean, sure, we were in a pretty tight spot just now (literally), but... that's ok 'cause we're home now, and she's gonna... ?" They looked over the human lying on her back, very still.
"Sans, are their, are her lips supposed to be blue?"

"If… no, come on… you're fine, look, we're in my home now!" He put his hands on her cheeks. "Come on kid, wake up and say hi to my brother!" Papyrus smiled, ready to boldly declare his plans of fame and popularity, but the words wouldn't come. He felt a heavy weight pulling on his chest as his brother's smile fell.

Sans whispered, "frisk?"

"What!? That's frisk? Frisk is a human?! But then, that means all this time you and her—"

"Shut up!" Sans shouted. The brothers shared a brief glance of utter shock at that outburst, but they quickly dismissed it as there was no time. Sans put the side of his head close to Frisk's mouth and pried open her jaw a little with his fingers.

"Sh-she's not breathing." Sans looked back and forth between them. He stared at Frisk's gray face and remembered the time when they had slept in the same chair after drinking. He pressed his head against her chest. He shot back up and said, "Papyrus?! her heart. it stopped. beating."

"Oh… But wait, weren't we supposed to capture the human?! And now you have one right here! I should call Undyne and…" He trailed off as his words seemed to be further upsetting Sans, who was already staring at him like a lost child.

"But, what am I saying… that's Frisk! We're supposed to be friends, and she's the one who… Sans, I… don't really…" He stared into his brother's pleading face, which looked like it had gone too long without being washed, and one of the eyesockets had some sort of strange residue around it.

"Maybe… you could make her heart beat again?"

"H-huuh, make it beat again?"

"And then maybe we can make her breathe again?! And then she'll get better?!"

"Huh," he nodded, clinging to Papyrus's words. "Uhh, ok? but, how do i… oh!"

Sans had a vivid flashback to a time long ago. He and Papyrus had just recently adopted a puppy and Sans had attended a rather boring seminar about dogs (the animal kind). Somewhere in that lecture, there had been something about a procedure that could resuscitate a dog under certain conditions… His expression couldn't get any wider. Sans was filled with determination.

He moved her arms to straighten out her body and then parted her jaw with his fingers again. He hesitated for a moment, and then blew a breath into her mouth. Papyrus stared, not expecting that. Sans felt that something was off. He pinched Frisk's nose shut and tried a second breath. This time he felt the pressure fill up her lungs and cause her chest to spring up, which surprised Papyrus again. After doing it a few more times, he pulled back.

"Ok, the next part is…" He put his hands on top of her chest and tried to press down over her heart.

"Hnnn… hn! Uu…"

"What is it brother?"

"I can't, i'm not… strong enough." He looked at his hands and chuckled darkly. He stood up and
stared down at Frisk. A gigantic bone appeared over her body.

Papyrus jumped back, startled. "SANS WHAT—"

"hey bro. hold her shoulders so she doesn't slip out of position."

"WH-WHAT? BUT SANS,"

"papyrus! please!"

"UH, ALRIGHT THEN!" Papyrus kneeled behind Frisk's head and put his hands firmly on her shoulders. Sans stood over them with his hands by his side in that neutral and gesture-less posture that he always used when he was really concentrating on controlling his attacks.

"ok… here we go."

He crushed her chest. Both skeletons flinched at the sound of cracking ribs, muffled under the striped sweater. Sans stood frozen in horror at what he had just done.

"SANS!" Papyrus urged him. He snapped out of it and started moving the summoned implement again, crushing Frisk between the bone and the floor at a fast pace.

Papyrus could hardly process the situation. One moment he had been lying on the floor in an empty house. Seconds later he somehow found himself in the middle of an emergency, and it was a human of all things. He felt how small Frisk’s shoulders were under his large hands, and squeezed them slightly as if that could comfort her somehow.

"FRISK! PLEASE COME BACK!" Papyrus pleaded. Sans felt a little tinge of joy at how fast Papyrus had become attached to her, but all the more terrified of the inevitable tragedy that he was fighting to keep at bay. It felt like he had been pumping her heart for an hour, although it had only been 2 minutes. The hope that had welled up in him at the start of the procedure evaporated away.

"frisk, papyrus… i-it's not working."

"SANS! DON'T GIVE UP!" Papyrus encouraged him.

"nothing's happening."

"I THINK SHE'S GETTING A LITTLE STRONGER. TRY DOING MORE OF THE BREATHING THING! AND I'LL DO THE HEART THING!"

"ok." Sans kneeled down next to her again and gave her more breaths. Papyrus threw his red gloves into a corner of the room, de-summoned the giant bone, and started pressing Frisk's chest with just one of his hands.

"oh, sh-shit…" The pressure of Sans's rescue breaths had caused Frisk's chapped bottom lip to split open. Tears spilled over his cheeks as he tasted the blood. what am i even doing to her?

"SANS COME ON, BREATHE IN BETWEEN THE HEARTBEATS!"

"ok." After a few more minutes of that he cried again, "it's not working!"

"SANS! I DON'T SEE A FLOATING SOUL! KEEP GOING!"

"o-ok," he sobbed and kept breathing into her.
Papyrus felt a little jolt underneath his palm. He gasped and pulled his hand back as he felt the small rebound against his last compression. "OH MY GOD! SANS STOP! LOOK!"

Sans put his hand next to Papyrus's and felt, unbelievably, the soft beat of Frisk's heart. "a-ah…" he stammered, speechless. "we did it?!

Papyrus put his head close to hers and tried to hear if she would start breathing on her own again. "Frisk, that's it! You can do it!" He whispered as her jaw started to quiver. "Come on, tiny human! Breathe with the Great Papyrus! In!" he sucked in a breath. "Out!" And on his next "In!" Frisk jolted and sucked in a tiny, struggling breath.

"That's it!"

Sans was getting his emotions back under control as he watched Papyrus coach her back to life. As he caught his breath he said, "i can't believe it… i can't believe that worked… hah…"

"WE DID IT BROTHER! IT'S THE MIRACLE OF LIFE!"

"hah!" Sans nodded and beamed at them both. His face was covered in all sorts of substances, but his smile was shining like the sun. Frisk was struggling with tiny, rapid wheezes.

"She seems to be having trouble in that position!" Papyrus said. He put his hands under her head and back and lifted her up into a reclining position. She started panting in deeper, labored breaths, and squinted at him. She squeaked out a noise that sounded like a question.

"YES FRISK, IT IS I WHO HAVE BROUGHT YOU BACK TO LIFE! And Sans helped."

"Pa… Pa-yrus?"

"CORRECT!"

Frisk tried to make a move to clutch her chest, but it was like she had lit herself on fire and she immediately regretted her decision. In her pain she panted harder, which made it hurt even worse.

"easy there kid! calm down." Sans really wanted to hug her, but that was obviously out of the question, so he held her hand and squeezed it gently.

"Sa, Sans?" she whimpered.

"yea."

"It hurts."

"i know. i'm so sorry."

"Wh-where are we?"

"we're in my house. it's got my brother in it and everything."

"I…" Frisk squinted back up at Papyrus. She saw a blur of fuzzy white, black, and red shapes. "I c-can hardly see him… a-ah…" Her brow knotted tightly.

"Uh… Sans? Is there something wrong with her eyes? She seems to be crying but there are no tears coming out! I thought humans could cry?!

"she needs water."
"Oh, OK! I'LL GO GET SOME!"

Papyrus made a pair of bones to support Frisk's back in place of his hands. He went into the kitchen and filled up a glass of water. When he knelt and brought it close to her, Frisk unexpectedly went into an animalistic frenzy in which she ignored her broken body, tried to grab at the glass with both hands, and inhale the entire object at once. The result was a mess of coughing, dropped cups, spilled water, painful convulsions, and the emptying of what little fluid was left inside of her body into her pants. Sans and Papyrus held her hands and patted her head and comforted her as the episode passed.

"S-sorry," she coughed. Her face glowed red beneath her eyes. "I'm sorry, I'm s-sorry!" She winced and shut her eyes and repeated the phrase.

"THERE'S NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE TO ME FRISK! OBVIOUSLY, THAT WAS TOO MUCH WATER FOR YOU. WHAT WAS I EVEN THINKING?!" He smacked his forehead dramatically. "WAIT, I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!" He ran into the kitchen and came back out with a new glass of water, with a plastic straw that was shaped like the head of a bunny with a fuzzy blue pom in the center for its nose.

"ATTENTION HUMAN! This is THE FLUFFY BUNNY SIPPY STRAW OF MAGNIFICENCE! FLUFFY BUNNY will help you take one hop at a time! OK?!"

She sobbed tearless sobs and looked shamefully away from the faces of the skeleton brothers.

"OK FRISK?!" Papyrus repeated.

"O-o-ok," she nodded and cooperated as he knelt by her side again and fed the tip of the sippy straw into her mouth.

"There you go! You're doing great!" She nodded, but with a strong look of humiliation in her eyes.

"It's ok!" He said and patted her hair. "Wowie! Your hair is pretty!" Papyrus smiled and pet her hair some more. Frisk blushed at the praise and sipped her water.

"damn that's cute," Sans thought and chuckled. He said, "hey, so… can i leave you alone with papyrus for a sec?" She agreed. "great! i'll go and get tori to come heal ya."

"Toriel!" Frisk cried happily at the thought of seeing her caretaker.

"be right back,"

"Wait!" Frisk called and then coughed from the effort of raising her voice.

"?"

"D-don't… hah, don't forget to grab your laptop."

"ok," he said and disappeared.

From inside Toriel's living room, Sans peeked his head above the windowsill and got a glimpse of what was going on in the yard. He turned away from the window and looked around the cluttered room with one of his eyes black and the other shining blue for light.

"looks like tori's not doing too hot. plan B it is then."

Before he left he remembered to pick up a few things from the house. Toriel had dumped most of his belongings in the living room but his bookbag was easy enough to spot. He saw one of Frisk's black
aprons hanging over a chair and picked it up. She'll want that.

He took another glance through the window and thought, Whelp, I'd better get going... hang in there Tori. As he was about to leave, he caught sight of a dusty smartphone, abandoned on the surface of the drawer by the basement staircase.

Hmm...

Sans took his shortcut to that one spot around the corner of Grillby's restaurant where no one would ever see him appear. As he walked towards the door, he felt a sudden light-headedness and staggered against the window.

"Whoops," he muttered to himself. As he stood back up, he caught sight of his reflection.

"Pff what the—i almost just walked into Grillby's looking like that?!" He grabbed a handful of snow and used it to rub away all of the dirt, sweat, blood, tears, and ominous red stuff off his face. "Phew, tha's better," he said and pushed open the door.

He didn't seem to notice the stares as he walked up to the bar. A yellow bunny monster stumbled excitedly over and attached herself to his arm, nuzzling affectionately. "Sansy~! I missedchu so mawch! Where've you beeeen?!"

"Six feet under in a nightmare of my own creation," he said as if it were a punchline. Everyone laughed and the ugly fish monster at the bar smacked his knee.

"Come on man," said the ugly fish. "You were just living at a different bar, weren't you?"

Sans was stunned for a second, but replied, "Buddy, the accuracy of that statement is greater than my evasion stat," which earned him another round of guffaws.

He sat down at the bar and made eye contact with Grillby. "Heh, what?" He shrugged under the look Grillby was giving him. The bartender's hands paused their motions on the glass that he was polishing.

"... It's been a while."

"Yea," Sans agreed with a nod. "Can I get a glass of milk and two burgers? Oh, and... uh, how do I put this..." He put his finger under his chin. "My friend is most certainly, definitely, absolutely going to judge you with very judgemental tastebuds. So y'know, don't spill the ketchup or anything," he winked.

"Seriously though dude, like where did you go?" His bar neighbor pondered. "You know, just between you and me, Grillbz got real nervous when you stopped showing up."

"Oh really? Sorry 'bout that..."

"Papyrus forgot that you were gone a few times and came in to pick you up, and then when you weren't there, he pretended like he didn't forget and said that he just came to buy some bottles of ketchup to surprise you for when you got home."

"Oh, gee." He almost shook with the effort of keeping a straight face when he heard that one. Grillby came up with his order in a paper bag. "Welp, better get back before he comes to get me again, huh?"

Sans walked out towards the door, but he turned back and said, "Oh. Grillby, put it on my tab."
Grillby put away a bunch of glasses on the rack above the counter, adjusted his bowtie, and went back through the fire exit. He stepped across the kitchen towards his office area. He didn't seem surprised to see Sans standing there in the shadow of the coat rack near the back door.

"hey grillby," he said. "can i ask you a favor? i have this… friend over at my house. but she's not doin' too great." He gestured to the bag of takeout in his hand. "this'll help a ton, but i think she still needs proper healing."

"… Ok… but I don't understand why you are asking me. If you need a healer why not just go to the hospital?"

"oh, that's cause, i'd like to keep this quiet. and i really don't think i have anyone else i can trust with this."

"What do you mean? Sans, what have you gotten yourself involved with?"

"she's not a criminal or anything, it's… you'll understand when you see her. please?"

"Alright then, but I will not be finished with my work until 2 AM, can this wait until then?"

"oh, yeah, of course! she would be so mad if i pulled you outta work, even for her sake." He giggled just imagining that.

"Ok then, go tend to your friend. I will be by later."

"seriously? thanks grillby!" He seemed so genuinely delighted and relieved at Grillby's acceptance, that it surprised the flame spirit when Sans stumbled against the door on his way out.

"Are you alright?!" Grillby said as he caught him.

"y-yeah. i'm fine, really. i just haven't had anything to eat in two days."

Grillby sighed in exasperation and prodded the bridge of his glasses with his finger. "Then go home and eat!"

"ok."

"Walk home and eat," Grillby rephrased as he sensed Sans preparing to use his magic.

"ok," Sans said and left through the back door.

Frisk sipped her water and slowly rehydrated. Papyrus was particularly fond of petting her hair, which she didn't mind in principle, but at the moment was making her feel small and helpless. As feeling returned to her lips, it became too painful for her to continue sucking on the straw. She squeezed her eyes shut with a grimace and rejected further administrations of liquid.

Papyrus put the glass down. "Do you think you are going to not die now?"

"I-I think so, yeah."

"That's great! Because you made my brother cry like a baby when you almost died, so you'd better not do that again!"

She couldn't help the weak smile of satisfaction that appeared on her face, even though the expression tugged at her lip.
Sans came in through the front door. "hey, tori was busy, sorry about that. i gotcha the next best thing though," he said, showing off the paper bag whose scent made her chin lift and her eyes sparkle in anticipation.

Papyrus said, "Man, I can't believe the first thing you do when you get back is go to Grillby's. Wait no, that's exactly what I would expect from you."

"that's just what i would expect you to expect from me," Sans shrugged.

"WELL?! DID YOU AT LEAST GET ME..."

"literally just a cup of milk."

"YOU'VE EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS!" Papyrus grabbed the paper mug and chugged the milk victoriously. Frisk thought they were funny and laughed, then coughed, then cried again.

"ooh, i'm sorry frisk," Sans said. "we didn't mean to injure you with our hilarious jokes. want some burg?"

"Yeah," Frisk said eagerly. Sans took the burger out of its paper box and started to move it towards Frisk's face, but she seemed to struggle against this notion. She lifted her hands up from the elbow joints and tried to grab the burger for herself. Sans knew logically that this was not going to work, yet his natural reaction was of course, to let a person try and eat their food with their own two hands. So he let go of it and it flopped into her lap. She grunted and tried to retrieve it again, but she overextended and had to relax again to stop causing pain to herself.

"alrighty now, you've had your try," he said and reassembled the dropped burger. She looked on in a sort of horror as he took a big bite out of it.

"mmm. that is, the best bite o' burg I have ever tasted in my life. c'mon kid, ya gotta try this." He took the other burger which was still all neatly layered and held it up for Frisk to try again.

"S-sans!" she protested angrily. "You don't have to do that! I can eat the one that I dropped!"

"nah-uh. you only get the best one."

"B-but, Sans, that one—mmpf!" She bit down on the burger that was shoved into her mouth and chewed it. Tears spilled from her eyes as she took bite after bite, but it tasted so good that she couldn't refuse. By the time she was done eating, the cut on her lip had healed and it didn't hurt as much to swallow the last bite, but she was still very upset. Although the food seemed to have improved her condition, it was clear that her ribs were still broken from the way her sobs seemed to hurt her body. Sans and Papyrus looked at each other, not quite sure what the matter was.

Papyrus said, "Now that I think about it, perhaps the floor is not a suitable place for you! Let me put you on our cozy couch instead!"

Frisk protested vehemently. "N-no, don't put me on the couch! It'll get dirty!"

"That's ok! Sans can put some towels on it!"

"yeah, good idea bro." Sans made a move to head for their towel closet, but Frisk screamed and struggled when Papyrus tried to pick her up.

"What's wrong?! Did I hurt you?!"
"A-ah," she cried. "H-how can you s-stand to touch me?! I-I'm so disgusting, I'm all covered in my own filth, I-I..." she cried and sobbed as he picked her up in his arms.

Sans looked worried as he watched and noticed a red liquid trickling down Papyrus's elbow. "huh is that blood?" He also noticed the big red stain on his jacket where she had been lying.

"WHAT, WHERE?!!"

"there, where'd all that blood come from?"

"OH NO! DID YOU HURT YOURSELF THERE TOO?! WAS IT ME, DID I HURT YOU?!"

"What're you guys talking about?" said Frisk.

"LOOK, YOU'RE BLEEDING AGAIN!" Frisk gasped in horror as she realized what he was pointing at.

"i thought grillby's food should have been good enough to heal something like that," said Sans with his brow furrowed.

"Y-you guys, that's not, an injury," she whined.

"huh, what do you mean?" Sans asked. The color of Frisk's face was hard to distinguish from Papyrus's scarf as she growled and tried in vain to avoid their curious gazes.

"Wrong, wrong, this is so wrong!" she muttered, not explaining herself.

"hey, it's ok buddy," Sans said. "do you know what it is? yeah?" Frisk didn't nod, but the way she averted her eyes easily answered his question. "so just tell me."

"U-um it's just... it's a thing that my body does, because I'm a human girl... it's not dangerous."

"you're uh, sure about that?" A bead of sweat appeared on Sans's forehead as he looked at the quantity of blood dripping from his brother's elbow.

"SO YOU'RE OK! THAT'S GREAT!" Papyrus said and held her a little closer to his chest, but not tightly enough to hurt her ribs.

"It's not ok!" she cried in frustration. "This is so wrong! This isn't how I was supposed to meet you! I-I thought that..."

"What? How did you want us to meet?" Papyrus asked her sincerely.

"I thought that you would... try to capture me or... make me do puzzles, or maybe you'd be mad that I lied to you about being a h-human... I thought maybe you and Sans might argue about whether to turn me in or maybe you'd have some funny arguments about some s-stupid stuff, and Toriel warned me that I might get into a fight with someone, a-and Sans said he was going to protect me, but, y-you guys are not supposed to have to hand-feed me and wipe up my drool and get my freaking pee and blood all over your cool outfits a-and, having to explain to you guys e-everything about how my body works, and I just, hate this, and aren't we supposed to be doing something about the freaking power outage and the tunnel collapse, and everyone back in the Ruins is probably scared and hungry just like we were, but for the last 48 hours all I've been doing is thinking about pain, and pee, and being c-cold and thirsty, AND PULLING ROCKS OUT OF SANS'S EYE AND NOT BEING ABLE TO BREATHE AND I WISH I COULD JUST S-STOP THINKING ABOUT MY OWN PAIN FOR A SECOND WHEN THERE'S SO MANY PEOPLE DEPENDING ON US TO
When she had stopped crying enough to open her eyes a bit, she saw Sans standing before her, looking up at her with an expression that made her freeze up in something like fear. His mouth in a carefully guarded smile and his dim eyelights threatening to disappear.

"Your heart stopped beating."

Papyrus said, "Yes... that happened. It was awful! And the thing we did to get you back was... A LOT MORE VIOLENCES THAN I HAD PLANNED ON DOING TONIGHT! But now you're OK! And I know it feels like it's been a long day, but really it's only been two hours since you plopped onto my living room floor! I don't care about a thing like this Frisk! I can wash it out! But I can't wash away the pain I feel when you're sad! So please, stop being so proud, just for a little while, and let me take care of you!"

"P-papyrus," she looked into his eyes and teared up with emotion.

"OK?"

"Ok," she nodded. He hugged her against his chest. Frisk was surprised to discover that the round form of his chestplate was actually not made out plastic or styrofoam as she had assumed, but was more like a soft pillow. They noticed that Sans was scribbling something on a small memo pad.

Papyrus whispered, "What's he doing?"

Sans snickered and muttered, "can't wash away the pain i feel when you're sad," under his breath. "man that's epic..."

"Wow, really?" said Frisk.

"look pal..." he said, getting back to business. "i get what you're saying. it's frustrating for me too. i was just in the ruins, and it is as you say. we need to get back on track and help them as fast as we can. but how can you save anyone right now? you can't even walk. the reason you're so focused on your own pain, and your own body, is because that's all you can do right now. usually when everything's working and you can take your needs for granted, then you get to do cool stuff like working in restaurants and solving puzzles and saving the world... but you can't do that stuff when the lights are off and you don't have food and water. dignity is... a luxury you get to enjoy once all of that is taken care of."

"Oh. Sounds fragile," said Frisk.

"yep," Sans shrugged. "anyways... i bet you'd love to get cleaned up, huh?" She nodded. "well like i said, i wasn't able to get a hold of tori, but grillby's gonna come over later and take care of the rest of your injuries. so then you'll be able to move better and have a nice bath, huh?"

"Wha?! He's coming over later?"

"yeah, he said around 2 when he gets off work."

"I wanna take a bath right now!" she demanded. Sans and Papyrus looked at each other.

"WELL, YOU HEARD THE HUMAN!"

"ok." Sans went into their bathroom, which was next to his room at the end of the hallway, to start running the water.
Papyrus said, "Maybe you really CAN stand now if you try!"

"I think so," Frisk agreed. He helped her get back onto her feet. Standing still was alright, but when she took a step, the twisting of her chest made her hurt. Still, she was determined to take a few more steps on her own, but Papyrus made sure she didn't fall down.

"Ah…" She looked up at the monolith she would have to climb to get up to the second floor.

Papyrus said, "HERE, LET ME HELP YOU!" He picked her up against his chest in a position that didn't take her out of her straight standing posture.

"STAIRS SEEM A LITTLE TOO DANGEROUS FOR NOW." He declared it so seriously that Frisk giggled softly. She caught sight of the mess below them in the living room. Her nose twitched in disgust as she saw the spilled water glasses, stray gloves and socks, food packages, the bones that Papyrus had still not removed, Sans's hoodie which had multiple tiers of dark stains on it…

"Hey, look here!" Papyrus said, turning her attention back to himself. "We don't care about that, remember?! Me and Sans will take care of it!"

She nodded.

"Good!"
Sans's Error

Frisk was left alone in the bathroom, steamy and moist from the fresh tub in the corner. The room had no toilet, for obvious reasons, but it had a sink and a mirror. She saw that her eyes were puffy and sad, and her face was covered in many substances, even some of that ominous red stuff from Sans. With limited movement of her elbows, she managed to turn on the sink and splash some cold water onto her face with her fingertips. It felt so good, especially around her eyes and her lips. She carefully bent her knees and lowered her butt onto the edge of the tub and winced at the last little jerking movement as she sat down.

She tugged at the edges of her sweater. "Hmm…” She squinted and furrowed her brow as she tried to get her elbows into the right position, then gave up and went to remove her boots first instead. They wouldn't come off just from nudging her feet because they were closed with zippers on the sides. She tried to reach down to grab them, but grunted at the effort. She nearly tripped and fell, but was lucky enough to be able to correct her motion with only her legs. She shuddered through the surge of pain. Once it had passed, she bowed her head in defeat.

The door to the bathroom slowly opened and Frisk poked her head out.

"Sans… Papyrus…” she called in a tiny, barely audible squeak.

In the span of 1 second, Papyrus flew over the banister from the living room and landed with a thunk, and Sans went bzip and appeared in front of her. They smiled broadly and stood at attention, as if they were her eager minions.

"?"
"?!"

Frisk blushed at the hasty response and stared at them. "I…” She tried to take a deep breath to summon her voice. "I… I need…” She almost looked like she was going to cry again.

It's ok, you can tell them. They won't judge you. They've already seen almost everything anyways. They aren't going to hurt you…

"what?"
"What do you need?"

They are so gentle and kind… you can trust them.

"I need," she gasped. "help… I can't… undress myself."

She bowed her head in shame, but they just said, "OK!" "ok." and came into the bathroom like it was no big deal.

"there we go," Sans said as he pulled off her right shoe. "and the other one," he said and wiggled the left one until it came loose.

"Heh, stupid shoes," Frisk muttered, just trying to fill the awkward situation with some small talk. Her shoes suddenly sprung to life.

"Well I never!"
"The nerve of that human, calling me stupid?!"

"And after we covered her stinky feet and let her walk all over us for all of this time?!!"

"As a shoe, I am shocked and offended at this ingratitude!"

"As am I, br-sister! I suggest we should go on a strike!"

"Yes, let us go stand on the stairs and demand shoe polish!"

Frisk giggled wildly as the shoes marched themselves out of the bathroom. She was still cracking up she thought it was so funny, as Sans held her hands out at an angle so Papyrus could get her sweater and her polo off.

Sans had expected her to be bare-chested underneath her shirts, and so was surprised when he saw that she had on a thin black undergarment that he hadn't ever noticed, despite all of the times he had been pressed up against her. He smiled innocently and tilted his head a bit.

"huh, why're you wearin' one of those? you don't even have any breasts."

A long silence fell over the room.
Papyrus stared at Sans in disbelief.
Frisk stared at Sans in disbelief.

"OH MY GOD SANS!!! YOU CAN'T SAY THAT TO HER!!!!!"

"huh? what'd i—"

"GET OUT!" they both yelled and slammed the door in his face. He found himself outside the bathroom again, bewildered and confused.

"uh… sorry. is there um… anything i can help with?" The door opened a crack and Papyrus's hand shoved a wad of gross clothes into his arms.

"WASH THOSE," he said.

"And get me some rags," said Frisk.

"huh?"

"YES SANS, TAKE OUR OLDEST TOWEL AND CUT IT INTO A BUNCH OF SQUARES."

"uh, ok."

"And then find some plastic bags or water-tight containers," said Frisk.

"AND GET HER SOME CLEAN CLOTHES TO WEAR."

"ok." A bead of sweat rolled down his forehead as the demands piled up.

"Including underwear!"

"AND CLEAN YOURSELF UP AND CHANGE YOUR OWN CLOTHES TOO, YOU ARE JUST AS FILTHY AS FRISK!"

"ok."
"Make sure you wash your hoodie too, the blood will stain forever if you let it dry," said Frisk.

"ok!"

Sans said, "well, that's a lot of tasks. i'd better…" his eyes turned dark. "get started." he said as the opening riff to 'MEGALOVANIA' started playing.

The music cut off and Sans sat at his kitchen table cutting a faded gray towel into squares with a pair of scissors.

After Frisk's bath, they dressed her up in a pink long-sleeved shirt and a pair of baggy black sweatpants with a white stripe running down the side. Sans, having changed his own clothes for the first time in 2 months, was now wearing light-blue jeans shorts, and a black hoodie with subtle rose patterns over a blue t-shirt. Papyrus was wearing mostly the same thing, but he had changed his chestplate to his 'COOL DUDE' shirt, and his bottom piece to blue shorts. Frisk sat on the couch next to Papyrus as Sans ruffled her head with a fluffy towel.

"Hehehe—ow!" She carefully leaned back against the couch so that she could stop moving.

"grillbz should be over any second now."

"Wow, I finally get to meet him—I can't wait!"

"Frisk, how do you already know so much about Grillby?!" Papyrus asked.

"'Cause Sans talks about him almost as much as he likes to talk about you."

"yep," Sans nodded. "he's pretty hot topic."

"Ech," Papyrus glanced away in distaste.

"don't worry bro, you're still the backbone of my conversations."

"Why must you..." Frisk sighed.

"'cause, i gotta flesh him out for ya."

Frisk made a forehead-rubbing gesture, causing her to wince from the movement of her shoulder. "Your jokes today are so bad, it hurts. In fact, I..." she wiggled her toes. "can't stand it."

Sans was chuckling and saying, "hey, you loved my last bit..." as Grillby opened the door and came in. He walked over to the couch and stared down at Frisk.

"Wow…" Frisk looked up, mesmerized by the magical flames making up Grillby's face.

"… … … …"

"Hi, I'm Frisk! Sans has told me so much about you, it's nice to meet you!"

"… … … …"

Grillby put his hand on Frisk's head and enveloped her entire body in a burst of healing energy. She gasped. She patted her chest, and then twisted her torso back and forth, and then got off the couch and ran up and down the stairs and around the house while laughing. She realized that Sans and Papyrus were watching her with mushy expressions, and became self-conscious. She regained her composure and calmly walked up to Grillby.
"Ahem. Thank-you, mr. Gr—"

"ah-ah-ah," Sans said and held up a pointing finger. "we don't do that here."

"Oh," Frisk nodded and looked back up at her healer and tried again. "Thank-you, Grillby."

"… … … … …"

"My ribs were broken and I couldn't move very well. It feels much better now. All thanks to you!"

"… … … … …"

"So, I heard you run a bar, too? Just came from work, huh? I have a café in the Ruins!"

"…… … … … …"

"He's very shy," Papyrus explained.

"he tends to talk more once he gets to know you. why doncha try shaking his hand?" Sans suggested.

"His hand? But…" Frisk hesitated.

Grillby was posed for a handshake, but Frisk had a hard time overcoming her instinct to not touch fire. After staring at his hand nervously for a few seconds, she shut her eyes, held her breath, and braced herself for pain as she reach forward and grabbed his hand.

She winked one eye open as she began to register that nothing felt burnt, just pleasantly warm. She sighed in relief and looked up at Grillby, smiling.

"So, this is the little girl who stole my best customer?"

"Eep!" She squealed in surprise. He was still holding onto her hand.

"… … … Impressive," he said and released her.

"Um, th-thanks?"

"… Did you enjoy your burger?"

"Uh, yeah! It was delicious."

"… I'm glad."

Grillby hung out at their house for a while. He settled down and grabbed himself a bag of potato chipps from the fridge. Frisk was trying to comb out her wet hair with her fingertips.

Sans remarked, "your hair seems longer than when i first met you."

"Yeah," she said. Her hair had grown out to shoulder-length. Her bangs were now draping over her eyes and half-tucked behind her ears. "You guys don't have any hair ties do you—oh wait what am I saying of course you don't," she chuckled.

"is it too long for you?"

"Yeah, this length is not really appropriate for working in a restaurant. I'll have to start tying it back, or… maybe I could find a tighter hat to hold it in place?" She trailed off saying, "Maybe Toriel has
Sans was still looking at her head and contemplating. "I could cut it for ya."

She stopped and stared. "You... want to give me a haircut?"

"Well yeah, sure I do. I want my buddy to look all neat and pretty, just like she's supposed to."

She smiled at that. "But... do you even know how to cut a human's hair?"

Sans chuckled. He held up his scissors and said, "Of course I do. C'mon buddy. Don't you trust me?"

Of course she trusted Sans.

Snip.

"There ya go."

"IT'S BEAUTIFUL! COME FRISK, YOU MUST LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND SEE MY BROTHER'S HANDIWORK! IT'S ALMOST AS GOOD AS WHAT I COULD HAVE DONE!" Frisk smiled, eager to see the results as Papyrus ushered her into the bathroom. Sans and Grillby were close behind them.

She stepped up to the mirror. Her face reflexively scrunched up.

The appearance of her head was indescribable.

"Do you like your new haircut? Yea?" Sans grinned as Frisk slowly turned around in jarring increments, like a jammed door. "Uh?!" His shoulders hunched as her face came into view. "You don't? But it looks great, why..."

Grillby held up a pointing finger and said, "Ahah, I think it just needs a little..."

FWOOMP.

"Oh, oops..." He retracted his finger as Frisk's head burst into flames.

Sans transported them outside and Papyrus inserted Frisk head-first into the snow. He pulled her up again. Beads of moisture dripped down craggly black strands from her head. He set her upright and put her down.

Sans thought, _huh, I've never seen that expression before._

She looked over the three of them.

"Well, I'd better get going, it was nice to meet you Frisk," Grillby said and went home.

_Don't leave us! DON'T LEAVE US!_ Sans and Papyrus hoped, but the bartender walked away as Frisk glanced dismissively. She looked back at the skeleton brothers. She took a step forward, they both took three steps backwards.

Sans and Papyrus ran up the stairs and threw open the doors to their bedrooms.

"ATTENTION HUMAN!"

"Please, help yourself"
Sans kept his healthy distance from her as she checked out his room first. There was a lot of clutter in the way of the goal of the clothing drawer across the room. She pushed a bunch of dirty socks against the wall with her foot. She cast a glance at the tornado of trash. Sans quickly unwound the stray magics and made it fall down. Frisk turned off the treadmill and muttered, "Has that been on the entire time he's been gone?"

Then, before she could finally get to the drawers, she had to pick up the cardboard box in the way labeled 'my past', adding to it the stray notebooks on the floor titled, 'reset notes', 'timeline research', and 'journal of crippling depression', and put them all up on the shelf.

*He doesn't have just one trombone, but a lot of them?* She briefly recalled a corner full of guitars.

Her knee brushed against something as she closed the trombone drawer. "Huh?" She tugged on the fur-lined hood and dragged up a jacket from underneath the dresser.

Sans remarked, "oh, that's where my other black one went." Frisk put it aside and continued her search.

*Wow, he has so many clothes...* She rummaged through the clothing drawers which contained not only t-shirts and shorts, but a lot more hoodies with various, mostly cool-colored patterns. One was gray with little white bones on it. Another was sleeveless with green pockets.

*And they're all so soft!* She brushed the fabrics against her cheek and marveled at their fine quality.

A bit of red from within the drawer caught her attention. She dug it out and pulled up a hoodie with a white background and a collage of red, pink, and gray hearts. It looked brand-new.

"oh, you found that huh? you can go ahead and keep that one, i never wear it."

"How does this look?"

"amazing."

She walked past him and into Papyrus's room. She opened the closet, but it was too dark to see inside. He stepped over and pulled a chain for her, turning on the light.

"Thank-you. Wow, you have a walk-in closet?" She found a lot of hats and tried them on in the closet mirror.

She tried on a red hat. "That hat has many uses! Not only can the wide brim protect your face from deadly lasers, the feather on top deters dogs from nesting there! Truly a versatile article of clothing!"

She picked up a baseball cap. "My special hat?! I... normally wouldn't allow anyone to handle that! But I'll make an exception for you, my special friend! Perhaps you'll even find... its secret."

She turned over the cap. Papyrus gawked at the dotted outline of the missing present box inside the cap. "WHAT?! IT'S GONE? But I—how..." His shoulders slumped in disappointment. He grumbled to himself in confusion as she put it back and continued to search for more hats.

Frisk found a black pirate hat with a skull and crossbones on it. "Undyne found that one at the bay! She said it reminded her of my face! She also gave me that flag you saw in the hallway. I think it's from the human world! But how did they find out what my face looks like?!!"
"Hmm…" She continued to search through his closet. "Oh?" Her eyes sparkled as she pulled out an old fedora. Clouds of dust billowed in the air as she patted it.

"UH, WHAT'S THAT? I'VE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE!"

"ooh, your old fedora. that sure brings back memories."

"THAT'S NOT MINE. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW THAT GOT THERE. MAYBE THE ANNOYING DOG PUT IT THERE."

"aw bro, you forgot to send this old letter: DEAR SANTA, THANK-YOU FOR THE COOL FEDORA, — PAPYRUS."

"UH, SANS WROTE THAT! IT'S ALL PART OF HIS SCRIPT FOR THIS SCENE!"

"look frisk, here's a picture from papyrus's high school graduation. doesn't he look cool in his fedora?"

"CAN YOU EVEN TRUST PHOTO EVIDENCE NOWADAYS?"

Frisk exhaled with a small puff through her nose, but denied them the full satisfaction of laughing at their jokes. She tried on the fedora in the closet mirror. It fell down over her forehead.

"It's too big… But then again, it does cover my features pretty well. Wait, isn't that kind of deceitful?" She gripped the brim of the hat, raising it above her eyes as she looked back at the brothers. She contemplated the skeleton glove covering her hand. "Well, it's not really a disguise. It's just keeping a low profile, right? And that'll help us get our work done faster, so…" She still looked unsure though.

Sans said, "yeah, good thinking." Frisk stared at him for a second. She stepped forward and reached for the base of his hoodie.

"huh?" He started to protest as she unhooked the pin on his zipper-puller, but forced himself to stay still and let her do as she pleased. She attached the ruffly blue-and-black plastic flower to the brim of the black fedora. She checked herself out in the mirror again, pivoting in her black sweatpants with their white stripe, turning the back of her white-and-red, heart-patterned hoodie to Sans.

"you know those don't match," he remarked. She look back at him again.

"but hey, who says you have to match?"

Frisk didn't have to wear her cozy hoodie or skeleton gloves inside the warm house the entire night, so they were left draped over the arm of the couch. Sans and Papyrus were doing their own things at the moment. She stood by the front door and put on a thick, fur-lined, blue winter coat. She had to go to the bathroom and she was really looking forward to taking care of this one all by herself. She put on some white mittens and stepped outside.

Snowflakes gently floated in the still air. There were a lot more trees, and a lot less houses than she would have guessed. I thought it was supposed to be a cozy suburb but it's more like a high-mountain village. Whoops, I didn't even think about whether anyone might be outside. Lucky it's the middle of the night, she thought and adjusted her hood to cover more of her face. That tunnel… She pondered the familiar-looking tunnel for a moment and then walked into the woods behind the house. That should be far enough. I can still see the house, but I don't want to be too close.

Undyne was wandering around in the early morning hours. "Ugh…" she hugged her arms and
rubbed them for warmth. *Shoulda brought my coat if I was gonna end up in Snowdin, but I just walked without thinking about the destination...* She noticed the light on in the living room of Papyrus's house and stepped up to the door. *Hmm? Those are small footsteps,* she thought and followed them out of curiosity. *Wait, what am I even doing, stalking whoever is behind Papyrus's...* She paused her thought as she saw the small figure crouching and patting the snow.

*Hehe, I guess this is what it's like to be a cat,* Frisk thought.

"Yo! When'd you get back?!"

Frisk froze. *Huh. This voice...*

"I know it's a weird time for me to be over here, but I just couldn't sleep... um... how've ya been?"

Frisk could barely make out the captain's words over the sound of her own pulse pounding inside her hood. *She thinks... I'm him?! I could... does my voice even go that low?! Maybe if I at least use the right font...?!

She stood up, mittened hands buried in her pockets. "ok," she replied.

"...Ok. So... are you still working in the Ruins?"

Frisk nodded.

"Anyways, what happened over there? When your call got cut off, Papyrus was so worried he came over to the Lab and we... uh..." Undyne took a step and Frisk turned her head ever so slightly. "Are ya gonna, like... ever turn around?"

Frisk shrugged.

"You're... acting weirder than usual." She leaned to either side and the figure turned itself accordingly. "What the—Are you—Sans what—" She sighed and raised her eyebrow, but tried to keep her patience. "Are you OK dude?"

Frisk's shoulders were hunched up to her ears. She pinched the lining of her hood with her fingers and shook 'no'.

"OK... What's the matter?" Frisk opened her mouth and thought. Memories of Sans cutting her hair and saying stupid comments to her in the bathroom flashed through her mind.

"i'm on my period."

Undyne was a little taken aback when he actually replied. "O-oh. Wow, uh, I'm sorry. That must suck. You sound awful." *The fuck's a period?*

"eh, i'll be ok. it only troubles me... periodically."

Undyne's eye twitched. *You know what, this is probably just another one of his stupid pranks!* She stepped forward again, but so did he. She tried a couple more times to see his face, and then growled, "What's your problem, man?!"

*What do I do what do I do what do I do, Frisk panicked. She'll kill me!* Undyne made a grab for the hood of the jacket.

Frisk whirled around and buried her head in the heroine's breast.
"Ah-ah-ah, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

Frisk tightened her arms around Undyne's waist. I've got to tilt my head a little so she doesn't feel my nose.

"HN!?" Undyne blushed furiously as the head nuzzled her chest. I've got to make sure the hood doesn't fall down! Frisk rubbed her head up and down against Undyne's ribs in order to get the tip of her hood tucked more securely against her forehead.

"LET GO OF ME YOU LITTLE…" she raised her fist ready to punch him on the head, and summoned some spears around them both. I can't hit Sans! She reminded herself and restrained her attacks. Should I turn him green?! She used her stun on the persistent little hugger. But that doesn't stop him from moving his own arms, it just makes me stuck here too! Holy shit, when did he get such a GRIP?! She dragged her boots through the snow and 'Sans' dragged along with her.

"OK," Undyne panted, barely masking her fury underneath a cordial tone. "Look, we… seem to be at an impasse here."

"that's… impassible."

"SO! I PROPOSE… That you let go of me."

"…"

"And I will close my eyes and turn around and walk back home."

"…"

"And we will. NEVER. SPEAK. OF THIS. AGAIN."

"… thought you'd never ask." Frisk let go of Undyne and turned around in one motion, keeping her head low. She desperately wanted to grab her hood as she walked towards the house, but instead she put her hands back in her coat pockets and casually strolled away.

Sans was in the living room when she came back inside. "woah, careful about going outside frisk. what were you doing?"

She started to give him the cold shoulder as she had been doing and said, "None of your…" She trailed off as her eyes widened in realization. She looked contemplative and then a little guilty. Finally, she smiled genuinely and said, "I forgive you for ruining my hair!"

"huh?" already? what was with all of those expressions? He shrugged and smiled. "well ok. let's let by-bones be by-bones... hn?" He voiced mild surprise when she stepped forward and hugged him.

"Thank you for saving my life! I'm so glad to be here now."

"i'm glad you're here too," he said and hugged her back. "but… you should thank my brother, not me. i gave up on ya, twice. or thrice. i can't do anything without you guys."

Frisk let his words sink in and contemplated them. After several minutes, they were still in the embrace. "Uh…" she raised her eyebrow. "I think we've had our moment now. Sans?"

Sans's eyes were closed and his head hung limp over Frisk's shoulder. Due to his nearly non-existent weight, she hadn't even realized that she had been supporting him on her own.
"I was gonna say something nice to contradict him, but…"

"KINDA HARD WHEN HE GOES AND DOES THAT."
Frisk laid Sans down on the couch and stepped back.

"Now what are we gonna do? It's almost morning, we've got to get to work!" She turned to Papyrus. "Isn't there any way to get him to wake up?"

"Well, that would depend on if he's just normal-tired, or completely-exhausted-his-baby-bones-energy-tired!" said Papyrus.

"Completely exhausted…" She remembered how they had just spend the last 2 days sleeping on rocks, having nothing to eat, going insane in the dark, and finally how worn-out Sans had looked when she finally came to. "The latter! Definitely the latter."

"What is this work that you have to do? Did you guys say something about someone needing help?"

"Papyrus… do you want to help me?"

"Frisk, I am an official sentry under the Royal Guard! It's my JOB to help people! I'm not exactly sure what's going on, but if someone is in trouble, then tell me everything and I'll help you!!!"

"Ok!" She happily accepted. "How much do you know already?"

"Well… three days ago, I was on the phone with you guys and you were about to tell me a bedtime story. But then your call just stopped and I couldn't call you back!"

"That was three days ago?" She frowned as if she had just realized that. "Oh man, we've really got to get moving! So, ok… we were on the phone and then suddenly our call cut off. And so did our electricity! All the lights in the Ruins turned off and it was pitch black! Sans and Toriel had to use their magic to make light so we could see…"

She explained the gist of everything to Papyrus; about how Sans had fallen asleep on the way home, about how the food shipping had stopped, about how they had investigated the tunnel, discovered the damage, gotten trapped, and injured.

"… and then, I'm not sure what happened in the last bit, but somehow Sans got better and took me here!" She closed her eyes and let out a sigh as she concluded. When she opened them, she found herself surrounded by armbones, her face pressed against the tall skeleton's ribcage.

"Hu?"

"Frisk, thank-you for taking care of my brother!" She couldn't reach very far up on him, but hugged him back around his spine anyways.

"No problem. Thanks for bringing me back to life."

"Hold on! You said you were trapped in that cage for 48 hours… YOU MUST BE… AS HUNGRY AS A HUMAN!"

"I am a human."

"RIGHT THIS WAY, HUMAN!!"

"Yay!" Frisk yelled and followed him into the kitchen.
"AT LONG LAST, YOU SHALL BE ALLOWED TO EXPERIENCE THE EXQUISITE FLAVORS OF MY FAMOUS, DELICIOUS, NUTRITIOUS, HOMEMADE SPAGHE—"

Papyrus opened the door to the refrigerator. They both fell silent and stared with their jaws hanging slightly.

"Huh."

"WHERE DID ALL THE SPAGHETTI GO?! I SWEAR, I HAD LIKE. 3 SHELVES FULL OF IT."

Frisk and Papyrus stared at each other for a second, then subtly glanced towards the living room. Suspicious.

"WELL… NO MATTER! I'LL JUST MAKE SOME MORE! NYEH-HEH-HEH…"

Frisk looked down and said, "No. I'm sorry Papyrus, but we can't make more spaghetti. We'll just have to grab something on the way… 'cause we don't have time for luxuries right now." She nodded at Sans.

"I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT… So, what are we doing again?!"

"Hold on, let me grab my notebook… oh…" She looked around the living room, and even peeked inside of Sans's shoulder bag which was lying on the other side of the couch. "Huh."

"What are you looking for??"

"We forgot to bring back our notes… along with everything else we had with us in the cave-in. Oh well, I'm sure Sans has most of his information in his skull anyways. Too bad though, I wanted to keep that hardhat… anyways!" She shook the thoughts out of her head and stood up straight.

"Attention Papyrus!"

"READY FOR ORDERS, FRISK!"

"Great! These are the mission objectives. First, we must find some emergency food supplies to get back to everyone in the Ruins so that they don't starve!"

"OK."

"Second, Sans needs to meet up with the Hotland Construction Team guys, tell them about what he saw in the shipping tunnel, and work out the changes to their building plans."

"THAT'S THE PLAN?"

"Pretty much."

"OK, SO LET'S MAKE EVERYONE SPAGHETTI!"

"Sorry, but I don't think that will work."

"WHY NOT?!"

"You and I can't afford to feed everyone in the Ruins! Our population is a few hundred, and we'll need to supply them for at least a week while the guys get a new passage opened. We can't do this all by ourselves, we need to get help from someone else."
"IN THAT CASE… I WOULD ASK UNDYNE FOR HELP!"

"Undyne? …I guess that would be fine." She muttered, "As long as she doesn't meet me."

She looked back at Sans. "So… what should we do about him?"

"MEH. JUST BRING HIM WITH US!"

"Ok!" She agreed. "But first, do you think we could…"

"Yes!!" He was thinking the same thing.

Papyrus put Sans in his lap and held his ankles while Frisk pulled off his sweaty Froggit slippers. They put some clean socks and a pair of blue sneakers on his feet. Papyrus held the shoes steady as Frisk tied up the laces.

"MAN, THIS IS EASIER TO DO WITH TWO PEOPLE!"

"I know right," she giggled.

A woman stirred under her thick bed covers. Droopy eyes opened in confusion. Her alarm had not gone off yet. Long bunny ears perked up at the sound of muffled voices. She crawled over to her bedroom window and rubbed out a circle in the fog so she could see into her front yard.

"WHAT? YOU LEFT YOUR WALLET BACK THERE TOO? NOT TO WORRY! I, THE GREAT PAPYRUS, HAVE YOU COVERED!"

The smaller figure patted the other one of Papyrus's arms which was not holding a short, unconscious monster in a black hoodie. "Actually, you know what, let's forget about it and just move on to Waterfall! We're in a hurry, remember?"

The woman rubbed her eye with her paw and thought, Oh god, there's 3 of them now…

"WHAT ARE YOU SAYING NOW?! YOU CAN'T SKIP BREAKFAST!"

"Papyrus, it's ok. I'm not that hungry anyways…"

"NOT HUNGRY?! FRISK, YOU NEED TO EAT MORE THAN 1 BURGER IN 3 DAYS. YOU'LL DISAPPEAR!"

Frisk silently nodded, but looked apprehensive as Papyrus pulled out his own wallet.

"WHAT… IS THAT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT? You don't want me to buy you things?! Frisk, I told you before didn't I?! You don't have to be ashamed to ask me for help! It's just money, alright?!!"

"I, I know…" She glanced away and blushed. "But, you don't have to buy me the most expensive things in town…"

"What are you talking about? It's only 25 gold!"

"25 for a cinnamon bun? That's cinna-nuts!"

"Sounds like a normal bun-bun price to me!"

"Really?" She muttered, "Wow, my neighborhood is kinda poor."
"Look Frisk, if we have to split up later, I'm going to give you my brother to keep you safe, right?"

"Yeah."

"So, how can you look after my lazy brother properly if you don't have breakfast?!"

She gasped. "You're right?!"

"OF COURSE I'M RIGHT! SO STOP BEING SO STUBBORN, AND LET ME BUY YOU A CINNAMON BUN-BUN!!!"

"Fine… but they aren't even open yet."

"Oh, don't worry! They always come if you just ask politely:" He put his hands on the side of his mouth as he yelled, "HEY, SHOPKEEPER!!!! I WANNA BUY A CINNAMON BUN-BUN FOR MY FRIEND!!! COULD YOU PLEASE OPEN UP YOUR SHOP!!!!!"

"Urk!" The shop owner scrambled away from the window, grabbed her keys off the dresser next to her bed, and hurried into the adjacent room. As she fumbled with the locks she thought, That's all they want?! Fine then, if they will just go away and let me sleep!

They walked past the narrow bridge across the pond to the cave which marked the entrance of Waterfall. Frisk thumbed over the contact list on Sans's cell phone while thinking, What should I say to her…

ring ring ring

'BREW' was calling. She tapped the button to answer. "So, you decided to pick up, huh?! Finally!"

"Hi! This is Frisk. I've just arrived in Snowdin with Sans and—"

"What?! 'Friss'? Huh?! Who the hell are you and why are you not Sans?!"

"I'll explain if you just let me—"

"You ignore me for 4 days and then you don't even have the decency to call me yourself?! Good riddance!" He huffed and hung up on her.

"Uh…” Frisk stared at the phone, vexed. They paused in front of an unattended sentry station inside the blue-tinted cavern. The air blowing in from Snowdin was still cold enough to keep the snow frozen on the roof of the booth. She selected 'BREW' from the contact list to call him back.

Ring, ring-click.

"Hello?"

[font face="Comic Sans MS" size=12] "hey, it's me."

"Finally! Keep a better handle on your kid, will ya?! I ain't in the mood to deal with annoying brats today."

"will do. hey, kiddo. this here is the baritone-bone-tone-skele-phone, which you are not allowed to loan. ya got that?"

[font face="Determination Mono"] "Yes."
Brew said, "Right, I was just saying... What the hell is going on?!"

"A helluva lot."

"Ha, ha."

"Anyhoo, there's been some major structural damage. The main power wire supplying the ruins through the shipping tunnel got... broken. And uh, also the phone line, also broke. I went in there to check it out, and barely managed to find a way through to waterfall, but I think it's caved in now. So we're gonna have to change the plans for building."

"What kind of damage are we talking about? How long do you think the main project will be delayed?"

"I... could probably explain it better to ya in person. I have to work on something else for a little while. How 'bout we have a meeting in the afternoon and go over it? Is... 4 ok?"

"Sounds alright."

"Great. If you've got nothin' else to do until then, maybe you could try and find out more about the shipping tunnel's old construction? Like find out who built it and get their old blueprints?"

"Ok, but if I have to call the Lab, I'm askin' under your name."

"Um... sure why not. So, meetcha later then?"

"Yes, I'll see you at our headquarters at 4:00. And be sharp!"

"But how can I be sharp if I'm sans?"

Click.

Papyrus was staring at her. "Wowie..."

Frisk scrolled down the contact list and selected 'UNDYNE' next.

Ring... ring.
Ring... ring.
Ring... ring.
Click.

"Hey captain, it's me."

"H-hey! Uh, what do you want?! Are we meeting up soon or what?"

"Didn't realize you were so eager to see me again... fishcakes."

"WE ARE NO LONGER ON SPEAKING TERMS. IF YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY, YOU CAN HAVE PAPYRUS OR FRISK CALL ME. WE'RE DONE."

Frisk glanced away as Papyrus's gaze bored into her back.

"Frisk, if I may,"
"Ring… ring.

Click.

[font face="Determination Mono"] "Hi."

"Oh, Frisk! How you doing kiddo?! I haven't spoken to you in forever!"

"I'm actually in Waterfall right now."

"Woah, you're over here? How'd ya get out of the Ruins, punk? Is everything OK over there?"

"I came with…" She covered the microphone with her hand, held the phone away from herself, and whispered to Papyrus, "Does she know about his shortcuts?"

"I'm… not sure?!"

"I managed to find a way out. Now I'm with Papyrus and Sans…” Frisk explained the rest of the situation to Undyne.

"What?! Something that serious happened… Man, I had a feeling something was up when Papyrus came over before. Some people even came to me yesterday with reports of environmental damage around this area too… Listen up, FRISK. You seem to have the most knowledge about the situation, so I'm temporarily appointing you as Advisor to the Royal Guard."

Her eyes glazed over. "Cool." Papyrus looked to the side and raised an eyebrow-bone, but no comment.

"So! Advisor! What do we do now?!"

"Well like I said before, making everyone spaghetti is not feasible right now, so…”

Unydne said, "Why not?!"

"The issue is how we are going to get it back to those in need. Our… method of transportation has limited energy, so the rations need to be very light, and as calorie-dense as possible. Tomatoes are mostly water. And boiling large quantities of pasta may not be possible in the Ruins right now, due to the power outage. It would be better to find something that can be eaten with little to no preparation. It should also be really cheap. A staple food produced on a mass scale such as rice or potatoes… those still need to be cooked though. Hmm, corn… or seaweed might work…” She pondered as her fingers idly brushed against some reeds growing out of a pond.

Papyrus says, "Hey Undyne, don't your neighbors grow things like that in their backyards?!"

Frisk said, "Ah, you live in a farming zone right?"

"Uh, yeah,"

Papyrus said, "OH!!! What if UNDYNE asked them to donate food to the Ruins?!!"

Frisk said, "Aah! I bet Undyne could rally her neighbors to help us! She's really popular and idolized, isn't she?"

Papyrus said, "Absolutely! All the kids admire her and want to be like her! Except for you Frisk! I'm sorry I had to meet you first and steal the spotlight! Otherwise, Undyne would totally be your idol!!"

"You guys, I'm right here.” Undyne was sitting at her kitchen table, wearing the same outfit since the
previous night. Her jaw opened in a wide yawn, baring her full set of teeth. They chomped shut as she grinned and continued the phone conversation.

"So, Papyrus and Frisk, come meet me at my house and add any more details to your report that you think of on the way. Then we'll go over to my town's farming association and see what we can do."

Frisk's voice replied, "Yes ma'am! We'll be right ov… huh?" Her attention seemed to be diverted by something on her end. Undyne waited and faintly heard something that sounded like, whimsper

"Uh, Undyne?"

"What?"

"Sans wants to know if you've been feeling alright lately."

"…I'M. Feeling. PERFECTLY FINE!! Yeah! I'm feeling so great, that I think that me and Papyrus will be able to handle this food drive just fine without you guys! Ngahahahahahaha!!"

"Huh… you mean, you don't need my help?" Frisk said, sounding somewhat disappointed.

"Well, of course I'd love your help, Advisor! But uh… I think that Papyrus's brother needs your help a lot more than we do!"

"Oh," she giggled. "I guess you're right!"

She tapped the screen lock button and put the phone away in her hoodie pocket as she walked forward.

"Frisk, seriously…" Papyrus followed after her, carrying Sans under his arm.

"I think we need to have a talk!" Frisk was admiring the beautiful pond scenery and the plentiful fields of water sausages as they passed over a long boardwalk through the marsh.

"This manipulative behavior of yours is concerning! I feel like... you are headed down a dark path."

Frisk ignored him and kept marching forward.

"I mean, you're literally going down the wrong path! It's this way!!" he pointed to the left tunnel as Frisk was just stepping onto a bridge to the right.

"Oh, ok." She ran back to Papyrus and walked by his side.

"Stay close to me now. A lot of the rooms around here are really dark!" He offered his free hand to her and she took it. She clung to his wrist with her own gloved hands and looked around at the scenery now that she didn't have to pay attention to where they were going.

There were a lot of interesting things on the path along the way. But for some reason an old statue caught her attention. She contemplated its melancholy pose as a steady supply of raindrops drizzled over its head. Papyrus came back with a red umbrella in hand.

"Why do we need an umbrella?" Frisk asked curiously as she tucked herself against his elbow again. Her question was answered as they walked through a long, rainy cavern.

"IT'S ALWAYS RAINING HERE."

"Does it ever stop?"
"NOPE!"

Frisk was so curious about the rain she tried to stretch her head out from under the umbrella to look at the ceiling.

"Don't make me fight to keep you dry!"

"Alright." She giggled and stopped trying to look.

"There's something way cooler to see through here!" Light shined at the end of the tunnel. The path led them along the cliff by the the side of a lake in a huge cave with a high ceiling. An elegant building was visible through the fog in the distance.

"Oooh!" She ran ahead on the path and stopped to admire the view. Little pinpricks of light shined from the ceiling, refracting through the moist air like twinkling stars. She felt as if she were floating, lost in the night sky.

Papyrus said, "Hey! It's raining in the next room too, so get back under the 'brella!"

She ran to catch up with him as they continued along the path into another rainy cavern "What was that cool building in the distance?"

"That's the King's castle!"

"Huh, really? You can see it from here?"

"Yeah! Actually, the King is the one who put the umbrellas here! He said he didn't want anyone to catch a cold…” He looked down at Frisk. "What's a cold?"

"…A virus that infects humans."

"Huh."

"Huh."

They left it at that and put the umbrella back in the next 'brella bucket. Papyrus put Sans up on a high ledge at the end of the path.

"Not a lot of monsters use this path, because of the ledge. They usually take a more convenient way around."

He put his hands on her waist to pick her up too, but hesitated for a moment. He kneeled down and hugged her.

"Frisk, I'm worried about you! Promise me you'll be careful!"

"I promise."

"I don't think anyone will come here. And even if they do you'll probably be fine! Most monsters are nice and don't even know what a human looks like! But still, be really really careful!"

"I will."

"If it comes down to it, you can even use my brother to get you out of trouble… he can be surprisingly useful, even in this state." They shared a giggle at that. "But, I must request that you have some Mercy on his reputation!"
"Alright." Frisk agreed and glanced away guiltily. He picked her up and put her on the ledge.

"I have to go help Undyne now… so watch over my sleeping brother and stay right here in this room!"

"Ok."

"Don't go anywhere!"

"I won't."
"Hrrnggh. Wruf!" A dog monster's snout pulled out of the snow it was buried in. Pointed ears twitched.

He peeled himself off of the ground in front of Grillby's and turned off the alarm on his device. Caked snow fell away from the chest of his pink tank top, revealing a design of a smiling dog face.

"What happened last night… I was hanging out at Grillby's, playing cards with G-Dog…" He remembered when Sans had walked into the bar. "Oh yeah! The other skeleton came back!" His tail slapped against the snow excitedly as he imagined all of the bones he would soon be fetching.

He sat up and habitually pulled a dog treat and a lighter out of the pocket of his yellow lounge pants. He was scratching his ankle with his toe paws when he froze. His nostrils flared. He squinted at the ground in front of him. Had he not been visually impaired, he would have noticed the reddish and brownish stains in it. But, even without seeing them, his nose told him all he needed to know.

Frisk pulled herself and Sans further away from the ledge and sat back against the wall. The bridge ahead led to a large section of boardwalks suspended above the lake. As far as she could see there were several huts and sheds built into the winding grid of wooden paths. Vertical beams kept the whole area suspended one or two stories above another section of docks. She saw tiny figures busying about in the distance.

"Huh, could that be the Waterfall fish market?!" She smiled at the thought. "It's too far away to tell though." She leaned back against the wall again. Her fingers idly rotated the cell phone around and around.

"Well… all I was really supposed to do was alert some authorities to our incident, and now I've done that. It's not like I came here to be a big hero or anything. It doesn't really matter who takes care of it as long as everyone will be alright…" Sans sighed in his sleep and tilted his head to the left. Frisk pulled his shoulder to the right and made him lean against her instead.

"Still, waiting here doing nothing sucks!" She puffed up her cheeks and pouted at the ground in front of her. The ground didn't care.

Frisk heard the faint sound of footsteps smacking against muddy grass. She jumped and grabbed Sans's hand. The footsteps were getting closer. She carefully crawled up on her belly and peaked over the ledge. She caught a brief glimpse of a dog monster tossing an umbrella back into the bucket. She heard it go plunk as she flattened herself against the grass.

The dog stopped moving and sniffed the air suspiciously. "Did something move? Was it my imagination?"

Frisk snuck back over to Sans and leaned him over her shoulder, ready to pick him up and move. I thought Papyrus said no one would come here. But… maybe he's nice!?
"I can only see moving things," the dog explained. "If something WAS moving… For example, a human…"

Frisk hugged Sans closer to herself.

"I'll make sure it NEVER moves again!"

_Ok, maybe not!_ She silently scrambled into a tiny cave in the wall. She peeked around the corner and heard some ledge noises coming from the ledge.

_He's climbing up here! He's following me by scent so he's sure to catch me. But he's got some kind of visual problem so maybe if I keep my distance, he won't be able to confirm_—her thoughts cut off and her eyes widened in fear as a white paw holding a sword appeared over the ledge and pounded down against the grass.

She pulled the brim of her hat down and stood up, preparing to run. _Wait, it's easier to run if I carry him like this!_ She took an extra couple of seconds to adjust to carrying Sans princess-style and then took off running to the wooden bridge just as Doggo's head appeared above the cliff.

"Wruf! Wruf!" Doggo barked and chased after her. Frisk peaked back over her shoulder. _He's catching up to me!_

Just as they were coming up to the maze-like section of the boardwalks, Frisk paused and briefly pivoted in a circle. From Doggo's point of view, he saw Sans briefly flash in front of his eyes. He stopped running for a moment and looked surprised and confused. Frisk used this moment to jump over a small gap between the wooden platforms and continue running.

Not bothering to see how close Doggo was, she kept running, taking lots of turns and using the huts and sheds to put distance between them. She had stopped running for a second to consider if there was any point in hiding in one of the huts. As she was looking at a barrel against the hut, she heard Doggo's paws pounding around the corner.

She gasped and stepped backwards. Her foot fell through thin air.

"Aaaah!" she screamed. She had just enough time to register that she was in free-fall, and so hugged Sans's head and ribcage against her chest and shut her eyes tight.

Her back slammed against a wooden crate, cushioned only slightly by the pile of soft, slippery, oblong objects which launched into the air as the wide container cracked in half. She gasped in the scent of fresh seafood. She pulled down her hat again, ignoring the surprised squeals of the onlookers and the green waders and brightly burning yellow hand in front of her. Plump, tasty fish fell off of hers and Sans's bodies as she sprung to her feet and shoved past the stunned fishermen.

She made it away from the docks and onto the shore and kept running without looking back. She turned around the left corner of a wall, and ran over a short bridge across a stream. There were many patches of tall seaweed surrounding this patch of ground.

She paused to catch her breath and stared at Sans in disbelief. "Hah… hah… _how are you still asleep?!"

He didn't wake up, but smiled blissfully as he curled up and grabbed the fabric of Frisk's hoodie. She pulled a fish out of his shirt. "Seriously…"

From a path opposite to the direction she had come, she heard a set of frighteningly familiar paw-steps. _Already?!_ She grabbed Sans and rolled into a muddy patch of seaweed. The cool sludge
soaked into their clothing and coated their skin and bones.

Doggo sniffed the air. "It must be around here somewhere… I'm not giving up now. I picked up a human's scent outside of Grillby's and came all this way to find it!"

*M-maybe if I distract him!* Frisk thought desperately. She threw her boots into the air. Mud trailed after them in two arcs before a splash was heard.

"Wruf! What was that?" Doggo ran over to the boots. "No no no, this is all wrong! I smelled the human's blood."

*My blood?* She began to panic as Doggo approached her patch of seaweed. She glanced towards the crotch of her pants. *I guess I could throw my... NO THAT'S TOO DISGUSTING! Another tasteless period joke like that would make us lose followers for sure! Looks like I can't avoid this encounter!*

Doggo squinted at the seaweed. "Don't move an inch!" Frisk saw a bright, light-blue glow shine through the seaweed. She hugged Sans and turned her back to it. It passed through them both and nothing happened. *R-right, that was a light-blue attack.*

Doggo said, "I am still suspicious of your movements! A few minutes ago, I thought I saw Sans, the guy who mans the sentry station down the road from my own! I sure like that guy! Wruf! So, if you are a human, move! And if you are Sans, don't move!"

*It's really helpful how he explains everything!* Frisk thought. Sans started to squirm due to something he was dreaming about. Frisk felt her stomach drop. She folded up his arms and hugged him tightly to keep him still as the light-blue attack passed over them once more.

*THAT WAS CLOSE!* She let out her breath as she stared at Sans's sleeping face. *I have to Act right now! I can't take the chance that he'll use a normal attack!*

"So, you are Sans!? That's good because I was just about to use a normal attack! Oh-hoh man, you sure got me good! I told you I hate it when you appear without moving, didn't I?" He chuckled nervously.

*Shhh.* Doggo blinked and stared. Sans had appeared in front of the seaweed. "There you are!"

"'sup dawg?"

"Hey man, long time no see! Listen, I think I'm onto something. There's a human around here somewhere! I've got their scent, so maybe you could go alert the Guard about it and I'll keep on looking?"

"uh… actually buddy, i've… already captured the human."

"Wruf! What?!"

"yea." His head bobbed in confirmation as the seaweed behind him shifted a little. "i turned 'em over and they're already on the way to the capital right now. so, undyne said that all us guards and sentries have the rest of the day off for today!"

"WHAT?! Really? Undyne never gives us a day off! Wohoo!" His tail wagged rapidly and he grinned. "Aw man I can't wait to get home and spend the day relaxing and smoking dog treats!"

"smoking's bad for ya."
Doggo turned back to look at Sans. "Hey man… what's up with that? You've never said anything about my smoking before… It's usually Papyrus who nags me about it."

Sans's elbows bent up, his wrists hanging limply as he shrugged. Doggo's eyes narrowed.

"Why are you staring at the ground all the time?" He took a few steps closer and stared at Sans's face as his head tilted to the other side but kept staring at the ground. "And why are your eyes so dark?"

He saw Sans's muddy left arm raise, and noticed the brief flash of white and red colors behind it. But before he could process this visual information, he felt Sans's hand land on the top of his head and rub back and forth behind his ears.

"WHAT? I've bet pet! Pat! Pot?! Sans pet me! Yay!"

* Doggo has been pet.

He barked happily the whole way home.

ring ring ring.

"Hello! This is Papyrus!"

"Papyrus!" Frisk exclaimed, happy to hear his voice after that close call. She brought her hand up to her face to rub her eye, but her hand was coated in too much mud to touch her eyes with.

"Are you still on the ledge where I left you?!"

She lowered her hand and said, "N-no… I had to move. I'm sorry."

"Hey! That's ok! People have to move sometimes! It's happened to me before too… Oh, Undyne wants to talk to you, here!"

Undyne's voice came on the line and said, "Yo what's up punk! I got some good news and some bad news. The good news is: I found a whole block of farmers who are willing to donate to your food drive to help the Ruins! Everyone on this street is all on-board with it!"

"Yay! What's the bad news?"

"Well…" Undyne sucked in an breath. "The crop that they grow is water sausages."

"Yuck!" Frisk replied instinctively. "Ah, I mean…"

"Is that not good? I thought they fulfill most of the requirements you described before."

"You're right, they do…" she agreed hesitantly. "But, water sausages, really?" she muttered. "I'm going to send everyone in the Ruins this… cattle feed?"

Frisk swallowed her pride and said, "W-well… they say beggars can't be choosers. And I'm the beggar now. We don't have all day to look for something else, so… if you've found someone willing to help us then. I guess. We'll… accept!" She nodded into the phone with an empty smile.

"Ok," Undyne agreed awkwardly as a pair of sweatdrops ran down her forehead. She shook them away and said, "So now that that's decided, the farmers need instructions on how to transport them back to the Ruins."

"Instructions?"
"Didn't you say you have some special transportation method or something?"

"Oh! Yeah, I do!" She glanced at Sans. "I can work out the proper weight of the boxes, but I'll need a bit of time, and I don't have any scratch paper on me…"

"Why don't you just ask Sa… Papyrus's brother? Dude can do that nerd stuff in his head, it's amazing! I mean, when he's not being a freakin' weirdo," she quickly added.

"Yeah, I know but Sans is, um…" Say something that will piss her off.

"What?"

"Sleeping," Whoops.

"What?! Are you serious, he's… sleeping?!" she replied furiously.

"U-uh…"

"And leaving a kid like you to do everything all by yourself?! Ugh, that idiot!" She huffed. "Ok." Undyne rubbed her forehead. "So… you said you just need some scratch paper and then you can figure it out?"

"Yeah."

"In that case, stay where you are and I'll come pick you up and take you to Gerson's shop. He sells school supplies and stuff."

"Thanks! But, you don't have to come all the way over here. I can work out the math pretty quickly, but your farmer friends could probably use a strong person like you to help with harvesting!"

"NGAHHAHAHA!" Undyne laughed boldly at the compliment. "Huh, you sure though? This is your first time in Waterfall, isn't it?"

"I…" Frisk blanked out, but Undyne filled in an excuse for her.

"Actually, you're right. You're already pretty close to Gerson's anyways! You're a pretty awesome kid, so you'll be fine on your own!" For some reason, Frisk felt a pang of guilt as Undyne began to explain to her how to get to the shop. "So, from the seaweed fields, all you have to do is cross the north bridge and then take the second right at the pond near the dump, and then…"

After Frisk had received the directions she hung up. Her arm fell limp at her side, still clutching the phone. "I told her that Sans is asleep. That means I can't use his voice anymore on her. I could still use him to trick other people though." She recalled Doggo. "What should I say the next time she asks to meet me?" She listlessly tried to think of some new and hilarious ways to divert Undyne. She looked down over herself and Sans.

"God, we're so dirty…"

A monster shaped like a bucket with a flushing lever bobbed his circular green head and hummed as his body vibrated. A rubber ducky floated atop the waves of soap foam. A stray bubble floated through the air and softly clung to the skull of Sans, who was slumped over on the ground, still caked in mud.

The bucket squashed and stretched, before spitting out a human girl who flew out and landed on the soft grass. Her heart-patterned hoodie and cool fedora were restored to their pristine white, red, and
"Wow, your cleaning magic is amazing!" She clapped as if he had performed a concerto for her. "Thank-you so much Woshua!" She was so grateful she hugged his head to express her happiness. Pink lines appeared on the bucket monster's cheeks.

"Th-thanks. Do you think it's safe enough for your friend now?"

"Yes, I think it should be fine."

Frisk held Sans by his ankle, dangling him over Woshua's bucket and gently dropping him inside. After another short wash cycle, a squeaky-clean skeleton in a dry-cleaned black hoodie was ejected onto the grass.

A pair of glove-covered human hands squished Sans's cheeks, causing his mouth to move as if it were talking.

"you really put me through the wringer there, kid."

"Hey, your brother told me to not ruin your image. I can't carry you around covered in filth!"

"he didn't say anything about you though."

Woshua stared strangely at Frisk who was acting out this dialogue of her own accord. "Are you… sure you don't need to be cleaned again?"
“Ahah! There’s the pond. And from here I just take the second… left, was it?”

Still carrying her tired and very asleep friend Sans, Frisk walked past the pond and through a hallway. She came to a dead end containing a strange building.

“Didja find the shop, Frisk?” Undyne’s voice asked over the phone.

“Wow! This building is amazing! It’s so cool!”

“Huh? I don’t remember Gerson’s shop being that amazing… where are you?”

“Well, I’m at a round building that looks like a giant blue head sticking out of the ground… the windows look like angry eyes, the walls are covered in scales, and there’s this huge… mane thingy coming out of the top and flowing around the side. It almost looks a little like you, hehe!”

“Because it is me, punk, you went to my house!”

“Wha?”

“Did you turn left instead of right or something…” Undyne started to say, but Frisk chattered on in awe.

“Oh my god, you live here?! Unydne, your house is… amazing! This is the coolest house I’ve ever seen in my life!”

“H-huh, really?” Undyne was taken aback by Frisk’s enthusiasm and almost dropped the water sausages she was pulling up out of the water bed. She put them into a box that was sitting on the boardwalk by her side, and adjusted the cell phone attached to her fish-fin ear.

Frisk said, “You don’t have any spare notebooks in your house, do you?”

“Pssh, hell no! What do you think I am, some kind of nerd?!”

Frisk giggled lightly.

“I do have a map though. Maybe you should take it, you seem like you need one.”

“Alright, thanks! But… your front door is locked.”

“Yeah, the key to the front door is underneath Mad Dummy’s mat.”

Frisk looked around the silent, empty room. There was a blue mat with a picture of a fish at the base of the front door, a larger copy of that mat out in the yard, and a few bushes near the walls. “Who? There’s no one here.”

“Ugh, again? What is that grumpy ghost doing lately? Anyways, it’s the bigger mat.”

Frisk pulled back the bigger mat to find a hidden panel in the ground, which was sealed with a padlock. “Uh…”
“Yeah, the key to the key to the front door is underneath my ponytail.”

“…”

“I mean the one on my house.”

“Found it.”

Frisk unlocked the door. When she opened it, she was met with a wave of heat. She stared ahead at the air shimmering above the kitchen counter. “Huh, it’s pretty warm in here…” She sniffed the air. “Is something burning?”

Leaving Sans in one of the chairs at the kitchen table, she ran up to the stove to see that the burner was on. There was a pot above the plate containing no water, but a partially-ripped box of dried spaghetti which was starting to melt and form a black sludge. She reached for the knob, but it was so hot that it burned her finger. “Ah!” she hissed and shook the edge of her hoodie sleeve over her fingertips to turn it off.

She took a moment to calm down, then raised the cell phone to speak again and took a deep breath.

“AAAAAAAH!” she yelled into the mic. “You left your stove on, thank god I came here by accident or else your house could have burnt down, did you ever think about how sad you would feel if you came home after all your day of working and leading and training with your guards, only to find your big beautiful house burnt down, and you have such a nice kitchen and a freaking piano too…”

Papyrus and a pair of tubby, tentacular monsters (one red and one black) watched from across the field as Undyne stopped working for a moment and responded to her phone, flustered. “What, really?! Oh man, I’m so sorry… gee Frisk… thanks, you’re a lifesaver… Yeah, I was using my kitchen a bit this morning… I know, I know… Thanks, that was a close one, phew!”

The girl’s compressed voice sounded from her headpiece. “Undyne, please be more careful in the future!”

“I will.”

“If you break the things you care about… you’ll regret it and feel sad.”

“I know. I’m sorry alright? I’ll be more careful.”

Frisk stepped away from the oven and towards the powered cabinet in the right corner. Undyne’s voice said, “So you checked everything now?”

“Yeah, it’s all good now. One more thing I noticed though, your heater is only set to 45 degrees…”

“Oh! That one over to the right? That’s my Hot Fridge!” she explained proudly. “I hate cold food. So Alphys fixed up my fridge so it heats up food instead! Pretty neat, huh?”

“Um, yes, it’s very neat… but Undyne, there are takeout leftovers and meats in here. At this temperature, bacteria will grow extremely quickly on this kind of food! You could get sick! I turned it up for you, alright?” She pressed some buttons on the inside of the fridge until the small display built into its wall read, ‘60.’

“Oh. Alrighty then, thanks! You sure are a helpful advisor.”
“Mm,” Frisk shrugged.

“So anyways, go ahead and head to the left corner. The map is inside my bedroom. It is on the shelf lodged between some of my old school books. Take your shoes off before you go inside my bedroom. Do not take Papyrus’s brother inside my bedroom. Do not take any photos of the inside of my bedroom. And do not read my diary, or else I will sprinkle your dust on my ice-cream sundae…”

“I thought you hated cold food,” Frisk said as she opened the door and stepped inside Undyne’s bedroom.

Frisk spread open the map over the kitchen table. An advertisement for an old turtle monster’s shop was paperclipped to the edge of the map.

*Ah, this must be it. Wow, he must have been running this shop for a long time. It says it’s ‘just after the exit to the Crystal Caverns,’ she read from the text on the ad. “Mhmm… mhmm…” she nodded to herself as she examined the map. “Ok!” She folded up the papers and tucked them under her other arm as she picked up Sans again and left Undyne’s house.*

15 minutes later, she exited the dark room into a hallway. The lights of civilization grew brighter as she walked. She mumbled to herself, “Wow those crystal caverns were pretty dark! Luckily I made it through and now I’m in town, so it should be right around the corner!”

She followed the sound of an acapella quartet. She rounded the corner to see four very similar-looking monsters finishing up the last bar of their song. In fact, all of the monsters in the vicinity were the same quadrupedal creatures which had both cat and dog ears on their heads. Most of the nearby monsters jumped up and down to cheer for the musicians.

“Yaya,Tem liek song!!”
“moosic so… VERY GUD!”
“bring TearS to Temm-eye!”

The left-most singer said, “thanks so much! now i introduce... BAND MEMMERS!!”

The monsters introduced themselves from left to right. The same one that had just spoken said, “hOi! i’m Temmie!”

The monster to Temmie’s right said, “hOi! I’m Temmie!”

The monster to Temmie’s right said, “Hi, I’m Bob.”

Luckily, the Temmies were too busy watching the show to bother Frisk. She noticed a sign pointing to a doorway with a giant exclamation mark above it! The sign to the left said, ‘hOi!! u shud check out… TEM SHOP!!!’ The sign to the right said, ‘yaYA!! i AGREES!! shud check… TEM SHOP!!!’

*Is this really the right place? Frisk wondered as she walked in. The space was filled with shelves selling many different brands of tem flakes. Only tem flakes. The shop attendant was lying on the floor behind the counter, mashing buttons on a controller, while the TV screen behind it was looping the demo reel of a video game. Frisk sneezed.*

“hOi! tem paus game for costumer!!” The shop attendant pressed the start button of the controller, which was not plugged into the gaming console, and came over to the counter. “welcome to… TEM SHOP!”

Frisk looked around and asked, “Do you sell… notebooks?”
“naNah! Tem only sell tem flakes! Is food of TEM! exempshun from capital sales tax!! is real goods, wan sum?”

“Um, no thank-you…” Frisk sniffled.

The Temmie was pushy. “Underground, full of… MONSTER! very dangerouseses for cute human! tem offer special armor. makes battles too easy! Tem will trade SKELETON for TEMY ARMOR, YAYA?!”

Frisk tightened her hold on the sleeping skeleton hanging over her shoulder. “No thank-you! I’m sorry, I think I have the wrong shop!”

“hOI!” the Temmie shouted. “don’t forget to leave tem tip!”

Frisk glanced at the donation box sitting on the counter. The phrase ‘COLLEG, tem pursu higher education’ was written on it, but scribbled out above that was the phrase, ‘TEXIT, tem fund village separatist campaign’.

“I have to go!”

In the dark cavern, a small mushroom on a platform illuminated the grass surrounding itself. The bright mushroom was in the middle of a path marked by more lit-up grass. Underneath the platform, a mushroom monster yawned and poked its head out of a window. He looked up at his glowing roof and grumbled, “Hrm?”

Frisk stepped just outside of the village’s entrance tunnel and onto the grass path. She scratched her chest through the fabric of her shirt.

The mushroom monster said, “Darn Temmies! Always turning on my lamp…” He reached up and turned off the lamp.

The grass path disappeared, leaving Frisk in the dark. She froze in her tracks and looked around. She heard the sound of someone in the distance shutting their window.

“Huh.” She tapped some buttons and turned on the flashlight app on the cell phone. *I can still barely see the ground. The path is a little bit raised and I thought I saw some hills and bumps when the lights were on, so I can’t just head straight for the glowing trees that I can see.*

She carefully walked along the path. “O-ok… there’s a fork here, I think it was this way…” She stepped a little too far off the center of the path and almost tripped, but she managed to steady her footing. Her waist was feeling really itchy now. She adjusted her grip on Sans as she used her elbow to rub her shirt against her skin.

*ring ring ring.*

Frisk jumped. It was Papyrus calling. She sighed in relief.

“Hello! This is Papyrus! Just calling to check that you haven’t gotten lost!”

“N-no! Of course I’m not lost!! I just have to go back a little, and… and… A-CHOO!!” She sniffl ed. “Uh… I…”

“Frisk?!”

“Papyrus!!!” she burst out. “I don’t know where I am, it’s all dark, and I can’t see where I’m going,”
“WHAT YOU’RE IN THE DARK ROOMS?!” “and I went to a weird village full of monsters that were all named ‘Temmie’,” “WHAT YOU’RE AT TEMMIE VILLAGE?!” “and she tried to get me to trade Sans for armor and then, I left and then, the lights on the trail went off and it’s so dark and scary and I don’t know…”

From the background Undyne said, “How the heck did she wind up at Temmie Village?!”

Frisk babbled, “I don’t know, I’m sorry, I can’t even follow your simple directions to get to a store…”

Papyrus interrupted, “CALM DOWN FRISK! YOU’RE DOING GREAT!!”

Undyne said, “Yeah, you’re awesome! Look, if you’re at Temmie Village, that just means you passed Gerson’s! And that means that you’re so good at finding it… that you exceeded it by a long shot! So don’t you dare put yourself down, you got that Advisor?!!”

Undyne’s flawless logical reasoning filled Frisk with determination. “Yeah!!”

Papyrus said, “THIS ONE TIME, ME AND UNDYNE WENT TO TEMMIE VILLAGE…”

“HEY!” she snapped. “I thought we agreed not to speak of that one again!”

Papyrus said, “SORRY UNDYNE! I almost forgot! Phew… It’s a good thing that’s the only embarrassing incident you’re refusing to speak about!”

Frisk giggled. “Yeah, good thing for you, Undyne—ACHOO!”

Papyrus said, “OH NO, DID YOU GET ONE OF THOSE COLD VIRUSES?!”

“Huh, what’s that?!” Undyne asked. “Is she ok?”

Frisk sniffled again and said, “I don’t know. I’ve just been sneezing a lot since I went to the Temmie Village. And my body is really itchy all over…”

Undyne said, “Oh, dang! You must have Temmie allergy!”

“What, she’s allergic to Temmies?!” Papyrus said.

“Don’t worry Frisk!! Gerson sells meds for that too! Now let’s get you to that shop!” said Undyne.

“Ok!”

It took some effort, but Papyrus and Undyne somehow managed to backseat-navigate Frisk through the dark caverns.

“YOU’RE AT A DEAD END? OK, GO BACK TO THE LAST PLACE YOU TURNED… NOW GO TO THE LEFT!”

Undyne said, “No, no, go right! You’ve got to imagine it from her perspective!”

Frisk was confused but went to the right at the fork. The flashlight shined across the round mushroom. “I found the light!” she said as she touched it and lit up the path.

“Great, now keep going!”

“NOW TURN UP!”
Frisk said, “Which way is up?”

“Shut up Papyrus, you’re confusing her!! Listen Frisk, there’s only one way to go, so don’t turn unless the path turns! Keep going the way you’re going!!”

Frisk circled around the the next mushroom lamp. “Oh, whoops… I’m at another junction.”

“Left!” said Undyne. “How many trees do you see?”
“Uh… four.”
“That’s too many! Go back! … Are you on the rocky path now?!”
“Yeah, I’m back in the rocky part again.”
“Good!”

“Do you see waterfalls?!” said Undyne
“Yeah,” said Frisk.
“How many waterfalls did you pass?”
“Two!”
“You’re almost there! Go through that cave! … NO NOT THAT CAVE, THAT ONE!!”
“This one?”

“YES!” Undyne shouted passionately into the phone. “YOU’RE DOING IT FRISK!! FRISK, WHEN WE PUT OUR HEARTS TOGETHER, WE CAN DO ANYTHING! NOW TURN THAT CORNER!!”

“It’s a sparkly crystal room!” Frisk exclaimed.

“SHE MADE IT!!”
“SHE MADE IT?!” Papyrus echoed.

Papyrus and Undyne cheered and hugged each other while shouting into their phone.
Papyrus said, “I’M SO PROUD OF YOU FRISK!!”
Undyne said, “DO YOU SEE NOW HOW DETERMINED MONSTERS CAN BE?!!”

Frisk stood outside the entrance to the shop and laughed, relieved. “Thanks you guys!”

“No problem!” said Undyne.

“NOW GO BUY YOUR SCHOOL SUPPLIES SO YOU CAN TELL US WHAT TO DO WITH ALL OF THESE WATER SAUSAGES.” said Papyrus.

“Ok, I’ll call you guys back in a bit!” Frisk said and hung up.
Frisk paused just outside the entrance to Gerson’s shop. “Crap, I forgot I don’t have any money!” Her fingers fidgeted against Sans’s hoodie. Papyrus’s words echoed in her mind. *You don’t have to be ashamed to ask me for help! It’s just money, alright?!

She sighed, not having time to worry about this right now. “Whatever. It’s just a small purchase, I’ll pay you back later…” She pulled his coin wallet out of the front pocket of his jeans shorts. As she examined it, her expression changed from guilt to concern.

“I thought he’d have a lot more on him…”

She went into the shop. Gerson was an old turtle monster wearing a khaki hat and shirt. A thin beard of white trickled from his chin. His eyes lit up as Frisk walked in.

“Woah there! I’ve got some neat junk for sale. Take a look around!”

“Thanks, but I’m just here to get one thing. Do you sell any paper or notebooks?”

“As a matter of fact… I do! Last one actually.” Gerson reached under his shop counter and slapped a faded notebook onto the counter. “That’ll be 55 gold.”

Frisk shrugged and smiled nervously.

“You’re a bit short on cash,” Gerson said as he held up a magnifying glass over his eye to help him see the money in her hand.

“I only have 32 gold. Maybe you could let me buy it a little cheaper?”

“Wa ha ha! If I gave out discounts to every little schoolgirl who came up short, I’d have to take out another loan. Besides, this isn’t just any ordinary notebook! It gives +2 ATK and +6 INV.”

“Huh? What does that have to do with anything… That notebook doesn’t even look new. The cover’s all torn.”

“A little wear and tear indeed, but it’s still the last notebook I’ve got. For some reason, I stopped getting new shipments of notebooks and paper. If not you, then someone else will surely pay full price for it.”

“Please mister, I really need a notebook! It’s important! Maybe there’s something else I could add to the money I have in return for it?”

“Ha! I’m tryin’ to get RID of my junk, not get more of it!”

Frisk looked dejected.

“You’re pretty determined, huh? Actually… maybe there is something that I would be willing to accept in return,” he said ominously.

Frisk gulped and apprehensively asked, “Something else? Like, what?”

“Your skeleton.”

Frisk clutched her skeleton protectively and took a step backwards. “No way!”
“Wa ha ha, just kidding!”

Frisk sighed.

“Seriously though, I do have an offer for you, if you really want it that badly.”

“Ok, what?”

“I’ll sell you the notebook at a discount, if you fulfill a little quest for me first.”

“Huh? I don’t really have time for side quests right now… I have to work out some calculations and call back my friends with the info as soon as possible.”

“Don’t worry, it won’t take you very long at all. It’s such an easy quest, a child could do it!”

“Fine then. But, if this is some kind of trick, then I’m going to report you to my friend Undyne! She’s the Captain of the Royal Guard and…”

Gerson burst into laughter. “UNDYNE is your friend, human? Wa ha ha! I didn’t realize he was training you in comedy too, kid!” He laughed while pointing to Sans. “Wa ha ha ha! Hoo boy, that’s a good one!”

At his words, Frisk felt a pang in her chest. But she tried to ignore it so she could pay attention to his explanation of her task.

“Alright then, here’s your quest. It’s very easy! All you have to do is… complete the piano puzzle and retrieve the legendary artifact.”

“Ok,” she nodded. “Could you explain really well how to get there, because… I’m uh…” Her face turned red as she mumbled, “I’m not very good at…”

“Don’t worry, I marked it on your map. Just follow the icon and you’ll be there in 5 minutes!” Frisk stared in amazement at the quest compass that popped up over her field of vision.

5 minutes later… “Wow, that was a more convenient way through!” Frisk noted as she strolled back along the rainy path and plunk’d the red umbrella back into the bucket. She paused as the guiding quest icon swivelled out of her view.

Wait, what? Back to the Umbrellas? I guess I need one of these. She picked up the umbrella and opened it again. Now the icon marker was pointing at the melancholy statue. She put the umbrella in the statue’s hand. Raindrops cascaded down the plastic fabric and spilled down over the small structures at the statue’s feet. A music box inside the statue began to play. The music kept playing and didn’t stop. Frisk stood for a minute just enjoying the peaceful lullaby. Sans seemed to like it as well. After a minute he stirred in his sleep and turned his head. Frisk shook out of the trance and continued on her way.

She followed the quest marker to a room containing a piano.

* Play the piano?

→ Yes.

No.

She set Sans down. She shyly pressed a few keys on the piano. “Hehehe!” She giggled and plunked some more keys. There’s some directions on the wall over here. ‘Only the first 8 are fine.’ “Oh, I get
it! I have to play that song from the statue.”

She sat down at the piano again. “Uh… how did it go? Like this? No, that’s not right…” Behind her, Sans shifted uncomfortably as she plucked random notes.

“No, no, that’s not how it sounded! I’ll just go back real quick and listen again!” She got up and headed for the door, but whirled around and ran back to her companion. “Kyeh! I almost forgot!”

She carried him in her arms back to the statue. His smile deepened peacefully as she stood and concentrated on memorizing the song. “Ok, I think I got it this time!”

She tried to play the piano again, but still failed to play the melody. “I can’t remember what note it started on. …Ugh! No, that sounds wrong…” Behind her, Sans grumbled. After she banged out another series of wrong notes, he started to sound really upset.

“Huh, what’s wrong?!” She stopped playing and knelt by his side. “Are you having a nightmare?! Calm down, it’s ok!” He did calm down and smiled again.

“I don’t suppose you’d like to wake up now and help me with this puzzle?”

Sans was unresponsive. Frisk sighed.

“Figures… Papyrus said 8 hours, so I probably won’t be able to shake you awake until at least 2 PM… That is, assuming you’re actually getting quality sleep with me carrying you around like this.” She stared doubtfully.

“Whatever, let’s just figure out the first note of this song.” She was stumped though. Maybe I should go listen again…

“hmm,” came a gentle humming tone from behind her.

She lifted her hand from the piano and swirled around on the bench. Sans was still asleep, slumped against the wall. She stared curiously.

“Sans… Let’s figure out the first note of this song,” Frisk repeated.

“hmm,” Sans hummed.

“Can you do that again?”

“hmm.” Frisk pressed some keys.

“Again.”

“hmm.” She went up a few notes until she managed to settle on it.

“I think I got it. Again Sans.”

“hmm.” Yes that’s it!

“Sans, hum the rest of the song.”

“hm hm hm hm-hm-hm, hm hm hm hm-hm-hm.” IT’S WORKING!

“Sans, hum the song again!”

“hm hm hm hm hm-hm-hm-hm-hm.”

“Only the first 8 are fine!”

“hm hm hm hm hm-hm-hm,” Wow, I didn’t know he could sing that high.

“Again!” She demanded more humming as she kept trying to match the notes and remember which
ones she had pressed correctly on previous trials.

“Again!”
“hm hm hm hm-hm-hm”

She groaned and scratched her itchy chest. “Ughhh I’m having such a bad time with this puzzle!”

“dododo do, do do doo dododo”

“WRONG SONG SANS!” she snapped.

10 minutes later, Frisk finally got it right after many iterations, trials, and errors.

Brrrrm. The hidden doorway opened.

Carrying Sans over her shoulder again, Frisk walked through the doorway. The next room was simple and contained a pedestal with a red orb on display.

“Finally!” Frisk sighed in relief and strolled up to the pedestal.

* It’s a legendary artifact. Will you take it?

→ Take it
Leave it

Frisk reached her free hand towards the artifact.

* You’re carrying too many dogs.

Frisk blinked. “What?”

Her legs buckled under the weight she carried, as if Sans had suddenly shot up to the mass of an adult male human. She fell over backwards with him landing on top of her.

“A-ah! What the—” She realized that the weight came from a bulge in the pocket of Sans’s black hoodie. Not knowing what it was or if it was dangerous, she pulled the whole thing off him before proceeding with the next step.

She grabbed the bit of white fluff poking out of the pocket, anchored the hoodie against the ground with her boots, and pulled. A doggy butt popped out of the pocket. She continued to tug it loose like a stubborn radish.

“Ngrah!” she yelled and yanked. The doggy butt popped loose as the Frisk butt landed on the ground.

* You deployed the dog.

The annoying dog hopped around happily and barked. A strange chiptune sounded throughout the room. Frisk saw the dog turn and bounce towards the pedestal. She tried to scramble to her feet, but it was too late.

The dog absorbed the artifact. It barked proudly and ran away to the sequel.

The artifact was gone.

Frisk fell back onto her knees and stared blankly. Sans, Sans’s hoodie, and her fedora were strewn
about on the ground around her.

ring ring ring

It was Undyne calling.

ring ring ring

ring ring ring- Click.

“Yo! How’s it going over there?”

“…”

“Have you worked out the shipping instructions? Did you get your notebook, or whatever it was you needed?”

“a-… i-…” Frisk’s voice cracked when she tried to form syllables.

Undyne became impatient. “Advisor! This is your Captain asking you a question! Report your status!!”

“I-I’m sorry… I messed up…” Frisk burst into tears. “I, I couldn’t afford it, so he said he’d give it to me if I did the piano puzzle, but, w-what am I even doing, this is such a waste of time, ugh I’m s-such an idiot, I-I’m sorry…”

“HEY!” Undyne snapped. “Don’t cry like a little baby! I ORDER you to cheer up right now, or else I’mma come over there and give you a noogie… A NOOGIE OF CHEER!”

Frisk let out a little laugh and sob at the same time. “Uh, that’s ok! A-actually, you know, maybe I don’t really need a n-notebook after all… I can just draw in the dirt! Yeah, it’ll be fine!”

“Frisk, look this is getting a little weird…” Undyne sighed. “Honestly, it’s been bugging me since this morning, but I didn’t want to bother you about it since what we’re doing now seems more important…”

“Oh.”

“So, uh… I was wondering, if you’re a…”

“I’m what?”

“Err… hah… Man, I’m sorry this is so awkward… I’ve never had to ask someone this before.” She scratched her other fish-fin-ear with her free hand.

“Are you avoiding me?”

Frisk held back a gasp as her body lurched as if struck by a blow. Here we go. Think of a clever excuse. “Ah…” Make something up. Blame Sans.

“Yeah. I am.” She was surprised by the tears that flowed freely down her face. Undyne listened, speechless.

“I’m sorry, Undyne! I lied to you… You’re right, I’ve been avoiding you. I’ve been making up stories and excuses, decieving you, and lying to you so that we won’t meet… it’s disgusting really… The truth is, I’m… h… h-hiding something from you. Something that I don’t want you to find out.
And, I’m scared, ‘cause, if you see me, then you’ll find out, and then you’ll h-hate me…”

“What? No way. I won’t hate you.”

“You will,” said Frisk. “I’m so sorry… Please forgive me…”

“Look, Frisk, I don’t really get what you’re talking about. Everything you just said sounded like a lot of wimpy nonsense to me! I don’t know what it is you think is so bad you can’t tell me, but, whatever it is, I swear that I will NEVER betray one of my friends!”

“H-huh,” Frisk sounded surprised. “Undyne, are we f-friends?”

“Duh! What—you think that just because I don’t know what you look like and you’ve got a few secrets, that means we can’t be friends?! Then you seriously underestimated my friendship powers! I got TONS of friends with secrets. I don’t have to know EVERYTHING about someone to know when their heart’s in the right place. I’ll show you, punk!! The more secrets you have, the better friends we’ll be!! And since you’re the most mysterious person I know, that means… I’ll have to make you love me so much… THAT YOUR ENTIRE LIFE WILL REVOLVE AROUND ME, NGA HA HA HA HA Ha Ha!! You and I are not just gonna be friends… we’re gonna be besties.”

Frisk covered her mouth with her free hand and squeezed her eyes shut.

“OK Frisk?!”

“M, m-hmm,” she nodded, wanting nothing more than to believe her.

“There we go!” Undyne said, sounding pleased. “I’m such a good friend, I’ll even help you avoid me from now on! Now, calm down and tell me what happened, k?”

“O-ok…” Frisk calmed down and told Undyne what happened.

After hearing the story, Undyne said, “Oh my god dude! Of all the stupid pranks today…”

“What do you mean?”

“Frisk, you know I’m the one who built that puzzle and put the red orb there!?”

“You did?”

“Yes, and do you know who sold that thing to me?”

“Who?”

“Gerson.”

Frisk made a Frisk face and said, “Oh.”

Undyne made an Undyne face and said, “Uh-huh.”
Undyne raised her foot to kick down Gerson’s door. Remembering self-restraint, she lowered her foot, but not her wild grin as she delicately opened the wooden door and shut it behind her. Then she whirled around pointed her finger straight at the turtle monster who stood across the counter.

“Ngaah!” she yelled to activate her battle music.

* The heroine appears!

“GERSON! What did you do this time?!”

“This time?” Gerson held his magnifying glass over the watch on his wrist and squinted. “Why, nothing! I’ve just had my lunch break.”

Undyne face palmed. “No, I’m talking about the prank you pulled.”

“What do you mean, child? I haven’t pulled a prank on you since last month. (How did that go by the way?)”

“(Terrible! It took three days to get the smell of mustard out of my hair!) And don’t call me a child, I’m twenty-WAIT, I’m NOT TALKING ABOUT MYSELF! I’m talking about Frisk! She told me you gave her a lot of trouble over a notebook! Sound familiar??”

Gerson’s better eye widened in genuine surprise. “You mean you really are friends? That kid wasn’t kidding, hah!”

“What’s so funny?”

“I’m just a little surprised. I expected a meeting between the two of you might end in… bloodshed.”

“What the hell?! Just what kind of monster do you think she is?!”

“What kind of monster she is? I wouldn’t worry about that.”

“You’re darn right I don’t care what she is! Frisk is my friend! And if anyone messes with my friends… Then I. Will. BEAT THEM INTO SUBMISSION!”

Undyne’s eye scanned over the shop menu, desperately looking for something.

Gerson observed her, confused. “Well?”

“Just… give me a minute…” Her eye twitched.

→ Talk
→ King Fluffybuns
→ Frisk(NEW!)
→ Prophecy
→ Fight


Undyne smiled as if nothing was wrong. She waved her hand and turned Gerson’s Soul green.
“Okay…” He raised an eyebrow and sipped his tea.

She undid that action and glanced away in embarrassment.

“Wa ha ha! Still a few steps behind your old master, eh?”

“Shut up!!” Undyne bounced impatiently. “You may be immune to attacks due to your little trick. But you’re still stuck here talking to me until I get what I need!”

“Do you mean this?” He dangled the Torn Notebook by its corner.

“Y—” she started to say, but looked at the notebook in disbelief. “Wait, that’s what this whole argument is over? That crappy old notebook, really? Wait… does it already have writing in it?!”

Gerson stopped flicking through the pages of the notebook and patted the cover shut.

“Scribbles or not, this notebook is awfully popular today! It is my last one, and I have no idea when the next shipment will come in since they suddenly stopped. Perhaps I should even raise the price…” As he trailed off in thought, Undyne’s fish fin ears twitched at the word ‘price.’

“Ha ha ha ha…” she laughed darkly. “You’re forgetting something, Gerson… I WILL leave this shop with that notebook.”

“You will?”

“Yes! For you see, while you were busy talking, I… navigated to the Buy menu!”

→ Buy
  . 25G – Crab Apple
  . 18G – Sea Tea
  . 30G – Cloudy Glasses
→ 55G – Torn Notebook
→ 100G – Torn Notebook

“What the—!” Undyne shouted in surprise as Gerson raised the price at the last second, denying her purchase.

She transferred 45 more gold from her wallet to her hand. “Take this!”

→ 120 G – Torn Notebook

“DAMN IT!”

Gerson laughed in relief. “Phew, you almost had me with that o—” Undyne interrupted Gerson’s talking turn to throw an extra 20 gold into her hand and purchased the Torn Notebook.

Gerson’s magnifying glass clattered on the counter. His pupils became tiny dots as he reeled back in surprise. “Oh… Well… I guess I’ll just go in my backroom and take a nap then.” He shrugged and walked off the screen.

Undyne grinned victoriously. She won!

* Scratch, scratch, scratch.

“Ugh.” Frisk was on her way back to Gerson’s shop. “My allergy is really acting up now that I don’t have any puzzles to distract me…” She pulled up her shirt to see that her belly was covered in
Luckily this quest compass thingy is still leading me back to the shop.

On the wall just outside the shop, there was a note taped to the wall.

*By order of the Royal Guard, the items below are not to be touched except by their authorized owner (you know who you are).*

There was a small glass bottle on top of the tattered notebook. Frisk picked it up. The label read, ‘Tem Pills – effectively suppresses allergic reaction to Temmies.’

She was tempted to open the bottle cap and pop one of the small white pills into her mouth right away. But first she wisely examined the label. The label folded out from the bottle into a very long document.

*Recommended dosage: Take 1 pill every 6 hours or as instructed by your doctor.*

*The following side effects have been reported in clinical trials, but may not actually be caused by Tem Pills: Headache, drowsiness, loss of motor control of tentacles, allergic reaction to Tem Pills, nightmares, muscle soreness, spontaneous dust emission, random fainting.*

*Recommended for: Agents ages 10 and up, Alligators ages 3 and up, Astigmatisms ages 4 and up, Bucket monsters ages 6 to 34, male Bunnies ages 5 and up, female Bunnies ages 8 and up…*

She skimmed through the long list of recommendations for different monster types.

*…Froggits ages 6 and up except Final Froggits, non-boss type Goats ages 3 and up, Gyftrots ages 12 and up, Humans ages 6 and up, Icicles except those ages 10 to 16…*

*Humans, finally!*” she exclaimed and swallowed a Tem Pill.

At long last, Frisk settled down on the floor and opened the notebook to an unused page. She unfolded the map she had obtained from Undyne’s house and began to measure out the scaled distance between a small alcove near the water sausage farm and the Ruins mail office. She jotted that down, and then brought up the calculator app on Sans’s cellphone.

* bzzzt

The phone vibrated and danced across the page. “Ooh, It’s a text message from Undyne! That’s alright, calling her all the time was starting to feel really repetitive.”

The message read: ‘I got a call from a team investigating a crash site near abyss so g2g help them out with some lifting.’

She wrote back: ‘Does it have anything to do with the shipping tunnel collapse?’

Undyne replied: ‘idk maybe. pap still at farm so call him with weights when u r done’

Frisk replied: ‘Ok.’

She set pen to paper and got to work. “The energy cost of Sans’s shortcut is \( E = 0.02275dM^2 \). Solved for mass, it’s \( M = \sqrt{(1/0.02275) \times (E/d)} \). His total energy pool is 8MP.”

She recalled their lessons…
“What’s MP stand for? Is it Magic Points?”
“nah, it’s mega points.”
“What’s a Mega Point?”
Sans held up a finger and said, “a million regular points.” As if it were obvious.
“Points of what?” she wondered as he continued onto the next topic.

Presently, she continued. “But I can’t base our order on his maximum energy, because he needs… quite a bit left over for the rest of the day. Like, he’ll probably want to teleport instead of walking everywhere, and he might take me with him, and we also have to account for anything unexpected. So realistically, we’ll set E to 4MP and subtract the flat rate for his empty-handed trip. And from there we’ll see what the maximum of M can be, given the remaining energy. But because of the squaring on the mass, it might be better for him to take multiple trips, so we’ll have to test increasing the amount of round trips until we get the best value for M…”

*bzzzt*
Undyne texted: ‘NERD’

About 20 minutes of writing and screen tapping later, she had charted out the resulting weight values for 1, 2, 3 and 4 round-trips. Leaning back on her palm, she sighed and called Papyrus.

“HELLO! This is Papyrus!! Are you going to tell me what I should tell these sausage lovers to do with all of their sausages?”

“Papyrus, first of all, they’re not real sausages.”

“WELL, THEY’RE TRYING THEIR BEST, OK?!”

“I know,” she said. “Second of all, tell them to put them in boxes, and to make each box weigh 205 kg. Sans will take 3 of them when he wakes up, but he’ll be back to take more, when his energy fills up again.”

“Wow… My brother taught you how to figure all of that out in just 2 days?! Great job Frisk. You’re such a smart cookie!”

Papyrus hung up, but he called back a few seconds later to say, “Cookie is slang for human!!!!”

She stifled a giggle as he hung up again.

*bzzzt.*
Another text message from Undyne: ‘btw u should go hang out with my friend alphys!! I think u guys will get along great, also u rly need a break from working’

*bzzzt.*
‘thats an order!!’

“I guess she’s right.” Frisk stood back up. She tucked her belongings securely in her inventory and carried Sans in a comfortable piggyback. “Now, how do I get to the Lab… oh!”

As soon as the thought entered her head, the quest compass activated and pointed the way back towards the dark rooms. “Great, this thing’s still working.”

On the winding path between Waterfall and Hotland, a white maintenance vehicle was parked. The contents of its open storage back had been removed and installed on the edge of the cliff. A pulley lift dangled into the depths below. The distant trickle of a stream was heard.
Undyne held onto the ropes of a harness in one hand and secured a small, fuzzy passenger to her shoulder with the other. The cheerful mole monster lit up the dark canyon with the beam from his yellow mining hat.

“Weeee!” He cheered as she kicked off the wall. “Thanks a big ol’ bunch for coming by so quickly!”

“Quickly? It’s been like four hours since you called me.”

“I know, you’re so punctual! It’s been over three days since the Minister called our team.”

“Then let’s hurry it the hell up!”

“Ah, such dedication, as only expected of the Captain of the Royal Guard!”

She touched down on a cliff sticking out of the wall, overlooking the remaining depth of the canyon. A square passage that jutted out of the wall looked like it had once traversed the open space in a straight line, supported by long stilts. But now it was torn in half, draping down all the way to the ground and splitting off into broken chunks, like a dropped roll cake.

Down on the ground next to the rubble, there was a muscular yet relatively short, red-skinned, humanoid monster. He stood up to the ankles of his rubber boots in a puddle of water and was holding a flip-style cellphone up to his ear.

“Yeah… Yeah, I read your message… I had a busy weekend, ok?… ‘Cause it was my mom’s birthday! … Well you don’t have to yell at me!” Undyne slid down the remaining edge of the cliff and joined him. His shoulders slumped and his head hung low as he remarked, “He always yells at me.”

The mole said, “That’s because he’s a meanie mc-mean face! Don’t let him get you down. Look, I brought Undyne! Now we can get rid of that boulder!”

Undyne blinked. “Boulder?” She picked up one of three huge chunks of rock off of the fallen passage and tossed it aside.

The mole said, “Doesn’t it look like these pieces of rock broke off from a bigger, rounder rock?”

The red guy pointed and said, “Yeah. And the roof here is kind of squashed.”

“I know!!” The mole hopped in place on Undyne’s shoulder. “It’s like it fell on top of the tunnel and then cracked!”

Undyne picked up another chunk of rock, this time gently placing it aside. She zoned out of the conversation the other two were having.

Way above them, Frisk walked along the path. She tilted her neck back and gazed at the natural arch towering over the border of Waterfall and Hotland. She passed underneath it and cast a curious glance at the equipment on the edge of the cliff as she continued on her way.

Undyne placed the little mole upside-down on the inside ceiling of the tunnel. His sticky feet clung to the walls as he walked up the inside. “Oh boy, I wonder what else I’m gonna find in here? I sure do love PUZZLE!”

Frisk came to a stop in front of a large building. An icon flashed in her peripheral vision, before disappearing, along with all the guiding markers, as Gerson’s quest compass buff wore off.
“Well, this must be the Lab. I sure hope it’s air-conditioned in there.” The sight of such a strange laboratory sticking out against the orange cliffs filled her with determination.

Alphys was curled up in her office chair, watching an animated show on her computer. The automatic door slid open and startled her. She caught a brief glance of a boot and a leg stepping through the frame. She snapped back to her computer screen and spoke in a nervous rush.

“O-oh, h-hey! You’re here already, huh? Uh, F-Frisk, right? H-hold on, I’ll be with you in a moment, I um, just have to reset this camera…”

She paused the media player and switched over to the security camera program. She clicked on a black rectangle from the grid and pressed another button to turn on the camera for the Lab’s entrance room.

As Frisk walked in, the large screen mounted on the wall to her left switched from a view of the castle across the lake to an extreme close up of her face.

Alphys slammed her hands down over her desk and shouted, “Watch out, there’s a human right behind me!”

Frisk stood still behind Alphys’s curved back.

“W-wait.” Alphys peeked over her shoulder, slowly pivoted, and gaped at the human. The human stared back with a polite smile.

“Hi, I’m Frisk.”
“Hi, I’m Frisk!”

“…” Alphys bit her bottom lip firmly while clenching and unclenching her sweaty hands.

“Undyne told me to come here to rest. She must have called you too, right?”

She did, but… she didn’t…

“Are you ok? You look really nervous. She didn’t mention I was a human, did she? Tehe, don’t worry! I’m not dangerous or anything!”

Alphys gulped. She’s a mind-reader?!

“Hello?” Frisk tilted her head. Her slightly oversized fedora slipped down, giving a clearer view of the skull resting against her shoulderblade.

“SANS?!” Alphys blurted out.

Frisk flinched a little when she finally said something. “Huh, you know Sans?”

Alphys’s eyes darted around for a moment. Then said hesitantly, “D-doesn’t everyone?”

They both stood silently for another couple of seconds. Then the ice began to melt and they giggled awkwardly.

“Um… w-why do you… ahem.” Alphys pointed. “Have… him?”

“Ah, this looks kind of strange, doesn’t it? Well, he got really tired and fell asleep this morning as we were just about to leave the house. But, we’re in the middle of a really important job and I was ordered to stay with him while I’m outside the Ruins, so, y’know. I just took him with me.” She smiled and shrugged. “So… you’re the royal scientist?”

“Th-that’s right!” Royal. Asgore.

“Do you work here all by yourself?” Frisk was looking around the lobby. There were dirty bowls, napkins, food packages, and other junk all over the desk and couch.

“Y-yeah! There haven’t been any other scientists or lab techs employed here for a long time. Th-that’s why I haven’t bothered to clean up much, I’m s-sorry it’s such a trash heap in here…” Work. Barrier.

“That’s ok. I was only wondering if you ever get lonely.”

“N-no, it’s ok. I kind of like it that way…” I’m alone. Undyne didn’t… So that means that I…

Frisk’s voice became distant as she started going off about the similarities between Alphys and Sans. “…he always disappears off to nowhere by himself…” The human’s red Soul glowed before her eyes.

I have to stop her.

“Did Undyne also tell you about the situation in the Ruins?”
“The um… f-food shortage and, um… p-power outage, right?” Frisk nodded. Alphys rubbed a hand over her head spikes. “O-oh! My god! I should really be h-helping you guys, I’m sorry, I’ve just been so caught up in my own pr—I—I mean, uh, I’ve been really b-busy! With stuff…”

“Oh, are you stuck on a project?”

“S-something like that.” Alphys scratched her cheek.

“Well… I’m sure you can do it! Just take things one step at a time. And then if you get stuck, ask someone for help!” Frisk’s advice, though obvious, gave Alphys a boost of confidence.

_The first step_? She thought as she stared at Frisk who still had Sans glued to her back. _First of all, first of all that is making me too nervous to think about anything else!_

“Heh, you’re right.” Alphys nodded and twiddled her fingers together. “Um… you must be t-tired of carrying him around everywhere, right? S-so…” she caught Frisk’s eyes and stammered as she continued, “W-why don’t you, p-put h—err-um, s-s-sit down on the couch?!!”

“Sure, thanks.”

Alphys’s shoulders relaxed a little. _Phew. That wasn’t too bad. Next, I should call Undyne and ask her why she didn’t k-capture her._

“I have to… go and, uh… to the bathroom!” She said and zoomed into the door to the True Lab.

Once she was safely alone in the elevator hall, her shoulders slumped completely as she let out all of her tension. _Ok, now I just have to call Undyne and… Her face turned completely red. CALL? UNDYNE?_

A minute later.

‘_oh my goddd I hate calling people so much, I don’t want to dooo this lmao,_’ wrote Alphys, who was procrastinating on calling Undyne by posting about calling Undyne on social media instead.

‘_had my claw over the button for the last 10 minutes JUST DO IT ALREADY OMFG._’ She cringed at her own weirdness and shook with a silent chuckle. She stared at the call button and took a deep breath.

“Alphys?” called the girl’s voice from the other room. Alphys pocketed her phone and opened the ‘bathroom’ door to see Frisk standing right behind it.

“H-hiya. I thought you were going to… r-rest?”

Frisk smiled cheerfully and said, “I’m done resting now!”

“That was quick,” Alphys noted.

“I’ve been thinking. There’s still a little bit of time before Sans wakes up. So I was thinking of going and paying a visit to Muffet the Spider.”

Alphys blinked and tried to comprehend what she had said. “Why? She’s… not exactly the friendliest monster.”

“That’s ok. We already kind of know each other. I’m pretty sure she’ll want to hear about everything from me. I was planning on going there anyways, I just hadn’t decided when. But now I have nothing to do until the meeting at 4:00 later, and I hate sitting around doing nothing!” She poked her
fingers together and added, “Especially when Papyrus and Undyne are doing my job for me…”

Alphys also stared at Frisk’s fingers as she processed. *She knows Papyrus too?*

“Ok,” she agreed. “How about I uh, guide you there? R-remotely, I mean!”

“Sure.” Frisk stepped back over to the couch to pick up her sleeping partner again.

“What are you doing?” Alphys interjected.

“Huh?”

“You’re going to—w-why don’t you just l-leave him here?”

“I told you didn’t I? We’re supposed to stick together. Queen’s orders,” she said and shrugged.

*Queen? What?* Alphys ignored that thought and said, “Uh, w-wait, one sec!”

She darted back into her Lab. She came back out a minute later, patting the dust off of a folded, wheeled contraption. She set it down and expanded it. Metal beams locked into a solid frame supporting a cushioned basket, which was sheltered by a hood-like cloth structure, complete with padded handlebars.

“Carrying him seems kind of inconvenient, so… why not use this instead?”

Frisk stared in disbelief. “Is that a…”

Alphys said, “Yes, it’s a refurbished artifact from the human world. I’ve added a bunch of modifications and special features to it for safety and protection. I call it the **Secure Carrier 2000**!”

Frisk inspected it and considered for another moment. “Ok.” She picked up Sans and placed him inside of the bedding. His legs dangled over the sides of the basket. She folded up his limbs so that he fit all the way inside it. As she pulled her hands back, a round plexiglass cover shot up and connected to the hood, enclosing the basket.

Alphys said, “A-anyways! Um… Go back the same way you came in here and turn right at the junction. After that, there’ll just be one path, and the puzzles should be…”

“Puzzles?”

“They should be… n-not activated,” she clarified and glanced down.

“Oh. Ok.”

“Yeah! So, j-just keep following the path until you get to the elevator, and then I’ll c-call you. Ok?”

“Ok.” Frisk accepted the orders with no further questions and exited through the front door, pushing along Sans in his carrier.

Alphys let out another long heavy sigh of relief when she was finally alone again. “Seriously this time,” she said as she plugged her phone into her computer. She settled back into her battered office chair and put on the headset. “This is just business.” She gulped, but selected Undyne’s name and pressed the call button.

Instead of Undyne’s voice, she heard a song of Determination play as a deep voice said, “*The person you are calling cannot pick up the phone right now, because they are busy calling someone*
else. But, I am sure if you wait a few minutes and try again, they will pick up. You cannot give up just yet... Caller! Stay determined... ”

Alphys’s eyes drooped sadly. “Oh…”

Undyne was still at the bottom of the Abyss, standing next to the red guy, waiting for the mole to return. She was on the phone with Papyrus.

“SO WE PUT THE BOXES IN THE SIDE ROOM, BUT NOW THERE’S ANOTHER PROBLEM! I’LL LET THIS PERSON EXPLAIN!”

On Papyrus’s end, a tentacular monster with dark-indigo skin borrowed the phone. The voice that came on the line sounded like it was obscured through bubbles being blown into a glass of milk. “One of our fields hasss been draining away all day. I’ve identified the sssource of the leak near Bridge Ssseed Garden B. It ssseems the corner of the room cafed into some ssspace below it.”

The mole’s face poked out of the broken entrance. “That sounds right up this alley! I found a wall ‘o rocks cutting me off after I went up a little bit in there. The passage is un-passage-able!”

The red guy had his face buried in an open map. “This line cuts straight under that room. It’s probably a secondary collapse triggered by the impact.”

Undyne said, “Papyrus! Stay at the water sausage farm and maintain order! We’ll go check that thing out.”

“OK!” he replied.

Frisk walked along the path until she got to the elevator as expected. Alphys’s voice blared out from the speaker on Sans’s cell phone, which was attached to a holder on the handlebars of the carrier. “Good job! Now go inside it and press L3.”

“This?”

“Right!”

She exited the elevator on a higher floor, where it was not as suffocatingly hot as it had been below. “Ooh.” She stepped carefully towards the edge of the path and looked down over a large sector of Hotland. Rows and rows of apartments, warehouses, industrial buildings, and a few specialized towers filled the natural cave shelves as well as artificial platform extensions at the edge of the terrain. She could see networks of roads and a large parking lot-like area where there were planes taking off and flying around in the air! A school bell rang out through the spacious cavern.

She moved on. After a few empty rooms and walkways, she came across a section where there were gaps in the path. There was a square pad on the ground at the edge of a cliff. It was lit by blinking lights and had an arrow which was changing direction every couple of seconds.

Across the gap to the right was a featureless shelf and an opening leading to the next room. Across the gap to the left was a shelf fitted with a conveyor belt conveying away to some other room.

Alphys said, “What, the puzzle’s on? Um, m-maybe one of the guards turned it back on? Well, d-don’t worry, I’ll explain it to you! That glowing tile is a jump pad. When you step on it, it’ll launch you into the air in the direction it’s pointing. But since this one is alternating, you’ll have to step on it at the right time, or else you’ll… you’ll go the wrong…

“A-Anyways! I’ll help you with the timing, ok?! Ready? 3… 2…”
Frisk thought, *Huh? It doesn’t look that hard, I don’t need—*

“I… NOW!”

Confused by Alphys’s timing, Frisk pushed the carrier forward. As soon as its rear wheel crossed over the LED border, the whole object was wrenched out of her grip as it launched into the air, carrying Sans across the gap to the right.

The arrow immediately reversed directions. Frisk pulled back the foot she was about to put down, stumbled, and managed to catch herself, straddling the borders of the tile on her palms and toes.

Back in the Lab, Alphys pressed a key on her keyboard. “There, that’ll stop it from changing,” she said with her mic muted. She stared at the computer screen. Her brow twitched slightly as she watched Frisk crawl off of the jump pad and pick her fedora off the ground.

“She must be really…” Alphys shook her head firmly. “No! I have to do this. I have to call…” she scrolled through her contacts again. “U-U-Un… Knight Knight!”

A syncopated chime, familiar to frequent visitors of the CORE, sounded from a cellular phone on a nightstand. A candle cast its gently flickering light over the bed.

Knight Knight started to reach with her large arm. A white orb touched her soft, feather-coated elbow. She looked back up at the smaller monster sitting on top of her chest plate with all four of her eyes. His pointy face grinned, magically.

“Let it go babe. When’s the last time you had a day off?”

“But, it’s not Undyne, it’s the royal scientist. I should see what she wants.”

“It’s all the same *hocus pocus.* Hey, we talked about leaving work at work, didn’t we?” He stroked her upper-arm with his orb, causing her to pay attention to him. “Knighty, be real with me now. Do you want to answer the phone? Or do you want me to put you to sleep?”

“A-ah, your magic words make me feel like a woman!”

Frisk who was trying to call Alphys, held her (Sans’s) own cellphone up to her ear and listened to the song of Determination. “…wait a few minutes and try again, they will pick up. You cannot give up just yet…”

She hung up and stared at the phone in confusion. *Alphys?* She tried to find a way across the room on her own.

“Maybe if I trigger the jump pad, it’ll change back again.” She dumped her fedora onto the glowing arrow pad, then took off her hoodie and threw it down too.

“They aren’t heavy enough.” She looked around the room for clues. There was a window a little ways up the wall behind her. Squinting into the glass, she could make out some kind of office. There was a side door down the hallway she had come from. She cast a worried glance at the carrier across the gap, before pulling her eyes from it and backtracking to the hallway. The door was marked, ‘Authorized Personnel Only.’

There was security panel beside the door. She guessed ‘1-1-1-1’, and then ‘1-2-3-4’, but they didn’t work.

Alphys was rapidly drumming her fingers over her desk. Her tail swished back and forth. “Ugh…
Undyne… Knight Knight… they aren’t picking up. I have to try again.”

She scrolled down to Undyne’s name again. Her palm was sweating over the mouse. She winced her eyes shut for a moment, but opened them and summoned up the courage to click the call button once again.

Just then, the loud ringtone of an incoming call blared on her computer. She was startled and hastily answered it.

“Hey, what’s the access code?”

“I KNOW, IT’S,” Frisk listened as Alphys blurted out the 5-digit code.

“Got it, thanks!”

“You’re welcome!” Alphys smiled as they hung up. “Hey wait! I messed up. Ugh… being the bad guy is hard,” she sighed.

Frisk entered the door and walked up a half-flight of stairs into an observation room. There were some buttons available for pressing on the counter beneath the window, labeled very straightforwardly. She pressed a directional arrow key and saw the jump pad in the room below change back. Then she pulled a lever, lighting up the word ‘LOCK’ above it, and made sure a dial labeled ‘TIMER’ was turned all the way to 0.

She triumphantly jogged back over to the jump pad. But she hesitated for a moment and peered over the edge of the cliff. It was a long way down. She stepped back, sucked in a breath, and jumped onto the pad with both feet at once.

“WAAAAH!” she screamed, arms flailing about as she shot through the air like a torpedo, spinning uncontrollably so that she couldn’t even see if she wasn’t falling to her death. Her soft hoodie slid against the ground in front of the Secure Carrier 2000.

“I think I prefer your blue magic,” she groaned.

They continued along a red rock walkway until they got to a puzzle room similar to the last one. Alphys said, “Ooh, another one? Sorry, I messed you up on the last one. I’ll just keep my mouth shut this time. I’m sure you can handle it!”

Similar to the previous room, there was a long chasm which separated the floor into two halves. Across the gap was the closed double door to the next room. At the edge of the cliff on Frisk’s side was a tile similar to the previous jump pad, but this one looked different. It wasn’t lit up.

To her left was a large square button on the floor, and two tall pedestals. One of the pedestals had stairs leading up to its top. The other pedestal had a treasure chest, but no way to access it.

Frisk pushed the carrier onto the dark jump pad, taking great care to set her boot down on it at the exact same time. But nothing happened. The jump pad was clearly disabled or shut off somehow, so she took them off of it.

She tried stepping on the large floor button. Her weight sank into the floor. “Oh!” she smiled when she saw a retractable walkway extend and connect the two pedestals. But when she stepped off the button, the walkway retracted.

She put the carrier on the button to keep it down. She went up the stairs to the top of the first pedestal, walked across to the second pedestal, and opened the treasure chest. Inside was a flat, semi-
transparent piece of plastic shaped like an arrow.

“Ahah.” She descended, pulled the carrier off the button, and took it back towards the jump pad with her. When she fit the plastic arrow into the dark tile and snapped its corners into place, it came to life and flashed its neon borders.

“Hnn!” She gripped the handlebar tightly and shut her eyes as they were launched into the air. The spinning wasn’t as bad that time, and she almost managed to land on her feet.

Now the only thing on the other side was the closed exit door to the room, and another weighted button. Frisk wheeled the carrier onto the button. The exit door opened.

“Huh?” Her brow furrowed in concern. She took the carrier on and off the button and saw the exit door open and shut accordingly. “I can’t proceed.”

She checked the time on the cell phone. “It’s already 1:00 PM. I might be able to wake Sans up by now…”

“Sans, wake up!” she shouted and pounded on the glass cover. “This thing is really sound-proof.”

She shoved the unit back and forth, trying to shake him. “Oh no, the shock absorption on the bedding is too good!”

What if I just took him out of it and used this carrier plus some of our clothes to weigh it down? Only problem was she had no idea how to get the glass cover to open. She inspected every inch of the contraption from its handlebar to its wheels, looking for a button or latch. She dug her fingertips into the edges of the glass cover and tried to pry it open by force.

“Is there no way to open this thing?!”

Alphys was watching from a camera on the ceiling corner. *Yes, she’ll soon realize she has no choice but to leave him behind. I didn’t name it the SECURE Carrier 2000 for nothing! There’s even a hidden camera right on the front that I can use to track her!*

She pressed a key and changed to the SC2K camera. She suddenly tensed, staring at the screen, as the display showed Frisk’s face close up.

*Beep beep*

Frisk was calling her.

“Hello, Alphys? I need help. I’m stuck in this puzzle room. I’ve thought of everything, but there’s absolutely no way for me to proceed without leaving Sans behind. But, I’m supposed to stick with him! ‘Cause Toriel said he’s supposed to protect me, and I’m supposed to take care of him! Please, I don’t know what to do… Alphys please help me.”

*Protect, what...?* Alphys thought, dazed. “I-I, uh— h - h old on Frisk, I’ll help you!” She pressed a button on her keyboard.

In Frisk’s puzzle room, a chute on the wall opened and dropped a blue cube into the room. Frisk used the cube to weigh down the button.

“Thank-you, Alphys!” she said gratefully.

“Y-you’re welcome!” Alphys replied with a tinge of a blush on her cheeks. On her computer screen,
the image from the camera was shaking as the carrier was pushed along through the doorway.

*Oh my god... What am I doing?* She took off her headset and buried her forehead in her palms. “Ugh. I have to g-get it together, t his is my frick i n’ duty! It doesn’t matter how c-cute and nice she is. It doesn’t matter that she’s friends with everyone... Th- th ey’ll all hate me anyways when they find out what I’ve done.”

S he was thinking back to her fun times hanging out with Undyne. *After all her tough talk, it turns out that she couldn’t go through with hurting an innocent human. Although... since it’s Frisk, I guess that’s not too surprising.* “Heh , ” she chuckled sadly.

O n the computer screen, the first-person camera view from the SC2K was open in one window, and a top-down map of the area was open in another window. Frisk was currently standing at a fork in her path. The map showed that the hallway to her left continued around a corner into a populated area. The right path led to a room marked with a bright orange background.

*No. Undyne’s too good to do something like that. I’ll leave her out of this.* Alphys clenched her fists. She put her headset back on.

*I f anyone deserves to take on this burden, it’s me, not her!*

She gazed down and avoided looking too closely at what was happening on-screen.

“H-hey. It’s me! Uh... G-go to the right here.”

Frisk obeyed and went to the right. After walking for a minute, she said, “Phew, it’s getting hot in here!” She tugged at the edge of her shirt, damp with sweat.

“It’s Hotland after all,” Alphys replied.

Frisk walked out on a metal walkway suspended in the middle of a large storage room. Additional catwalks and side doors lined the perimeter. Various disused machines were down on the floor. Parts of the room were connected and reinforced by cables of spider silk.

Alphys said, “Good! You’re almost there. Now just s-step on that platform. It’ll take you right to... right to your destination!”

Frisk stepped onto a square platform at the end of the metal walkway. It shook a little as its motor came up to speed, and then glided slowly across the room on a thin monorail. It was too far away from the walls for her to get off now.

“Um... Frisk...”

“What?”

“Thanks for coming all this way just to help so many monsters. You’re... a really good person.”

“Thanks?” Frisk was confused by the sad tone of her voice.

“Bye!” Alphys said and hung up.

“Bye? Ok...” Frisk drummed her fingers on the handlebars and looked ahead to the platform’s trajectory. It moved in a straight line, across the room, towards a narrower opening in the middle of the wall. A hot wind blew in her face. She squinted and held up a hand to shield her face.

As the platform entered the corridor, the heat was becoming really uncomfortable. But as she passed,
she didn’t notice the particular sign on the wall that read, ‘SERVICE ENTRANCE ONLY. TURN OFF OVEN FIRST.’ She didn’t panic until the platform rounded a corner.

“Mmm… smells like something’s baking… HN?!!” Her whole body tensed at the sight around the corner. It was a long room. Up ahead there were shelves full of racks and bakery trays containing cookies, croissants, and cake. Everything was distorted and skewed from the heat. The floor was lava.

“I’M BAKING!!” She grabbed the phone, wincing at the scalding touch of its surface, and tapped rapidly on the screen. “Alphys? Alphys?!!” No signal.

She shook the carrier violently. “WAKE UP WAKE UP WAKE UP!!!”

But he did not.

“HEEEEELP!!!!”

A bundle of spider silk flopped down from the corner of the ceiling, unfurling into a long climbing net, creating a diagonal, ascending path. The threads sparkled as if coated with blue glitter.

“H-hah!” Frisk simultaneously gasped in relief and choked on the hot air. She hooked her elbow under the handlebar of the carrier, braced it against her back, and waited for the platform to line up with the spider web.

She jumped and clung to the netting. She panted for a moment, and then tried to climb upwards. The netting helped her out by reeling in again. There was a ventilation shaft on the ceiling of the oven. Frisk, Sans, and the SC2K, were hoisted up into it. Meanwhile, the beady, glowing eyes of a large creature were peeking out from behind the racks.

Alphys had unplugged herself from her computer and curled up on the couch, tightly shutting her eyes and ears. She tried to rationalize to herself, “A-at least this is the last human. Just one more sacrifice and everyone will be free.”

One more.

She opened her eyes and shot up. “I FORGOT ABOUT SANS! N-No!” She ran over to her computer.

“I’ve made a terrible mistake! I changed my mind! I don’t wanna kill anyone! Abort, abort abort!!!” She frantically clicked some things.

“Access denied?!” She gaped at the pop-up when she tried to reverse the platform.

“I can’t see anyone! The camera on the carrier must have blown out! I have no cameras inside Muffet’s bakery!”

She tried calling Sans’s cell phone, but the line was clogged with cobwebs.
“Oof! Ow! Ngh!”

Frisk was dragged, disoriented, through the vent in a bundle of heat-resistant spider silk. When she finally stopped tumbling, she found herself being lowered onto the stone floor of a dark granite bakery. The room was carved out of a blue-black stone with faintly glittering streaks. Only a couple of magical yellow-green torches on the walls provided light. The proofing cabinets were on the ceiling. It smelled like dough and cinnamon.

A heavy door opened to her right. Red-orange heat blasted from the opening, silhouetting a four-legged monster with a body shaped like a giant cupcake. It wheeled out a rack of what smelled like chocolate cake, and shut the door behind. It turned and looked down at the bundle with its two eagerly glowing yellow-green eyes.

“Oh, wow! You saved me—us! Thanks so much! I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to get inside the oven, it was an accident! I thought I was going to die… hm?”

While she was rambling, the spider had walked up close, squatted, and started petting Frisk’s haphazardly sheered hair with one of its limbs, which had a texture similar to styrofoam. It gave out a strange, monstrous chuckle. “Khkhkhkh.”

“U-um, so, I guess you must be… Muffet? You must be wondering why you haven’t heard from the Ruins in four days, huh? Well, Buffet was fine last I saw her, just so you know! But man, it’s been crazy over there. I was only able to crawl out of the shipping tunnel, but everyone else is trapped with no food or power! Luckily, I’ve already got some friends to start working on that this morning, but I could still use your help too.”

“Rm-hm!” The large creature nodded along as she talked. It had somehow retrieved Frisk’s fedora that was dropped during her rescue, and placed it back on her head with an extra pat.

“O-oh, thank you.” The monster's jagged jaw broke into a gruff grin, and little blue blush lines glowed on its face. It moved in closer and lightly brushed Frisk’s cheek with its limb which was coated in very fine, short-haired fuzz.

“Yes, I think I’m fine now!” She glanced to her side to see the Secure Carrier 2000 lying on its side, occupant unharmed. “And Sans is ok too, thank god…”

“Sanns?” The monster curiously switched its attention to the sleeping skeleton behind the glass cover.

Frisk had started to wiggle loose of her bindings. She sat up and let her shoulders slump. “I think… you’re not Muffet.”

Just as she figured it out, a wild, giggling voice echoed through the bakery.

“Ahuuhuhuhuhuhuhuhuhuhuhuhuh! What's that you have caught in your web, my Pet?”

The silk around Frisk tightened again. “Eep!” she squealed. Another line shot out and dragged her across the floor, sliding into the next room. A thin fist pounded a button, causing a circular platform underneath Frisk to slowly rise while rotating, presenting her on a platter.

“A human, in my parlor? Oh my goodness, you’re so cute, I could just eat you up!” Another yellow-green torch illuminated the speaker’s face from below. Small spiders hung down on threads all
around Frisk.

“Do you know what I heard about humans? I heard they hate spiders. I heard they like to step on them! And tear down their homes! And pull out their legs, one by one, just to see them squirm!” She moved in a little closer. “And you know what else? I heard… a human’s SOUL could fetch a marvelous price! Do you know, dearie? How much money I could convince him to give me in exchange for handing you over? Ahuhahua!”

The human blinked and stared up at the cackling spider woman.

“I’m Frisk.”

The spider woman froze and widened all five of her black eyes in surprise. “Oh.”

The lights in the parlor all snapped on at once. The room was filled with maroon carpets, cushy furniture, pink lace, and tea paraphernalia. Muffet looked similar to Buffet, but her skin was purpler, and her hair was shorter and blacker. She wore a red dress with puffed sleeves.

“OH. You are Frisk! Hohoho… Nevermind all of that just now… Come and sit down, let me pour you some tea. Oh, you’re sweating rivers, and your clothing is toasted! Let’s make that some iced tea instead! Have you been inside my oven, dearie? You silly child! That’s only for humans who are not my business contacts! According to our reports, you never committed unauthorized harm towards a single spider! You’re an honored guest, in my books!

Frisk said, “I’ll try my best to stay that way then.”

They sat in a pair of cozy armchairs and discussed various things about bakeries and spiders and crisis situations for half an hour. Muffet’s control spiders dangled from the ceiling and served them snacks.

Frisk exclaimed, “What—9999G for a croissant?! That’s crazy! Why did you set it so high?”

“I usually ask Buffet for pricing advice, but the telegraph was down… so I asked someone else.”

“Who?”

“Some strange kind of monster, like a doll. He seemed to know a lot about money. He said he was a royal minister of… something I forgot.”

Frisk pondered. “Hmm… maybe he was being sarcastic?”

“Really? Someone bought it though!”

Frisk folded her arms. “Well, maybe you got lucky.”

“What price would you suggest then?”

“I dunno… 60?”

“And you think I will make more money that way?”

“You’ll definitely get more customers.”

Muffet bounced out of her seat, splashing a bit of tea out of a cup she was still holding. “Wonderful, I’ll go try it out right now! Well then, Frisk, it’s been lovely. As we discussed, I’ll prepare a donation of assorted pastries for the Ruins. It’ll be ready by tomorrow. I must return to my bake sale now. If
you have any questions, just ask my Pet. And do come again sometime. You’re always welcome in my parlor, dearie!

“Uee hee hee hee!” she giggled while zooming up through a hole in her ceiling. Frisk finished off the last sip of her cold drink, put down the glass and stood up.

She whirled around when Muffet popped back into the room on a web. “Oh, and Frisk? If you see any reporters, be sure to tell them how extremely generous and charitable I am! Tehe!” Frisk sighed as she left for good.

“I left Sans in the bakery,” she noted to herself. She went back into the granite room and approached the carrier.

“Whaaaat?!” She stared at the empty basket. Sans was gone!

“Uh, maybe he’s awake? It’s been almost eight hours… But no! The cover’s open. Sans would never have bothered to open it.”

She noticed some light-colored streaks. “What’s this powder? Oh… it’s just flour.” She sighed as she pinched the soft material between her fingers.

While staring down at the empty contraption, she noticed some small puffs of white on the black floor. Footprints?

She followed the footprints across the floor, through a doorway, and into a new area that was even darker than the bakery. There were torches here too, but it took her eyes a minute to adjust. She walked down a long hallway and came to a T. She followed the flour footprints to the right. After turning two more corners, the footprints faded out.

“Now where do I go?” She walked down random halls and corridors. She passed a few spider farming chambers, but they all seemed to be dead-ends. “What is this, some kind of labyrinth?”

Sans felt some confusing sensations in his body as he came back to consciousness. Like he was hanging upside-down. Something was wound snugly around his body. A soft material was lightly grazing his cheek.

“nn… nheh… heh, hehe that tickles. huh?”

His lids drooped opened. Two glowing yellow-green eyes gazed back into his eyesockets.

“mornin’ there buddy.”

The large monster paused its movements. “Is alive?!”

“yeah dude, i’m alive. just like any normal skeleton.”

The creature smiled and stroked his head again. “Sanns!”

“actually it’s sans.”

“Sanns!” It repeated in its low-pitched giggle and hugged him.

“so, ya wanna tell me where i am? or uh, what i’m doing here?”

“Shh, shh!” it patted his head and cooed. “It ok Sanns. I take care. I is babysitter.”
“would you care to sit me down?”

Just then, they both heard a girl’s voice echoing from the halls in the distance. “Sans? Saaans?!”

“frisk?” he called back.

“Sans, you’re awake?!”

“yep.”

“Where are you?!”

“over here.”

Down on the floor, Frisk came in through the only entrance to Muffet’s Pet’s lair. She looked up at them and gasped. “There you are! What are you doing up there?!”

“uh… just hanging out,” he said and winked.

“Sans!” she groaned. “I was really worried. Hey you!” she pointed at Pet. “Look, I’m grateful to you for saving me, but why did you take my friend away while I was talking to Muffet?”

“No worry. I babysit,” it explained, still patting Sans.

“Sans doesn’t need a babysitter. He’s not a baby. You should have left him where he was in his stroller!”

“stroller?” Sans repeated.


“No. I like.”

“i noticed,” said Sans.

“Release him, now!”

“Go away human!” Pet hissed and hugged Sans’s skull closer against its fluffy frosting hair.

“Give me back my friend!” she stomped on the ground and shouted.

Sans thought, gee these guys are loud. His made his eyes look black and threatening, and whispered something into the spider monster’s ear.

Pet paused its movements and looked slowly at Sans, then at Frisk, then back at Sans who nodded grimly. It gulped and shuddered. It looked away meekly as it lowered him to the ground, slackened his bindings, and crawled out through the way Frisk had come from.

“Sans!” Frisk ran up to him and pulled the silk off of his clothing. “Are you ok?”

“yeah. great job frisk, you saved me. thanks a bundle.”

“No problem.” Frisk beamed.

“heh.” Sans stood up, pleased.

Frisk added, “Thanks for pretending like you needed help just to make me look like the hero.”
Sans looked over Frisk’s shortcut computations in the Torn Notebook. Finding the dim green torchlight insufficient, he cast his own blue light over the page.

“hmm… m… m-hm…” She stood attentively awaiting his response. “indeed… very nice handwriting.”

“anytime kiddo.”

Frisk lost patience and blurted out, “Nevermind that! What about my math work, is it right?”

“course it is. it’s perfect. A+.”

“Yay!” she bounced with joy at his praise.

“yeah, this is really thorough. everything’s optimized for weight and energy in a variety of scenarios. this is above and beyond what i’da bothered to do. i’d probably just have guessed and overshot it.”

“No you wouldn’t. You’re more careful than that. You could have done all of this much faster than me.” She tucked in her chin and mumbled, “Ijustwantedtohelpyou.”

“you did. seriously, this saved me a lotta effort. you’re the best helper. (though i am kinda concerned about all the calls to undyne),” he added while thumbing through his phone in the other hand.

“Oh.” She tugged on her fingers and blushed.

“anyways, nice work and stuff,” he concluded and thumbed through the pages. “here,” he said as he flicked his wrist towards Frisk, snapping shut the cover of the Torn Notebook.

[FIGHT]
→ *Frisk
SMACK SMACK!
-3

Sans flashed to the wall of the room while Frisk dove in the opposite direction, sliding to a halt as her fedora rolled over the floor. The notebook was dropped face-down in the middle of the room between them.

“… that… was…”

“If that had been the other way around…”

“you okay?”

She had 17 HP and a scratch on her cheek, but she was fine. “I’m fine.”

Sans started to move his arm.

“No don’t touch it!” Frisk yelled frantically. He froze. She crawled up to it and carefully pinched the edges shut as she picked it up with both hands. “Did you memorize the values you needed?”

“yeah.”

“Ok.” She stashed the Torn Notebook in her inventory. They both sighed in relief when it was gone.

“cursed notebook.”
“What a rip-off.”

Frisk pulled open her map and pointed. “Papyrus is waiting for you in this room here.”

“k.”

“And then you have a meeting at HCT HQ at 4:00.”

“k. let’s get goin’ then.”

“This way!”

They left the spider monster’s room and walked down a hallway until they came across a four-way junction. Frisk hesitated for a beat before leading them to the right.

“back the way you came?”

“Mhm.”

After 10 minutes of winding and wandering, they went through a doorway and found themselves back in Pet’s room.

“nice try kid.” Sans smirked as she fumed in frustration. “this time i lead.”
Undyne sat in the bed of the maintenance vehicle, accompanying the mole and the red guy as they rolled into Bridge Seed Garden B. Somewhere along the way, they had gotten her to wear one of their yellow hard-hats. She hopped out and tossed a bridge seed across the pond, forming a bridge to the corner room. The red guy steered the vehicle over it while grumbling, “Ugh, you can’t walk two feet these days without being up to your armpits in puzzles!”

Besides the pile of rubble in the corner, the room contained nothing but a wooden bench. A pair of eyes peeked out from a dark crack in the wall, but disappeared as Undyne looked in their direction.

The red guy noted, “This stream looks easy enough to plug up with a barrier and some sealant. We’ll have someone fix it temporarily with magic for now.”

“Got it.” Undyne said. She called Papyrus again and told him to, “Go to Snowdin and find one of those Ice Cap kids, and tell ‘em to come to Waterfall.”

Red guy added, “The water’s branching off into a different crevice, so it looks like we can start clearing this corner in the meantime, as long as we keep the walls stable.”

They used Undyne as their excavator again. She started picking up the large chunks of rock and placing them in the corner of the room. They used harnesses and pulleys as she dug further into the pit. They shared a look of recognition as she picked up a lavender chunk of the shipping passage wall.

The trio of Ice Cap kids showed up. The red guy directed them to create a smooth ice wall across the stream that was draining water away from the fields. Undyne approved. “Well done punks.”

The green Ice Cap said, “Finally, some recognition of our ice fort building skills!”

The red Ice Cap said, “Who knew all we had to do to get Undyne’s attention was to constantly challenge her guards during their training sessions?”

The blue Ice Cap was secretly checking if Undyne was looking at its hat.

Undyne slammed a rock down next to the trio, causing them all to jump. “Don’t let it go to your hats.”

As she bored down further into the wreckage, the mole clung to the sides, installing a spring-loaded framework of beams to reinforce the structure of the loose walls.

20 meters down, when she picked up the next piece, her upper lip crinkled. “Euch! What is that? Something smells awful!”

The mole piped up, “But Undyne, you don’t have a nose.”

“I can still smell things!”

“Really? Wow! Do you smell using your teeth?”

“Shut up!” she snapped and continued removing the boulders.

The mole stopped chattering, but not before whispering a quick, “I love puzzle!”
27 meters down, it was so dark it was difficult to see, even with the light from the mole’s hat. Undyne pointed small, glowing, cyan spears to help her see the bright, round bars sticking out from among the dark-blue and dark-gray rocks. She touched down on the strange grill, squatted, and ran her finger along the smooth...

“Bone.”

They were too strong to crack open—she had to wrench them out of position. The wall rubble shifted and crumbled in response.

“Woopie-dee! More PUZZLE!” the mole cheered as he hopped into the musky box. He pulled the zipper of a backpack on the ground with his pink-tipped nose. “What’s this? Measurement gauges? Wiring tools?”

“Hey! Let me see.” Undyne motioned for him to get out of the way. She bent her tall body down, reaching into the narrow space. She saw a wallet decorated with a large red heart. A notebook full of nerdy math lessons. An empty metal bottle. Streaks of red in the dirt.

She recalled how the mole had gone in and out of the collapsed bit of the passage. Sans could fit in there…

She recalled Frisk’s vague explanation. “We found another way out!”

She must be as tiny as he is. And Papyrus mentioned they got hurt…

She recalled Alphys’s scolding. “What if someone was d-d-down there?”

Undyne was gripping a small-sized, lime-green hardhat in her fingertips. “What’s wrong, Captain Undyne?” said the mole.

“Oh! Are you guys done needing my help?” she asked curtly.

“Oh, well I guess so…”

She vaulted over the edge of the newly dug hole, strode past the red guy, and went back to her house. She wanted to throw spears everywhere in frustration, but she bit her lip and forced them all to evaporate. She fell to her knees and held back her shaking fist from punching down her own front door.

Sans and Frisk appeared in a blue rock room, full of cardboard boxes tied up with twine.

“Woah!” She stumbled slightly on the landing and grabbed his sleeve.

“great shortcut, huh?”

“So that’s what it feels like normally. It’s way better than those stupid jump pads.” Sans murmured in agreement. “Though there is still a little jolt.”

“yeah, that’s why i didn’t wanna take you back to the ruins when you were injured.” He looked around the room. “you guys took care of everything while i was asleep, huh?”

“Uh-huh.”

“and you didn’t get in trouble or anything?”

She happened to be facing away when he asked, so she had a second to compose her expression
before she looked him in the eyes and said, “Yeah.”

“goody.”

* bzip

“Ribbit!” Coco the Froggit was startled out of his standing snooze by Sans’s sudden appearance in the mail room.

“hang on, i got two more.”

* bzip

“Ribbit!” Coco jumped again.

* bzip

“Ribbit!” He seemed just as startled the third time.

Sans couldn’t help wanting to check on Toriel himself. He found her still lying against the tree among the same crowd he had seen there last. Many of the monsters were sleeping or quietly resting, trying to conserve their energy. Toriel had 3HP left and looked like a limp dishrag.

“S-sans!” she rasped. “You’re ok!”

“here tori, eat this. don’t worry, there’s enough for everyone,” he assured her and fed her one of the long, hairy, brown reed fruits. She opened her mouth and accepted it, looking relieved at first. But as she chewed it her face scrunched up in a grimace and she looked queasy as she forced herself to swallow it.

“W-what have you fed me? It’s disgusting.”

“a water sausage,” he said and shrugged. “what, it doesn’t taste any better when you’re starving?”

“No. It is like… cardboard blended with dirt. But no matter. I am proud of you!” she said and smiled at him. Her face already looked fuller and she had recovered 30 HP. “We will survive now. The children may whine about it, but I shall set a strict policy against ingratitude.”

“heh,” he nodded and shared a chuckle with her. Some other monsters, including Frisk’s employees, were already running around, to and from the market, distributing the rations. Conversations and movements were stirring up as monsters realized that food was being passed around.

“Sans…” Toriel’s smile faded as she looked over his shoulders. “Where is Frisk?”

“oh, uh, i just left her in the other storage room for a sec.”

“You mean… a room outside of the Ruins?”

“yep.”

“And she’s alone now?”

“well my bro went out somewhere so i think so, yeah.”

“Sans.”
“What are you doing here? Go back to her right now!” she scolded and waved him away.

“Okay!” He obeyed and hurried back to the mail room.

He popped back into the room where Frisk was, took her hand, and whisked them away again.

They appeared on the roof of a warehouse in Hotland. There were a few other buildings to its sides, but no monsters on the quiet street down below. Still holding hands, they paused at the edge of the rooftop.

Frisk was gazing at the winding cliffs high above them, trying to determine if those were the same paths they had just been on.

Sans was checking his phone. He noticed there were 34 missed calls from Alphys. wonder what that’s all about? well, i’ll call her back after this. He set his phone to silent to prevent further disturbances and pocketed it. Then he took them down to the ground, walked around the corner of the building, and rang the doorbell.

*ding dong*

A man made out of an ethereal black vapor, answered the door. He looked over their heads for a second before glancing down. “You’re actually on time. I’m amazed.”

Frisk sniffed the air and said, “Smells like espresso.”

The vapor trailing off of the man’s head flickered as he fixed his white sunglasses on her. “Is that a…”

“a professional chef, you guessed it,” Sans said with a wink.

“…a child…”

“she is a qualified representative of the ruins.”

“…a human,” Brew emphasized.

“she’s my buddy,” Sans warned while squeezing her hand more firmly.

“…Whatever. Let’s just get this underway.”

Inside was a living space that felt somewhere between an apartment and an office. There were folders and science magazines stacked upon the surfaces, Mettaton posters on the walls, and a landline phone. Through a doorway to the right of the lobby, Frisk noticed a room with a tiled floor that looked like a break room kitchen. The monsters already present glanced at her with curiosity. There was a guy with a green-and-black diamond head, and a purple-skinned high schooler who was lounging on the couch. Sans took his laptop out of his inventory and set it up on the table.

Brew said to Frisk, “You can hang out with the other little girl while we do our boring work.”

‘Little”? Frisk thought dubiously while staring at the female monster’s chest.

“Is that a school uniform?”

“Yeah, what about it?!” the girl said defensively.
“It’s so cool!”

She blinked at the unexpected praise. “You think it’s cool?”

Soon after, the doorbell rang again. In came a chunky red-skinned monster with a little mole on his shoulder, who said, “We finished our survey, ho!”

The red guy dumped a bunch of items on the table including the notebook they had recovered. “Is this yours?”

“yep, that’s m’stuff.”

The mole asked, “How’d you get outta that hole?”

“same way i get anywhere else,” he answered vaguely. His eyesockets twitched in discomfort as he peeled through the pages of his notebook, which had been partially dipped in some liquid that was probably not water. The other monsters started filling each other in and discussing all the information.

The mole said, “Undyne helped us get those! There was a column collapse at least 30 meters.”

The red guy spread a map over the table. “So far the length of the damage extends from about here to about there.”

Brew said, “Did you recover any of the materials? All of the walls, flooring, and cables were created before our time, so they will have to be reproduced to match.”

Sans was zoning out of the conversation and gazing across the room at Frisk. looks like they’re getting along, he thought. She was wearing a bedazzled expression while squishing the sucker pads on Danya’s tentacle limbs, who was shyly blushing from the attention.

“heh… ‘m hungry,” he mumbled.

Frisk’s ears picked up the phrase like an alarm bell. “I’ll make food!” she declared and ran to inspect the kitchen.

There was a counter, a standard electric stove-and-oven unit, a file cabinet for some reason, and a fridge. The fridge was empty except for a few bags of potato chippels. The drawers contained some forks, spoons, and butter knives, but they were all plastic implements saved up from past orders of take-out. The cabinets contained 2 large round pots, and some bowls and plates. “Soup it is then.”

She went back into the other room. Danya was standing right behind Sans and Brew, looking over their shoulders, while Sans was working on a new project document in the window labeled, [Untitled_3.ucd – UnderCAD].

“don’t have a material for this, i’ll create a new one… hmm, what’s the name of that mineral again?” He wondered aloud while hovering his cursor over the web browser icon.

Frisk tried not to interrupt them as she quietly stepped in next to Sans and whispered, “I wanna buy groceries.”

“sure, i can take ya…”

Danya was paying attention to the screen and said, “The common Waterfall rock? I know, it’s called —”
“Danya!” Brew announced. “Escort Frisk to the grocery store.”

“um…” Sans hesitated, but everyone else seemed eager to continue without interruptions.

“It’s right next door,” Brew added.

“Yeah, it’s like two doors down,” said the red guy.

“It’s real close!” said the mole.

“heh… guess i can let you outta my sight for a minute then,” he said, winking casually. “but take my phone anyways.”

As they left, Brew remarked, “I thought she wasn’t allowed to borrow his phone?”

After they shut the door behind them, Frisk said, “Wait, but… aren’t you part of their team too? You were just saying something.”

“Whatever, don’t worry about it,” she said and shrugged. They walked past the next building and went into an entrance that had a sign with an image of a leek hanging above the door.

Frisk walked up and down the short shelf aisles and hummed skeptically. “This store doesn’t have a very good selection. I could make something out of this at least,” she said while picking up a bag of flour. She twiddled with her newly-recovered wallet and said, “I don’t have that much money either. Everything outside of the Ruins is so expensive.”

Danya said, “I’ll help you! If you don’t have enough…”

“I’ll pay you back,” Frisk was assuring her when the entry door chimed and opened again.

In came a trio of monster girls wearing the same school uniform as Danya. Frisk noted the look of dread on her face as she attempted to ignore them and stare very hard at the vegetable bins. But the leader of the trio, a tall, green-feathered avian creature, deliberately walked up behind her. Broad feathers with brightly colored tips lined her arms, and she had a red flap under her beak which jiggled when she spoke.

“Oh, hi there Dan! You’ve made a friend, huh? That’s good, I was getting worried about you! You never talk to anyone at school. But, I guess even you can get an elementary schooler to like you.” The other two giggled.

Frisk whirled around and said, “I’m not an elementary schooler!”

Danya said, “Frisk’s not a little brat. She has a job. Unlike you.”

The Astigmatism said with a gasp of surprise, “You’re working too?”

The long-eared bunny monster standing next to her was putting some mushrooms in her basket. She glanced towards them and said in a hushed tone, “I feel sorry for her.”

Frisk said, “Why? I made up the job I wanted, and now I’m doing it. Do these guys treat you this way at school?” she asked her companion in disbelief.

“Yeah. They don’t understand girls like us who do honest work. Their parents just buy them whatever they want.”

“At least I have one of those,” said the bird monster.
“I can see,” Frisk nodded. “They’ve taught you a lot about the importance of grooming your feathers… and not much else.”

“Ugh. Shut up, you… wordy little person.” The bird girl turned to her bunny friend who had just finished checking out at the counter. “Did you get what you needed?”

“Yeah, Mom wanted me to buy a bunch of those mushrooms that come from Snowdin Forest.”

The Astigmatism said, “Yay! I love your mom’s sno-fo’ ‘shroom soup.”

The bird girl turned back to Danya. “Well, you kids have fun at your… ‘jobs’. I’ll see you in class tomorrow. And please remember, you’re not allowed to bring your emotional support human to school.” The trio burst into laughter as they left the shop.

Danya looked defeated. “Um… sorry…”

But Frisk wasn’t listening. She was already more interested in the bin full of brown and purple mushroom caps. “So, they’re good in soup, huh?” She looked pleased at how easily they tore apart in her fingers.

Continuing through the produce bins, she sniffed and tested small bits of the herbs available. She sorted carefully through the shelves of mostly-intact chicken eggs. “Need some sort of kick… there we go,” she said and picked up a jar of concentrated tomato paste. "Oh," she smirked knowingly as she picked up a bottle of Grillby's brand ketchup.

“Hm…” Danya wanted to say something but Frisk seemed too busy thinking about food.

They left the store with a bag overflowing with bundles of green leaves.

“Frisk!”

“Huh, what?” she stopped walking to listen.

“…” Danya’s mouth hung open stupidly. She panicked and rapidly cycled through her possible dialogue options.

→ Thank her for defending you.
→ Ask for her phone number.
→ Compliment her hat.

“Uh… Nice hat!!”

Frisk was surprised at the random compliment, but smiled and said, “Thanks! I got it from Papyrus.”

“Huh?” Danya’s lip twitched.

“Papyrus is Sans’s brother…” Frisk explained while simultaneously reading the signs of recognition in Danya’s expression. “Oh! Have you met him?” she asked excitedly and smiled harder.

“What, Papyrus—”

“He’s so cool, right?”

“—What a loser!”

Elsewhere... A pair of large hands broke a red-frosted, heart-shaped cookie in half, and popped the half into the mouth of their owner, Asgore, who sat solemnly at his kitchen table.
The girls returned to the office. Danya looked down at her feet and quietly shuffled in behind the other monsters. Sans stopped Frisk on her way into the kitchen and asked to borrow her notebook. His own was sitting on top of a towel on the table, opened to a soaked sketch.

"Sure. Be careful with it though," she said.

"don't worry, i'll ask someone else to do my torn notebookkeeping for me," he said and gestured for her to set it down in front of the mole, who was already helpfully holding a pen in his squishy pink nose-tip. "this guy nose what's up."

Finally, Frisk went into the kitchen to start cooking. She tore up the mushrooms into strips and laid them out on an oven tray. She opened the oven door and put them on the top rack, right beneath the glowing red burners.

“Oh right. I should give Sans his phone back…” She took it out of her pocket and thought, “Actually, I could use the timer app.” A pot on the stove was filled with eggs, submerged in water that was on the verge of boiling.

A pop-up on the screen was indicating 35 missed calls from Alphys. She stared blankly at the screen for a second.

“EH?!” she exclaimed her delayed reaction and quickly navigated to the contacts to call her back. “Hi! Sorry, the phone was on silent!”

Alphys spoke in a raspy, quivering monotone. “…F-Frisk… A-are you alright… i-is Sans alright…”

“We’re fine. Are you OK? You sound kind of funny.”

“H-h-ha ha ha… you’re asking if I’m OK… th-that’s really f-funny… y-you’re the one who almost died… ha ha…”

“Oh, that. Yeah, that was pretty scary! The platform accidentally going into the oven and all. But luckily, Muffet’s assistant was checking on it just then and saved us.”

“…You didn’t get burned at all?”

“No. He got us out as soon as I screamed for help. And Sans was protected thanks to that Secure Carrier of yours. So don’t worry, it’s OK!”

“No, Frisk… it’s not OK… you don’t understand… J-just when I thought I had already made the… w-worst mistake of my life… I went and outdid myself! H-hah! Frisk. I was not helping you.”

“Huh? What do you…” She glanced at the pot and heard the water boiling.

“I mean!! I gave you that carrier mainly to make it easier for me to separate you from him. And I activated those puzzles on purpose to slow you down!” She rambled faster. “And then I tried to call the guards on you a bunch of times, and the only reason you didn’t get caught is because I’m so bad at using the phone because I hate using the phone! And then I told you to go into the oven! Not accidentally! On purpose!! I tried to kill you so that I could harvest your Soul and do my job of breaking the barrier for everyone!!”

Frisk stood motionless, holding the phone up to her ear. She glanced at the boiling water and whispered, “35…”

She heard Alphys’s nervous breathing through the phone.
“Don’t hang up!” she spoke and startled Alphys who just had her claw on the button, about to hang up out of shame.

“Listen. Alphys. Um… Do you wanna have lunch with me?”

“…What?!”

“(55) Yeah. I’m cooking right now. I’m making some, uh, noodle soup. There should be plenty leftover. I’ll need your help to finish it all. So just… come over. OK?”
Forgive Her

Frisk had taken off her stuffy hoodie and equipped her black apron. She took the mushrooms out of the oven and set them aside. Just as she was going to take the eggs out of the boiling water, she realized the rim of the pot was annoyingly high up for her.

The little mole was perched on the armrest of a cushioned stack chair. “Undyne helped us clear up a lot of the rubble! We sure dug a long way down there!”

Frisk came and whispered, “scuse me.” He hopped onto the table as she tugged his chair away. He pointed at the computer screen and said, “I jammed in some supports all along the shaft here! It’s all set up for Mole access now…”

She stood on the chair and licked her lips in concentration as she used a flimsy plastic spoon and fork, which bent under the weight of the eggs as she took them out and laid them in a plastic bin full of cold water.

There were no cutting boards so she just made sure the counter was nice and clean before taking one of the large, spherical onions. She uselessly sawed the edge of a plastic knife against its papery skin before the utensil slipped and sprang out of her fingertips, falling to the floor with a *click.

“the second break was actually back here,” said Sans, lightly circling out chunks of the map that the red guy had spread out over the table. He noted Frisk’s presence as she walked behind him, past their table, and into a door on the left side of the room that lead into the garage.

“Maybe we should move on. This is starting to sound like more than a weekend repair job,” said Brew.

“it’s going to be extensive and expensive,” Sans agreed. “let’s get back to our current project then.” Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Frisk come back carrying a blade attachment to some machine, as large as her torso. She crossed behind them and went back into the kitchen again. “see if we can modify our plans to…”

There was a considerable pause between each thundering

*CHOP.

“speed up the process a bit…” He stared determinedly at the screen of his laptop, navigating to his

*CHOP.

main project file, even as a bead of sweat pooled on the back of his neck.

*CHOP.

Frisk stood on her chair and dumped the cubed onions and the roasted mushrooms into the larger pot. They sizzled in the cooking oil. Squinting, she reached down and stirred them with a plastic spoon.

She walked through the meeting and went into the garage again. Sans heard a bunch of drawers opening and closing as the tools clattered noisily. She walked back behind him again, this time carrying a foot-long wrench, and some other tools. He tried not to wonder too hard about the strange sounds coming from the kitchen.
Frisk marched in place on top of a plastic bag, kneading the dough with her socks. She used a PVC pipe to roll out the dough, and then folded it between an extra sprinkling of flour. She then stood on the chair for extra height leverage as she held the machine blade firmly with both hands and aimed it over the dough.

*SCHOP*

Sans’s head peeked around the corner of the doorframe, staring wide-eye-socketed as she carefully chopped the dough into thick noodles. She dropped the raw noodles into the second pot of boiling water. Then she used the long-handed wrench to give the reddish-brown broth a stir. She used a tiny plastic spoon to test the broth, then added some more tomato paste. On the counter, set aside, was a sorted pile of green herbs, and a plastic knife lying next to a bunch of cut-in-half soft-boiled eggs. With bowls laid out on the counter and ready to go, she used the wrench in her right hand to push up the noodles against the side of the pot, while holding a pair of alan wrenches like chopsticks in her left hand to grab and transfer them into the bowls.

*DING DONG*

“Sans, you get it!” said Brew.

“you got it,” he said and tore his eyes away from the cooking process.

Alphys stood and waited. “Hm, I wonder who’s gonna answer. I kind of hope it’s not…”

The door opened. “heya.”

“H-hi Sans!”

“if it isn’t the royal scientist. come to join the party?”

“Yeah, well y’know, Frisk told me to c-come over…”

“she did huh?” His tone sent a shiver down her spine. She felt his eyelights pelting her back as she came into the hall. There’s s-so many people in here. Frisk was setting some bowls down in front of monsters who eagerly dug in at once. Sans shuffled back over to his spot, commenting, “cool, i didn’t know you guys were pals.”

Alphys shuddered. He knows. She knows. They all know. Everything.

Frisk came out of the kitchen with a second set of bowls. “Yes.” She gave one bowl to Sans. “We’re pals.” She came over to Alphys with the second bowl.

“S-so, you made uh, noodle s-soup…?” She shrugged in uncertainty and thought about the endless packets of instant noodles she often survived on.

*CLUNK*

“Woa…” Alphys’s eyes glazed over at the bundles of green herbs and soft-boiled eggs floating on top of a layer of thick, cylindrical noodles. A savory aroma from the gleaming broth hit her nostrils and made a drop of drool pool at the corner of her mouth. Her gaze drifted upwards and met Frisk’s expression of determination.
“Eat up.”

Frisk solemnly handed her a tiny white plastic fork.

She caught a few noodles on the tip of the fork, and sipped some of the broth from the rim of the bowl. She ate the egg half with a big bunch of green stuff in one bite. "Mmm, this is, *sluuurp*, the best soup I've ever had in my life! Ugh... why don't I ever go outside and get real f-food more often?" She glanced and Frisk again and quickly looked down as she ate her soup.

"I'm so sorry for everything... I... l-liked you a lot, from the start, you know. But I thought I had to..." Her eyelids drooped as she stared at the reflective surface of the soup broth. Two little tears pooled against her glasses.

"Ah, come with me!" Frisk tugged on her arm. Confused, she followed her into the kitchen. "Sorry, I wasn't trying to embarrass you in front of everyone!"

"You're sorry?!" Alphys gawked in return. "That's the least of my concerns right now! I'm just so r-relieved that you're alright now. I c-can't believe you would be so k-kind to me, a-after today..." She trailed off and wiped her cheek with her hand.

Sans was not listening to the guys at the table and paying more attention to eavesdropping on Frisk as much as he could without getting out of his seat. He stared skeptically into his soup as he drizzled ketchup into it. "Sorry... but for what?"

Frisk gave Alphys a tissue from her apron pocket. "I'm not mad. You were just trying to do what you thought was right."

"Clearly there's a p-problem with my moral compass, because I don't even know what I think is right."

Frisk didn't know how to respond and stared politely.

“Um, m-maybe I'll go take a peek at what S-sans is working on...” she added. Frisk smiled and nodded and picked up some plates full of extra soup toppings.

Alphys found the spot beside Sans to be unoccupied and no one seemed to mind her standing there. Frisk set her plates down on the table and said, "There's more eggs and stuff here if anyone wants."

Meanwhile, Danya was standing in the back, leaning against a drawer chest by the wall. She bit her lip shut and stared the scene in front of her, thinking, Holy crap, it's Dr. Alphys! She's like, totally my idol! And Frisk is her personal friend? And now she's hanging out with Sans? Ugh... I hope they don't find out what I said about their annoying friend.

"hey kid," Sans addressed her.

“What, me?!”

“yeah, you. having fun starin’ at me? or you wanna c’mere and look at this?"

Before she knew it, she was sitting down in his chair at the table, Alphys and Sans standing on either side.

“have you seen this program before?” The menu bar read [Untitled_2 – UnderCAD].

“Uh no, I’ve never used a computer before… it looks pretty complicated.”
“ok, that’s fine. ignore all this stuff on the sides for now. that’s a model of the trading tunnel we’re building between the ruins and the forest. if you go through these tabs here, i put it on a few layers, so this here’s a model of the terrain you guys are digging out now.”

“Oh, I know!” She pointed at the screen. “It’s dug out up to there now.”

“Oh, it is? you must have done a little extra the day after the power went out. you can update it. see these little nodes here?”

“Uh-huh!” She raised her limbs to click on them and encountered a slight issue. She didn’t have fingers. She managed to operate the touch pad well enough anyways with the narrowest tips of her two-tentacled forearms.

“now type in the new value in the pop up.”

She concentrated and squeezed her most dexterous sucker pad on the tip of her right arm into a narrower shape, and pressed the numbers on the keyboard.

“now hold shift and press the + down there to make a new duplicate layer. we’re gonna narrow the attack surface here just enough for a monster to walk through, so we’ll have access to the ruins again asap.”

“How big of a monster?”

“good point. we should make it tall enough for tori.”

Frisk said, “What about Asgore?”

Sans noticed she was still walking around serving food. “frisk, will ya sit down and eat already?” He used his magic to make a chair move and prod the backs of her knees. She fell into the seat and finally had a chance to have a bite of her own food. He saw the scratch on her cheek disappear as her HP recovered. But now, she had some strange purple dots underneath her eyes, which he had never seen before. “how many hours have you been awake now?”

“I’m fine.”

“that’s not what i asked…”

“Is there an option for materials?” Danya asked, still focusing on the project.

Alphys said, “It’s over here.”

Frisk grabbed the ketchup across the table and said, “Stop letting other people do your job for you, Sans.”

“it’s called mentoring.”

Danya said, “Hey, I think we should switch to a Mini-Gopher XD, is there something here that keeps track of the machines we’re using?”

“yeah, it’s the budget and resources tab here. hey, you’re pickin’ this up pretty quick.”

Brew was bored of the design work, lying on the couch with his feet in up on the side-rest while browsing the internet on his phone. He noted, “Didn’t know you paid that much attention at the meetings.”
Sans said, “surprising what you find out when you ask.”

Alphys said, “Have you considered a career in science or engineering?”

About an hour later, they were finished. Sans summarized the proceedings. “well, now we know what we’re doing tomorrow. we’ll have a small version of the Ruins Trading Tunnel open, estimated completion time twelve days, give or take two days. then we can allow people to come in and out while we expand it and build all the infrastructure according to our original construction plan. and after that we’ll be starting on repairs to the Secret Shipping Tunnel and the related rooms in waterfall.”

“Hold up, what are you talking about?” said Brew. “Repairing the shipping tunnel? You can go ahead and do that, but I never said anything about my team taking that project.”

“oh. so take it?”

The diamond-headed guy who hadn’t said anything yet said, “The problem is, who’s the client? The Ruins again? We don’t even know who owns that tunnel.”

“Check the file on the dresser,” said Brew.

Alphys who was standing closest, picked up the battered old folder and flicked through the first few cover pages. “Umm… client… ‘District Home.’”

“So it is the Ruins,” diamond-head affirmed. “We have a rep here, don’t we? What’s your budget look like?”

"It's like 0," said Frisk. “We poured every last half-G we had into the Trading Tunnel project.”

“So you’re broke.”

“Yeah.”

“Well… I estimate the changes we made to the Trading Tunnel will add some cost, although our company may be able to forgive that small difference. But the Shipping Tunnel is another problem. It's no routine job, and my boss hates administrative work.”

As if to prove his point, Brew laughed aloud at his phone. “Man, the special effects this episode are just gold...”

“…As you can see, he’s really not interested in deciding if our team is going to be responsible for the repairs, or finding a buyer for the project. So you are going to have to figure that part out on your own.”

“We solved the food crisis by getting farmers in Waterfall to donate to our cause,” she said hopefully.

“Donating? Well, even if our team were willing to do charity work for you (which we’re not), construction can’t operate like that. We order parts and materials from a dozen different factories and refineries, and we sometimes hire specialists and consultants for certain operations. All of that cannot operate on goodwill.”

Frisk and Sans looked at each other like they were wondering what to do next.

Diamond guy checked the time on his phone and muttered about how late it was getting. “Let me get this straight. You say this situation is putting everyone in the Ruins in danger, right?”
“Yeah.”

“And you still consider yourselves subjects of King Asgore, do you not?”

“I think so… our merchants still pay taxes to the kingdom.”

“So… don’t you think you are entitled to some assistance in an emergency? Have you considered asking for financial aid?”

“huh, wait a minute…” Sans started.

Alphys said, “Hey yeah! That sounds like a great idea, I mean, Asgore pays me to research the barrier and stuff… Even though I decided not to…”

“?” Sans tilted his head curiously.

“But anyways, that sounds like a good idea. You should ask for emergency financial aid!”

Frisk was nodding along. “I could tell him about Toriel, too.”

Diamond guy added, "Lemme give you a tip kid. If you're asking for funds, you wanna go directly to the King. Try to avoid any annoying middlemen."

“hey,” Sans tugged on her sleeve. “can i talk to you outside for a sec?”

They went outside for a second.

“you wanna go talk to the king?”

“Uh-huh.” She nodded with confidence.

“you do understand that asgore has declared war on humanity? every human who’s fallen here so far has died. by his hand or otherwise. he has six human souls in his castle already. what makes you think he’ll spare you?”

She took his hand. “Because you’ll be with me. I don’t have to be afraid of anything when I’m with you… right?”

“right. but…”

“Come on, it’ll be fine! You’ve done a great job of protecting me so far—I haven’t died a single time!”

His eyesocket-lids drooped as he gazed distantly at her fingers, lightly squeezing them back. “yeah. except for that one time when your heart stopped beating.”

They both fell silent and contemplated morbid thoughts.

*ring… ring

Sans answered his phone. "... hello?"

"Hi! Sans."

"oh, hey. what's up undyne?"

"Sooo, uh... I was just thinking. About lots of... stuff, and things. And I feel like I owe you an
"o...k?" Frisk let go of his hand and put hers in her hoodie pockets. "for what?"

"Well! You know earlier today when I said we aren't on speaking terms anymore? I was pretty riled up when I said that. Now that I've had some time to cool off... I think that was too harsh. I know you haven't been feeling well, so I shouldn't be so hard on you. I didn't know about your... condition."

"condition?" Frisk's lip twitched a bit. Her eyes were hidden by the brim of her hat.

"Yeah, you know... your 'period'. Anyways I'm sorry about today! Let's start over. I still want you on sentry duty when you're done with your projects, OK?!"

"ok."

"So we're good?"

"we're good."

"Great! Hope you feel better soon. Bye!"

They hung up. Sans stared blankly at the phone in his hand. "what the hell???"

He shrugged and put it away. "whelp, back to what we were talking about. hey, are you ok?" He noticed Frisk's hands were trembling inside her pockets.

She looked back up at him. There were beads of tears at the corners of her eyes. "Yeah, fine." Her voice sounded strained though. She still had those strange markings under her eyes, like perfectly round purple stickers.

He sighed. "look... i think you should call it a day. you're completely exhausted. it hasn't even been 24 hours since you almost died. how 'bout you get some rest, and we can think about this funding thing tomorrow?"

"But Sans, I want to do it now!"

"what's the big rush?"

"You don't get it. Out here everyone knows and respects you. But not me. I don't have that much time left to move around freely in this place. Word's gonna get out about me being a human, soon. And then I'll have to go hide in the Ruins again. So before that happens, I want to do everything I can out here! And I'd also like to see as much of the Underground as possible."

"you're... very determined, huh?"

She smiled.

“you’re sure about this?"" 

“"Yes.”” 

“i'mma ask you one more time. are you absolutely, dapsolutely sure you wanna go see the king?” 

“"Yes.”” 

“ok. close your eyes,” he said as they joined hands again.
She closed her eyes. She felt a little jolt and the ground shifting beneath her feet. The smell of a different room filling her nostrils.

“now open.”

They stood in a hallway with stone brick walls. They walked a few steps and turned at a junction where the walls fell away, revealing sprawling city streets. "you wanted to see more of the underground, right?"

"Wow!" Frisk drank in the scenery as they walked along the castle wall.

"looks nifty right? let's come back sometime later. i'll show ya some of my favorite dives."

"Yeah!!" She skipped enthusiastically. The view of the Capital disappeared behind a wall as they came to another corner. Sans tugged on her hand. She slowed down and followed his guarded expression as they approached the house at the end of the hallway. The door was hanging open in between the beds of green bushes.

Sans poked his head inside and called "'llo? asgore?" He relaxed a bit and let go of Frisk's hand. "he's not here."

"This house looks just like Toriel's," Frisk said. Sans chuckled lightly at her reaction. "What, does that mean something special?"

He shrugged.

"Hey, someone made a mess in here!" Against the wall next to the descending staircase was a low bookshelf. Someone had pulled out a suspension file box and strewn its contents over the floor, all the way up to the front landing. The line circled in red in the accounting book by Frisk’s feet caught her interest.

"Huh? It's..." She squatted down for a closer look. "The date I came here."

"oh."

“And that’s…” She pointed to another circled line a few columns down. “The date I opened my restaurant."

"someone's popular," he remarked. "asgore's probably hanging out in the courtyard."

"Ok, where's that?"

"down the stairs."

"Alright," she said. Ignoring the papers for now, she stepped towards the chain that was fastened across the corner of the wall and the railing of the staircase. She raised the chain in her hand and ducked down.

"excuse me, what?"

"Huh?" she paused and looked back.

"what are you doing, frisk? that's like, a waist-high fence. you can't just duck under it." She bit her cheek as he continued to chastise her. "what do they teach you kids on the surface these days..."

"Where are the keys then?"
"he leaves them in the kitchen and the hallway," he said, snickering. She went into the kitchen and picked up the key from the counter, came back, and unlocked one of the padlocks. Both ends of the fence hung limp from their fastenings. She took a step past them.

"ah-ah."

“What?! I unlocked the chain!” She gestured to the broken S-shape on the ground.

"there are two keys," he insisted.

"But,"

"two."

"It's not ev—"

“uh.”

“The padlock’s—”

“uh-uh.”

She clenched her fists and huffed. “Fine!” She stomped down the hallway, snatched the second key off of the nightstand, and fitted it into the second padlock. She caught Sans’s grinning eyes as she walked past him and stepped down the staircase.

At the bottom step of the staircase, Frisk held out her hand and grabbed a handful of Sans’s collar when he teleported in front of her.

“What are you doing Sans, you can’t just teleport down here! Use the stairs like a normal person, you degenerate!”

His eyes went black for a second. Then he grinned widely and shook with laughter, which Frisk found to be contagious. They were still coming down from that jumpscare as they entered the final corridor.

“h-heh!”

“Hehe… woah! It’s sunlight?” She stopped and admired the windows on the left wall.

“Yeah. looks like we came at just the right time—i love the way this room gets all yellow in the evening. hey, we’re real close now. maybe we should think about what we’re going to say.”

“Ah, right—our work! Asgore must be just around the corner. We’ll have to explain to him about everything that’s going on in the Ruins. Hopefully I can convince him that talking to me about financial aid and providing assistance to his own subjects is more important than killing me for my Soul.”

“good plan. my money’s on you, kid.”

“Well, well, well…” said a new voice. A door shut. Sans and Frisk whirled around. She noticed a few closed doors on the right wall, and a figure moving out from behind the long row of columns. The sunlight was shining in at just the right angle to make them squint at his silhouette.

“For the last FOUR DAYS I’ve been running to and fro, trying to make sense off all this MESS. A dozen different people telling me with TWO-dozen different stories. Half my bots are
INACCESSIBLE, that useless failure of a scientist won’t answer my calls, I have no IDEA where R.D. ran off to, and even the guards are taking the DAY OFF for some incomprehensible reason! All because some IDIOT threw a fucking BOULDER on top of the shipping route, and THEN, some OTHER idiot went and set off a COLUMN LANDSLIDE in Waterfall! That was YOU TWO, wasn’t it?! And NOW!! You want ME to grant you ‘ASSISTANCE’?"

The brief glare of the sun passed so that they could see the speaker.

“YOU!

“DUMMIES!

“DUMMIES!!

“DUMMIES!!!”
A Very Important Meeting

It was a training dummy similar to the acquaintance they knew from the Ruins, and yet so different. His eyes were loud and furious, but his body had seen better days. The bare minimum amount of effort had been applied to the loose stitches keeping him intact.

"woah, where'd you come from?" said Sans.

"What kinda stupid question is that?! 'Where'd you come from?'" he sneered in imitation. "I came from my office! You know, those doors to the government offices, which you never notice because you're always so obsessed with staring at the windows!"

"maybe you should spend more time staring at them, you might feel less stressed."

"Maybe you should EAT DIRT!" he yelled back as the door to his office slammed open again and a line of eight small dummy drones rushed out. Each shot out a flickering white energy ball on their way to forming a line with their master in the middle. Frisk blinked in surprise at the sudden attack.

"here!" Sans tugged on her hand. They ran to the left and avoided harm. The dummy line moved all at once to their side and fired a new round of energy attacks. He pulled again and led them, backstepping out of the path of the attacks.

"Hold on!" Frisk shouted over the commotion. "We're not here to fight! We're here to talk about the Ruins situation!"

"Dodge THIS and then we'll talk!"

The drones moved towards them in a line formation. Sans pushed Frisk's arm and had them stumble into a gap. "this way!"

"Aah!" She pointed over his shoulder. Sans threw up a quick 3-bone shield to absorb the stray energy ball headed for his face. Frisk flinched and let out a breath.

"Sans what are you doing?!"

"protecting you."

"Well protect me from further away! It's not like you're going to body-block anything!"

He shrugged. "let's just run away. i hate fights."

She let go of his hand and shook her head. "No." He jumped back, dodging a row of drones that zoomed at him. "I hate them too, but we need to finish our job. We have to deal with this person."

"this person is trying to kill you. watch out!"

She turned her head and braced herself as a miniature dummy rushed at her. "Hwah!" she yelled as it ran over her and dealt 2 damage. A second one lined up to take its turn.

"frisk move!" She moved backwards along the same path as the attack. The drone simply caught up and hit her for another 2 points of damage. Sans winced and said, "what is this, your first encounter?"

She rubbed the new bruise on her shoulder and looked at him without understanding.
"wait, really? this is a pretty bad place for your, uh, tutorial level. so... i'll just have to help you out."

Mad Dummy was angrily ranting, "If it weren't for me, people like you would all get together with the King and throw one big IDIOT PARTY."

"if it weren't for me, people like you would never learn to lighten up," Sans said. He used a burst of blue magic to push M.D. out of the shadow and into one of the rays of sunlight shining through the window. He winked and said, "there, much better."

M.D. paused and stared at him, trembling with fury as a red glow enveloped his body from his wooden base to the top of his horse-shaped head. "YOU THINK THAT'S FUNNY? ARE YOU BRAINDEAD? You want a joke, I'LL show you a joke! LOOK I'M REAL FUNNY!"

"now!" Blue magic gripped her Soul and forced her to move out of their path. The motion disoriented her for a second, but she landed easily on her feet when he let go. "not bad," Sans grinned at how well that had worked. But she wasn't as pleased.

"Sans, don't make any more jokes! This guy clearly doesn't appreciate your sense of humor."

"sure he does... he's in stitches."

"GRAAAAH!" M.D. screamed and had his minions fire their next round at Sans, who dodged.

"I'm serious! You're just making him madder!" said Frisk. "Not every situation can be solved with jokes, Sans!"

"impossible," he breathed in shock.

"What's even more hilarious is you coming to ask the kingdom for aid after you TRASHED the shipping route! You know 3 of my bots broke on impact!? 5 others were stranded in the abyss and ran out of batteries! I had to fly them up one-by-one! And one even got electrocuted!"

"yeah. i know..." Sans agreed solemnly. "this whole mess is my fault. i shoulda known our movements were too risky and gotten us outta that tunnel sooner."

"No, don't apologize to him..." Frisk tried to interrupt.

"if only i hadn't lied to tori in the first place, we could just use the door."

"SO YOU'RE THE ONE WHO BROKE THE DOOR TOO?! Failures, Failures, FAILURES!!"

Frisk groaned. "Sans!! You're not helping! Let ME do the [ACT]ing."

"you want me to do less? sure thing."

M.D. continued his tirade. "You've done more damage than good! I won't trust you with 2 coins from the Royal Treasury! You'd be better off dead—yeah! Dead! That's it! Hahahahah! I've got it! I'll take the human's SOUL!"

"soul?" He readied himself as the drones moved in a large semi-circle behind M.D. in preparation for their next attack.

"I'll cross the barrier and leave all of you insufferable people behind! Once I escape this festering
cave, then everything I DON'T want will NO LONGER BE MINE!!"

The dummy drones shot two clusters of balls that closed in on Frisk in an X-shape.

"frisk... dodge the bullets! " Sans used blue magic to push her to the left.

She caught her footing, but was momentarily confused. "Huh?!" she yelped in surprise at the bright explosions.

"U-Um... so, you seem to care about the state of the kingdom, but—ah!" She was pulled backwards to avoid another X-shaped bullet pattern. "b-but, you, um, also h-hate everyone? I don't... get...

The drones floated backwards and shot out a random scattering of balls. Sans pushed Frisk into a gap in the pattern. But she saw one of the attacks whiz right by her face. "Eep!" She turned and darted away from it.

"no don't—"

"AH!!" Two other energy balls hit her in the back and knocked her and her hat down.

Sans rubbed his palm over his browbone. "frisk, stop running back into the bullets. " Her HP was down to 11 already.

"DAMN your hairdo's ugly!" M.D. gawked and mocked her. "'HEY STYLIST!! Gimme that rotting tree stump look!'"

Frisk self-consciously patted her hair. "A-Anyways," she tried to continue "As I was saying about the repair..." her eyes widened."...costs..." A complex field of energy balls, both aimed and scattered, appeared in a beautiful and deadly arrangement. Her blue Soul floated up a foot and then turned red again. She fell onto a platform that zoomed across the field, weaving between the gaps, timed perfectly to miss every single one including Sans's own tentative burst of counterattack bones.

"? !! Huh? Wah?!" Frisk was overwhelmed by the amount of dangerous visual stimuli. She crawled off the platform.

"no no don't jump off there!"

"Ow!" She landed roughly, right before M.D.’s wooden footstand. 10 HP. She gazed up into his eyes which glowed red and fired a pair of lasers at her. A large shield-like object enveloped her in shadow and blocked the hit. She didn't get a great look at it as she tucked in her chin and shut her eyes and ears. But she felt the deep rumble of the giant counter-laser above her head.

Sans brought her sliding across the floor back to him. He slammed down a thick wall of bones to defend them from projectiles.


*Sluurp. Her HP was maxed out. While she was busy eating, Sans peeked around his bone wall and made a few small blasters to absorb additional fire and also shoot back at M.D. "efficient," he noted. He addressed Frisk again. "now you, quit wigglin' and wormin' around everywhere. just sit still and you won't get hurt," he assured her.

"But I can't help it! Everything around me is scary and confusing!"

"hmm... what if you tried closing your eyes?"
"What?!" She thought he was crazy at first. But she found herself complying anyways. Something felt so natural and right about it, as she let her eyes droop shut like a sleeping doll.

"and now..." He took down the wall so he could see their opponent(s) again. The hallway swarmed with rows of miniature dummies moving in opposite directions. "...let me do the [FIGHT]ing."

Platforming above the entire field again seemed like a good move. Frisk sat still and let all the aimed shots miss her. She felt a little jolt as the platform disappeared, leaving her inside a floating concave object. She felt strong magic gathering beneath her, followed by the object's rumbling. "A-a-a-a-a-a-a..." The blaster was angled at the floor so that it could fire at the approaching mini-dummies.

Sans noted that drones that were hit by his laser were barely damaged. *they're constructs, so my attacks aren't very effective.*

"Useless, useless, USELESS! These things can't even jump!" M.D. was standing near Frisk's side of the battlefield and took the opportunity to slingshot his mangled body at her.

Frisk gasped at the jolt as Sans pulled her Soul onto a new platform. M.D. had landed right under the downwards-facing blaster and got hit with its next shot. "YEOUCH!" His body flashed pink as his HP dropped to 220/300.

Frisk zoomed to the opposite end of the battlefield and was dropped off in the hollow of another blaster. She felt around and clung to its crevices.

*that worked a lot better on the main guy,* Sans noted.

"They're HERE! Dummy bots!" M.D. exclaimed. Six metal dummy bots with blinking red lights for eyes came in from the direction of Asgore's house. Sans jumped aside to avoid them. "Now my prototypes will have their revenge on you for stranding their siblings in the Ruins!"

Frisk calmly kept her eyes closed. *I haven't gotten hit yet. Concentrate on my own part!* "Alright now, you angry dummy—"

"It's MAD Dummy! M.D. Get it right."

"Of course, M.D. So, you gonna stop attacking me any time soon?"

"Nah, I'm good!"

Three of the nearest cloth drones shot their attacks at Frisk. Her seat rotated to absorb the attacks with its face, while her blue Soul clung to its inside.

"Suit yourself. You're only wasting your energy anyways. Now, let's discuss funding the repairs to the shipping route. If you care about your country at all, you should know that a huge sector of your own population is currently without power and communication to the—"

"I know, I know, I know!!" M.D. shouted over her. "I don't need some backwater waitress lecturing ME on how to do MY JOB! What do YOU know about national planning?!"

Her closed eyes twitched at being called a 'waitress', but she kept her cool. "I already solved the whole food crisis."

"Pfft. Big deal! I don't eat and you don't see me complaining!" One of the new metal bots shot a homing rocket which locked onto Frisk's Soul. Sans let it get close before rotating the blaster and her around, flinging the rocket back towards M.D. who was ranting, "You're already building a new and
more modern tunnel to the Ruins anyways. Why do you need the old one so badly? Just leave it in pieces for all I care!"

* BOOM
"ACK!" 195 HP. M.D. made some coughing noises.

Frisk tried to argue, "But, the old shipping tunnel has, um, the power cable! And, um, the communication lines..."

"So what, you and TWO other people can use your phones? Just put in another power cable through the new tunnel. Done. Finished! Solved!!"

"But, I feel like there was a good reason why we wanted 2 tunnels in the first place."

"OF COURSE THERE WAS! You don't need to tell ME again. I KNOW that Home would recover faster with their old shipping route restored." Mad Dummy was so mad that he explained Frisk's entire argument for her. "I KNOW that having backup cables would leave them more secure against future accidents. I KNOW that the increased trade volume will leave the newly connected Ruins' economy in a better position to catch up with the rest of the Underground!"

One of the bots shot her seat with a homing rocket. Sans waved and flung her away, adding a second vector to slow her landing over the floor.

"See, you DO care! You ARE angry that the shipping tunnel was broken! So why won't you let us repair it? We have the same goal!"

"Wrong, wrong, WRONG! My goal is to manage financial resources for the ENTIRE kingdom, not to destabilize everything just to bail out one derelict district!" The dummy bots made two columns of three on either side of Frisk. "SERIOUSLY, how much more do you people expect to be given? With all the help you already receive, you really think you're in a position to demand MORE support?" One group of bots flashed yellow and wheeled towards Frisk. Sans shot a white attack bone that hit them all in a line, causing them to un-yellow and back away from her.

"What do you mean 'MORE' support?" Frisk asked for clarification but M.D. ranted over her.

"You think gold just grows on TREES?! WELL IT DOESN'T OK?! The Royal Budget is already fully allocated! Your little slum district already enjoys the most lenient tax codes in the whole Underground! And if that wasn't enough for you, you ALSO get a 50% SUBSIDY ON ALL IMPORTED FOOD AND HOUSEHOLD GOODS!"

"Import subsidy?"

The other three bots charged towards Frisk in yellow mode. Sans diverted them again with the same method.

"Did you honestly think that you could run a RESTAURANT business in the Ruins? Your little hot dog stand wouldn't survive another DAY if the price of your ingredients suddenly DOUBLED overnight!!"

"You've been keeping tabs on me?"

"Of COURSE I keep track of your dumb food shack. Look at you now, trying to sneak past me! If it weren't for me every poor little Soul with a sob story would get the dumb oaf to sign away the entire wealth of the kingdom overnight!!" M.D. was getting cotton all over the page.
"As usual, it's up to ME to fix everything! I can NEVER rely on ANYONE else to do ANYTHING!"

He tried to body-slam Frisk again. Sans sent a bunch of light-blue bones towards her while raising her up on a platform.

* bonk bonk bonk
165 HP.

* ring... ring

Still manipulating the battlefield with his left hand, Sans used his right hand to nudge his cell phone out of his pocket. His eyelights flickered in annoyance at the name of the incoming caller. "this again? i can't really focus on it. frisk, catch!"

She was surprised, but obediently held up her hands. The cell phone flew up into her fingers. She winked one eye open just enough to answer the call.

"H-hello?" she said. Sans inverted her gravity and stuck her to the ceiling.

"Yo! What's up my awesome little friend!" greeted Undyne's cheerful voice. "So I just had a great idea! I think you, me, and Papyrus, should all hang out sometime!! I know you're nervous about that, because of your mysterious secret, but I bet if we're all together, then—"

"Undyne this is really not a great time, I'm in the middle of a- NAAH!" Frisk noticed a rocket coming her way. Sans created a new platform 'beneath' her, bringing her back towards the floor as a rocket hit the ceiling. She shut her eyes tightly again and said, " an official negotiation! "

"You're in what?"

M.D. bounced and jumped up to kick her with his base. Sans nudged him to the side so that he missed her and landed right on top of a blaster facing upwards.

"A very important meeting!" said Frisk, now sitting on the floor.

Three other skull faces appeared to surround M.D. in a laser cross. Finally Sans switched his blue magic to Frisk to make her dodge more incoming rounds of basic shots from the cloth dummies.

"Huh?! I can't understand you over all the explosions!" said Undyne.

"Sorry, I'll get back to you!" she said and hung up. She pocketed the phone and wrung her hands, trying to get back on-topic. "Uh, where were we..."

"have you used check yet?" Sans suggested.

Frisk used [ACT] -> Check -> Mad Dummy

* MAD DUMMY - 7 ATK -40 DEF
* Royal Finance Minister
* Budgeting Consultant
* Business Advisor
* Personal Trainer

"What the heck?! And people tell me I work too much... No wonder you're such a jerk! You've got way too many jobs!"
"It's not my fault I'm the only one who knows how to get anything DONE! All anyone ever does is ask me for advice!"

"If people ask you for advice, then why don't you teach them how to do things properly? Instead of attacking them?!"

"How can I teach people who are GARBAGE?! Target practice is all they're good for! And I'm even better at that too!"

"What about us? I haven't gotten touched by any of your attacks for the last...

"7 minutes, 42 seconds," Sans filled in.

"Does that count for anything?"

"Hardly! This slacker? I bet you don't even have a proposal for the funding you want so badly, even though I TOLD your construction team to investigate it!"

"Oh!! They did! We just did that!" said Frisk.

"I put the summary sheets in her notebook," said Sans.

"Let's see it then!" said M.D.

"OK! Time out!" Frisk used [ITEM] -> Torn Notebook.

"No time-outs!" M.D. said. The line of cloth drones moved towards Frisk. Pulling her blue soul diagonally against the floor, Sans moved her into the gap, and then changed her angle sharply to avoid the homing rocket. She lost her grip on the notebook and pressed down its cover with her hand

[FIGHT] -> Frisk -> Torn Notebook

*SMACK SMACK

-3

"KYAH!" she yelled and flinched.

"Give that to me!" M.D. said impatiently and snatched the unstable office supply out from under her nose. He floated it in front of his face and flipped it open to the page marked with a green paper clip, which held a print-out from the company meeting.

"WHY is it printed in COMIC SANS?! ARE YOU MOCKING ME?!" The drones used a second wave of the same attack pattern, but without the gap in their line-up.

"It's my default style sheet," Sans said while waving his arm to launch Frisk over the rushing drones.

"FUCK CSS!" M.D. screamed. "Also this looks OK I guess," he added. The next homing rocket missed Frisk and exploded against the floor again. "But something's got to GIVE! I TOLD you, we don't have leeway to give the Ruins additional grants! Think hard now if you've even GOT a brain inside that skull o' yours! Have you REALLY cut costs everywhere you can?"

Sans said, "We scaled back the first project a lot. You can take a look at the summary."

M.D. flipped back to the page marked with a purple paper clip. His pupils zig-zagged over it for about 5 seconds. "NOT GOOD ENOUGH!" He yelled and chucked the notebook back at Frisk.

"He read it that fast?!" She winked an eye open and held up her hands to catch it, but touched the
Sans used [ITEM] -> Ketchup. "frisk! catch!" She caught the ketchup and looked back at him with an expression of despair. He gave her a thumbs-up.

Frisk took a deep breath, gripped the bottle in both hands, threw her head back, and chugged half of the bottle in one go. "Blah..." Her mouth hung open with her tongue sticking out. Her HP recovered to full again, but she looked faint. Sans looked proud though.

M.D. said, "You were supposed to design an EXPEDITED dig plan! Why are you using FANCY BLUE PAINT? Take that shit out!"

Frisk repeated, "Yeah Sans, take out the fancy blue paint!"

Sans said, "no way. fancy blue paint is the top layer of the coating which prevents corrosion, rust, and magical damage on the support beams. it's very important."

"We're not compromising on safety!" Frisk agreed.

The cloth and metal dummies arranged themselves alternatingly and spread out around the battlefield. They staggered their attacks and layered several patterns at once. Sans observed the complex mosaic of bullets and moved Frisk into the gaps. The attacks lasted for several minutes as they continued their discussion.

"The vertical chamber then? Get rid of the escalator and elevator!" M.D. suggested.

Frisk said, "Yeah Sans, do we really need an escalator AND an elevator?"

"of course we do," he said with annoyance. "accessibility is not optional, frisk. think of the disabled people. you know little old chey can't use stairs on her own."

"Ah, you're right!" she imagined the tiny, slow-moving Migosp, and agreed. "Those stay in! Sans knows what he's doing, OK?!"

"Then WHAT do you WANT ME TO DO?!" M.D. yelled. "Erase YOUR compensation?"

"compo-what? sure whatever."

"No!" Frisk shouted over him."Come up with something else! Perhaps, if there's anything that I can help with—"

"Die?"

"Anything else," she clarified.

"YOU ARE SUCH A DEMANDING KID!!" he cried in frustration. "You can't expect to just GET YOUR WAY at EVERY TURN!"

"Also stop attacking me."

"No, NO, NOOO! ALRIGHT, you SPOILED ROTTEN TREE STUMP!! This is my FINAL OFFER! I will write you an order for the Royal Treasury to sponsor the repairs to the shipping
tunnel—AND ONLY THE SHIPPING TUNNEL. BUT, I'm canceling your cow's allowance!"

"What cow?"

"THE OLD LADY! You know? She receives a monthly stipend! How else do you think she gets money?! But since you're such a little BUSYBODY, you'll deal without that just FINE! WON'T YOU?!"

"You do know that Toriel is the Queen?" said Frisk. "You shouldn't talk about her like some dependent..."

"Queen of WHAT? The RUINS?!!" M.D. madly scribbled on his clipboard, now drawing up the contract on his own. "Since she's QUEEN again, she shouldn't need support anymore now, RIGHT CHEF?!"

Frisk realized that this was her chance. "Uh, yeah! You're right! I agree!"

"also she's a goat, not a cow," Sans added.

"Shh!" said Frisk. "We're actually getting somewhere!"

"Since you refuse to give up anything, I'll have to cut resources from other sectors. The Royal Guard and the Lab haven't been doing their jobs properly anyways. But you're great pals with them aren't ya?! Good, because YOU'RE taking FULL responsibility for this outcome!" He finished off the last sentence of his contract with a flick of the pen, and floated the clipboard over to her.

Frisk opened her eyes and took it. She stared into the Mad Dummy's eyes, full of determination. "I accept."

"THAT'S ASSUMING YOU DON'T JUST DIE!!" The basic attacks came back in full force. Sans used a platform to raise Frisk above it all. The bots shot all six of their homing rockets at once. A blaster appeared above Frisk's head, canceling out her vertical platform. A second platform caught her and zoomed away from the center of the swarm. She hit a standing structural bone so that the platform slid out from underneath her and dropped her onto a third platform, which zoomed in the opposite direction. The homing rockets turned sharply and followed her Soul back towards where M.D. was standing near the eye of his own storm.

* BOOM

While he was stunned from the rockets, the blaster above him charged up and fired on him for its full duration. 104 HP. Finally, a stray energy ball from mini-dummies hit him. 99 HP.

"aren't you getting tired of this?" said Sans. "i know i am. why not be pals?"

Frisk said, "I'll forgive you for trying to kill me if you cut it out now. After all, you work with R.D. so we'll probably see each other again."

"see, me and frisk are buddies, and look how great we're doing. just put down the bullets and we can all be friends."

"Yeah!" Frisk smiled and cheered encouragingly. "Try friendship instead of murder!"

M.D.'s eyebrows twitched in irritation. "Whatever, whatever, WHATEVER!!" He recoiled from their idealistic offers. "Are you guys SERIOUSLY trying to give ME a friendship speech?! You think I'm gonna be 'BUDDIES' with RUINS TRASH like you?! Hahahaha! I don't need friends!!
"I'VE GOT KNIVES!!"

He suddenly pulled a knife out of nowhere and sent it flying towards Frisk.

*CRACK*

Sans chucked the knife out through the window with such force that they didn't even hear the glass shatter. It flew high into the sky, out of the barrier, well beyond any hope of retrieval.

Frisk stood frozen. Sans started to relax.

"I'm... all out of knives." M.D. admitted. "But it DOESN'T MATTER! Even if you survived all of MY attacks, that form still needs to be signed by KING ASGORE!! Good luck with that, HUMAN! Whatever, I'm outta here! It's your problem now! HA HA HA HA ha hA ha HA HA HA !! 1!!! !!!!"

He laughed madly and haphazardly flung the tattered remnants of his dummy body out through the broken window.

Finally, Frisk and Sans were left to enjoy the hallway in peace and quiet.

"well..." Sans broke the silence. "that was unexpected." The long, smooth floor tiles made his voice reverberate.

"I think... it went pretty well though."

"yeah. you're pretty good at dealing with difficult people."

"Tehe!"

"i hate to admit it, but... that wasn't too bad."

"The fighting?"

"yeah." He smirked and gave her one final push with his magic, placing her underneath the fedora which he let drop onto her head. "it's a lot more fun when i'm not the one being shot at."

"That's good. You're not meant to be shot at." She nudged the fedora into place. They continued walking through the hall again.

Just before the end of the hall, Sans stepped in front of Frisk and stopped. "and you're not meant to be in dangerous fights. here," he said and held out his open palm.

"What?"

"gimme the order thingy. i'll go show it to asgore."

"But I just got M.D. to write this out..."

"yeah, you did a great job. it's all taken care of, 'cept for this one little detail. so what's the problem?"

"So..." Her brow furrowed and she hugged the clip board closer to herself. "You're going to take credit for everything I just did?"

"wha? no, of course not," he said and chuckled nervously. "i just don't think there's any need for you to show yourself to asgore now. it's the same if i go alone... come on buddy, i'm just trying to keep you safe. to protect you."
"Well that's fine, but I don't only want to be protected. I want to be seen and heard! I'm not just a puppet for you to play dodging games with! I want to look the King of this country in the eyes and tell him that..." she yawned widely for 12 whole seconds. "...and tell him that I am the one who is working on behalf of his people."

"you're not even in a proper state to be doing this. you're gonna faint in the middle of the meeting."

She held his hand and said, "If that happens, you have enough energy left to take me home, right?"

"i have enough left. it's just... asgore's my friend too, y'know."

"Sans..." She knew what he meant. "It'll be OK! We'll do it together. We've done everything together up to this point, haven't we?"

He sighed. "fine then. but... at least let me give you an introduction first," he said and winked.

"Ok." She nodded, satisfied. Just before he stepped through the doorway, she said, "Oh by the way!"

"?"

"Do you think my clothes are dry yet?"

He smirked at her and said, "i'll go check."
Frisk and Sans stood just around the corner to the throne room. She had changed back into her blue-and-pink striped sweater, the black collar of her polo poking out from underneath. But her jeans were still drying in Sans’s house.

“You’re sure that’s the proper way to address him?” she whispered.

“yup,” he whispered back.

Asgore was busy tending the garden with his back to them. “Ho hum ho hum…”

He heard light footsteps from the entrance to the throne room courtyard.

“A guest? Hold on, I am almost finished watering these flowers… Oh, it’s you,” he said after turning around. He relaxed and smiled a little more kindly. “How are you?”

“i’m good. i’ve brought someone here to see you.”

“Who is it?”

“she’s uh… the ambassador.”

“What?” Asgore raised one eyebrow. What?

Frisk thought as she listened from around the corner. Why ’ambassador’? She wrung her hands and fretted over how to incorporate this new title into her presentation.

“The ambassador of what?”

“the ruins.”


“uh, that’s ok. i don’t think she should have any caffeine right now. she’s actually got something important to ask you.”

“Well then, it’s rude to keep your guests waiting. Send her in, Sans.”

“ok.” He nodded and walked back to the courtyard entrance. He reached behind the edge of the doorframe and spoke to someone hidden from view. “it’s alright. here.”

Small hands clasped, they stepped into view. Asgore felt the wind knocked out of his chest as if he had been punched.

“Oh.”

Carrying a clipboard in her free hand, she stepped forward and tried to sound professional. “Greetings, Mr. Dreemurr. My name is Frisk. I am a human from the surface. I’ve been living in the Ruins for the past three months. Sorry for hiding from you.” She added a quick bow to the end of her greeting. She smiled apologetically. Asgore somberly returned the expression.

“…I so badly want to say, ‘would you like a cup of tea?’ But… you know how it is.”
“Know how what is?” Frisk raised an eyebrow.

“Oddly though, I was not informed of any new fallen humans. Somehow you have avoided all of our guards and made your way here all on your own.”

“I didn’t come on my own. Sans is right here…”

“But that will not change our fate. You know what we must do.”

“Do what?” She huffed and folded her arms. “I’m not going to fight you.”

She stated the obvious, but it was like talking to a brick wall. Asgore turned his back to her and started to step away towards the next room. “I am sorry human, but my mind was set long ago, and that will not change now. When you are ready, come into the next room. There lies the barrier that you must cross to go home…”

“I’m not trying to go home!” she yelled, losing her patience.

He paused his footstep. “You’re… not?” he said and looked back.

“I told you, we told you! I have something for you to sign! You haven’t listened to a word we just said! He told you I’m too tired for tea, and you called me ‘human’ even though I just said my name is FRISK! Why won’t you look at me!”

“gyuh, calm down frisk,” Sans said nervously. “i’m sorry sir, she’s really tired right now…”

Asgore did look at Frisk. She wore a mismatched outfit of a striped sweater over a polo, a pair of pants that looked like she borrowed them from Sans, and an oversized fedora that dangled from her forehead as she strained her neck to look upwards at him. Her face was strangely blotched from patches of red flush and purple circles under her eyes. Oddly, though she was upset at Asgore, she didn’t seem at all afraid of him. Sans on the other hand was avoiding their gazes and staring at the grass around his sneakers.

“Err… ‘Frisk’ you say? Now that I think about it, I have received some news about you. Though, had no idea you were a human child.”

“I know what your plan is. But the truth is, if you attack me right now, everyone in the Ruins will suffer. Even if you take my Soul and break the barrier, they’ll still be trapped and starving.”

Asgore looked concerned. “They’re trapped and starving ?” he repeated.

“Yes, that’s what I’m here for. I was sent to seek help. Also, um, if you listen to my request… I can tell you some things about Toriel,” she suggested.

“Tori? What about her? Do you know her? Is that where she’s been all this time—the Ruins?”

Frisk held up the clipboard between them. “ First sign this. ”

“What is that?”

“It’s a Royal Order for a change to the budget. I discussed it just now with your financial minister.”

“Golly, you spoke with that fellow?” Asgore sounded almost impressed. “He didn’t… get hostile?”

She looked at Sans and shrugged. “We handled it. Now we’re all set up to have the shipping tunnel and terrain damage in Waterfall repaired. As for the new entrance to the Ruins, it will be opened in
about 12 days. Sans is…” She paused, unsure of what to say.

“it’s fine. i’m bringing things in and outta there in the meantime.”

“And you… have been helping to organize all of this?”

“Yes.” She held up the clipboard more expectantly. “Please sir, all of my friends—Toriel is counting on us.”

He reached out to take the object from her. His 4-fingered hand was so large that her fingers wouldn’t have been able to wrap around one of his own. He turned it around and held a pen in his other hand as his eyes unfocused.

“I remember the day after my son died…” Frisk and Sans listened with burning curiosity. “The entire underground was devoid of hope. Once again, everything had been taken from us by the humans. I said that I would destroy any human that came here. But you…”

He opened his eyes and said, “You are the first human who has ever come to me, in order to ask to do something for me. For my people.” He looked down and regarded the young girl before him. “I have never met anyone like you. Even though you must understand by now what happened to the other humans who fell here, you are more concerned about the monsters? You truly do not wish to go home?”

“Of course I want to go home! I miss my Dad so much! But, they told me what the way to go back was…” She glanced at Sans again and then stared up at Asgore’s chest where she imagined his soul might appear if she were to encounter him. “I’d rather live down here for the rest of my life than do that!!”

“I see.” Asgore straightened his back, closed his eyes, and sighed. “I will have the rest of this taken care of first thing in the morning.” He gestured with the clipboard. The pair was still standing on edge. “Please be at ease. I will not make you fight me.” Sans’s expression went from his guarded smile to full-out beaming. Asgore smiled sadly in return. “I could never say no to you.”

“Young one,” he said to Frisk again. “When I look at you, there is something in your eyes that fills me with hope. Truthfully… I am tired of this ‘war on humanity’. It has gone on for long enough. I do not want to hurt anyone… I just wanted everyone to have hope. I just want to see my son… I just want to see my wife… It brings me unspeakable joy to hear word of her. Please tell me, how is she doing? Is she alright?”

“yeah don’t worry, she’s fine,” Sans answered. “i got her some food just in the nick ‘o time.”

Asgore blinked. “In the nick of…”

“…time?” Frisk finished. “What do you mean?”

“oh, well she’s been keeping some of the weaker monsters and little kiddos alive longer by using some kinda advanced healing magic to transfer her lifeforce directly into them.”

“WHAT?” said Asgore.

“it’s ok she stopped now.” He chuckled and mumbled, “it was pretty badass actually…”

“Sans why didn’t you tell me about this earlier?!” said Frisk.

“’cuz you didn’t need anything extra to worry about today.”
“But, she could have died!”

“And what difference would it have made if I told you that? Would you have worked any faster? No. You were already doing as much as you possibly could have.”

“Sans is right, Frisk.”

“Huh?” She looked up in surprise.

“It is thanks to both of your efforts, and the decisions that each of you made, that you were able to achieve the happy result that you did today.” He shook his head slowly and rubbed his forehead with his fingers. “I still can’t believe you managed to talk down my finance minister. He’s very good at his duties, I just wish he would…” He trailed off muttering in exasperation. “Um, nevermind.”

He stepped towards the entrance to the garden that they had come from. “Frisk, I know you are tired, but please come with me for a moment. I would like to show you something.”

Frisk and Sans exchanged a curious look. They followed after him. They walked back through the judgement hall, the open castle wall, and up the stairs into Asgore’s house. He opened the door to the children’s bedroom. Frisk coughed at the dusty air rushing out. The room looked similar to her bedroom in Toriel’s house, but there were two beds. On the floor were two white present boxes tied up with red ribbon.

“As I mentioned before, I got word about your restaurant opening. You see, it’s my custom to greet new businesses, so I had prepared some gifts for you. I could have mailed them to you, but since the Ruins are opening soon, I had planned on waiting until Christmas. But now, you’re here. And, my gosh, I say you deserve some rewards right now…”

He picked the box by the left bed and handed it to Frisk, who looked like she couldn’t believe this was happening. Her name was even written on the wrapping paper with marker.

“Go on,” he encouraged her.

She tugged the ribbons apart. She tore off the wrapping paper and opened the box. “Hm?” She held the box bottom still in one hand as she picked up a strange ceremonial knife with a cool swirly red-and-black pattern. “What is this, some sort of dagger?”

Asgore pointed and said, “Actually that’s just the sheath. It comes out…” He trailed off as she caught on and realized that what looked like the hilt was actually part of an outer container. She felt a tiny click and saw a white glint between the black handle and the faux-hilt.

“Oooo…” Her tired eyes lit up and sparkled at the smooth and shiny blade. “A knife… A REAL KNIFE!?”

“I managed to keep that one hidden from the iron collection. Is it a good knife? I’m afraid I cannot tell.”

“Yes!! It’s a chef’s knife. I even know this brand. They use high-carbon steel and their blades are known to keep their edge well.” She gently scraped her thumb tip against the blade. “Ugh, I’m so happy I don’t have to use those crappy bone knives anymore!”

“Huh?” Sans was surprised to learn that his bone knives were crappy. “What do you mean? I thought you liked those. You ask me to make like 3 of ‘em every day.”
“I ask you to make lots of them because they keep chipping and breaking all the time,” she explained.

“oh.”

She put it back in the sheath and stashed it in her inventory. She smiled ecstatically again. “Thank-you Mr. Dreemur r!”

“Please, just ‘Asgore.’”

“Thank-you Asgore!! This means so much to me!”

Asgore chuckled, “Hold on, I have one more thing for you.”

“Eh? Another?”

“Um, this one is more…” he picked up the second box by the right bed and handed it to her. She started to unwrap it. “Well, I’m not quite sure why. It just sort of… feels right to give it to you.”

Frisk lightly nodded as she pulled up the string and dangled a yellow, heart-shaped locket before her eyes.

“Maybe it would look cute as a necklace?” Asgore suggested.

“yeah, good thought. it really suits her, ‘specially the heart and all,” Sans said as Frisk fastened the clasp around the back of his neck.

“Right where it belongs,” she hummed, looking pleased with her work.

“um… what?”

“What do you mean, ‘what?’ I want you to wear it,” she stated.

“heh. i’m flattered, kid, but… i think this thing’s more your style.”

“Who cares about that? Have you run a Check on this thing? It’s got 99 DEF! That’s insane!”

“oh, wow. that’s pretty good. all the more reason why you should wear it.” He winked while reaching to take it off. Frisk stopped his hands on his shoulders.

“Sans. You have one hitpoint. And I’m supposed to sit back and watch you defend me? Do you have ANY idea how worried I am every time you have some stupid close call? When you’re in danger, I’m so scared I can’t think straight! So just wear it, OK?!”

Sans nodded. “ok.”

He contemplated for a second and said, “y’know, you sounded almost like my brother just now… maybe he’ll be happy about this. heh.” He noticed Frisk’s head was hanging down limply.

“um… buddy?” Her head snapped back up.

“I think it’s time for a certain young lady to go to bed,” said Asgore.

“Yeaaaah.” She yawned and stretched her arms wide above her head.

“Before you do though, there is just one more thing I was curious about… that hat you are wearing.”
“My hat?”

“Yes, it’s quite familiar to me actually. I remember giving that to Papyrus, not too long ago.”

“it was back when he was in high school,” said Sans.

“Really?” said Asgore, sounding surprised.

“Oh…” Frisk fiddled with the brim of the fedora. “Well, I borrowed it from his closet before we left the house this morning. And the reason for that was because, um, Sans tried to cut my hair… and I didn’t really… like it. So I covered it up.”

Asgore tilted his head. “May I see?”

Frisk shyly took off the fedora and held it against her chest.

“Oh. My goodness.” He looked at her head in disbelief. “Err, it’s… That is, ahem…” He bent down and whispered, “Sans, what were you thinking? This is unacceptable.”

Sans looked away and shrugged.

“And you.”

“Hm?” Frisk looked up.

“What gave you the bright idea to allow Sans to do that to your head?”

“But, he said—”

“Frisk.” Asgore put his hands on Sans’s shoulders and stood him across from her. “Look at your friend. Do you see any reason why you should have refused to let him anywhere near your hair?”

“Well…” she scrutinized him and tried to figure out what it was Asgore was trying to show her.

“He’s a skeleton.”

Frisk still didn’t get the point.

“He doesn’t have hair.”

“Oh!” She finally realized and slowly nodded, staring at her hairless companion in understanding. She jumped a little when she felt a pair of giant fingers prodding her scalp.

“Hmm…” Asgore critically examined Sans’s masterpiece. He pinched the burnt tips between his thumb and forefinger. He furrowed his brow and ran a finger through different parts of her hair. “Yes… there’s still enough left. I can work with this.”

“Huh?”

“Frisk, I believe I may be able to give you a decent-looking haircut. Though it may not be exactly to your style. Would you allow me to trim it for you?”

“You… want to cut my hair?” Her voice was fully of uncertainty. The last monster who said that did this. How can I trust this one?! But then again… She glanced up at Asgore’s magnificent beard. He actually HAS HAIR!
She gulped and nodded. “O… ok?!”

Several minutes later, Asgore had set up the necessary tools for the job. Just like Toriel, he had a bathroom under the crawlspace of the stairs. It was a little larger though, with plenty enough space in front of the sink to have a tall rotating stool, upon which Frisk was placed. A towel was fastened around her shoulders with a safety pin. Her head was leaned back against the porcelain basin.

* A dramatic melody fills bathroom.

* Lamplight is shining through the barrier of the shower stall.

“Young one, you have done a very, very good job today. Now, please sit back and relax. Sans… watch and learn.”

* ASGORE attacks!

He whipped out a bottle of shampoo, twirled it around in his hand, grabbed it facing downwards, and squeezed a cool blue-tinted solution onto her hair. He scrubbed and rubbed up a fine lather before grabbing the nozzle from the nearby shower to rinse it out.

“Ah…” Frisk sighed at the pleasurable sensation of the warm water flowing, and fingers rubbing against her clean scalp. Trails of white foam swirled down the drain.

Next he had her sit back up, and patted her hair half-dry with a towel. He picked up a comb from the nearby counter and began to straighten out the mess. The comb caught and tugged against a black knot.

“Ow!”

“Oopsies. Some of the tangles are stuck together. No more of that,” he assured and stopped trying to tug so hard with the comb. He lowered his brow and said, “We’ll just have to cut them out.”

*flick*

His arm shot out, holding an elegant straight razor. He rammed it downwards and smashed the [MERCY] button. Then he began to use the comb to anchor the blade in place as he slashed off the tips of Frisk’s hair.

* shff shff shff*

He anchored his wrist and continued to trim the tufts into a uniform length. He was getting into the B section of his theme song as he ruffled her hair, now with most of the worst mistakes removed, refining the shape of her bangs for a few more minutes.

*shff shff shff*

Her eyes glazed over in a daze. She had met the King not fifteen minutes ago. Now, she could hardly believe the kind of treatment he was giving her. He removed all of long, uneven locks around her ears. The razor made small, tightly spaced strokes up the sides of her head. She felt an unfamiliar emptiness on the back of her neck as he used a soft brush to wipe away the trimmings.

Asgore loosened up a wad of dark-green gel in his palm with two fingers, then applied it to Frisk’s hair. He rubbed in circles, massaging the freshly-scented product into the shapen locks, putting the finishing touches on her new, slightly tapered and yet very respectable looking crew cut.
He gently poked her shoulder and turned her around. She stared into the mirror with wide eyes. Asgore and Sans fell silent and awaited her response.

“It’s so… short.” She ran her fingertips along the fuzzy base of her neck. Her brow furrowed skeptically as she toyed with the new slightly triangular shape of the thickest part above her forehead. Sans watched the movements of her fingers with uncanny interest.

“It’s a boy haircut,” she said, sounding disappointed. “But…” he turned around and looked up at Asgore. “At least it’s a haircut!”

“Thank-you!” she cried and threw her arms around him. Meaning, her face squished the middle of his belly and her fingertips stretched out almost all the way to his sides. “I want you to do all my haircuts from now on.”

Asgore felt a little fluttering in his chest and gently covered her back with his hand. “Of course.”

“Whelp, that does look a little better than what i did,” Sans admitted. “Looks like you guys’re gettin’ along great. I’m sorry for doubting ya, champ.”

Frisk didn’t respond.

“Hello? Frisk?” He stepped closer and waved his hand near her cheek.

Asgore looked down and noticed that his hand was supporting Frisk’s entire weight as she leaned against him. “She’s asleep.”

Sans stood by and watched as Asgore tucked Frisk into the left bed in the children’s room. The King smiled fondly and left the bedroom. Sans chuckled lightly as he pulled the chain to turn off the lamp, before following out after him.

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