Once More, With Feeling

by TeaTinBlix

Summary

It's a place where weird things happen, and kids go missing. It's a place where everyone grows up being told to stay away from. It's a place Frisk grew used to hearing scary stories about. But someone also once told Frisk that there was Magic on that mountain, and that if they were lucky, Mt. Ebott would grant them a wish.

Any wish.

And with Frisk's older sister, You, practically on death's doorstep, they were willing to take any chance they could.

And as luck would have it, Frisk literally stumbled right into the Underground and had the adventure of a lifetime. However, by the time they were able to free the monsters and make
their way back out to the surface, their new friends and their magic in tow, not even a wish could bring back what Frisk had lost. Because at the end of every single run through the Underground, no matter how quickly Frisk hurried, as the sun rose over the mountain You succumb to an illness you’ve been battling for a long time.

So with one final Reset, Frisk goes back farther than they ever have before. If they can't bring the monsters to You... they'll bring You to the monsters!

It's Frisk's last hope, and Your last chance.

Notes

I haven't written a fic in literal years, this is nerve-wracking, oh jeez. I hope ya'll like this self-indulgent as hell fluffy sappy friendship story omg. ...Probably eventual smut, not gonna lie. It'll be a while tho, hooooof.

I'd be super happy and extra motivated if I got feedback! C: Comments are crazy appreciated <33
One last try

Sans stands on top of Mt. Ebott, his brother and his friends surrounding him.

The sunrise was the most beautiful thing he’s ever laid eyes(ockets) on, and no matter how many times he had to relive this moment, it never dulled. The feeling never changed.

And just as the awe, strong as it was, began to fade… as always, a cold ball of dread began to take its place.

As his friends chatter and talk, excited and happy and oblivious to the fact that this was their dozenth upon dozenth time standing in this very spot, he forces himself to keep his expression neutral. Forces himself to keep his grin from faltering, and from hiding the small tremble in his bony fingers, his hands stuffed in his jacket pockets.

Every time they reach this point, every time he watches this sunrise… It was like clockwork. He had experienced this moment so, so many times, he was able to count down to it by the second.

And when he reaches the end of that countdown, his hands trembling in his pockets and his teeth gritting so hard it makes his jaw ache, a terrible and ripping pain blooms in his chest.

It’s unbearable, hitting him so suddenly it makes his vision blur. It’s as if he can feel his soul, the very culmination of his being, threatening to shatter right then and there. But as always, he doesn't budge. Doesn’t waver or let his grin so much as twitch.

He knew, from experience, that it would fade. With time the pain would ebb and he’d be left exhausted and drained until the kid decided they wanted to give the underground another runthrough and reset the world.

Maybe it was the resets that caused it. Maybe it was the (other)kid. Maybe he was allergic to the sun. Who knew?

All he knew was that exactly two minutes and thirteen seconds after stepping onto the surface beside his brother, his soul was broken. His soul was damaged, and would stay damaged, until Frisk brought them back in time again.

When Papyrus exclaims he wants to go make a good first impression with the humans, as he always does, Sans is more than grateful to ‘follow’ along, taking the excuse to hurry away from the others. Somewhere where he doesn't need to hide his trembling hands or labored breath anymore.

He’s always hated it when the kid reset. His brother finally got a chance to see the surface. To see the stars, to meet other humans, to live outside. The others were so happy, too. He hated seeing all of them dropped back to square one, stuck and not moving anywhere.
...But a small part of him, even now, silently begs Frisk to reset again. That something was wrong,
that something wasn’t right, that this pain was too much, please reset again.

He’d never say a word, though. Even if this was one of the very rare cases where Frisk decides to try
to live up on the surface for a while, he won't every say anything.

As always, Sans would just grin and bear it.

So when the ground under his feet gives a telltale tremble, foretelling the abrupt end to this story, he
can't help but feel relieved, even as the familiar yet terrifying black void of the reset fills his world.

Frisk stares down the rocky slope of Mt. Ebott, silent as a mouse.

They're too late.

They were always too late.

No matter what Frisk did, how quickly they hurried and raced to free the monsters and bring them to
the surface, it was inevitably. Always. Too. Late.

The sun was rising over the horizon. It was and bright and clear and beautiful, but to Frisk…

To Frisk it was nothing but a giant, glowing tell to their failure. Nothing but a smack in the face. A
promise that this wasn’t going to be the happy ending they were so, so hoping for. Not this time.

The babble and chatter of their friends sounds dull and far away in Frisk’s ears. They'd heard the
same conversation--the same bubbly excitement and hope for a future that wasn't ready yet so many
times they could recite everyone's words by heart anyway.

They were all so happy. This was the first time they were seeing the surface, after all. The barrier
was broken, and Frisk’s friends were enjoying their first taste of the fresh surface air. Frisk wishes
they could be as happy. Frisk wishes they could be half as excited. Frisk wishes it didn’t have to
always be like this, that there was something they could do...

Something dawns on the small child, and a glimmer of hope--a glimmer of pure determination--
flashes in their eyes, bright as the rays of the rising sun.

Their gaze locks on the glittering city in the distance as an idea begins to form.

Frisk had never tried to reset back further than the fall. Over the dozens and dozens and dozens of
times they had so desperately tried, they always began back at the same place. Back at the bottom of
Mt. Ebott. But...if they could manage it...maybe it was worth a shot. It had to be worth a shot.
Nothing else was working.

One more time. Just one more time.

“I’LL GO MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION!” Papyrus’s voice rings out suddenly, the tall,
lanky skeleton bolting off away from the group, Undyne and Alphys close on his heels, laughing all
the way.

Sans takes a small step back, chuckling, his grin wide as ever.

“welp. someone’s gotta keep him from getting into trouble. see you guys.” He lets out a soft chuckle
and turns on his heel, rushing off in practically the opposite direction he said he was going, as was
Sans’ way.
Frisk pauses, then took one more look at Toriel and Asgore, the last two of their friends still with them.

Frisk loved each and every one of them, so much it made their heart swell to the point where sometimes they wondered if hearts could pop. They want them happy, and they want the ending to be perfect.

But this one isn't right. Not yet. One more time.

Frisk takes in a deep breath, and closes their eyes. Reaching up they take hold of Toriel’s large, warm paw and give it a gentle squeeze; a silent apology. If this time didn’t work… Frisk would be done. Frisk wouldn’t try anymore. They make a silent promise to their friends that they wouldn’t make them all do this again.

“I love you,” they say, voice just a whisper.

Frisk doesn't give Toriel time to respond or even react before they reset the world, one more time.
It's a deal

Chapter Summary

Frisk brings you to the mountain.

Chapter Notes

I realized the hardest part of writing this so far for me is keeping in the same tense omg. Especially writing from a second person sort of perspective. I kept hopping between past and present tense, but hopefully I caught it all when I edited it up.

Edit: I went back and edited up the chapters to keep the tense I use the same throughout lmao. So yay on that pfff

Also cripes, I just wanna skip to meeting the skelebros!! Sheesh!!!!!! damn this story telling and important character driven plot or whatever.

This room is too damn hot. You shift back and forth between kicking off your blankets and then gathering all of them back up again, the air freezing cold against your sweat-damp skin. This was awful.

The fact that your parents were arguing with each other downstairs doesn't help you feel any better. Especially because, as usual, they were arguing about you.

Guilt wrings at your gut, and as you struggle to figure out how to try to fall asleep comfortably, all you can think about is the fact that with your fate looming closer every day, you’re going to leave your family in a hole of debt so deep that they may never be able to pull themselves up and out.

Your parents were always on top of making sure you knew it, too. Maybe not on purpose, maybe not maliciously, but you always knew when they weren't happy. You tried to never ask for much, especially not since getting sick, but it was a red hot coal of shame and humiliation in your gut that they made you feel like a leech. You knew it wasn't your fault--of course it wasn't your fucking fault you got sick. You just wished they didn't make you feel that way.

...You knew your parents love you though. Stress could change people, and one of the reasons you held on as tightly as you did was because of the happy memories of how your family used to be.

Frisk, though… Frisk had never changed.

You love that kid so much. As sappy as it was, they were your damn sunshine on a cloudy, cloudy day. They were your cup of cocoa in a blizzard. Frisk was your whole world, and you made sure to tell them so whenever you got the damn chance. ...Because really, how much time did you have left to tell them, anyway?

Weeks? Months? The doctor’s more optimistic estimation pushed a whole year.
“Ugh,” you let out a groan, and flump back into your gross, damp pillows, frowning up at your white, tiled ceiling. “Fuck you, boobs.”

“What’d you say?”

A little voice, laced with a sneaky giggle, comes from the other side of your door.

You sit up, blinking, and can’t help but laugh in embarrassment when Frisk eases the door open and slips into your room.

“Shit, my bad, kiddo! Don’t say that word, it’s super…not good.”

“Mhm,” Frisk nods, still grinning, and hops up onto the bed at your feet, their legs dangling over the edge. They took a minute just…to look around. As if they were seeing your room for the first time in a long time.

It was odd, because at that moment, you felt as if you hadn’t seen Frisk in a long, long time, too.

Frisk just looks over your space, watching your betta fish in your fish tank dart into his little mini castle. They look at the various dumb, nerdy posters dotting your walls. They look at your bookshelf, absolutely crammed full of everything from comics and cruddy romance novels, to textbooks from before you had to drop out of college.

Your favorite though, was a scrapbook Frisk made last Christmas. Made from an old school binder and full of lined paper, it was full of drawings and comics and stories about all the adventures they wanted to have with you someday.

Sometimes, you’d get up out of bed in the middle of the night and take it down from your shelf. You could only every look at it when no one else was around, because no matter how hard you tried, it made you cry every time you opened it up.

“So, what’s up, my favorite little gender-binary-fighting sibling?”

“I had…” Frisk hums, and ducks their head, their little chocolate bob hiding their face for a moment. “…an idea.”


“…You have to promise me something, though,” they went on, and the…seriousness in their voice was surprising. This was your tiny, little goofball of a sibling and you can’t recall hearing a tone like that from them. “You can’t ask any questions. Not ’til we get there. Okay?”

“Hm.” You sit back, thinking. Honestly, at this point in your nearly non-existent life, Frisk could ask you to rob a bank with them and you’d probably be up for it. Actually, wait, hold on no, that would go on their permanent record. Maybe not that. But you’d be willing to do a whole lot. “…Any other conditions, boss?”

“Oh, yeah, can we use your car? It’ll be way easier.”

You can’t help but laugh then, reaching up to cover your mouth with your arm, muffling the sound. “My car? Sure.”

“Also, we’ll have to sneak.”

“Sneak?” you repeat, cocking an eyebrow.
“Yeah, sneak. They can’t know where we’re going. It’s a secret.”

You kind of want to argue. Or ask more questions. But there they sat, looking so desperate, reaching out and holding one of your ankles over the blankets, staring at you pleadingly. How the hell were you supposed to say no to that?

“...And I can’t ask questions? That question doesn’t count.”

“No, none. But it’s also really important,” Frisk gives your ankle a shake. “That we go, right now. And that you come with me.”

You pretend to give it some thought. Like you were really mulling it over. And maybe part of you was, but at that point your curiosity was so damn strong that you could care less about anything else. To top it off, you actually had the spoons to spare, too.

“...Deal, kiddo.”

And that’s how you found yourself sneaking out of your room and down the stairs, Frisk leading the way. You grab your coat—and make Frisk grab theirs as well—and gather up your purse, making sure your keys don't jingle as you slip out the back door.

Your parents were still yelling at each other when you start up your old gas-guzzling pickup and drive away, and when you can't hear their voices anymore it's like a weight being lifted off your shoulders.

“So, uh. We going on a hike, kiddo?”

You park the truck on the side of a ‘road’ that’s seen so little use there are saplings beginning to sprout in the old tire tracks. The two of you sit in the front of the truck, radio humming softly, looking up at the looming presence of the mountain. You’d kept your promise and hadn’t asked any questions, but…

“Listen, this place has a crazy bad reputation for people disappearing, so I’m cool if we just sit and stare at how cool it looks from in my truck with lockable doors, but-- Frisk?”

You blink in stunned shock while watching the little pipsqueak unbuckle their seatbelt and open their door, hopping down onto the ground.

“Kiddo, I’m not joking, get back in the truck,” you call, doing your best to use your ‘serious big sister’ voice.

But then Frisk begins to walk away from the truck, further down the road, and you scramble to unbuckle and go out after them, shoving the keys into your purse and throwing the strap over one shoulder.

“Frisk! I’m not kidding!”

You take a step after them...and Frisk begins to run.

Panic bites at your insides, and you begin to chase after them. For a moment, anger mixes with that fear. Frisk knew how sick you were. Frisk knew you couldn’t be doing this, and the thought that this might be shaving hours, if not days, off your already dwindling life span, was a bright red beacon in the back of your mind.
“Frisk, please!” you shout, but to no avail.

“A little bit farther!” they call back. “We’re almost there, come on!”

They lead you up the mountainside, the sky dimming, the sun beginning to set.

“Frisk, it’s getting dark! We can’t stay here!”

“Almost!”

You begin to feel frustrated tears brim in your eyes. You felt so weak, and so damn tired. You thought they just wanted to come look at the mountain, get some fresh air, take a break from their parents screaming. If you had known they would pull a stunt like this, you’d have never have gotten out of bed.

“Frisk, I can’t go up anymore.” You pant, exhausted and sore from head to toe. “I don’t have the energy for this, kid, come on.”

There was no response.

And that was the scariest thing you could have imagined.

“Frisk? Frisk, please come down,” you try again, begging.

Still, there was no response.

You gather up your last dregs of energy and push further up Mt. Ebott. The sky is a wash of pinks and oranges, and it would have been beautiful if you weren’t so frightened.

“Frisk!” you bark, letting your anger show then. “This isn’t funny! Get back here right now!”

You hike yourself up onto a flat sort of clearing, and when you look back down over your shoulder you’re honestly shocked at how far up you’d made it. That whole adrenaline thing and how it could give you superpowers wasn’t bullshit after all, huh?

You turn back around, feeling a tad more energized, and begin to run again.

“Frisk, where are--!”

In the long, dark shadows the forest cast across the ground, you hadn’t seen the hole.

One of your hiking boots--boots you hadn’t worn in over a year--catch the edge of an old, gnarled root, and it’s only when you didn’t hit the ground that you realize the hole was even there.

You fall into the pitch dark, and your exhaustion catches up at the most merciful time it could, rendering you unconscious before you could hit the ground.
The first thing you feel when you wake up is your arm. Namely, how it doesn't feel too great.

Secondly, is your legs... Hup, make that both legs.

Actually, strike that. Your whole body is pulp.

“Frisk?” you rasp, and manage to push yourself up onto your elbows.

You're alone, and you're surrounded by a cushiony heap of golden flowers. You recognize them, absently in your dazed mind, as the same kind that grow on the hills outside the city.

The flowers must have been the reason you weren't dead. How long was that drop? You can't see the hole you fell into, but that was probably on account of it being dark out rather than it was that far up.

“Frisk?” you call again, blinking slowly, fear mounting.

“Frisk, kiddo, where are you?” Oh, God, where were they? Where was your baby sib? They had to be okay, if anything happened to them, you don't know what you would do--

“I’m over here!”

Frisk’s voice is the sweetest damn thing you’ve ever heard, and you push up into more of a sitting position, wincing. “Frisk, holy shit,” you gasp, and the relief in your voice is palpable. “Get over here so I can kick your ass, you crazy little shrimp! Are you okay? Are you hurt?”

Frisk rushes from the shadows of the... cave? you were stuck in, and kneels down in front of you. You take their little face in your hands, turning their head gently this way and that, checking for any injuries.

“I’m okay, I’m okay! I promise, I pinkie swear.”

You take a moment to just hold onto them, tugging them down into a hug, and they hug you back.
The cave you’d fallen into...you can’t tell how big it is. Shadows eat up every corner from what you can see. Only the flowers are visible, and that's only barely. A little miracle patch that saved you and Frisk. Maybe you're a little more rattled than you first thought, but you give one of the flowers a little thank-you pat when you finally let Frisk go.

“I’m sorry,” they say, and you notice they’ve been crying into your shoulder. “I didn’t mean for you to get hurt. I didn’t want you to get hurt.”

Your heart clenches, and suddenly you (mostly) forget about being angry. Seeing Frisk cry was just something you can't handle. “...I’m fine, kiddo, just a little sore. I’m just glad you’re okay.” You let out a laugh, and give Frisk a gentle push. “You kids are so bouncy.”

Frisk giggled at that, reaching up and wiping away the tears from their eyes.

“But,” you begin, and reach out again, smushing their face between your hands. “You ever do anything like this again? I’m gonna grind you up into powder and make tea out’ve you. Frisk tea.”

Frisk makes a face, but nods and reaches up, holding your hands with their little ones.

“I promise I won’t. Never again.”

They look down, closing their eyes. Frisk lets out a heavy breath, and then stands up, still holding onto your hands.

“We gotta go, though. We can’t sit here forever.”

You blink at that. Honestly, you probably could sit here a while longer. “Ah...kiddo, remember the first rule about getting lost? You’re more likely to be found if you don’t move. They’ll find my truck by the mountain and they should find us eventually.”

Or, at least, you were hoping. You really don't want to think about dying in a hole. You had to be positive and look on the bright side of things! Especially for Frisk. ...If only for Frisk. They needed to get out of here way more than you did.

“We’re really far down,” they point out, and look up at the dark ceiling above you. “I don’t think it would matter. So we should move.”

Frisk gives your hand a gentle tug, urging you to get up. “We can find another way out.”

You...have your doubts. You have a whole lot of doubts.

You look around and when the dark walls of the cave look like they were getting closer you can't help but wince, swallowing your panic. When you thought about it, you really don't want to get up and leave, but you really don't want to sit there in this dark little flower patch any longer, either.

“O...okay, kiddo.” You let out a breath and stand with another flinch. Oh, sheesh, you were going to be sore for a long time. But you suck it up and straighten your spine. You have to be strong for Frisk. You were in charge, and you don't want them to be afraid. “We’re gonna be okay. Let’s hunt for an exit.”

Despite you being the one ‘in charge’, Frisk kept being the one to take the lead. They hurry in front of you a few steps every once in a while before running back and holding your hand. You're using your phone’s flashlight to make sure you don't fall into anymore holes, lighting the few feet of gravely, rocky stone floor ahead of you.
“I’ve got about a 75% charge left on this bad boy, kiddo,” you say. “I might switch to just using the light from the screen soon, it’ll save on the battery—”

You pause, because up ahead, there was...a gate...?

You angle your phone up a bit, and you aren't sure how you're supposed to be feeling as you took in what looked like a large carved stone doorway. What the hell was that doing all the way down here? What the hell was--

“Look, see?” Frisk pipes up cheerfully. “Someone’s gotta be down here!”

“Yeah, and by the looks of it, they're probably weird and culty. What the fuck is that weird wingy symbol?”

“Hey, swear jar!”

You huff, frowning as you recall the big water jug Frisk had scribbled on with a marker back home, labeling it the ‘Swayr Jar’. They liked to follow you around sometimes, jingling it ominously, just waiting for you to slip up. Because you slipped up a lot.

“Tell you what, I'll put a whole twenty in it when we get back home if you let me curse all I want to down here, eh?”

Frisk hums in thought. “...How about...one swear word a day. You only get one a day.”

Well, you sure as hell aren't planning on being stuck down here for more than one day, so hey. That sounds good. “Deal.”

Without another word, the two of you duck into the stone doorway, and you pretend not to feel like you’re being watched.

The oddities don’t end there though. Up ahead, after the weird stone doorway that shouldn’t have existed, there looks to be a light. You don't have the slightest idea where the light was coming from, seeing as how it was dark outside, but somehow, a small mound of earth was illuminated in the middle of the new cavern you step into. It illuminates the mound, along with a single, yellow flower.

Frisk’s hand tightens around yours, and you figure, yeah, they must think this weird random light with no source is freaky too. The flower is a little off putting as well. It kinda looks like...

Does it have a face?

You move closer, Frisk still holding on tightly.

And then the strangest thing happens.

“Howdy!” the yellow flower says. “I’m Flowey! Flowey the Flower!”

You let out a sound akin to the air being let out of a giant balloon. “Oh, fuck, what?”

Frisk gives your hand a gentle shake, and their voice is barely a whisper. “You already had your big swear for the day.”

“Oh, ffffffffshhhwhat?” you wheeze again.

“Hmm...” the flower seems to look straight at you, and you feel a chill jolt down your spine. You don't much care for being stared at by a talking flower. “…You’re… Golly, you must be so
confused!"

Frisk scoots their way in front of you, placing themselves between you and the flower. You immediately tug at one of their shoulders, pulling them back behind you instead.

“Someone ought to teach you how things work around here!”

Despite his chipper, friendly voice, something about the flower gives you the heebie jeebies. Really though, how else were you supposed to feel about a talking flower?

“I guess lil’ old me will have to do! Are you ready?”

“Oh, jeez, ready for what?” you mutter, and Frisk gives your hand an urgent tug.

“Here we go!” Flowey says.

Frisk leaps in front of you, between you and the flower, and your gasp is caught in your throat.

As they stood, as if ready for a fight, in front of you, a bright red glow fills the space in front of them. From their chest, a heart appears. A floating, glowing, red heart. It hovered in the air in front of Frisk, strong and powerful.

Despite not knowing what the hell is going on, you knew exactly what you're looking at. You knew what that thing was, just from the feeling of it being so close alone. It was Frisk.

“See that heart?” Flowey says, smiling happily. “That's your Soul! The very culmination of your being!” Flowey's eyes dart to you again, his smile widening. “I wonder what your Soul looks like!”

Frisk stamps a foot on the ground, as if trying to keep the flower’s attention on themselves. You don't like this one damn bit.

“Frisk, honey, let’s go back to the first room, okay?” you speak slowly, reaching out to touch their shoulder. To your shock, they shrug away from your grip and shake their head silently.

“Your Soul starts off weak,” Flowey went on. “But can grow strong if you gain a lot of LV. What’s ‘LV’ stand for, you ask? Why, LOVE, of cour--”

“Let me and my sister go through. We don't want to play,” Frisk interjects. Once again, their little voice sounds so serious. It's almost as big of a shock again as seeing their perfect, beautiful little red Soul.

What a day.

Flowey looks surprised to say the least though. He blinks, before an irritated smile slowly crosses his features, his eyes narrowing at your little sib. “I haven’t even shared any of my LOVE with you, yet.”

“Don’t want it. Please move,” Frisk says. They're taking the whole talking flower and Soul thing really well, while you're busy trying to keep your breathing level. You're pretty sure you're one hop away from a meltdown. Or were you having one right this moment? Was this what a meltdown felt like?

One of Flowey’s eyes twitch, his leaves shuddering. “…So you know what’s going on here, don’t you?” he growls. In an instant, his demeanor changes. A horrifying, almost toothy grin warps his cheery face.
You reach out and yank Frisk back, hugging them to your chest. Their Soul jerks at the same moment, shifting back, as if tied to Frisk’s movements.

“You just wanted to see me suffer,” Flowey snarled.

Frisk reaches up, grabbing hold of your wrists that are crossed in front of their chest. “Don’t move,” they say, voice soft, a whisper just for you “Just stay still.”

Suddenly, in a violently quick sweeping flash, a ring of what look like tiny little white bullets circle around the both of you. They spin in the air, and something in you tells you they’re dangerous, and you squeeze Frisk even tighter to you, sweat beading across your forehead.

“DIE,” Flowey barks, and his already horrifying face contorts into a real toothy smile, a horrible, grating laugh leaving him as those bullets begin to get closer, the circle closing in slowly.

Without hesitation, you duck down and wrap yourself tightly around Frisk. You reach up with one arm as well, instinctively looping the arm around where their red SOUL floats in the air. You’d much rather those little things shred you than Frisk any day. You’d die for this kid, and you tense, ready to do just that.

So it's very unexpected when a flare of bright flames shoot up around you. In an instant the floating bullets are wiped out. The fire dances, warm but not searing, before disappearing just as quickly as it appeared.

Flowey blinks, looking confused, before a second blast of flames knocks him flying clear out of the ground with a startled cry. He disappears into the shadows, deeper into the dark cave, without another sound.

Frisk pops their head out of your shoulder, but you don't let go, still holding onto them for dear life. Your heart pounds, your lungs heave. You were gonna be sick.

A massive shape steps out of the shadows, and you blink helplessly up at it as it moves into the light. They're tall and imposing, easily pushing eight feet. They're wearing a purple dress and you see the same symbol you'd seen on the stone gate embroidered on their chest.

Their face resembles that of a...goat? A sheep? But softer, rounder, a bit more expressive than the animal your brain tries desperately to compare them too. They even sport a pair of small, pointed horns that sprout from the top of their head.

You kind of want to cry.

“What a terrible creature, torturing such poor, innocent youths,” the goat--woman?--says, and her voice is strong but soothing. If you could tack a feeling onto just her voice, you’d describe it is as warm cocoa. Something soft and friendly.

Frisk wiggles a little in your hold, and you can't help but to loosen your grasp the smallest bit, letting them get free. You feel lightheaded, blinking slowly at your tall, fluffy savior.

“Do not be afraid, little ones,” the goat woman went on, and you notice that even her eyes are gentle. “I am Toriel, caretaker of the Ruins.”

Frisk smiles, and as your vision began to blur you watch them give Toriel a shy little wave.

Toriel gives Frisk a tiny wave back, and a bright smile lights up her face. “I pass through this place every day to see if anyone has fallen down. You two are the first humans to come here in a long
“Time. Come!” she holds out a large paw to you, where you still sat on the ground, unable to move. “I will lead you through the catacombs!”

You blink again, and your gaze drops from her kind, smiling face, to her massive paw. Or was it a hand?

Your vision gets darker by the second then, and you feel yourself wobble a bit. Frisk gasps, turning to face you completely.

The last thing you can make out is their bright red SOUL disappearing back into their chest, safe and sound, and both Frisk and Toriel reaching out for you as you tip back towards the earth.
A window to the Soul

Chapter Summary

You hear a few things that are a little tough to hear.

Chapter Notes

SCREW IT, let's go back to present tense because it's easier with a story like this omg.

AND YO...........WE GONNA MEET THE SKELEBROS NEXT CHAPTER.
WHO'S EXCITED?? ME.

Also, for anyone interested, I have an undertale tumblr blog at TeaTinBlix.tumblr.com!
Feel free to follow me and ask questions or bother me or whathaveyou! C: <3

The sound of muffled speech is what you make out when consciousness first pokes at you. You can barely make out the words if you really, really try. You’re pretty sure you hear the word ‘snail’ a few times, so you shake your head and try to decide if you should keep waking up or just go back to sleep instead.

You’re in a bed, you notice. It’s soft, and warm, and so, so comfortable. You close your eyes and nuzzle a bit more into the soft comforter, grunting. For a tiny, blissful second, you truly believe that falling down the hole and meeting a violent, talking flower was just a dream.

But then you crack a hesitant eye open, squinting at a room that is definitely not your own, and the dream crumbles.

Nope. Some crazy shit went down, and now it’s time to deal with it.

You sit up slowly, holding your breath, expecting a lot of pain to come along with the movement. But you’re surprised when there’s no pain at all. You feel great. Better than you have in a long time, in fact!

...Oh, shit. Were you dead?

You give yourself a hard pinch on the inside of your arm, yelping as the pain you were only half expecting bites at you. Okay, so, not dead. In theory, anyway.

You reach up, and your fingers touch over the very, very short hair covering your skull. It had just begun to grow back after having lost it to a rough couple rounds of chemo, and you were...hoping it got long enough to play with before your time was up.

You drop your hand, shivering, and shift your legs over the side of the bed. The wooden floor is surprisingly warm under your bare feet, and you stand, peering around the room quietly. The lights were dim, but there was a warm glow coming from underneath the closed door.
Your jacket was draped over the foot of the bed, and you see your boots on the floor. You’re still in the sweatpants you left the house in, as well as your soft purple sweatshirt. Oddly though, you notice absently, they were both very clean, as if you hadn’t fallen down a hole and got harassed by a flower in them. It was like magic.

Quietly, holding your breath, you open the door and peek into the hall. You see a few more doors lining the wall of the hallway, and what looks like a dining room at the far end of the hall. Now that the door is open the muffled voices are much clearer, and you can easily make out Frisk’s voice.

You recognize the voice of the sheep...goat woman from earlier as well. The one who rescued you from the flower.

_Damn_, what a crazy sentence. What was even your life?

You slowly begin to make your way down the hall, lightly keeping one hand to one of the walls, tracing along it as if for support as you go. You pass what must be the foyer of the house, moving past both what looks like an entrance door, and a staircase leading downstairs. Every inch of this place just feels… _safe_. The atmosphere is akin to a nice warm hug, but with all the weird shit going on, you’re not sure how you feel about that just yet.

You peek into the room where you saw the table set up, and you see Toriel sitting in a large, comfortable looking armchair. A fire is lit in the fireplace beside her, bathing the room in warm, dancing light and adding a cozy crackle to the air. Frisk is sitting criss-cross-applesauce on the floor in front of them, and you can hear the smile in their voice as they ask for “another snail fact.”

Before Toriel can answer though, she looks up, and your eyes meet.

“Oh! My child, you’re awake!”

She closes a book she had been holding in her lap, standing and setting it on the chair behind her.

Frisk turns and scrambles to their feet, and you brace yourself for a hug before they practically throw themselves at you. You squeeze your arms around them tightly, smiling wide.

“Frisk!” you lean down and smush an obnoxious kiss to their cheek, and laugh when they push away with an overdramatic, disgusted noise. “Are you okay? What happened?”

Toriel laughs, the sound soft and melodic and warm, and her smile shows brightly in her eyes as she looks at the two of you, delighted and endeared.

“I’m fine, I’m great!” Frisk says, and they look up at you, grinning. “Toriel saved us! Then she carried you all the way here, and we solved a bunch of puzzles together through the Ruins on the way! I wish you’d been up, it was a lot of fun!”

You reach up and scratch the back of your neck, once again not sure how to feel about all this. Grateful, of course. But also confused. Concerned. No doubt a few other things, but you were having trouble picking feelings out and naming them. How long were you out?

“How are _you_ feeling, my child?” Toriel asks, and she was addressing you now. Her expression was the epitome of motherly concern, and you felt a sudden ache in your chest. ...You...kind of missed how your own parents used to look at you like that. Instead of just, tired and frustrated all the time.

“...I feel kind of like a wuss,” you say honestly. “That’s the second time in like. One day that I’ve passed out.” You reach up and give the front of your head a rub, grumbling. “That can’t be good for my brain.”
“Your health was very low when I found you. You must have been very hurt when you fell down here.” She looks at you with a concerned expression that bunches up the fur between her eyes. “I studied healing magic when I was young, and did my best to help you. How do you feel?”

You blink a few times, staring at her. “I...uh. Actually, I feel great!” You look down at your hands, clenching and unclenching them into fists a few times. Healing magic? Was there a chance she could have...? No-- no no, you stop those thoughts right there. You weren’t going to get your hopes up. That was too easy, to be fixed literally overnight by magic.

“I’m not sore or anything,” you go on, tone a bit softer this time.

Toriel looks like she wants to say something else, mouth opening for a moment, but she shakes her head and smiles instead.

“Would you like to hear an interesting snail fact?” she asks.

It’s a weird question, but this has been a weird day. You want to ask what’s going on. You want to ask what she is (is that a rude thing to ask?). But when Frisk leaves your side and goes back to sitting on the floor in front of the fire, and pats the floor beside them, that seals the deal. You move across the warm wooden floor and sit down next to your little sib, crossing your legs just like them. “Um. Yeah sure,” you say, laughing under your breath. “I love snails.”

“Oh, so do I!” Toriel says, delighted. She picks up her book, and sits back down.

You sit, and you listen. Toriel’s voice is so soothing, every word feels like a lullaby. You curl an arm around Frisk when they lean against your side, and for a moment, just one sweet little moment, you’re at peace. The crackle of the fire, the warmth of Frisk’s little self, learning that snails flipped their digestive systems... this was great.

After your 27th snail fact, Toriel closes the book.

“While I do love reading about snails, let’s take a break. I made you both a treat, while you were resting. Here, stay here with Frisk, I’ll go get you both a slice from the kitchen.”

At the mention of food, your distracted, lost mind can narrow in on one more piece of the new space you hadn’t really paid much attention to yet: the smell.

Like the sweetest, most welcoming bakery you’ve ever visited, the smell of cinnamon and vanilla in the air. And... something else you couldn’t put a finger on. It was familiar, but...shoot, what was that smell?

Frisk stands up and takes your hand, leading you over to the table. There are two adult seats (or, rather, two gigantic seats, and one much smaller seat by comparison) surrounding it, and you sit down hesitantly at one of the larger chairs. Your feet dangle from the ground, and you feel like a kid.

Toriel steps back into the room, and she’s carrying two plates. On each looks like a slice of...some sorta pie. Whatever it is, your mouth instantly begins to water, and your stomach growls a lot louder than you expected it to.

She laughs, as if you’ve just complimented her, and sets the plates down in front of both of you, along with two forks that are, shockingly, your size. “It’s butterscotch-cinnamon pie!” she tells you, beaming. “I hope it’s a nice surprise. Do you like cinnamon and butterscotch?”

“That’s what it was!” you say, and pick up your fork, smiling. “Butterscotch. I couldn’t place it, I haven’t smelled butterscotch in ages. This looks amazing, Toriel, thank you! I love both of ‘em.”
She sits down at the other large chair, resting her hands in her lap and smiling. Frisk has already begun to dig in, and you gently nudge their shin under the table with your boot.

Frisk swallows the mouthful they’re working on, and smiles at Toriel as well. “Thank you!” they say, and Toriel reaches over, patting their head so gently you wonder if Frisk even felt it.

You take a bite of the pie, and it’s the most heavenly thing you’ve eaten in a long time. Maybe in your life. You let out a happy hum and lean back in your seat, savoring it. You swallow your first bite a split second after you hear Frisk let out a giggly “it tickles”, and then you kind of realize what they meant.

As soon as you swallow the bite of butterscotch-cinnamon pie, you don’t really feel it move down your throat like you would normally? It almost feels as if it dissolves in a tingly, sparkly sensation in the back of your throat. It startles you enough for you to clap a hand over your chest, blinking in surprise, wondering if you’re about to start choking.

“Monster food does not act like human food,” Toriel says, watching you. “It’s made of magic, after all. Your body absorbs it completely. I’m sorry, I should have warned you.”

“No, it’s okay, it just--” you look down at the pie. “Just startled me. Wasn’t expecting it.”

Despite this, you take another bite. And another. And then another. Until the entire slice (and it was a good sized slice!) is gone. By the time you’re done, you’re almost used to the odd sensation, and you feel even better than you did before you ate it. You could get used to this magic stuff.

That can’t be the case however, and you reach up, tiredly rubbing the sleeve of your sweatshirt over your eyes. “So how do we get back up, Toriel?” you ask.

She visibly flinches, which causes you to drop your arm and look at her in surprise.

You hesitate, concerned. “Are you okay?”

“Oh, I...I’m fine, I...” Toriel takes a deep breath, and then lets it out through her snout slowly, closing her eyes. “...I’m...so sorry, but...there is no way out of the Ruins.” She looks up at you, and her eyes seem suddenly ancient. “You cannot go back home.”

It’s such a heavy statement, you don’t really even process it. You make a noise in the back of your throat, frowning a little, and look back down at your empty plate. No way to get back home? You were stuck…? That meant… that meant Frisk was stuck.

“But--” you begin, but Frisk interrupts you.

“That can’t be true,” they say, looking at Toriel, their little brows furrowed. “There’s a way out of the Ruins.”

“And how would you know that, my child?” Toriel asks slowly, mirroring your own question before you could ask it yourself.

Frisk huffs. “When we were coming back, I heard some Froggits talking about a place called New Home, and how there’s a door to get out of the Ruins downstairs.”

Toriel stares at them in silent shock, and you couldn’t help but notice a little lift in their voice as they spoke. It was a tiny, almost unnoticeable waver in their voice that nobody would be able to hear unless, like you, you knew them through and through. It was a little tell that they were lying, but that didn’t make any damn sense, because how the hell else were they supposed to know that? It’s been a
stressful day, so you shake off hearing the little catch in Frisk’s voice as just that.

“I…” Toriel closes her eyes again.

“Is that true?” You ask, and she winces again. That’s enough of a ‘yes’ for you. Why would she lie about that?

“...Please, excuse me,” she says suddenly, and stands. “I must do something. I’ll...be back in a moment.”

Without another word, or an explanation, she leaves the two of you sitting at the table, rushing out of the room. You can hear her heavy footsteps fade, and know she’s heading down those stairs you passed.

“Come on,” Frisk says, and motions you up. You stand silently, and move ahead of them, hurrying to the stairs. If the door downstairs is the only way out, and that’s where she’s going, you have a bad feeling in your gut that you need to rush.

You and Frisk move down the stairs quickly, the stairs leading to a long and dim hall. You can make out Toriel’s silhouette, and the two of you run to catch up to her.

Thankfully, she stops, but she never turns to face you. Her voice is low, and while it isn’t menacing, she sounds utterly serious. It’s the sort of tone you remember hearing from your mom when you were in big trouble, and it makes you fidget a bit as you stop at the same time she does.

“You wish to know how to return ‘home’, do you not?” she asks.

You feel Frisk hold onto one of your hands, and you give them a gentle squeeze.

“Ahead of us lies the end of the Ruins. A one-way exit to the rest of the underground. I am going to destroy it. No one will ever be able to leave again.” Her shoulders are trembling, you can see it even in the dim light. “Now be good children, and go upstairs.”

She starts to hurry away from you again, each step easily equal to two or three of your own. You and Frisk hurry after her.

“Hey, that’s--you can’t do that!” you call.

Toriel stops again, and still does not turn to face you.

“Every human who falls down here meets the same fate,” she goes on, and you feel dread prickle at your gut. “I have seen it, again and again. They come. They leave. They…”

You hold onto Frisk’s hand tighter.

“They die.” She looks up at the ceiling of the long hall. “You naive children. If you leave the Ruins...they...Asgore...will kill you. I am only protecting you,” she says, cold desperation in her voice. “Don’t you understand? Now go back upstairs.”

Once again, she starts to march, quicker this time.

“I don’t understand!” you shout. “It’s just as dangerous here, too! The first thing we met was a talking flower that tried to kill us! We can’t stay here forever.”

“This is your final warning,” Toriel says, and her tone has turned hard. “Do not try to stop me.”
She turns a corner in the hall, and when you follow after her you can see large double doors at the end. She stops in front of them, and when you and Frisk rush into the small room with her you can see her shoulders are trembling even harder now.

"Please," you begin, and your own voice is shaking. You don’t know what’s going on, or why this sweet, motherly monster suddenly wants to trap you and Frisk here forever. She felt so safe, how were you supposed to handle all of this? “We’ve got a family back home, our parents. I’ve got friends, Frisk has friends...we can’t--we can’t stay here, even if it is dangerous.”

Toriel is silent for a long moment, then shakes her head slowly, her back still facing you. “You are just like the others,” she mumbles softly. It makes a pang of anger bite at your chest.

“What, because we want to go home?” you snap, and Frisk looks up at you with wide eyes.

“No!” she finally turns to you, and you hesitate because for the first time she looks angry. “Because you will not LISTEN! Time and time again, I have tried--I have tried so hard to protect the children that fall into the underground. Time and time again, I have failed. I have let them slip through my fingers, and I know their fates did not end happily. I know they were killed on the other side of this door.”

You’re shaking now too. You’re so damn scared, you’re heartbroken, you’re confused.

“...Monsters aren’t bad,” Frisk suddenly says, and the anger in the goat woman’s face softens to surprise. “...You’re not bad,” they go on, looking up at her. You remain silent. “The others here were really nice, too. I know the monsters out in the rest of the underground won’t all be scary, either.”

“You don’t understand, child,” says Toriel tiredly. “The fact that you are human...will draw them to you. The fact that you are human will paint a target on the both of you, and your very Souls will be in danger.”

“I don’t understand,” you whisper weakly, feeling exhausted in more ways than one. “I don’t--” you swallow. “We have to go home. We have to try. If that’s the only way to get home, then we have to go through.”

For a long, long time, Toriel just stares at you. Her expression is something you can’t read, but it makes you uncomfortable and fidgety. You hold eye contact however, stubborn and serious.

“...There is only one solution to this,” she says finally. “Prove yourself.”

You tense, eyes widening. Prove yourself…? She couldn’t mean--

“Prove you are strong enough to survive!”

This time you refuse to let Frisk be the one to risk their Soul.

You push them back behind you the same moment Toriel steps closer, as if to initiate something. And indeed, the moment her foot touches the ground, you feel an odd...tug. In your chest. It doesn’t hurt. It’s not at all an unpleasant feeling. Just an odd, unfamiliar one.

But then you blink, and a dim, orange glow fills your vision. A little heart. You’re looking at your soul, hovering in front of you. It’s orange, but it’s not nearly as bright as Frisk’s soul. For a moment you chalk that up to Frisk being a spry young kiddo, but then you notice something else a little different in comparison.

Unlike Frisk’s Soul, you could see through yours. Toriel was visible through your Soul, like an
orange pane of glass. And when you leaned in for a closer look, you could even see the tiniest hairline crack running down its center.

You felt tears suddenly brim in your eyes. You were looking at the manifestation of what your illness was doing to you. This was what dying looked like.

“Oh…”

Toriel’s voice is so soft, you barely hear it. When you tear your eyes up from your faded Soul and look at her, she has her paws crossed over her mouth, her eyes wide and horrified.

“Oh, my...my poor child,” she takes a step closer, but you aren’t threatened. You know without a doubt that your ‘fight’ is over. “You’re sick,” she goes on, almost speaking to herself. There’s a hitch in her voice, thick with emotion. “You’re very sick… I thought when I was healing you that I felt something off, but I had hoped I was wrong…”

“...I, um.” You swallow thickly, your vision blurry from the tears threatening to drip free. “…I was diagnosed a little over a year ago,” you mutter, not knowing what else to say, or do. You look down at your Soul again. “I’ve...got maybe a year left, the doctors think, if I’m lucky.”

Toriel visibly winces, and before you can do anything, she has both you and Frisk pulled into the warmest, softest hug you’ve ever received.

“I was hoping…” you duck into her shoulder, weak, needing her support. “I w-was hoping that when I found out you used your healing magic, I...maybe you fixed me.”

“Oh, my child,” Toriel nuzzles the side of your head gently. “Oh, my dear child, I cannot mend a Soul.”

You droop in her arms, feeling defeated. You shouldn’t have gotten your hopes up. You’d tried not to, but… damn it. Damn it.

She pulls back slowly, and when you look up you can see a shimmer of unshed tears in her kind eyes. “I...a part of me wants to keep you here with me even more than I did before,” she admits. “But…”

“Is there someone who can help her?” Frisk asks, voice so quiet you almost don’t hear them. “Someone who can help fix a Soul?”

Toriel turns her head and looks over her shoulder at the massive double doors.

“I cannot mend a Soul,” she says on a breath. “My magic can heal physical pains and injuries. Headaches, upset stomachs…” she closes her eyes, and a tear drips into the soft white fur on her cheek. “…scraped knees.” Toriel shakes her head. “There are other kinds of healing magics. I know of one monster who possesses the magic required to help mend a Soul and injures tied to it, but…”

She straightens, and an angry huff of air leaves her nostrils, reminding you for a moment of a bull.

“...He will do nothing to help you,” she growls softly.

Toriel lets the two of you go, gingerly and slowly, and turns to look at the doors she had been so keen on keeping you from. “I will let you pass. I will let you into the rest of the underground, in the hopes that maybe...there is another who will help you.”

You stand up as well, holding Frisk’s hand gently in yours.
“Even if you were to stay here, it is not a life fit for either of you. The Ruins feel so small, once you get used to them.” She sighs. “And...You are right, Frisk,” Toriel says. “While it is...dangerous on the other side of these doors, no, monsters are not bad. Just as humans, as a whole, are not bad.” She looks back at you, and she’s smiling, her eyes still shiny.

“Even if you cannot find someone to help you, I wish you all the luck in the world on your journey home.” She lifts a paw, and wipes the pad of her thumb beneath one teary eye. “I wish you a fast trip home to your family, little ones.”

“Do you…?” you pause, and then nod towards the doors, looking at her. “D’you wanna come with us…?”

She seems shocked at that, her eyes widening, clasping her hands in front of her chest in surprise. “I…”

For one, hopeful moment, she seems to consider it. It would be so less scary out there with a monster you felt safe with, especially if it really was as dangerous as all that out there.

“...I cannot,” she finally says, and you can only sigh and nod. “I’m sorry, my child, but... I cannot leave the Ruins. I can’t…” she closes her eyes. “I cannot bear it.”

“It’s okay, no worries,” you mutter, feeling as if you’ve poured salt on an old wound, hurrying to fix your mistake. “Sorry, I just… I know we gotta go out there, I’m just nervous.”

She smiles gently again. “Do not apologize, my child, I… do wish I could go with you. May I ask something of you though? Before you leave for the Ruins?”

You nod mutely, and Frisk leans their head against your side.

“Stay one more day to gather up your strength,” she offers, and holds out a hand for you to take. “I will be able to prepare some food to send you on your way with. And,” she chuckles gently. “You left your boots and coats upstairs. You will need both.”

You laugh as well then, and take her hand. When you do, Frisk giggles with delight, extremely pleased with the motion, and hurries to Toriel’s other side to take her other hand. Toriel is very happy to oblige, beaming down at your perfect little sib.

“One more night’d be great, actually.” You reach up and rub the last remnants of exhausted tears from your eyes, and let her lead you back upstairs.

She cooks up the greatest grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup you’ve ever had, and you and Frisk have another slice of the butterscotch-cinnamon pie for dessert. Frisk snuggles up in your lap after dinner, and you lean against the side of the stone fireplace while Toriel tells you the rest of her interesting snail facts. It’s all so comfortable and safe that the thought of leaving tomorrow makes you anxious.

...If it weren’t for the fact that you were determined to get Frisk home, you might have taken her up on her offer and stayed.

When it’s time for bed, Toriel carries a sound asleep Frisk to the room you had been resting in, and the bed is plenty big enough for you to fit in it as well. You don’t mind sharing it with your little sib, even if they do tend to try to hog the blankets.

“Thank you,” you whisper before Toriel leaves the room. “For everything, Toriel.”
For a moment, she doesn’t reply, her back facing you. After a few seconds, she tips her head to look back at you over her shoulder, and a smile lights up her face. “You’re very welcome, my child,” she whispers back. “Get some rest. I will prepare a bag for you to take in the morning.”

You nod, snuggle into bed, and are asleep faster than you can say ‘butterscotch-cinnamon pie’.

When you wake up, Frisk is already out of bed. You can hear their little boots tromping around, and when you move our legs off to the side of the bed to get your own boots, they’re arranged nicely in the middle of the floor, complete with a clean pair of socks folded up beside them.

You smile and slip on both, stepping out into the warm hall.

Toriel is in the dining room, slipping a...surprising amount of plastic containers full of food into a shockingly small little backpack.

“Last night I tailored a few extra dresses of mine for you. They should fit like the sweater you’re wearing right now,” she says, looking up from all the food and smiling at you. “I gave Frisk a few extra sweaters their size as well. I put them in the bag, along with some food.”

“Hoooow…” you begin, blinking. “Is all that fitting in that little bag y’got there?”

Toriel blinks, then looks from you to the little bag in question. She laughs, and gives you a wink. “Magic, of course,” she says.

“...Oh,” you say. “Of course.”

Frisk giggles, sitting in Toriel’s huge armchair. They’re already wearing their coat, and their boots are all tied up neatly. They look excited.

“You ready, Frisky?” you ask, and smile, still a little sleepy as they nod and nod and nod.

Your nerves come back, anxious and honestly a little scared. ...Okay, nah, you’re really scared. You have no idea what to expect, and you don’t know if asking will make her reconsider letting you through or not. So you don’t. You just need to get Frisk home, that’s your number one goal.

And if they happen to find someone who can magically cure you...well, that would be great.

But Frisk’s gotta go to school, god dammit. Gotta live their life to the fullest. Gotta experience those good ol’ recess days. Gotta see the sun and the blue sky again.

Once your bag is all packed, Toriel walks with you back down the stairs to the double doors. She hands you the bag, and despite it being so small, you expect it to be heavy with how much stuff Toriel put into it. But, of course, probably due to magic or whatever, it’s light as a feather. You put it on over your jacket, and she scoops you and Frisk in for one more hug.

“I never thought this was gonna be a thing I’d say,” you begin, voice muffled into the soft purple fabric of her dress. “But thanks for rescuing us from that evil talking flower.”

Toriel laughs, and Frisk giggles as well.

“Well I couldn’t just stand by when you were in such a thorny situation,” she says.

You squint, confused. Holy shit did Toriel just make a pun?

Frisk bursts into more giggles, and Toriel looks pleased as punch.
“I’ll be *rooting* for you,” she adds, and you sputter out a laugh and lean out of the hug.

“Okay okay!” you laugh. “If I had known you were a pun lady, we woulda bolted last night!”

She gives you a sly sort of smile and a wink, and then motions towards the double doors. “When you leave the Ruins,” she smiles, the laughter still in her voice. “Keep and ear and an eye out for someone named Sans. They will be a friend to you.”

“Sans, eh?” you scratch at the back of your head. That honestly made you feel better. Haven’t even left yet and you had an ally out there. Good, good.

“I trust them,” Toriel says.

You take Frisk’s hand, and you move towards the doors. You have no idea what’s on the other side, but...right now? You feel ready.

“Good luck, little ones,” Toriel says, voice soft. You don’t look back, afraid you might start crying if you do, but you see Frisk give her a wave over their shoulder and they say a soft ‘goodbye’.

You take a deep breath...and step out of the Ruins.
Chapter Summary

Who doesn't love a nice walk in the snowy woods, where you're being followed and everything is spooky?

Chapter Notes

ITS THE BOI

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Or, rather, you thought you were stepping out of the Ruins. Really, it looks as if you’ve stepped into another long hallway. You give Frisk’s hand another squeeze, and start walking.

It’s difficult not to turn and look when you hear those double doors slide closed behind you, the slide of stone-on-stone making you think of that first shot that’s fired at the beginning of a race. ‘And they’re off!’ you think to yourself.

“...So, kiddo,” you begin, walking with them at a bit of a slower pace than your usual so they can keep up easily. “Crazy past couple’ve days eh?”

Frisk giggles, nodding. “It’s been different, huh?”

You snort. “Different’s a good word, kiddo.”

“Is your backpack heavy?” they ask, and even hold up a hand like they’re offering to take it for you. What’d you ever do to deserve such a perfect little pipsqueak for a sib?

“Nah, it’s actually super light! Magic, or something, probably,” you say with a shrug.

You’re feeling better, a little more brave. Frisk’s always been good at helping to put you at ease.

You can see a large brick doorway up ahead, and take a deep breath as you near it. When Frisk squeezes your hand, you take it it’s because they’re still a little nervous about leaving the Ruins as well.

When you step through the doorway, you see another illuminated mound of grassy earth in the middle of a dark room, and the sight of it makes you hesitate and stop. It looks exactly like the spot where that flower attacked you--

As if on magical cue, that very same flower pops up from the grass. His eyes are narrowed and a snide, irritated smile stretches across his weird little flower face.

You yank Frisk back and hold them behind you, bristled. If you screamed, would Toriel hear you?
“Very clever,” Flowey the flower growls. “You think you’re so smart, huh? Don’t you?” He gives his little green leaves a bounce, like someone would wave their hands around for emphasis. “In this world, it’s kill or be killed!”

You feel your eyes narrow, and fear sparks into agitation.

“So you were able to play by your own rules this time! Big deal! So you spared the life of a single person!” Flowey lets out a laugh, and that freaky, toothy grin spreads across its expression. “I bet you’re feeling really great. You didn’t kill anyone this time!”

Frisk holds onto your hand even tighter, and your agitation flares.

“But what will you do if you meet a relentless killer?” he asks. “You’ll die, and you’ll die, and you’ll die!”

This flower needed to shut up.

“Until you just...tire of trying.” He laughs again. “What will you do then? Will you kill out of frustration? Will you--”

You stomp a foot, and his words stop, blinking at you.

“I’ll keep trying, you shitty little weed,” you bark, and a surge of satisfaction zips through you when the little flower actually tilts back, stunned. “You’re talkin’ to someone with an actual time limit already over their head, you’ve got no idea!”

Kill or be killed? Tire of trying? HA.

You actually laugh, but the sound is completely mirthless and unhappy. You just sound angry, and Flowey just looks incredibly uncomfortable.

Good.

“I don’t know how to do anything but try. It’s all I’m good at anymore. So shut the hell up and get out of our way.”

As soon as you’re done snarling at him, you realize you’ve really got no bite to back up your bark. You mean, you suppose you could try to kick him? If he tried to attack you and Frisk? Really though, you were just hoping this little asshole backed down. Toriel seemed to kick his ass easily enough, maybe he wasn’t as tough as he played out to be?

For a long moment, the two of you just stare at each other. You never let your angry expression slip though, refusing to show weakness, despite your nervousness growing by the second.

“Oh…” Flowey grins again. “...This is going to be really interesting.”

His face suddenly contorts, a wide, horrible smile full of teeth and malice growing so large it engulfs his petals. You move back another step as he opens that toothy mouth wide and laughs again, the sound high and earsplitting.

You feel Frisk squeeze your hand, and you don’t budge an inch after that.

Flowey sneers at you one last time, and then disappears back into the earth.

You don’t realize you’re holding your breath until your lungs start to ache, and you let out a huff of air, frowning.
“What an asshole,” you grumble. “I can call him that without putting anything in the swear jar, by the way. He’s an exception.”

“Yeah, okay,” Frisk agrees.

You and Frisk stand there a few more seconds, making sure the flower monster is really gone, before walking forward. On the other side of this room is another giant door. The two of you stop in front of it, and you press a hand to the surprisingly cold stone for a few seconds.

“Hey, Frisk?” you begin slowly, and they look up at you expectantly. “I want you to promise me something, okay?”

“Okay…?” Frisk says.

“If anything happens to me out there and you’re left on your own? I want you to come back here to Toriel. Okay?”

Frisk stares at you silently for a minute before they laugh. “Nothing’s gonna happen to you,” they say. “Don’t worry.”

“Promise me anyway though. Yeah?” You give Frisk’s hand a playful shake, but there’s no playfulness in your voice anymore.

“…Okay, fine,” Frisk says with a sigh. “I promise. I’ll go back to Toriel if...something bad happens.”

“Cool, good.” You puff out a breath and brace yourself. “Here goes.”

You push the door, and you’re surprised at how easily it swings outwards.

You’re also super surprised when you see, of all things to be underground, fresh white snow. You pause, holding the massive stone door open with one hand, peering around. There was a long path, surrounded by a forest made up of tall, thin trees.

“…Huh, no wonder the door was cold,” you mutter, your breath clouding in the air in front of you.

Frisk suddenly rushes past you, giggling, and you can’t help but tense a little as you remember Toriel’s warning. About how dangerous it was supposed to be out here. It kind of made you imagine that behind every one of these bushes or trees there could be a monster hiding, just waiting to pop out and...eat you, or whatever.

“Watch this!” Frisk calls, and your nerves calm a bit as you watch them attempt to do a cartwheel, only to slip up on the soft snow and flop onto the ground onto their back.

You laugh, and step away from the door onto the path. “Oh, that was super impressive, kiddo.”

“Okay, but watch this,” they say. They then make the cutest snow angel you’ve ever seen in your whole, entire life.

“…Alright, you got me. That’s pretty awesome,” you admit.

Frisk giggles and gets back up, careful not to mess up their snow angel, and brushes the snow from their pants. You twirl a finger, motioning them to turn around, and you help brush the snow from their back as well.

When you look back at the huge stone door, it’s closed shut behind you. You have to bite back a surge of worry and fear, but then Frisk takes your hand and you feel better.
You shake your head though and scold yourself silently. You were supposed to be the comforter here! You were the adult, you were the big boss on the block, you had to be here for Frisk. You didn’t want Frisk worrying about you.

So you puff out your chest and grin like you don’t even know what it feels like to be afraid.

“Allright, kiddo!” you begin, and point down the snowy path. “Onward!”

Frisk giggles and the two of you begin to walk. You notice Frisk keeps glancing into the trees, which you gotta admit makes you crazy nervous, but the giddy smile on their little face helps with that. It felt good to see them so excited. Even if it was during a sort of...bad time. Being stuck underground with actual magical monsters. But hey, kids were kids! Couldn’t blame ‘em, despite being scary as hell, this shit was still pretty neat.

“Don’t trip,” you warn them with your best Big Sister voice, and nod at a huge tree branch lying in the middle of the path. It’s easy enough to step over, but Frisk makes a big, overdramatic display of almost tripping over it, but catching their balance at the very last second.

They even strike a pose once they “catch their balance”.

You have to clap, nodding in admiration. “Impressive, kiddo,” you say.

They take your hand again, and you’re glad for it because their hand is nice and toasty warm.

“You know what sounds good right now?” you mutter. “Some hot chocolate--”

There’s a loud, crunching SNAP behind you, and you actually yelp and jump about three full feet forwards, yanking poor Frisk along with you. You twist and hold your tiny sib behind you, expecting to see all manner of horrifying monsters on the path.

Instead, you just see the stick you’d just stepped over. Only it looked like it was...broken. Broken in several different places.

How in the fresh hell…?

“Ooooh boy,” you breathe. Oh lord, you were about to get up and eaten by the Jersey Devil or some shit. You weren’t ready for that.

“I wonder what did that?” Frisk hums curiously.

If you weren’t so spooked, you’d have stared at them. How were they so calm? That was a big stick!

“Probably something that thinks humans taste like Red Vines, let’s get a move on,” you say, and turn, moving much quicker now. Frisk trots along beside you without complaint. You think it’s a little weird that they’re still smiling.

You don’t really know what to look out for, or what to even hope to see as you march. Maybe a nice warm, crackly fire. Or a Starbucks. It--

There’s a heavy, unmistakable sound of a footstep on snow somewhere behind you, and your fast walk turns into a full on sprint. Without even realizing it, you’ve scooped up Frisk and have them squeezed tightly to your chest. You don’t even look back.

Your inner monologue is something along the lines of NopeNopeNopeNopeNope, just an uninterrupted string of panic, but Frisk keeps swatting at your shoulder and back, telling you to slow
And the only reason you do is because you see a narrow bridge up ahead over a deep, dark ditch. You’d have tried to just up and sprint right over it if it wasn’t for the odd fact that there seemed to be a set of...bars? Over the bridge? You knew you could fit through them pretty easily, but you weren’t risking accidentally dropping Frisk into that ditch, either.

“Stop!” Frisk says for the umpteenth time. “It’s okay!”

You do stop, but only so you can put Frisk down onto the bridge and all but push them across to the other side before you.

There are more footsteps behind you, louder, like the crunch of the snow is amplified in the air around you.

“Run, Frisky,” you say, and you’ve honestly got every intention of facing your stalker and talkin’ ‘em down with you if it was your time to go. “Go—”

“human.”

…

The footsteps have stopped. The voice behind you—right behind you—is a deep, rumbly baritone.

“don’t you know how to greet a new pal…?” the voice asks, each word drawn out and so, so slow. “turn around and shake my hand.”

You can see the headline now. Woman found, murdered by handshake.

You’re staring at Frisk, absolutely frozen solid, and only when they reach towards you and give you a little nudge do you shake out of your haze. Frisk... didn’t seem scared at all. That didn’t really mean much, seeing as how calm they seemed to be with this entire underground situation thing, but it still helped shake off some of those fear-icicles from your system.

You take a deep breath, hold it, and slowly turn around.

The sound you make could be compared to a lot of things.

A cat getting its tail stepped on

The sound of thirteen drum sets falling down the stairs (cymbals included).

The Eiffel Tower collapsing in on itself.

A microwave that instead of beeping several times, just makes one infinite eeeeeeeeee.

Though honestly, ‘woman seeing a living talking skeleton for the first time’ could probably fit on that list just as easily and still convey the same feeling.

He was a bit taller than you, by just a few inches. But he was wide, as well. Not nearly as large as Toriel, but the word small never once came to mind while looking at him. The most notable thing about him though was the fact that he was in fact a skeleton. His skull was white and smooth, and inside the pitch dark and empty sockets of his eyes were two bright little dots of light. Two dots of light, you noted, that were looking right at you.

Stretching across his skull in a very not-human-skull sort of way, was a wide, cheerful grin.
at him for another moment longer, you really wouldn’t call him a human skeleton, if he was one. Like Toriel being so much more different than the animals she was similar to, this guy too was his very own thing. A skeleton, sure, but there was nothing human about him.

He continued to grin at you as your cat-shriek died off into a pitiful wheeze, still frozen in place.

“...huh,” he finally said, and you noticed only then that he actually had a hand outstretched, like he really did want to shake your hand. “well, i can’t say i’ve ever gotten quite a reaction like that outta somebody.”

“Sorry!” you squeak, and suddenly you’re embarrassed beyond belief. Fuck, what if this guy was a good guy? And here you were, screaming in his face like a rude soneofabitch. “I’m--I’ve never! Met! A skeleton before!”

You don’t notice, or even really hear, Frisk giggle behind you.

The skeleton chuckles, shrugging his broad shoulders. He’s wearing a big blue hooded jacket lined with fluffy fur along the hood. Your horror stricken brain tells you it looks cozy.

You agree with your horror stricken brain. It does look cozy.

“i’ve never met a human before,” he says, and his smile widens. His smile actually widens, like the bone of his skull is as malleable as skin. “so does that make us even?”

“Well, uh,” you blink several times in the span of a single second. “You haven’t shrieked at me yet, so no?”

He gives his hand--still outstretched for you--a little wiggle. “how ‘bout a proper greeting, and we’ll call it even then?”

You nod dumbly, and reach out, taking his hand in yours for a gentle shake.

You...feel a lot of odd things, all at once.

Like an overwhelming buzz of electricity through your chest, touching the surprisingly warm bones of his hand causes every ounce of that still-present fear and paranoia to ebb away.

Looking up at this weird skeleton man, you suddenly feel at home. You feel safe. You feel like you’ve been looking for something your whole life, and suddenly that search is over.

There’s no damn reason for you to feel any of these things, and your heart pounds like it’s excited and happy while your head pounds because it’s confused as all hell about literally everything.

...You also notice that, uh. There’s a long, drawn out farting noise in the air as you squeezed his hand.

You look down and squint, those weird emotions still boiling in your chest.

“What is that?” you mumble, bewildered to see that there seems to be an actual whoopee cushion smushed between your hand and his. “Is that what I think it is?”

For a long moment, he doesn’t reply. It’s a long enough pause for you to look back up at his face, and you’re startled to see that those little glowing dots in his eye sockets are just...gone. It’s a little unsettling, and you draw your hand back from his.

The movement seems to shake him back to the present, and he clears his throat, a little loudly.
“ah, haha,” he chuckles, and you notice an odd blue sort of glow stain his cheekbones. “sorry. the ol’ whoopee cushion in the hand trick. never gets old,” he says, and you can hear a little tremor in his voice that wasn’t there before. He shakes his head, and when he focuses on you again those little eyelightNe are back. Maybe even a little brighter than they were.

“i’m sans. sans the skeleton.” The smile he’s got is a soft, genuine one, and you don’t realize it when the tips of your ears go a little pink.

“I’m Skip,” you say, and you give him a smile too. “Skip the human. And this is my little sib, Frisk.”

Sans cocks his head slightly and grins, his brow ridges lifting. It’s the weirdest thing. “skip and frisk, huh?” he asks, looking between you and Frisk, peering over your shoulder.

You shrug, your own smile growing into a grin too. “Two peas in a pod,” you say with a shrug. “And, uh--oh!” a bolt of remembrance jolts through you, and you clap your hands in front of you once, loudly. “You’re--! You’re the person Toriel told us about!”

The lights in Sans’ eyes brighten a bit, and he looks curious. “tori told you about me?”

“You’re--! You’re the person Toriel told us about!”

“Just your name,” you explain, and point back over his shoulder at the closed door back to the Ruins. “She said that uh, that she trusted you.” You didn’t want to assume right off the bat that he’d be a friend or ally in all this. That was a lot to assume or expect of anyone you just met, after all. “She sorta warned us about how dangerous it could be out here.”

Sans shrugged his shoulders, the fluff of his hood ruffling a bit. “it can be. you two are humans after all. the underground ain’t exactly full of people who’d be happy to meet one.”

You click your tongue and frown, looking back at Frisk again. Quietly, you turn and cross the bridge, just so you can hold their little hand again, and turn back to look at Sans. He was watching you, his hands stuffed into the pockets of his jacket.

“I just need to make sure Frisk gets home safe,” you say. “We fell down here by accident. I don’t know anything else.” You look down at Frisk, and they’re looking back over their shoulder, away from Sans and further down the path. “We aren’t here to hurt anyone, I promise.”

Sans surprises you when he lets out another light chuckle, but it’s not teasing at all. “i know. i can’t help but smile too. Odd as it was, that weird feeling from before is still there. You still feel safe with him around. Despite not wanting to dump any expectations on him for helping you out, something told you that he would, in fact, help. One way or another, you knew he’d help keep you safe.

“If i’m being honest, though?” he goes on, and he crosses the little bridge as well, twisting sideways to fit through the bars on either side of it. “i don’t think you’ll have much to worry about here. at least not in this part of the underground.” He gives you a wider, almost sly grin. “it’s too cold here for people to get their bones rattled over much.”

You squint at him slowly. You caught the pun that time. “...Did Toriel teach you that one?”
He laughs again, the sound lighting up something inside you.

“hey, now,” Sans laughs, and stops beside you. “i’ll be the first to admit that she’s a real champion when it comes to the jokes, but hey.” He gives a big shrug, closing his eyes and chuckling. “she’s just not as sanssational as i am.”

Your laugh sounds like a mix between a snort and a velociraptor stepping on a Lego, Frisk giggling right along with you (or were they giggling at you?), and it makes Sans beam down at you proudly. You’re pretty sure you’re gonna like this guy.

Chapter End Notes

When I was trying to come up with a name for Frisk's big sister, all I really knew was that it had to be equally as...unique?? as Frisk was, as a name for someone omg. Who names their kid Frisk? The same people who name their kid Skip, that's who.
What a neat lamp!

Chapter Summary

That sure is a conveniently shaped lamp!

Chapter Notes

EVERYONE'S FAVORITE TALL BROTHER!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You’ve started to walk again through the snow again, holding Frisk’s warm little hand, and Sans the skeleton walks along on your other side. What a weird trio the three of you make.

“So, uh,” you’re still recovering from his sanssational pun, your smile wide. “What are you doing out in the woods? D’you live out here? Why’d you sneak up on us like that?”

“whoa whoa whoa,” he holds up a hand and motions at you to slow down, smirking. “before you ask another one, lemme at least answer those questions first. so, here goes.” He took in a deep breath, like he was about to go into extreme detail with each question.

“i dunno, nah, and just ‘cuz.”

You blink, and then laugh again. This dude was a goof. “Just ‘cuz?” you repeat, and he smirks down at you.

“You looked spookable, what can I say,” he shrugs. “well, okay, that might not be the entire truth. i’m actually supposed to be on the lookout for humans right now.”

You stop, and that comfort and safety you felt flickers and vanishes. Sans stops a few steps ahead of you and turns though, shaking his head.

“don’t worry, i don’t really care about capturing anyone,” he says, tone gentle.

That doesn’t ease your nerves though, your shoulders squaring. “C-capture?” you ask. ...Okay, honestly, that was a step up from ‘kill on sight’ like you were really afraid would be the case, but it was still alarming nonetheless.

Frisk gives your hand a little shake. “It’ll be okay!” they say. “Sans seems like he’s a good guy.”

Sans pauses, and hunches his shoulders a bit, making the fluff of his hood cover half of his face, his grin widening. “aw,” he chuckles, looking down at Frisk. “that’s real sweet of yah, bud. bein’ a good guy is somethin’ everyone should try to do, huh?”

“Yeah!” Frisk nods, and looks up at you expectantly, like they were hoping you were suddenly feeling perfectly hunky dory.
“besides,” Sans goes on, shrugging his shoulders, his tone relaxed and easygoing. “my brother, papyrus… he’s the one who’s all about humans. he’s a human-hunting fanatic.”

He must have seen you go a little pale, holding up both hands in a placating gesture, shaking his head. “pap wouldn’t hurt a fly. in fact...here, i’ve got an idea. i think he’s on his way to check on me. c’mere, follow me.”

He cocks his head at you to go along with him, and you feel like you’ve really got no other choice. He leads you just a short way down the path and into a small clearing. What looks like a wooden sentry station sits alongside the road with...was that supposed to be a lamp?

“quick,” Sans says, a low chuckle in his voice. “behind that conveniently shaped lamp.”

Frisk lets go of your hand and slips behind it, and… okay, yeah, that was weird. ‘Conveniently shaped’ was a great way to put it. It was essentially a little kid’s silhouette. You squint at it for a moment before you realize you weren’t gonna fit behind it, no matter how hard you tried.

“quick,” Sans speaks up again, and you glance at him. He gives you another wink, and you can’t help but feel absolutely fascinated, watching his eye socket shut for a moment. “behind that conveniently shaped sentry station.”

You glance at the station, back at him, then snort and do as he suggests, hurrying past the lamp and diving behind the station just as a new pair of snow-crunching footsteps reaches your ears.

You glance around the snowy floor of the bottom of the station, noting numerous bottles of ketchup, mustard, and relish. All of them were frozen solid. This place was so weird.

The new pair of footsteps stops, and you move closer to the wall of the sentry station. There’s juuuust enough of a gap between two of the wooden boards for you to peek through, and you’re able to keep an eye on Frisk behind the lamp as well.

The new monster is huge. He’s as tall as Toriel, standing at least 8 feet tall. But he’s skinny. Narrow and spindly, which makes sense, because this guy looked like a skeleton, just like Sans.

“‘sup, bro,” Sans says.

“YOU KNOW WHAT’S “SUP”, BROTHER!” the new skeleton--he had to be the Papyrus Sans mentioned--was loud. His voice was a much more higher pitch than Sans’, and maybe even a little nasally, which was a weird thing to describe a voice from someone who didn’t have a nose.

“IT’S BEEN EIGHT DAYS!” he booms, placing his hands on his hips. You notice he’s wearing...an odd sort of outfit. Big red boots and gloves, a red scarf that might have actually been a cape, and what looked like a breastplate. You weren’t sure. “AND YOU STILL HAVEN’T RECALIBRATED! YOUR! PUZZLES!”

Puzzles? You remember Frisk mentioning that they and Toriel had to solve a bunch to move through the Ruins. Was that like...a thing down here? Puzzles?

You suddenly truly feel like you’ve been dropped into a video game dungeon, and you’re not sure how you feel about that.

“ALL YOU DO IS SIT AROUND AT YOUR STATION!” Papyrus scolds. To Sans’ credit, the smaller skeleton looks as chill as can be, his hands in his pockets, just grinning at his taller brother with the patience of a saint. “WHAT ARE YOU EVEN DOING?!”
“staring at this lamp,” he says, and you tense, balling your hands into fists, your eyes darting between Papyrus and Frisk. He wasn’t trying to get Frisk caught, was he?! “it’s really cool,” he goes on. “do you wanna look?”

“NO!!” Papyrus barks, much to your relief. You even catch Sans give you a wink, looking directly at you through the tiny little gap in the wooden boards. Was he ‘spooking’ you for fun again? You were gonna kick his ass.

“I DON’T HAVE TIME FOR THAT!! WHAT IF A HUMAN COMES THROUGH HERE?!” he stomps his foot repeatedly, obviously frustrated with his brother. Hell, with a sense of humor like he’s got, you can kinda see why Papyrus might be so agitated. “I WANT TO BE READY! I WILL BE THE ONE!” the speed of his foot stomping increased, the snow crunching loudly under his booth with each stamp. “I MUST BE THE ONE!”

You glance at Frisk, worried that they must be terrified out of their mind.

To your complete surprise, their little hands are actually cupped over their mouth, and you can see them trying their hardest not to giggle out loud.

Suddenly this whole thing seemed a lot less frightening and a lot more silly.

You look back at Papyrus, a bit of Frisk’s perspective dawning on you. ...The guy was kind of a goof, wasn’t he?

“I WILL CAPTURE A HUMAN!” he roared, and a tad of that fear came back again.

The foot stomping stopped, and he lifted a gloved hand to his chest. Despite not feeling a breeze, his red scarf seemed to catch the wind and billow out behind him, making you think of a superhero. “THEN, I, THE GREAT PAPYRUS... WILL GET ALL THE THINGS I UTTERLY DESERVE! RESPECT! RECOGNITION!”

His gloved hand moves, grazing back over the top of his skull, and you imagine that if he had hair, that would be the moment where he’d do a graceful hair flip. “I WILL FINALLY BE ABLE TO JOIN THE ROYAL GUARD!”

Royal Guard? Oh, jeez, that sounded intimidating.

“PEOPLE WILL ASK...TO BE...MY..."FRIEND"??”

You frown at that. The way he said it made it sound as if that would be something out of the norm for him. That was... a little sad.

“I WILL BATHE IN A SHOWER OF KISSES EVERY MORNING!”

You reach up and rub your face. You don’t know whether to laugh or cry or what. This was such a weird day.

“hmm.” Sans rumbles, and turns his head towards Frisk’s hiding spot. You squint at him from your own. “maybe this lamp will help you.”

You make a mental note to shove a snowball down his coat the second you get the chance.

“SANS!!” Papyrus booms, and he’s begun to stomp that foot again. “YOU ARE NOT HELPING! YOU LAZYBONES!!”
You smirk, and when you look at Frisk the poor thing his practically hopping in place with their effort not to give away their hiding spot.

“ALL YOU DO IS SIT AND BOONDOGGLE! YOU GET LAZIER AND LAZIER EVERY DAY!!”

Ooooh, you mentally cheer. Roast him, Papyrus!

“hey, take it easy. i’ve gotten a ton of work done todday,” Sans says defensively. “…a skele-ton.”

You’re pretty sure you actually heard a ba-dum-tss.

“SANS!!” Papyrus huffs.

“aw, c’mon,” Sans grins cheekily. “you’re smiling!”

“I AM AND I HATE IT!!”

Honestly? Now it was your turn to try not to laugh and give away your hiding spot. Now you’re covering your mouth with one of your hands as well.

“SIGH…” Papyrus said, literally saying the word ‘sigh’, rather than actually sighing. “WHY DOES SOMEONE AS GREAT AS ME… HAVE TO DO SO MUCH JUST TO GET SOME RECOGNITION?”

“wow,” Sans says, his tone full of teasing concern. “sounds like you’re really working yourself... down to the bone.”

Ba-dum-tss

You can’t help it. You cup both your hands around your mouth and call out a loud “Booooo!”, still ducked down behind the sentry. You see Frisk double over, no doubt giggling into their little arms.

Papyrus looks around, startled. “…YOU SEE!” he barks, and waves an arm at the forest. “EVEN THE TREES AGREE YOU NEED TO NEVER DO THAT AGAIN!”

Sans’ grin is wider than ever, and his eyelights are so bright you can easily see them from where you are. You can’t help but grin when he throws another wink your way.

“UGH, I WILL GO ATTEND TO MY PUZZLES…” Papyrus huffs, resting his hands on his hips. “AS FOR YOUR WORK?” he pauses, and squints his eye sockets at his smaller brother, his own grin growing even wider than usual. “PUT A LITTLE MORE…BACKBONE INTO IT!”

You’re glad he started laughing at his own joke, because you wheeze out a string of muffled giggles yourself. Thankfully, his laughter is so loud, he doesn’t hear you, and bolts out of the clearing to go and take care of his puzzles.

After a few moments, Sans lets out a soft laugh and turns his body to face the sentry station. “okay,” he calls. “you can come out now, pal.”

You peek out, looking down the road where Papyrus had run off to, double checking to make sure he was really gone, before stepping out from behind the station, nearly tripping over a frozen bottle of ketchup. “You are a brat, you know that?” you growl, but you can’t help the smile in your voice.

Frisk comes out from behind the lamp, finally able to giggle out loud to their little heart’s content.
Despite everything, you got the feeling...a very strong feeling, that Papyrus wouldn’t hurt a damn fly.

“what, me?” Sans blinks in mock shock. “that hurts, pal.”

“Oh, don’t you pal me, after almost giving Frisk’s spot away like five times!” you point a finger accusingly at him, but you can’t muster up any actual malice or anger in your voice. Which was...odd, seeing what your situation was. And how absolutely protective you’ve always been of Frisk.

Hell, maybe you were stressed, and even your brain couldn’t fathom Papyrus being an actual threat.

Sans chuckles again, his hands still in his pockets. “there was nothin’ to worry about,” he says. “pap wouldn’t hurt a fly,” he assures, fortifying your earlier thoughts on the tall skeleton.

“Still!” You’re grinning though, and look down the path. You don’t see anything but trees and more snow. How big was it down here? “Made me nervous--”

You wince suddenly, and you feel as if your breath and energy has left you in a rush. Unable to support yourself, you sink shakily down to one knee, feeling sick.

“Skip!” Frisk yelps, and hurries to your side to help keep you from falling over.

As you try to catch your breath, you feel Sans at your other side as well, resting one hand on your back, and the other beneath one of your arms to help support you. “whoa,” he mumbles, and the ridge between his eye sockets is creased with concern. “what’s wrong? what is it?”

“I’m--I’mfine,” you shake your head, swallowing back a surge of nausea. Man… fuck cancer. Straight to hell. “Just...g-gimme a second? Or...or a few minutes, I just…”

“i’m sorry,” Sans says, his tone a little rushed, and...guilty? “papyrus wasn’t gonna hurt frisk. i knew he wouldn’t look behind that weird lamp, i was just pullin’ your legs, but even if he did, he wouldn’t have--”

You shake your head, and you can’t help but laugh. He thought this was his fault.

“Not your fault, you didn’t do this,” you explain, and you feel Frisk rummaging around in the tiny backpack behind you. “I’m sick. Sometimes I just...get these real bad weak spells. I just need to...recharge for a few.” You close your eyes, just focusing on your breathing for a minute. You remember a trick your dad taught you to help fight through nausea, pressing your tongue to the roof of your mouth and count to 7 with each deep breath in.

“sick…?” Sans says, the word soft. “what--”

“Here!” Frisk pulls something out of the backpack, and you’re grateful Sans is there to help hold you up. When Frisk hurries around in front of you, they’re holding a little plastic container with a grilled cheese Toriel had packed up for you. The sight of it makes your stomach roll, your nausea not digging the idea of food.

“Thanks, kiddo,” you say with a wince. “But I’m good for now.”

“It’s magic food, remember?” they say, and pop open the lid. The grilled cheese was cut into triangles, and they pick out one of the little pieces, holding it out. “Magic food helps. You’ll feel better, I promise!”

You hesitate another moment, but you reach out and take the little triangle. You give it a little
experimental nibble, just to make sure you could get it down, and were pleased that the little weird magic tinges it caused at the back of your throat didn’t trigger you to get sick.

When you took a bit of a bigger bite...you did notice a tiny difference in your strength. Like that magic not only tingled at the back of your throat, but also your aching, exhausted muscles as well. Toriel was a damn lifesaver.

“Monster food heals you if you get hurt!” Frisk explains, and you squint at them suspiciously.

“How d’you know that?”

“Cause I tripped and skinned my knees real bad in the Ruins,” they explain. “Toriel gave me a piece of monster candy, and my knees were all better!”

You blink, eyes widening. “...Oh dang, that’s really cool.”

Sans chuckles, but he sounds distracted. “i don’t know if you’ll be up for my brother’s puzzles in your state,” he says.

“Are they the spinning axes and spike pits kinda puzzles?” you ask breathlessly, glancing at him. You’re trying to lighten the mood, but you sound so miserable that it’s a little difficult.

“ah...” he laughs softly nonetheless. “more like buttons and patterns. but it still might be a lot.”

“I could live at this weird lil station hut from now on, then,” you offer, and nod at the sentry station. “I could build a farm. Raise a family. Teach Frisk the ol’ family tradition of eating eight bowls of cereal in one sitting.”

Sans laughs again, and it sounds a bit more real this time. Frisk smiles at you too, feeling better that you’re able to joke again.

The sandwich really is helping.

With every bite, you feel a bit of your energy come back, and by the time you’re halfway done you’ve gone from nervous nibbles to chomping down half a triangle in one go. When it’s done, you’re feeling...much better.

“Okay...okay hold on, let’s see. This is the real test here,” you mutter, half to yourself, half letting Frisk know you were gonna try to stand.

Sans and Frisk help keep you steady as you heft yourself up off your knees. You brace yourself for the worst, which would involve more fatigue, dizziness, and probably a bout of vomiting. But...nothing happens. You felt tired, sure, but you didn’t feel nearly as sick anymore.

“...Wow,” you mutter, and laugh softly when you feel Frisk hop up and plop the empty container back into the tiny backpack. “That monster food is a fucking miracle.”

Sans blinks, and Frisk gasps.

“SWEAR JAR!” they cheer, and you can’t help but curse again. Shit, you were gonna owe this kid so much cash by the time you got home. “You already used your big swear for the day, so I’m gonna remember that.”

Sans looks down at you, then at Frisk, then at you again. His grin looks genuine, and when he lets out another laugh, actually tipping his head back, you can’t help but laugh right along with him.
“Hey,” you begin, and Sans reaches up to jokingly wipe a nonexistent tear from an eye socket. “I dunno why you’re laughing, if you’re gonna be hanging out with me and my kid-sib here, that means you’re gonna be on Swear Jar rules too.”

Sans’ grin turns cocky, and uh. Something about that expression makes a whole little gang of butterflies take up residence in your guts.

“I’m already on swear jar rules with papyrus. but if i slip up around the kid, i’ll be sure to pay up too.” He pauses, and his smile fades a little. “...you sure you’re alright, pal?”

“Want me to do jumping jacks t’show you? I promise, I’m good,” you say, waving a hand dismissively. You smile though, you can’t help but feel...good that he cares enough to ask. “I’ve gotten pretty good at being able to judge what my limits are. So c’mon,” you tilt your head, giving him a grin before you start to walk down the path again.

Frisk hurries ahead, but you call out for them not to get out of sight, and to your relief they listen and slow down.

Sans falls into step beside you, and you wonder if his pace is naturally just as pokey as yours is, or if he’s being nice and slowing down for you.

“If…” he says slowly, and you glance at him as the two of you walk. “If you feel like that again, let me know, okay pal?” he keeps his eyes ahead, hands stuffed into his pockets again. “I don’t usually show anyone, but i know a few shortcuts here and there through the underground.”

He sees you perk up from his peripheral and shakes his head. “Reason i don’t ask if you wanna take one right now is because there’s a risk they’ll make you get sick all over again.”

Sans tilts his head and looks at you, and no doubt you look confused as all hell. What kinda shortcuts was he talking about? Roller coaster shortcuts?

He snorts, smiling at you gently. “They can be a little jarring if you aren’t used to ‘em. so let’s save it for if you’re already not feeling that great.”

You stare at him a moment longer, then nod, looking back out towards the road to keep an eye on Frisk. “Thanks, big guy,” you say, and you mean it. “I’m glad we bumped into you first out here.”

He’s silent for a long stretch of time, the two of you falling into a nice, companionable silence. The crunch of snow while you walk and Frisk’s occasional giggle as they play in the snow are the only sounds in the air.

So when he mumbles out a soft “yeah, me too,” you blame the little bit of heat you can feel bloom on your cheeks on him startling you. And totally not anything else.

Chapter End Notes

I wanna add a note here saying a few things.

I don’t have cancer, or any chronic illnesses. Most I’ve got is some hella depression and anxiety I’ve been wrasslin' with for a good long while. But, I have very close friends and family who have battled their way through cancer in the past. I know people say this sort of thing all the time, but they’re honestly some of the toughest people I know.
You've gotta be made of strong stuff to suffer through something like that.

When I write Skip, I want to write a story about someone who's able to have a rad as hell adventure--complete with puns and romance--despite being ill. I see a lot of stories with chronically ill characters, and their entire personality seems to be hinged on being sad and miserable, and their journey stems on coming to terms with death, or pain, or any other number of sad things. And while that's completely understandable, and completely relevant for a lot of people, I want to write a story where a chronically ill character has the chance to deal with all of that...but also grabs life by the neck and THROTTLES it, because damn it it's time to have a goofy adventure and have fun, and while the illness is absolutely horrible, let's focus on the WAM BAM HOT DAMN sparkly aspects of all the people you love around you.

'Cause that's how my fam and friends who've survived that shit tackled it. I wanted to try to write that bravery into this story, 'cause it seems like a good setting for someone who wants to believe in a lil' magic.
It's a weird day for everyone

Chapter Summary

Sans thinks about Things.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The silence was bothering him.

It wasn’t an uncomfortable silence--actually quite the opposite. It felt like the kind of silence where you could just...sit and read, or nap, or eat a good ol’ burg, and not have to worry about jamming the space full of small talk.

But the thing was, he wanted to hear you talk. He wanted to ask you questions. (he wanted to ask the kid questions too, but that could wait).

All he really knew about you was that your name was Skip, you were sick (he needed to ask more on that too), and you tickled his funny bone something fierce.

It had honestly taken all of his willpower not to burst out into genuine laughter when you’d actually boo’d him from your hiding spot. He could hear the grin in your voice, and something about the fact that you’d chipped in to the bit with his brother made his Soul buzz. It was fun.

He wanted to learn more about your sense of humor. About what made you tick. About you.

As the silence continued to stretch though, a part of him stopped to wonder if maybe he was only curious because you were new. You were a whole new twist in the road of an otherwise seldom changing routine.

...Even if that were the case, he mused, that didn’t take away from the fact that you were still interesting. And he wasn’t about to staple the word ‘novelty’ to your forehead. You were important to Frisk, so automatically you were important to him.

No matter how...complicated his relationship with the kid was, he cared about them (remember, don’t forget, Frisk is not the other kid. Never the other kid.). Sometimes he’d get the same gut instincts to look out for them that he got for Papyrus. Like he could feel the desperate tug of their emotions in their bright red Soul.

But Frisk had gotten very good at hiding their feelings, and it was a coping tactic Sans was all too familiar with. And for someone so young, it was concerning as hell.

Yet...there they were, playing in the snow on the path up ahead, finally looking and acting like a kid again. He hadn’t seen a sight like that in...he didn’t know how many resets.

Sans looks down at you, that silence still hanging warmly between the two of you, and he can’t help but think--he can’t help but be sure—that you’re what Frisk has needed this whole time. Something tells him that maybe you’re the reason nothing’s ever felt right enough for Frisk, once they’ve reached the surface again.
The thought is an odd one though.

If that were the case, and Frisk wanted you around this whole time, why not just bring you to the mountain after they all reached the surface? The others would have been so ecstatic to meet Frisk’s sister after the adventure was done. They’d have welcomed you into the goofy, mismatched family with open arms.

…

A cold chill that had nothing to do with the snow rushes up Sans’ spine, and his steps seem to sputter, nearly tripping over his own slippered feet.

A ghost of pain—a memory of what it felt like—lances through his chest. His Soul aches at even recalling the moment, standing on top of Mt. Ebott, and he absently reaches up a hand from his pocket and digs his fingers into the front of his coat.

…Were you not on the surface, when Frisk got there?

Where were you? In every timeline he remembers Frisk staying topside, he doesn’t remember seeing you at all.

*How sick were you?*

*How—*

“So like,” you begin, and he almost jumps, your voice startles him so much. “How the heck is it…y’know, light out?” you ask. “Aren’t we technically in a big cave thing?”

…

Sans lets out a deep breath, and a tiny bit of the tension that had begun to build in his bones eases. He was just jumping to horrible conclusions. Nothing was wrong—he was good at always assuming the worst, after all.

He lets out a low chuckle, shaking his head and forcing the remnants of those alarmingly terrifying thoughts out of his mind. “Would you be mad if I said it was magic?”

“Nah!” You grin up at him, and his Soul buzzes again. “I’d just get more curious. So is magic like…super common down here? ‘Cause lemme tell you,” you snort. “It’s in short supply up top.”

He cocks his head. “No magic on the surface?” he asks, despite knowing the answer. He’d love to hear your spin on it, regardless.

“Heck no,” you say, and you sound disappointed. “I mean, sure, some people believe in it. But it’s all written off as camera tricks and sleight of hand, and all that. But one time,” you say, and drop your voice like you’re telling him a secret. He automatically tips closer, wanting to hear whatever you’re about to say. “I caught a shiny Pokemon twice in a row. If that’s not magic, I dunno what is,” you end with a wink and a laugh, obviously joking around with him.

Sans has a vague memory of hearing about Pokemon in one of the timelines he spent a good chunk of time on the surface, but it’s foggy enough for him to feel completely clueless as to what you’re talking about.

A split second after the first wave of confusion washes over him, he thinks to himself that he doesn’t give a shit, and will happily listen to you talk about whatever Pokemon is if you wink at him again.
Sans tips his head and squints at the road ahead of him. What a weird thought *that* was. Today sure was… *something*, wasn’t it?

“heh,” he finally says, realizing he’d remained silent a bit too long. He didn’t want to make you feel awkward. “can’t say i know for sure what a pokemon is, but hey. if it decided to take a shine to yah, it can’t be that bad.”

You laugh. You *really* laugh.

You even duck your head, reach down, and smack the top of your thigh with one hand.

“Shit--” you reach up and rub the sleeve of your coat over your face, giggling. “I wasn’t expecting that, ohmygod. I gotta brace myself for puns around you.”

“eh,” Sans shrugs a little over exaggeratedly. “i’m told i’m a *punny* guy.”

“Stop stop!” You huff and swat playfully at his arm. He chuckles and hunches his shoulders in response. “I’m not good at puns! I’m good at super bad jokes though.”

...Oh?

“that so, bud?”

“But like,” you shrug your shoulders, and look away from him. “What do you *call* a joke mixed with a rhetorical question anyway?”

Sans pauses, waiting for the punchline. When one doesn’t come right away, he grins and tips his head. “what?” he asks.

You don’t say anything, and he sees the corner of your mouth twitch into a bigger smile.

He pauses, and repeats the joke in his head—and on the second time through, when he’s actually trying to piece it together—he gets it. And he barks out another genuine laugh.

He was gonna get sore if you kept this up. His funny bone could only handle so much.

“clever, *real* clever, pal,” he says with an utterly delighted, and…proud? chuckle.

You laugh then, too, and your face turns a little red. Are you embarrassed? You shouldn’t be embarrassed!

“that was great,” he goes on, and he means it. “i haven’t heard that one before. got anything else?”

“Oh…” you glance around, like you’re looking for inspiration. “Oh--” You smile again, and point into the forest.

“Trees have always made me a little nervous,” you begin, and Sans looks out into the woods as well, waiting for the punchline again. “No real reason, they just always seemed kinda shady to me.”

Sans *beams* at you, and he doesn’t notice it himself, but his eyelight are bright and wide. His shoulders shake, another happy laugh leaving him. “hey, pal, c’mom!” he laughs. “you said you weren’t good at puns!”

“I’m not! That one’s a fluke!”

You laugh along with him, and it feels *right*.
It's a little shocking to Frisk when Sans doesn't hang back by his sentry station. He actually tags along on your walk through the snowy forest, keeping pace with their sister.

It was kinda funny, Frisk thought. They'd run ahead and make more snow angels, having more fun than they'd had in...what felt like years, and every time they'd glance back to check on you, you'd be smiling and laughing. And the dorky skeleton was smiling just as big.

That...made Frisk really happy. Sometimes Sans seemed really sad. It confused Frisk whenever they stopped to really try to think about it. Who'd be sad with such a cool brother like Papyrus? And he had such cool friends! Like Undyne and Kid! Sometimes Frisk wondered if...maybe Sans was sick, too. Like you were.

When you first found out about how sick you were, you tried to keep it from Frisk. They remember you began to act...so different. You were sad, and quiet, and sometimes you'd burst into tears over nothing. It scared Frisk so badly. And then it scared them even worse when they found out what was really wrong.

Frisk chews on their lip in thought, and glances back at Sans.

Maybe it was like that. Maybe Sans was sick too.

You had seemed to start feeling better--happier--after you'd begun to talk about it. Maybe Sans needed to tell Papyrus about it, if he was sick. Or about whatever was wrong, if that wasn’t the case. Maybe he could even tell you!

Frisk smiles at the idea, and looks up at the dark ‘sky’ of the cavern’s ceiling overhead, feeling warm tears prick at the corners of their eyes.

All they wanted now was for their family to be happy. And after all the adventures they’d had, Sans, Papyrus, Toriel...everyone was family, just as much as you.

And Frisk was gonna make sure you all got your happy ending. Their wish was gonna come true.

Chapter End Notes

A bit of a short chapter, but I just wanted to get some goshdang cutesy shit in real quick before we hop into PUZZLES c:

my undertale tumblr is TeaTinBlix and I'd LOVE love love to chat with ya'll over there!
C: <3
Is that a skeleton?!?!

Chapter Summary

Some stuff happens! And then you meet Papyrus!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sans is actually hilarious.

Like, in all honesty, you haven’t actually laughed genuinely at a knock knock joke since you were like. Five. But here this guy was, cracking out one after the other and making you actually giggle-snort like a dweeb.

The fact that Frisk would chime in with their own giggles at every joke was like the icing on the cake.

“You getting tired yet, kiddo?” you call out, stopping to take a little breather. The cold air seems to wear you out much quicker, and you wonder if it’s working at Frisk the same way. They’ve been doing nothing but skipping around and building tiny snowmen and snow angels. It honestly looked damn exhausting.

“I’m never tired!” Frisk says, and they take off down the path at a quick sprint. “I’m--”

Something… weird steps out of the forest and into the middle of the road. Upon seeing it, Frisk skids to a stop in the snow, and the weird little creature lets out a strange squawk, like a chicken mixed with some kind of dinosaur. It sounds startled, like Frisk spooked it just as much as it spooked you.

It looks sort of like a bird? Standing on two little chicken like feet, and fluffy icy blue feathers covering its body. But its head is large, and an odd snowflake-like pattern of feathers covers the front of its big-beaked face.

“Frisk!” you yelp, and you tilt into a run to catch up to them, alarmed.

Your little sib, however, seems much less afraid than you are.

“Hey!” they say, greeting the weird bird thing that’s about a full head taller than them. “You wanna be my partner and challenge them to a snowball fight?” they ask, and point back towards you and Sans behind them.

You stagger to a stunned stop, blinking. Eh?

The odd little bird thing looks surprised as well, cocking his head (in a very bird like manner, you note) and peering at you.

“...You betcha I do!” the bird suddenly says, and its (his?) beak stretches into a challenging grin. His voice is high and a bit rough. It makes you think of a teenage boy hitting puberty. “Quick!” he says, and points a wing at a big mound of snow on the side of the path. “Behind that conveniently placed snow poff!”
Inside your mind, you imagine yourself holding a clipboard. You scan a picture of the weird little snow bird, and then scratch an ‘X’ into a box labeled ‘not a threat’.

Your fear and alarm evaporates, and you just let a good ol’ wave of confusion, utter betrayal, and the urge to be victorious wash over you.

“I used to be a snowball champ when I was a kid!” you warn, backing up hurriedly to put some space between you and the snow poff. “Don’t think I’ll go easy on you just ‘cause you’re small!”

You can hear Frisk mutter to their new friend, voice flat. “That’s how she pushes my buttons. She knows I don’t like how tiny I am.”

“What a dirty tactic,” the snow bird replies.

You puff out your cheeks, and then turn to look at Sans.

He’s just staring, the white eyelights in his sockets darting from the kid’s snow fort to you, and lingering on you for a good long few seconds.

“You gonna be the Clyde to my Bonnie, or what?” you demand, resting your hands on your hips and squinting at him, trying not to smile.

“...well,” Sans begins, and lets out a sigh. “guess i have snow choice.”

You hear the little snow bird laugh out loud. He liked the snow pun, it seemed.

“If they’re Bonnie and Clyde,” you hear Frisk whisper, “That means they’re the bad guys, so we’re the heroes.”

“Aw, nice!” the snow bird whispers back excitedly. “I love being the hero!”

You jog back to Sans’ side, and his shoulders are shaking as he laughs silently, his eyes on the snow poff. “On a scale from one to ten,” you ask, “where would you put yourself as a worthy partner? One being snowball loser, and ten being snowball king.”

Sans makes a low humming noise in his chest, and gives you a smug sort of grin. “If i say i’m a snowball king, does that make you my snowball queen?”

“Wh--”

Before you can even sputter out a single word or even blush, a powdery cold snowball explodes on the side of your face. Oddly enough, it’s not the harsh, stinging sensation you remember as a kid. Even the snowballs down here feel like magic, more like puffs of cold cotton. Was everything down here magic?

You bark out a startled laugh and reach up, brushing the snow from your head and slipping behind Sans, using him as a...

“.I just realized, you make a super lousy meat shield,” you say.

Sans snorts, and flips the hood of his jacket up over his head with all the seriousness of a knight putting on his trusty helmet. “make no bones about it, you ain’t wrong.” He ducks down suddenly, leaving your upper half out in the open, and you yelp and zip behind a tree.

You watch Sans scoop up a handful of snow, packing it into a ball. He notices then that you’re no longer behind him, and turns his head to look at you, laughing. “you leavin’ me out here all high and
dry? i thought we were partners--"

He’s suddenly pelted by at least ten snowballs. ...Somehow. You’re not sure how the hell the kids managed that, but you have to admit, you’re both very proud, and glad as fuck you didn’t stay out there.

“regicide!” cries Sans, and falls to his knees with a dramatic flair.

You squint at him. “What kinda snowball king are you!” you roar, and even shake a fist at him. When you hear Frisk and the snow bird laugh in delight, you raise your voice a bit more, trying your hardest not to burst out laughing.

You haven’t felt this happy in so long.

“We’re getting a divorce!” you say, and point at him from your hiding spot behind the narrow tree. “The snow kingdom is now a snow queendom, and you’ve been booted to being a lowly snowball peasant!”

“that’s so harsh,” Sans says, snow still plastering one entire side of his hood and face. “and here i thought...what we had...was special…” he flops onto his back, arms splayed wide.

“...blehhhh,” he blehs. And with that, your king is dead.

A second passes, and you think you even hear him start to snore.

“Curses,” you hiss, and it’s tough to keep in character when Frisk and their new little friend are absolutely losing it behind their little snow poff fort.

You duck down, an idea popping into your head. You didn’t really plan on winning, but you were for sure gonna go out with a bang.

You grab at the pure white snow on the forest floor, testing its texture and if it was gonna stick well. To your delight, this was the perfect snow for this, and with your best evil laugh you begin to gather up as much of it as you can into your arms, heaping it into the biggest snow boulder you can muster.

“She did her laugh,” Frisk yelps. “That means something’s coming! Brace yourself!”

You stand up, heaving the snow boulder up with you.

Part of you, the more logical and nervous side, brings up the point that you really aren’t going to feel well later on if you keep using up so much of your energy. Not to mention the cold is probably messing with your already weak immune system. This wasn’t a good idea--

You shove those thoughts aside. Fuck all that noise, you were in a magical underground cave, making friends with actual skeletons and being attacked by talking flowers. You were the queen of this goddamned snow queendom, and you were gonna stop trying to hold yourself back.

You were having fun, real fun, for the first time in so, so long. Frisk was having fun too. So, frankly? Fuck everything else.

With a roar like you’re trying to sound like the Yeti itself, you charge at the snow poff fort, giant snowball in your arms.

Oh hell yeah, you were gonna get ‘em!

You see Frisk and the snow bird peek over the top of their fort, only to scream and twist, trying to
scramble out of the way and away from you. But you weren’t gonna be merciful, oh no, you were a tyrant of a queen and you were gonna--

You were gonna trip over your own damn shoes, that’s what you were gonna do.

With a startled yelp, you fall to the ground before you can drop the snow boulder on their unsuspecting heads. And with the boulder cradled so carefully in your arms, it’s in the perfect position to cushion your head and neck when you fall.

So, essentially, you end up face planting your snow boulder.

You lie there, in humiliated defeat. Your queendom is in tatters.

“oh, shit,” you hear Sans sputter out a laugh, and the snow crunches as you hear him get back up. “you okay there, bud?” he asks, and you feel his hand on your back.

You lift your head, your face popping out of the snowball with a soft gasp for air, blinking.

Snow sticks to our eyelashes and coats your brows. Holy crap, snow was cold.

“I’m no longer the snowball champ I used to be,” you say forlornly. Your mock sad, longing expression turns into a smirk when Sans laughs, and you reach over with an arm, giving him a playful shove.

You felt so comfortable around him.

It usually took you a good amount of time to warm up to anyone new. But him? You felt like you’ve known him for years.

“i hear that comes with age,” Sans says, and his grin widens when you gasp loudly.

“You calling me old?” you demand.

“What goes up and never comes down?” Sans asks, ignoring your heated question.

“What!” you huff, but there’s never any actual venom in your voice.

The skeleton gives you a wink (that’s still so strange) and grins. “your age,” he says.

You let your face flump back into your snow boulder.

You can hear Frisk and the snow bird laughing hysterically a little ways down the road. They’d actually run a good distance to get away from you and your Ultimate Attack. Kind of made you proud, truth be told. Striking fear into the hearts of children. *Nice.*

You finally begin to push yourself up, and Sans offers you a hand to help you. You take it without hesitating, and he helps you to your feet with ease.

You let your hold on his hand linger though, and you can’t help but look down at it. He was warm, and the bones of his hand were much thicker than a regular human’s would be. They weren’t rough either, and you’re fascinated at how they move and bend without any muscle at all. You even twist your hand gently back and forth to get a better look.

He clears his throat at one point, and you blink up at him.

“Oh! Sorry--I just kinda wanted to see your hand up close?” you offer, and suddenly you’re
embarrassed all over again.

“hey, i don’t blame ya, bud. your hand is pretty neat too. real squishy.”

You snort and look back at the kids. “Squishy? Alright, fair enough, bone boy.” You lift your hands and cup them around your mouth, calling out to the two victors. “You’ve defeated Bonnie and Clyde!” you call.

Frisk turns to the snow bird and holds up a hand. The snow bird responds by smacking a wing against it in the cutest high five to ever exist.

You start to walk, and Sans falls into step beside you.

“I’m Frisk!” you hear them introduce themselves, smiling big. “That’s my sister, Skip!”

“Ice to meetcha!” the snowbird says, and his feathers fluff up happily when Frisk giggles. “I’m Snowy!”

“Ice to meet you too, Snowy,” you laugh, slowing to a stop a few feet from them down the road. “Sorry if we caught you up. Were you heading somewhere?”

“Nah! I just like to go off on my own to practice my jokes,” he hums. “Heya Sans!” he looks at the skeleton, cocking his head. “Aren’t you supposed to be working at your station?”

“eh,” Sans shrugs his shoulders. “got distracted.”

“You’ve gotta keep a lookout for humans, man!” Snowy says, and you look at him a little quickly. Did he...not know what a human looked like? Did he think you and Frisk were monsters? And here you let yourself think that human-monster relations would be a bit easier to smooth over and things wouldn’t be automatically scary everytime you met someone new. Turns out you and Frisk are just on a lucky streak.

Frisk seems to read your mind, and they smile, tilting their head and mimicking the tilt of Snowy’s own. “Say...what’s a human look like, anyway?” they ask.

You bite your lower lip, resisting the urge to tell them to shush. There’s no need to push your dang luck.

“Y’know, I actually don’t know?” Snowy reaches up and scratches his beak with a wing. “I’ve heard they’re pretty big. Kind of scary. Eat magic for breakfast. You know, the usual,” he says with a shrug. “Pretty sure you’ll known one when you see one though.”

Sans swoops in to the rescue, laughing. “that’s for sure,” he says. “we didn’t mean to keep yah from your practice though, snowy.” He looks at you, his grin not quite as wide as it was earlier, but there’s still a glint in his eyes. “this kid has some real talent when it comes to his jokes.”

Fully distracted now, Snowy puffs up proudly. “Ha! I know, right?!” he beams. “I knew my dad was wrong!”

You blink, staring at him for a moment. That was...kind of a really sad thing to say. “Can...can you give us one more before you head out?” you ask.

“Sure!” Snowy hops a few times, and he really reminds you of an excited bird then. “Knock knock!”

“oh, i love these,” Sans grins. “who’s there?”
“Icy!”

“icy who?”

“Icy you!” Snowy cheers, and his happy hops speed up as the three of you laugh. He waves a wing, tells you once again he’s happy to meet you, and continues on back across the road and into the forest, disappearing into the trees.

You slip your hands into your coat pockets, noticing only then how chilly you were feeling after manhandling all that snow. “He was sweet,” you say, and look back at Sans, still smiling.

He nods and looks away from the trees as well, watching Frisk brush leftover snow off of their hands on the knees of their pants. “he’s a good kid. his old man doesn’t know what he’s talking about.”

You let out a breath, fogging the air in front of you. “What a cruddy thing to say to your kid. Like damn. Hey, Frisk!” you suddenly bark, raising your voice. Frisk stands at attention and looks up at you. “You can do anything you want to in life! Whatever makes you happy, you can do it!” you hold up a fist and shake it in the air for emphasis. “Even if you just wanna be a pizza delivery person for your whole life! That’s fine!”

Sans laughs, his broad shoulders shaking, and Frisk giggles as well.

You kind of want to call Snowy back and tell him the same thing. Hopefully the three of you were able to give him a little confidence boost before he left.

“...Can I ask a question?” You look at Sans, who makes a small grunt in reply. “Why didn’t he recognize what we were?”

Sans shrugs his shoulders. “most monsters down here have never even seen a picture of a human, let alone a real one. and as you heard, the stories they tell each other sort of paint you guys up to be a little spooky.”

“I like the part where we eat magic for breakfast best.”

Sans chuckles. “yeah? sometimes kids’ll try to scare each other by making up new stories,” he grins. “my favorite scary story growing up said that humans could breathe fire, and decorated their houses with dust.”

“Dust?” you repeat, brows lifting. That was honestly a weirder one than the breathing fire thing.

Sans blinks, and he looks like he remembers something. He shakes his head, snorting. “heh. weird, right?”

“Kids are weird. It’s a thing,” you grin, shrugging as well.

“oh, hey, i uh… have a favor to ask?” Sans reaches up and scratches his bony fingers over the back of his neck.

“Yeah? What’s up?” You cross your arms over your chest, letting a shiver run across your shoulders. Fuck, it was chilly.

“So… my brother’s been kind of down lately. and he’s never seen a human before…” Sans trails off, looking at you, letting you put together the pieces yourself for a moment.

“...Yooooo want us to meet your brother?” you clarify.
He just smiles.

“The brother who wants to capture us?”

His smile widens.

You squint at him. In his defense this was the goofball brother who supposedly wouldn’t hurt a fly. You couldn’t even fathom being afraid of him, truthfully.

“I wanna meet him!” Frisk peeps up, and tugs on one of your arms. “C’mon, please? Sans said he’s feeling down!”

You look down at them and their big, pleading eyes. They even stick out their bottom lip for good measure.

“...Well, that settles it,” you hum, acting like this was a difficult decision to make. You look at Sans and can’t help but smile, letting out a sigh. “Lead the way.”

“actually, i’ll meet you guys up ahead, ok? i’m gonna go catch up to him.” He chuckles and looks ahead down the road. “i kinda wanna see his face up close when you guys meet.”

You nod, understanding. You’d probably want to see something like that up close too. “Just...uh...” you trail off, and you feel your smile fade a little. You nervously pluck at the sleeves of your coat, and you have to look away from him after a few seconds. “Remember that I’m really trusting you here, yeah?”

Sans doesn’t respond at first, and you shift your weight from foot to foot. Was that the wrong thing to say? You felt like you should explain what you meant. That this was literally unknown territory for you, in every sense of the word, and all that talk of capturing (and killing, from what Toriel said) still bites at your nerves. “Sorry, I didn’t mean-- I didn’t mean to offend you or anything, I’m just--”

“you didn’t offend me, pal,” Sans interrupts, and his voice is quiet.

You look up at him and meet his eyes, the skeleton watching you. He’s smiling, though it isn’t as wide and borderline obnoxious as it usually is. It’s softer.

“just the opposite, in fact.”

Sans reaches out for you then, and you freeze when his hand brushes over your shoulder. You’re unsure of what he’s doing, and you feel heat bloom on your cheeks, the tips of your ears going pink as he tips closer.

“Um--”

He grabs the hood of your coat and flips it over your head.

You blink, eyes darting up at the edge of your hood now hanging over your brow.

“you were looking cold there, bud. don’t want ya to catch a cold and get worse.” He gives you a wink, and brings his hand back. With that, he stuffs his hands in his pockets, turns around, and begins to march down the road.

“Um--!” you look back and forth between him, and the road behind you. “Weren’t we walking this way?”

“don’t worry about it, i know a shortcut. i’ll see you two up ahead,” he calls without turning around,
moving further down the road.

You look back down at Frisk, frowning. They just shrug their little shoulders in return.

But when you look back up after Sans, he’s gone. Like he up and vanished into thin air.


“C’mon!” Frisk gives your arm a tug. “I wanna go meet Papyrus!”

“Did you not see him totally just poof? Did you see him bolt into the trees?” You squint, shoulders hunching. “He’s not gonna pop out and try to scare us again, is he?” you rumble, suddenly suspicious.

“Probably not!” Frisk laughs, and your eyes narrow even more on the word ‘probably’.

“C’mooooon!”

You relent without a struggle and let Frisk tug you along. You keep glancing back over your shoulder though, half expecting to see him pop out of the trees.

Down the road, you hit a fork. One part of the path curves out of sight, and the other seems to lead to the edge of a river. Curiosity overtakes you, and you crunch over the snow towards the calming noise.

Oddly enough, at the edge of the bank there’s what looks like a fishing pole shoved into the snowbank, the line in the water.

Frisk rushes closer to investigate, and you call out to be careful not to slip in. They pull the string of the fishing line up, and a little piece of paper dangles from the hook.

“What’s that?”

“A picture!” Frisk says, looking at the paper. “...There’s a phone number on the back.”

You step beside them and Frisk hands you the paper, careful not to touch the tip of the hook still stuck in the photo. It’s a weird looking fish monster.

“Call the number!” Frisk says, grinning.

“What? No, I’m not gonna call this guy’s number. This is probably some kinda weird...fish monster dating thing.”

“Do it! Do it do it! I dare you!” Frisk gives your arm an excited tug.

You puff out your cheeks, and decide hey. Why the fuck not.

You pull out your phone, scrunch your face up, and dial the number.

The line actually begins to ring, to your surprise. It rings twice before it picks up.

“Heya toots!” says a raspy voice from the other end of the line. “Whatcha wearin’?”

You hang up.

“...Well? What happened?” Frisk asks, tugging on your sleeve again.
“Wrong number.”

“What?!” Frisk huffs. “What’d he say?”

“He said we should go meet Papyrus,” you reply, and drop the paper and the hook back into the water, letting it sink into the river.

Other than that weird little...thing, it was a pretty sight. The water was a deep blue, and the snow covered forested banks on either side gave it all a sort of dream like feel. You take a few more seconds to look it all over before reaching up to tug your hood down a bit further, turning and leading Frisk back onto the main path.

After a few minutes with nothing but the muffled, distant sound of the river and your crunching footsteps, a pair of familiar voices lifts up through the air. You can’t help but smile, and it’s a little shocking when you realize you’re actually excited.

The two skeletons fall into your line of sight as you round the corner of the path, stopping beside a large stone sitting in the middle of the road.

“SO,” Papyrus is saying, still unaware of you and Frisk. “AS I WAS SAYING ABOUT UNDYNE--” he pauses mid sentence as Frisk quietly coughs, and turns his head.

To say his jaw dropped would be an understatement. You actually get a little concerned that it might fall of his skull. Was that possible?

To your utter amusement, Sans plays along with his brother, the two whirling around in place in absolute shock and surprise. Finally, they whip around, their backs facing you, shoulders hunched like they’re trying to talk quietly amongst themselves.

“SANS!! OH MY GOD!” Papyrus ‘whispers’. His voice is still nearly as loud as ever. “IS THAT...A HUMAN?!?!!!?!” His voice is so frantic you can almost hear all those extra question and exclamation marks.

The two whirl back around to look at you, as if they’ve got to double check.

You don’t move, and neither does Frisk.

“uh,” Sans hums, and looks at his brother. His shocked expression is gone, and he’s grinning again. “actually, i think that’s a rock.”

You glance behind you at the weird stone in the road. It certainly was a rock.

“OH.” says Papyrus, and the disappointment in his voice is so strong, you have to hold yourself back from throwing your arms in the air and shouting ‘you’re right I am a human!’

Sans beats you to the punch though, speaking up again. “hey, what’s that in front of the rock?”

Papyrus looks from the rock right back to you and Frisk.

“OH MY GOD!!!” he gasps, and drops his voice back to a ‘whisper’ as he looks back down at his smaller brother. “IS THAT A HUMAN?”

“Yes,” Sans ‘whispers’ back.

“OH MY GOD!!!”
You get an idea, and reach out, grabbing hold of Frisk and giving them an excited shake while you keep your eyes on Papyrus. You point, gasping. “Oh my god!” you yelp, and can’t hold back your grin no matter how hard you try. “Is that a skeleton?!”

“I’d have to say…” Frisk squints. “…Yes.”

“Oh my god!”

Sans turns his head, looking away from his brother, and you can hear a quiet, drawn out wheeze, like he’s trying his best not to burst out laughing himself.

“THAT’S RIGHT! FEAST YOUR EYES!” Papyrus says, and holds his long arms out wide. It’s shocking how big he is. He’s almost two of you stacked on top of each other.

Papyrus looks back down at his brother, whose shoulders are shaking with silent laughter. “SANS! I FINALLY DID IT!” he cheers. “UNDYNE WILL… I’M GONNA…” he seems to be having trouble coming up with the right words, he’s so excited.

“I’LL BE SO… POPULAR! POPULAR!! POPULAR!!!”

He stops, and clears his throat by saying ‘AHEM’ aloud. “HUMAN!” he says, and points a red gloved hand at you.

You stiffen then, and bite your lower lip. You still can’t help but feel nervous. You still don’t really know either of these two. And despite the fact that you said you trust Sans—and you really, oddly, do—you’re second guessing every little thing with Frisk here. You have to look out for them. They’re more important than anything else in the world to you.

“Eh?” You point at yourself in response. “Me?”

“YES! YOU! YOU SHALL NOT PASS THIS AREA! I, THE GREAT PAPYRUS, WILL STOP YOU! I WILL CAPTURE YOU!” he says.

You glance at Sans and he gives you a wink, which makes your nerves calm a bit.

“YOU WILL BE DELIVERED TO THE CAPITAL!”

The capital? There was a monster capital? You guess that made sense. Despite how curious you feel about what it must be like, you suddenly really never want to step foot anywhere near it.

“THEN! THEN…” Papyrus trails off, and taps his gloved hand to his chin in thought. “…I’M NOT SURE WHAT’S NEXT.” He drops his hand and shakes his head. “IN ANY CASE! CONTINUE… ONLY IF YOU DARE!”

He turns on his heel and bolts down the road away from you, laughing all the way, a string of “NYEH HEH HEH HEH”’s fading into the distance.

Once his brother is out of earshot, Sans tilts his head back and laughs good and loud. You stand up, holding Frisk’s hand as the two of you close the gap between you and Sans, and you can’t help laughing a bit yourself.

“that went well,” he says, voice quaking with his laughter, and when he looks at you again his eyelights are bright. “I told ya i’d keep an eyesocket out for ya.”

You smile, and then remember something he said earlier, looking over his shoulder and out towards
where Papyrus ran off. “Is this the part with the puzzles?”

Sans snorts, turning a bit. “yep. this is the part with the puzzles.”

Chapter End Notes

ok I lied, there are no puzzles in this chapter. I was writing and then the snowball fight scene just sort of happened, so there u go, u get that instead.

Also, with the way only SOME of the monsters react as if they know you’re a human, I figure, like Monster Kid, some of them have no clue you aren’t a monster too.

AND OK NEXT TIME IS PUZZLES

Follow my Tumblr @ TeaTinBlix ! I love talkin' about this game and this fic and also cats and tea lmao <333
“Papyrus seems like a damn sweetheart,” you say, crunching through the snow.

“isn’t he the coolest?” Sans smiles, and the tone of his voice is absolutely genuine and packed with admiration. “i haven’t seen him that excited in a while.”

Your heart gets all warm, and you hope you sound similar to him when you talk about your perfect tiny sib Frisk. Who is also the coolest.

“I’d say he’s definitely cool,” you nod, and you mean it.

Sans is practically glowing, his eyelights bright as you march ahead.

You turn a corner in the path, and as the trees shift out of your way you see another sentry station sitting on the side of the road. You don’t bother slowing down, but Sans holds out an arm in front of you, blocking your path. You blink at him, absently reaching up and tugging at the edge of your hood so it drapes a little further over your brow, shielding you a bit more from the chill. “Eh?”

“i want to give you a heads up, but things up ahead might get a little ruff,” he says, his tone suggesting there was a pun in there somewhere, but you can’t place it. “there are a few other royal guards at their own stations keeping a lookout for humans.” He shakes his head when you fidget, and his smile keeps you from panicking again. “like papyrus, they’re all a bunch of fluffy softies. but also like papyrus, they take their jobs pretty seriously.”

“So what do we do?” you ask, frowning. “Hide? Pretend we’re monsters, like we did for Snowy?”

“let me handle it. i’m friends with these guys, they’ll throw me a bone,” he grins and looks down at Frisk as well. “that sound good, buddy?”

Frisk just gives him a double thumbs up and a grin. “We’ll follow along!”

Sans chuckles and nods, and when you look back up towards the sentry station you freeze, sucking in a sharp breath.

There’s a dog person leaning out of the sentry station (those puns from earlier suddenly make sense, damn it), and he’s squinting in your direction.

“Who is moving?” he barks. He scrambles out of the station, and you notice there’s a dog treat sticking out of his mouth. It sort of reminds you of somebody holding a big cigar between their teeth. “I can only see moving things! I heard voices. Voices come from things that move. Could this moving thing be...a HUMAN?”
The dog monster lifts his paws, and two very sharp looking blue knives pop into existence in his grip.

You instinctively grab a hold of the back of Frisk’s coat, tugging them back towards you while grabbing a hold of Sans’ arm tightly. The sudden motion seems to catch the dog monster’s attention and causes him to bristle, baring his teeth and hunkering down as if he’s about to charge you.

“hey doggo,” Sans calls, his voice level and calm, and you actually double take at the skeleton. His name was Doggo?

“Sans?!” Doggo’s aggressive posture drops. “Were you the one who moved?”

Sans lifts a hand and waves, and you notice Doggo tracks the movement, head tilting from side to side. “me and a couple friends. we’re heading into snowdin and i need to help them get through pap’s puzzles.”

“Oh.” Doggo looks a bit disappointed for a moment, but he turns and feels his way back towards his sentry station, the blue knives vanishing before he hefts himself back up inside behind the counter. “Well, alright then. Don’t scare me like that next time!” he scolds.

“sorry, pal,” Sans hums, and he looks at you then, nodding his head forward. The three of you start to walk again, and he lets you continue to hold onto his arm. You keep Frisk on your other side, as far from blue-knife-dog-man as you can. “i’ll try to warn ya next time. keep an eye out for me at grillby’s later tonight, yeah?”

“You know it,” Doggo answers with a snort.

You glance over your shoulder to make sure he doesn’t follow and you see him ducking down behind the counter out of sight.

You look back ahead, and tighten your grip on Frisk’s hand. Suddenly the whole threat of being captured and...possibly killed feels a bit more real and solid to you. You’re certainly not feeling as giggly as you were earlier.

A few quiet minutes pass and you only slow down once you’re sure you’re far enough down the curvy road that you won’t be heard or seen by Doggo, and the rest of the forest is silent as well.

You slow to a stop, Sans and Frisk stopping with you.

“Skip?” Frisk asks, and squeezes your hand gently. “Are you okay?”

“I’m not feeling super great,” you admit quietly, and you realize only then that you’re still clinging to Sans’ arm like a lifeline. You apologize under your breath and let go of him, but he reaches out after you draw away and rests a hand on your back, like he’s worried you need the support.

“What’s wrong? Do you need more monster food?” Frisk asks, sounding worried.

“No, kiddo, I um. I’m just a little stressed, it’ll be fine,” you mutter, but you can feel the cold, scratchy, bubbling beginnings of what you’re terrified is a panic attack about to begin, clawing at your gut and rising into your chest.

Sans is quiet for a moment, and the smile on his face looks tight, watching you intently. “pal, take a deep breath for me, ok?”

You do just that, closing your eyes as well. But behind your eyelids you get a horrible image of the
dog monster using those blue knives to attack Frisk and you physically wince, eyes snapping open. “Shit,” you breathe and reach up, grabbing your hood with your free hand and pulling it down, covering the upper half of your face. “Shitshitshit.”

“hey hey hey,” Sans murmurs, and his voice is gentle and quiet. “give me another deep breath, buddy. here, do as i say, ok? i want ya to breathe in for four seconds…”

You hesitate, but then do what he says, counting to four quietly as you inhale.

“now hold it for seven seconds,” he instructs.

You do.

“now exhale slowly for eight seconds. make a ‘whoosh’ sound outta your mouth when you do. ...okay, good, buddy. now do it again. four, seven, eight.” He even counts out loud for you, soft and just above a whisper.

You focus on your breathing and his voice and Frisk’s reassuring grip holding your hand. It takes a few rounds, but...the processes seems to have halted your building panic. And after a few more rounds you begin to feel better.

“I’m sorry,” you mutter during one of your exhales, and you feel Sans’ hand rub up and down your back.

“none of that, keep breathing. four, seven, eight,” he says. “you’re doin’ great, pal.”

You grunt in reply, but you listen and keep doing the exercise. After a few minutes pass, you let your grip on your hood slacken and slowly drop your hand to your side, your hood slipping up and letting you see your surroundings again.

“there she is,” Sans says, and the light teasing tone in his voice makes you snort out an embarrassed laugh. “how you feeling?”

“Better,” you answer truthfully. “Fuck, I’m sorry,” you say again, and you don’t even catch the swear, and Frisk doesn’t call you out on it. “I just--saw those fucking knives and I…” you trail off, gaze darting down to Frisk. For a split second that panic flares back up again, but Sans moves his hand from your back to your shoulder and gives it a squeeze, drawing your attention back to him.

“lemme show you something, bud. it’ll make you feel better,” he smiles at you and lifts his free hand, letting his palm face upwards. “you saw what color those magic knives were, right?”

“Yeah...? Blue,” you say, and he nods.

“blue magic is a special sort of magic. look,” he says, and above his palm a blue, glowing bone suddenly blinks into existence, floating above his hand.

You gasp in surprise, blinking at it. “Bones for the bone boy, eh?” you mumble, and he snorts out a distracted laugh.

“hold out your hand,” he says with a grin, and chuckles when you squint at him. “trust me on this?”

You relent, and hold up the hand that had previously been holding your hood.

He moves his hand up and grabs the bone, holding it like a club, and then winks at you before he slowly moves the bone down towards your arm.
You’re stunned when it simply passes right through you. It leaves a tingly feeling behind, but other than that, it’s like it never touched you.

“blue magic,” Sans begins, “is only corporeal if it’s touching something that’s moving. here, try to tap it,” he says, and holds the blue bone club up again.

You reach out and poke at it with your finger, and you’re shocked when this time you actually touch it. You tap at it again, and it feels solid and real. When you hold your hand out and steady again, he lets the bone ghost through your wrist one more time, quicker this time. You let out a breathy, surprised laugh and then he dispells the magic, the bone vanishing.

You look down at Frisk, your eyes still wide with quiet awe. “That was neat,” you say, and they nod, looking just as surprised as you feel.

“That was really cool!” Frisk agrees, and grins up at Sans. “Can you do that to my hand too?”

You don’t notice the shift in his expression, and even if you did it’s one you couldn’t have read anyway. His eyelights move to Frisk, watching them quietly for a moment. “maybe...next time, kid,” Sans says slowly. He looks at you again, shaking his head, and when his thoughts seem to clear he looks concerned again.

“So...so those knives wouldn’t have hurt Frisk?” you ask.

“If they had stayed still, yeah. not a scratch. a lot of monsters utilize blue magic, too. and it’s always the same,” Sans explains.

Something dawns on you, and you look down, resting your hand over your chest. “H-hold on, how come-- last time someone used magic at us, our Souls came out?” you look at Sans, blinking. “How come they didn’t that time?”

He seems surprised at the question but lets out another chuckle. “because this wasn’t an encounter.”

“...Aaaan encounter?” you press, tipping your head and squinting, urging him to go on.

He seems relieved, glad you’re feeling well enough again to be asking questions, and shrugs. “it’s a monster thing. we start encounters to mean anything from ‘happy birthday’ to ‘i’m pissed and we should duke it out’.”

“And you gotta pull your Soul out for that?” you ask, befuddled and confused.

“that,” Sans goes on, his tone patient, “only happens with humans.”

He pauses, reaching up with his free hand and rubbing his jaw. “okay, if i’m gonna explain all this, lemme figure out how so i don’t confuse ya.”

“Much appreciated, bone boy,” you smile.

He chuckles at the name. “tibia honest, it might be a little hard to explain, so bear with me, ok?”

“Roger,” you nod.

“hm.” Sans looks out into the quiet trees of the forest for a moment, the bone ridges of his brow furrowing as he mulls over his thoughts.

“...every monster you’re gonna meet down here can use magic. there are a lot of different kinds, but let’s just focus on blue and basic magic. basic magic is just sort of...what it sounds like. every single
monster can use basic magic, it’s like the default. when it manifests it’s always white. like this.”

Another bone pops into the air, but unlike the glowing blue of the last one this one must be made of that basic magic he’s talking about. It’s a solid white club, and he grabs it out of the air like one.

He gives it a few tosses, letting it spin in the air a few times before it falls and he catches it again. “white magic, you’re gonna want to get out of the way from. it can smart if it hits ya, whether you’re moving or not,” he says with a grin.

You don’t grin back, rumbling uncomfortably in your chest. Flowey had used that kind of magic on you when he’d attacked you with those bullet things.

“Can I see, can I see?” Frisk asks, and holds a hand out.

Sans hesitates, but then shrugs, smirking. “knock yourself out, kid,” he says, and hands them the club.

Frisk takes it and, like any good kid would, runs to the side of the road and starts smacking a snow poff with it.

“And what about encounters?” you ask.

“think of them like a game,” he explains. “when two monsters strike up an encounter, they take turns firing magic at each other. monster magic relies heavily on intent, so unless they’re shooting magic to hurt, it won’t do any actual damage of it hits.”

He pauses though, looking at Frisk.

“humans, though...it’s like your souls can’t tell one way or another, and even if the intent isn’t to hurt, if that magic’s moving quick enough it’s going to hurt you regardless.” He looks back at you. “and that’s probably because you’re made out of stuff, and we’re made out of pure magic ourselves.”

“Wh--wait, really?” your eyes widen. “You’re made out of magic? Like, all of you?”

Sans holds his arms out, chuckling. “one hundred percent homegrown magic, buddy. all monsters are.”

“...But wait, then what’s stuff?” You look down at your hands, clenching and unclenching your fists. “Like guts and all that?”

Sans makes a face, and it’s really weird to see a skull crinkle its ‘nose’. “yep.” His mock disgusted expression turns back into an easy grin though, and he gives you a wink. “i would have guessed that though even if i didn’t know you were human. you’ve got a lotta guts coming down here after all.”

You laugh and give one of his arms a playful shove, and his broad shoulders shake as he laughs along with you.

“So...encounters are like... games monsters play with each other,” you begin, hoping you’re understanding this...weird tradition...thing. “Where they gotta dodge each other’s magic? And unless they want it to hurt it won’t. But if you’re human it’s gonna hurt regardless?”

“yep.”

“And monster Souls don’t pop out during encounters, only human Souls?”

“yep.”
“I got into an encounter in the Ruins!” Frisk calls then, turning around, still holding the bone club like a sword.

“Yeah we both did,” you huff, looking at them, and you don’t see Sans frown.

“It was a different one! It was when Toriel was carrying you. A frog monster--called a Froggit, by the way,” they add, using a tone suggesting you should be impressed with them teaching you such an good informational tidbit, “started an encounter with me! He was really nice. I complimented him and he blushed a lot.”

“D-did you get hurt?” you blurt, unhappy you’re just now learning about this.

Frisk shakes their head. “No, his magic was super slow. Shaped like little flies buzzing around. I just had to duck out of the way. After I complimented him he ended the encounter ‘cause he was happy.”

You squint a bit and reach up to rub the back of your neck. “...I’m still super confused, but okay.”

“think of it like solving a puzzle,” Sans says, and you look at him again. “every monster usually has some sort of… way to solve how to win their encounter.”

“Lots of puzzles down here, eh?”

Sans gives you a shrug. “it’s a monster thing. we love our puzzles.”

“You sure?” you grin, narrowing your eyes at him. “Coulda sworn when we first saw Papyrus he was chewin’ you out for not recalibrating yours in, like... What was it?”

“Eight days!” Frisk chirps.

“Oh, damn,” you tease, and Sans rolls his eyelights, huffing and looking away from you in mock annoyance. “Eight whole days!”

The bone club suddenly vanishes from Frisk’s grip while they were in mid-swing towards another snow drift, and they let out a long unhappy “awwww!” at their toy being taken away.

“eh, papyrus has always been the one who’s been the puzzle master. why even try when he’s such an expert?” He grins, and you feel as if he means every word, pride strong in his voice.

There’s a long, quiet pause as he lets your thoughts settle, Frisk crunching back over to you and reaching up to take one of your hands again. Only when you’ve been staring out into the trees for a few minutes, your thoughts a million places at once, does Sans try to call you back.

“you feeling better, bud?” he asks.

You let out a breath that ends in a smile and nod at him. “I am, actually. I’m ready to start walking again if you guys are.”

“Yeahyeah!” Frisk cheers, and gives your hand a tug. No doubt they’d been bored just standing around. You knew how much energy the kiddo had to spare.

The three of you begin your trek, Sans and Frisk on either side of you. The chill of the air is beginning to seep through your coat, and with your adrenaline gone you’re starting to really feel it.

“How much further until…” you trail off, and you realize you’ve got no damn idea really where you’re supposed to go from here other than ‘out’.
“i was gonna take you to snowdin,” Sans says without looking at you. You recognize that name from earlier when he’d spoken to Doggo. “it’s a little town up ahead. it’ll be a good place for you to rest up and catch your bearings.”

It feels like a weight you hadn’t realized you’d been carrying is lifted from your shoulders, and you let out a relieved huff. “Thanks, Sans. No joke, you’re a real lifesaver.”

Sans gives you a wink, and you brace yourself for a pun. “don’t mention it. you’ve really saved me from a heap of boredom today, so i’d say we’re even.”

You roll your eyes and snort before looking ahead.

The silence that falls over you three is comfortable again, just the sound of snow-crunching footsteps and the soft ‘paff’ of the occasional bit of snow that slips from the tree branches of the forest.

It’s still so strange to you that the cavern is illuminated as much as it is. You can’t find any one source of light--no artificial sun or anything, the light just is. And the snow that slowly drifts from the ceiling of the cavern is glittery and gentle. You can’t help but admire how beautiful everything is.

How literally magical.

Sans and Frisk stop suddenly, and your attention is drawn from the snowy stone ‘sky’ above you to the road ahead again.

A tall, armored dog monster stands in the middle of the path. He’s holding a shield as tall as he is and a very large sword that looks like it’s definitely not made of magic but actual sharp metal.

“Ohmygod,” you yelp, and your heart stops when Frisk suddenly lets go of your hand and rushes towards them. “FRISK!”

You jolt after them, heart feeling as if it’s pressing up into your throat. That fear only skyrockets when you see Frisk’s bright red Soul leave their little body and hover in front of them. An encounter. Sans said there was a puzzle here for them to solve, but all you’re paying attention to is that fucking sword.

A strong hand grabs a hold of your arm, stopping you short, nearly making you fall over backwards.

Sans makes sure you don’t topple though with a steadying hand on your back, but you can’t help the searing outrage and betrayal that bubbles in your chest as he stops you from reaching your baby sib.

“wait,” he implores, and keeps that one hand on your back and the other still gripping your wrist. “this one i can promise is harmless.”

“Let GO! He’s got a fucking sword bigger than Frisk!” you bite out. Your glare darts from him towards Frisk. “It--”

You stop then, staring.

The dog monster in question is sitting on the snowy ground, sword and shield still in his grip, but all he’s doing is panting happily as Frisk scratches the spot on his head between his ears. And is it just you or is the dog monster’s neck growing longer with every scratch?

You feel yourself relax slightly, though your heart is still pounding so hard you can feel every beat.

“Who’s a good booooy?” you hear Frisk say, and the dog monster lets out a delighted bark, leaning
his head into Frisk’s outstretched hand for another pet.

Sans’ grip on your arm loosens and then lets you go completely. He gives you a sheepish smile when you can’t stop yourself from glaring at him for a moment.

“i’m sorry, pal. i didn’t mean to scare you. i just didn’t want you kicking poor lesser dog’s ass,” he says with a soft laugh. “he’s as big of a softy as my bro.” Sans pauses in thought, humming.
“...honestly, maybe more. i’d bet my bottom collarbone on it.”

You snort at that, even more of your anger subsiding.

When you look back at Frisk you’re sure the dog’s neck has grown. It looks like a big noodle, and Frisk has to jump up in order to continue petting him.

When your baby sib laughs, your anger and fear are completely gone.

“...Sorry,” you say, and look at Sans again. His smile is a little tight, his eyes on you. “I--”

“you apologize a lot when you don’t need to,” Sans interrupts. “you were scared for frisk. i’d have reacted the same way.”

“I still snapped.”

Sans snorts. “pal, you didn’t know. i was a little worried i was gonna get a knuckle sandwich from ya there, though.”

You shake your head, still smiling, and move closer to the other two. Frisk’s Soul has gone back into their body, and you laugh at the idea that a pet (or five) was all it took to solve the dog monster’s encounter puzzle.

“Can…” you hesitate, laughing under your breath. “Can I maybe pet?”

The dog monster--Sans had called him Lesser Dog, right?--barks happily and nods.

You laugh again and reach up, giving him a gentle scritch behind one of his ears that has his already wagging tail going nuts.

His fur is so soft it’s crazy.

Without warning, Lesser Dog hops to his feet, his neck now so long that you doubt even Sans could reach the top of his head. He sets his shield down for a moment, letting it rest against his legs, and tugs a tiny little cloth sachet from his belt. Without a word he drops the sachet into Frisk’s hands, gives the top of their head a little pat with his paw, then picks up his shield and bounds down the road like his tail is on fire.

The three of you stare after him for a silent few seconds.

“...He okay?” you ask, and look at Sans when the skeleton laughs.

“He’s just fine, pal, trust me.”

“What’d he give you, Frisk?” you look down at the little pouch he’d given them. You blink when Frisk shakes it and it jingles.

Frisk opens the top and peeks in side before reaching in and pulling out...a gold coin?
“Holy wow,” you mutter, and take it when Frisk offers it out to you. “Is this real gold?”

“Well it ain’t fool’s gold, bud,” Sans smiles. “Sometimes monsters reward those who solve their encounters with money. If you save ‘em up, you could get a burg at my favorite bar in Snowdin.”


“Swear jar,” Frisk says.

“Yeahyeahyeah.” You hand back the gold coin to Frisk and they drop it back into the pouch. They tie it back up, and you turn so they can stuff it into one of the unused pockets in your little backpack, crouching down a bit so they can reach it easier.

When you straighten back up another shiver crawls across your shoulders and you dig your hands into your coat’s pockets. “Frisk, hon, are you cold?” you ask. If you’re feeling the chill, you’re worried they are, too.

“Nope,” they chirp back, shaking their head.

“Are you sure, kiddo?” you press.

“Mmhm,” they respond. Damn little kids and their crazy little furnace bodies full of energy.

Before you can tease them about their said crazy little furnace body, a sudden weight falling over your shoulders makes you jump and stop, yelping in surprise. Warmth spreads over your back and neck, and when you shiver again it’s from the sudden temperature switch.

Sans has draped his big blue jacket over you, and you’re not sure if it’s the sudden warmth of it that makes you blush or something else.

He grins at you, tilting his head to one side, his hands stuffed into the pockets of his shorts now instead of his jacket. “Y’looked cold there, bud. Don’t want you to get chilled to the bone.”

You hesitate, but can’t help but smile. “Hold on a sec, I think you need this way more than I do,” you protest. All he had on now was a white t-shirt. He had to be cold as hell.

With his arms exposed though, you can’t help but stare. It’s even more obvious now how…not human he is. How different. The bones of his arms are much thicker than a human’s skeleton his size would be. Hell, you were pretty sure that you wouldn’t even be able to wrap a hand around his humerus alone.

“Eh, I might not have much meat on my bones,” he chuckles, “but the cold is one thing I don’t have to worry about much.”

“Yeah well what if you get chilled to the bone? It’s freezing out here!” you huff.

“If he gets chilled to the bone,” Frisk speaks up, and they turn so they’re walking backwards and facing you, slowly moving down the road away from you and Sans. “Then you just gotta owe him a brrrger!”

There’s a beat of silence before Sans bursts out laughing, and you can’t help but join him.

Frisk is beaming proudly while the two of you laugh, and you take a moment to slip on Sans’ coat completely while your giggling tapers off, not wanting a sudden breeze to push it off your shoulders.

Shit, it really is cozy.
“feelin’ better?” Sans asks, laughter still bright in his voice. He seems pleased when you nod, and starts walking again, following Frisk’s lead down the path. “good. that was a great one, by the way, kid.”

“I’m learning from the best,” Frisk says with a wink.

“oooh, a charmer. i’ll have to warn paps about you.”

Your little trio makes it over a little crest of a hill, and a tall familiar skeleton slips into view.

“speak of the super cool devil,” Sans grins.

Papyrus is standing on the other side of an odd square shaped impression in the snow, the size of it somewhere around 15 by 15 feet, you guess. As soon as the taller skeleton sees his brother, he stomps a foot in the snow and puts his gloved hands on his hips.

“SANS!!” he barks, “THERE YOU ARE!”

“hey, bro,” sans says with that easy grin of his.

“WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?” Papyrus demands. “YOU’RE SO LAZY! FIRST YOU SPEND ALL NIGHT NAPPING, AND NOW THIS?!”

“i think that’s called…” Sans cocks his head to one side. “…sleeping.”

You snort loudly, lifting your arm and covering your wide smile with his sleeve.

“EXCUSES EXCUSES!” Papyrus huffs. His gaze darts to you and you see his eyes widen in surprise. “SANS! WHY IS THE HUMAN WEARING YOUR COAT?”

“They were lookin’ a little chilly, and there was snow reason not to share it.”

“Oh!” Papyrus smiles then and nods. “THAT MAKES SENSE!”

“She also owes him a brrrger!” Frisk adds, obviously still proud of themselves for that one.

“GAH!” Papyrus stomps a foot and crosses his arms, smile turning into an exasperated scowl. “LOOK WHAT YOU’VE DONE, SANS! IT’S SPREADING!!”

“aw, don’t gimme the cold shoulder, pap.”

You and Frisk both laugh and Papyrus lets out a frustrated “NYEH!”

“ENOUGH DISTRACTIONS!!” he waves a hand through the air before pointing at you. “HUMAN! IN ORDER TO STOP YOU, MY BROTHER AND I HAVE CREATED SOME MORE PUZZLES!!”

You pause and look at Sans, meeting his eyes. “Have you now?”

“I guess you’ll have to wait and see, pal,” he says with a wink.

You look back at Papyrus, who’s squinting at his brother. A moment later he shakes his head, attention returning to you. “I THINK YOU WILL FIND THIS ONE...QUITE SHOCKING!!”

Sans snorts, and you lift a brow.
“FOR YOU SEE, THIS IS THE INVISIBLE… ELECTRICITY MAZE!!! WHEN YOU TOUCH THE WALLS OF THIS MAZE,” he pulls out a shiny blue glass ball, holding it out for you to see. “THIS ORB WILL ADMINISTER A HEARTY ZAP!”

Instinctively you reach out and tug Frisk back a bit more from the square indent in the snow.

Papyrus seems to notice this, hesitating for a moment before tacking on a cheerful “A NON LETHAL ZAP, OF COURSE!!!”

You grunt, looking down at Frisk. “I’ll handle this one, okay?”

Frisk smiles up at you, and you’d swear they’re trying not to giggle. You have to admit, despite the threat of electrocution, Papyrus is still pretty funny. “Okay!”

“SOUND LIKE FUN?” Papyrus asks. “BECAUSE! THE AMOUNT OF FUN YOU WILL PROBABLY HAVE IS ACTUALLY RATHER SMALL I THINK…” he trails off, eyes darting off to the side, squinting into the distance as if he’s just realized this. “…OKAY!” he shakes his head, looking back at you, still grinning. “YOU CAN GO AHEAD NOW!”

You hesitate, glancing at Sans. The skeleton just gives you a wink, so you take a deep breath, and take the smallest step forward, pressing a foot down onto the square indentation.

The moment you do, Papyrus suddenly yelps and jumps a good two feet in the air, his body flashing brightly for a moment, reminding you of a cartoon character that had just stuck a fork into an electric socket.

“...You sure that ain’t lethal?” you call out.

But Papyrus isn’t listening. He shakes himself off and begins stomping a foot. “SANS!! WHAT DID YOU DO?!”

Sans chuckles from beside you. “i think skip here has to hold the orb,” he says.

Papyrus blinks. “SKIP?”

“the human,” Sans says, and nods his head towards you, keeping his eyes on his brother.

“OH! OKAY.”

Your eyes widen then when you watch him walk through the maze. You look down at his feet, and notice he’s leaving behind footprints you’re going to easily be able to follow back over.

“HOLD THIS PLEASE,” he says to you, and reaches out, plopping the glass orb on top of the hood over your head.

As he darts back over his own footprints, making the path through the maze even more obvious, you take a moment to marvel how the orb doesn’t fall off your head right away. It even stays put when you turn your head to look at Sans again, who’s still grinning just as wide as ever.

You’re kind of starting to wonder if he ever stops smiling.

“Go on, solve the maze!” Frisk says, giggling, and you laugh back, smiling at them.

“Okay, here goes,” you say, and take an overdramatically deep breath, like you’re truly bracing yourself, and step forward. Absolutely nothing happens to you as you follow Papyrus’ footsteps through the snow, and he lets out a shocked gasp when you reach him on the other side.
“INCREDIBLE!” he shouts, and presses his gloved hands to his cheekbones. “YOU SLIPPERY
SNAIL! YOU SOLVED IT SO EASILY!” he pauses, squinting at you. “TOO EASILY…”

You give him a sheepish grin and a shrug.

“HOWEVER! THIS NEXT PUZZLE WILL NOT BE SO EASY!” he warns. “IT WAS
DESIGNED BY MY BROTHER SANS!”

You look over your shoulder at the shorter skeleton in question, who gives you a little wave.

“YOU WILL SURELY BE CONFOUNDED!” Papyrus continues, and you look back at him,
unable to keep from smiling. “I KNOW I AM!”

He then lets out a laugh, spins on his heel, and actually does a very impressive moonwalk away from
you, down the path and out of sight.

Once he’s gone, you let out a bubbly, breathy laugh. When you turn back around you see Frisk and
Sans both carefully making their way through the maze over yours and Papyrus’ footprints. “Is it
weird that despite all this, like... capture stuff, this is the most fun I’ve had in months?”

Sans laughs as he stops beside you, reaching up and plucking the glass orb from the top of your
head, tossing it over his shoulder absently where it lands in the snow. “eh, i always knew humans
were weird, but you really do take the cake.”

“Hey!” you protest, trying not to laugh. You put your hands into the pockets of his coat, so much
warmer now with it on than before. “Does, uh,” you give him a nervous sort of smile. “Does the
puzzle you made have, uh...electricity in it?”

Sans snorts and shakes his head. “no electricity,” he says, and you let out a relieved sigh. “but i can
promise you that it’s definitely a puzzle that’ll have you searching for clues.”

Chapter End Notes

Ayyy, check out my Undertale Tumblr! I love chattin' with peeps and making new
friends omg! I'd love to answer questions and talk about possible future fluffy and
angsty shit that's gonna go down pffff

Also, I was thinking of that bit in the game where it's mentioned that it's sad humans can
never experience a bullet pattern birthday card. So I thought, what if sometimes
monsters just toss magic at each other for funsies? Magic seems to be super based on
intent for monsters, so I figured it made sense. So here we be!

Also I'm so jealous of Skip, ya'll have no idea omg. i wanna wear sans' hoodie too :C
Chapter Summary

Just some good ol’ goofs and puzzles. Nothin' sad to be had here.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The dynamic Sans sees between Skip and Frisk reminds him a bit of himself and Papyrus. The teasing, the playful shoulder and head pats, the occasional inside joke. At one point the three of you pass a gnarled old pine tree, knots in the bark looking vaguely like a face, and Frisk points at the tree and smiles slyly at you before giggling out a teasing “Look, it’s you!”

Sans grins as he watches you bolt after your little sibling for the ‘insult’, and he laughs after you catch them, exacting your revenge by blowing a raspberry against Frisk’s cheek until they beg you to stop, voice breathless with their giggling.

For so many resets now, Frisk had seemed...more like a husk than a kid. It made sense when he thought about it, what with the kid doing the same things over and over and over again. He was in the same boat, really. The only reason he didn’t just stay in bed whenever he felt the world reset was because there was always that hope that something would change. Obviously the kid was looking for something, and he could only hope they found it.

Sans wanted his brother to be happy. For all his friends to be happy. And it would be no help in having that happen if he crumbled in on himself.

...And then, here you were. A shock of light in an inky dark room. When you smile it brings to mind images of the first time he saw the night sky. When you laugh it’s like hearing bells; like being let in on a precious secret. Both felt like things to be cherished.

His soul is warm in his chest as he follows the pair of humans, his eyesockets half shut and his eyelights bright pinpricks while he remains deep in thought.

He’s feeling hopeful for the first time in so long.

Sans spots the Nice Cream vendor and he watches Frisk excitedly tug you over to him. He snorts when he hears them excitedly ask if you want ice cream and he watches you crouch a bit so Frisk can dig out the little gold coin purse they’d gotten from Lesser Dog out of your backpack.

“Wow, hey thanks!” Blue the bunny says happily as he hands over two Nice Creams. Frisk counts out the correct amount of coins for him, Skip watching them and muttering a soft ‘good job’ when they pay the right amount. “Tell your friends, okay? You guys have really made my day!”

You’re already unwrapping yours, and you pause when you notice a handwritten note inside the wrapper.

“I hope this treat is as sweet as you’,” you read aloud. “Aw! That’s super cute!”

Blue laughs, looking a bit bashful, leaning against his cart and reaching up to scratch at one of his
long ears. “Thanks! I write all of the notes myself!”

“Mine says ‘Are those claws natural?’” Frisk reads. They look down at their little stubby nails before grinning, holding up their free hand and showing it off. “A hundred percent natural!” they hum.

“Very fierce!” the Nice Cream vendor laughs. He looks up and only notices Sans then. “Sans! Hey, man, how you doing?”

“hey, blue,” Sans smiles and walks closer. “was a little bonely ‘til i met my new friends here. how’s business?”

“It was real slow before these two showed up. Now it was worth it to push the cart all the way out here!”

“Oh, crap, Sans,” Skip says, drawing his attention. For a moment he’s worried something is wrong before you hold out your Nice Cream for him. “We didn’t have enough to get you one, too. Want mine? I can steal a bite of Frisk’s.”

“Hey!” Frisk huffs, but they smile at Sans and he knows they wouldn’t be too upset if he takes you up on the offer.

His Soul flutters for the umpteenth time today and he just shakes his head. “thanks pal, but i’m good. i just bought a couple nice creams the other day. paps loves ‘em.”

“Papyrus is one of my favorite customers,” Blue says happily. “I’m moving my sale spot again soon though! Keep an eye out for me in Waterfall!”

“will do, bud.”

You and Frisk begin to walk again and he moves along with you. When you take your first chomp out of your Nice Cream though, you have to stop just so you can turn around and tell Blue how good the treat is.

Blue blushes and he reaches up, tugging on his long ears so they partially cover his face. “Thanks so much!” he says, pride bright in his cheerful voice. “That means a lot!”

Sans is beginning to understand that with a big sister like you, no wonder Frisk is such a good kid.

“Seriously,” you go on after you’ve walked a little bit further. “This is so damn good. You want a bite, Sans?”

He’s a little surprised at the offer, and sputters out a light laugh. “i’m okay, thanks bud.”

“Oh! Oh oh oh, look!” Frisk says excitedly, and points with their free hand up ahead. One of Papyrus’ more leisurely puzzles is there; it’s a little golf-like patch of smoothed out snow that allowed a magically-respawning snowball to be rolled around and bounced towards the hole at the end. “I wanna try, hold on!” they say.

With a speed and ferocity that reminds him a bit of Paps, Frisk chomps down the rest of their Nice Cream, stuffing wrapper in their pocket before rushing towards the ball.

“What am I lookin’ at?” you ask, watching them curiously.

“they gotta get the little ball into the hole,” he shrugs, and points towards the goal in question.

“Oooooh, so like mini-golf!”
“you can give it a try if you want. the ball’s enchanted so once it goes in the hole, it’ll pop back up at its starting place.”

“That’s neat as hell,” you mutter honestly. You take your time with your Nice Cream though, on the opposite end of the spectrum as your little sibling.

Frisk spends a few minutes giggling and kicking the snowball, watching it bounce off the walls of the little course. A few times they almost get it into the hole, only for it to barely miss and bounce further away.

“You better hurry!” you call. “It’s shrinking!”

Frisk laughs, and by the time they finally manage to get the ball into the hole it’s even smaller than an actual golf ball.

To your surprise and Frisk’s delight, a light blue flag pops out of the hole.

Frisk reaches out to touch the flag, squinting at it the little words printed on the fabric. “‘You waited, still, for this opportunity’, ‘then dethroned “Ball” with a sharp attack.’” They look down at the hole just in time to see it spit out four gold coins onto the snow. “It gave me money!”

“good job, kiddo,” Sans says. He looks at you, smirking. “are you gonna give it a try now?” Honestly, he wants to see you try, if only to have a little fun with it. He wants to hear you laugh again.

“Fuck yeah,” you mutter, voice soft enough for Frisk not to hear, and Sans chuckles. “Just lemme finish my Nice Cream.”

“want me to hold it for you?” Sans offers. He holds out a hand, cocking one bony brow. When you hesitate he quirks his fingers a few times. “it’s not gonna melt on me, if that’s what you’re worried about.”

“...True,” you say, and then something seems to dawn on you, looking down at the Nice Cream with wide eyes.

“...you okay, bud?”

“Why the hell did I get an ice cream anyway?” you say, a laugh coloring your voice. “It’s cold as shit, what was I thinking?”

“you were thinking it was an ice time for some ice cream.” His hand is still outstretched, just in case you want to play before you finish. He laughs out loud when you roll your eyes, but he’s careful when you do hand over your half-eaten treat.

“Thanks,” you say, and he just nods, watching you trot over to the course.

By now the snowball has popped back up in its starting place, and Frisk’s light blue victory flag has disappeared back under the snow.

“Ya’ll ready for this?” you ask, and you even strike a pose by the snowball, like you’re trying to warn the puzzle that it doesn’t know what’s coming.

“You can do it!” Frisk cheers from sidelines out of the course, jumping up and down. “Go go go!”
He watches you make a big show of trying to figure out how you’re going to start, crouching down and making angles to look through with our hands. It makes Frisk laugh, and he sees your own smile widen when they do.

Finally, you stand again, taking a few moments to inch around as if you’re trying to find the perfect spot to start from.

“Check this out,” you say, and you give Sans an over-exaggerated wink before you take one big step towards the ball… and then you kick it like you’re playing soccer instead of mini golf.

The ball, surprisingly, doesn’t explode into powdery snowflakes on impact, and instead shoots away with your kick. It bounces off the walls several times, looking like a crazed pinball, zooming further down the course…

Until it slows down to a crawl…

And falls into the hole.

Frisk shrieks out a cheer, leaping into the air and throwing their hands up.

“...wow,” is all Sans says from behind you. Hot damn.

An orange flag pops up from the hole and Frisk, being much closer, rushes over to read it for you.

“‘You are the kind of person who rushes fists-first through all obstacles!’” they read, voice still tinged with near-manic excitement. “It gave you five whole gold coins!”

“Would you believe me if I said I totally did that on purpose?” you ask, looking back at him, your eyes wide and your smile shocked.

“after a stunt like that? i’d believe anything you say, pal,” Sans says with a chuckle, and holds out your Nice Cream for you to take again. “here, champ, you’ve earned this.”

“Thanks, bone boy,” you say, surprise and awe at your own stunt still evident in the giggle lacing your voice.

He kind of really liked the nickname, truth be told.

You take your ice cream back and trot over to Frisk, and Sans follows along.

Sans keeps trying to figure out what sort of questions to ask you. He’s trying to figure out when would be an… appropriate time. It was a little difficult for him to process the passage of time when he’s been reliving the same chunk of it countless times over. He doesn’t want to scare you off or weird you out by dropping personal questions on you after you’ve only just met.

It’s difficult to resist though. He feels the questions form on his tongue dozens of times, only to sputter out into nothing before he can ask any of them. He doesn’t want to risk losing this.

...He’s confused when a bit of him speaks up from a quiet place in his chest, and tells him he doesn’t want to risk losing you.

Absently he reaches up and rubs a hand over his sternum, his Soul fluttering again.

“so…” he mutters finally. “what brought you to the mountain?”

That seemed like a safe question, at least.
“This little goblin wanted to go on a hike,” you say, and give Frisk a playful nudge to their back.
“There’s this big...hole, up there. It was getting dark so we didn’t see it.” You pause and look up at the ceiling of the cavern.

Sans can only imagine how strange all of this must be for you. He’s still impressed at how well you’re taking it. Or, at least, how well you’re taking it on the outside. If you’re anything like he is, and he really hopes you aren’t, you’re hiding away most, if not all, your true feelings on the situation.

“going for a hike in the dark?” Sans chuckles, his eyelights darting to Frisk, curious. “seems a little dangerous.”

“Mmhm,” you say, and there’s a tense little ‘I told you so’ tone in your voice as you look down at Frisk again. Seems to him like you’ve already had this chat, and he wonders if Frisk somehow dragged you along without your wanting to come in the first place.

“I didn’t mean for you to get hurt,” Frisk says softly, and Sans can hear the guilt thick in their little voice.

“Hon, I’m just teasing, I know you didn’t.” you say, and you don’t let Frisk dwell on their guilt, grabbing them and yanking them into a hug. You squeeze them so tight that their breath leaves them in a cartoonish wheeze, and Sans can’t help but smile at the sight.

The fact that you cared about Frisk so damn much made him feel safe with you.

It was a strange feeling. But it was one that a great part of him felt confident in down to his very Soul. The other part of him was stubborn and logistical though, standing its ground and trying its best to keep from caring too much.

Sans rubs his sternum again over his white t-shirt, watching you. Who on earth were you? Why were you affecting him like this? Stars, he was confused.

“Is that Papyrus?” you speak up then, and point ahead. And sure enough his cool bro is standing patiently across the other side of a small clearing.

When Papyrus sees that he’s finally been noticed he lifts an arm and waves excitedly.

“HELLO, HUMAN!” Papyrus grins widely.

The three of you stop on the other side of the clearing, and a single piece of paper sits between you and Papyrus.

Sans watches you closely, curious and admittedly eager to see your reaction to his ‘puzzle’. He hopes it makes you laugh.

“I HOPE YOU’RE READY FOR...” Papyrus begins, only to pause, as if he’s just noticed something wrong with what’s in front of him. He squints at the piece of paper, as if he’d been expecting it to transform into something else upon your arrival. “...SANS, WHERE IS THE PUZZLE?”

Sans cocks his head to one side like he doesn’t understand the question. “whaddaya mean, pap? it’s right there. on the ground.”

When Sans hears you choke back a snort, he finds himself feeling proud of his lazy work.
“trust me,” Sans goes on. “there’s no way they can get past this one.”

He looks at you when you step forward first, and Sans notices that Frisk is hanging back as well. No doubt the kid is enjoying your reactions to all of this as well.

“Let’s take a looksee,” you hum, and crouch down in front of the paper. You pluck it up, and a moment later you bark out an amused laugh. You laugh so hard you actually topple back a bit, landing on your butt in the snow, still holding the paper.

“What!” Papyrus gasps. “What is it? Is it truly a difficult puzzle?! What is so funny?”

“Hold on, I gotta solve it first!” you laugh. “Frisky,” you call, looking over your shoulder. “You got a pen?”

Frisk shrugs and shakes their head, giggling. “Nope! Sorry!”

“Hmm…” you turn back and look down at the paper. “That’ll make solving this puzzle even more difficult…”

Frisk’s giggling turns into a full on laughing fit, the little tyke doubling over as you make a big show of being completely thrown off by the word search.

Papyrus puts his gloved hands over his mouth and gasps and his eyes actually sparkle. “SANS!” he cries, sounding absolutely delighted. “I can’t believe your puzzle is actually working!”

“I told ya to trust me, paps!” Sans laughs.

“You did!! I apologize!”

“Okay, I found ‘monster’,” you say out loud. “Let’s see...we got...oh! Here’s ‘robot’!”

“...SANS.” Papyrus squints at his brother. “...is your difficult puzzle a word search.”

“I found ‘skeletons’!” you announce, and Frisk giggles harder.

“yep,” Sans nods.

“SANS!!”

“What’s wrong, bro? Having trouble searching for the right words?”

“NyeH! NO!!”

“Found ‘giasfcflubrehber’!”

“THAT’S NOT EVEN A WORD!”

“It’s in the puzzle, though,” you say, and hold up the paper, giving it a little shake.

Papyrus stomps closer to you and crouches down beside you, squinting at the paper as you continue to hold it out. “Oh! It really is!” he rubs his chin, surprised. “I suppose that was meant to stump you! But you found your way around it!”
“Sure did,” you grin. “Hold up, I’m almost done. Just a few more…”

Papyrus stands again and begins to tap his foot, eyeing his brother suspiciously. “THAT DOESN’T EVEN LOOK LIKE A PUZZLE YOU MADE YOURSELF! IT LOOKS LIKE YOU TOOK IT OUT OF THE PAPER!”

“well, yeah bro. it is from the paper.”

“SANS!!”

“Aaaand, done! Found all the words,” you say, and grunt as you stand up, still holding the paper. You pause to catch your breath, sounding a little winded. Your breath sounds a bit thin, and Sans is glad he gave his jacket to you when he did.

“WELL, DESPITE MY LAZYBONES BROTHER NOT PULLING HIS WEIGHT WITH THIS PUZZLE,” Papyrus hums. “I AM STILL IMPRESSED YOU DECIDED TO SOLVE IT ANYWAY!” he squints at his brother then, hands on his hips. “THOUGH IF YOU WANTED TO MAKE YOUR PUZZLE TRULY CHALLENGING, YOU COULD HAVE USED THE JUNIOR JUMBLE!”

Sans snorts. “that easy-peasy word scramble? that’s for baby bones,” he teases.

Papyrus straightens with a huff. “UN. BELIEVABLE. HUMAN!” his attention darts to you, and you snap to attention like a startled soldier. “SOLVE THIS DISPUTE!”

You pause and look between the two brothers. “Uhhhh...Hey, you ever tried sudoku?” you deflect.

“What? What is that?”

“It’s a puzzle game!” You grin when Papyrus instantly lights up. “It’s this grid filled with numbers, and… hey, how about once I find a pencil I make a board for you to solve?” you offer.

“WOWIE!” Papyrus gasps, and once again there are actual literal sparkles in his eyes. “YOU WOULD DO THAT? FOR ME?”

“Sure! You’re a cool dude. And sudoku is fun, I bet you’ll like it.”

“WOWIE!!!” he gasps even louder. “IT’S ALMOST AS IF WE’RE…” he hesitates, his sparkly eyes widening.

“...Friends…?” you offer, remembering how excited he’d been at the idea of having them.

Papyrus gasps yet again, the sound sharp and melodramatically affronted. “I DIDN’T SAY THAT! WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT F-F-FR-- I HAVE TO GO!! GOODBYE!!”

He turns on his heel and bolts down the path, disappearing around a thickly forested corner down the road.

“...Huh.” is all you say, staring off where the taller skeleton disappeared to.

“You’d really write up a puzzle for him?” Sans asks after a moment of silence.

He watches you shrug your shoulders.

“Well, yeah. Sudoku boards are pretty easy to set up, but shit, they’re killer to solve.” You grin at him. “At least for me, I mean. I can zoom through the easier ones, but once the difficulty starts
ramping up my brain starts to cramp.”

Sans cocks his head to one side. You were a damn enigma, weren’t you? Almost too good to be true, if he were honest. He feels like he needs to keep himself tensed for something to go wrong, but... even he, the calculating, silently paranoid, overprotective pile of bones knew there wasn’t a single hidden agenda to be had from you.

When he lets himself leave his thoughts, he blinks at you a few times, realizing you’re mimicking him.

Your head is cocked as well, staring him in the eye and doing a bad job of trying not to smile.

Sans straightens and he feels his cheekbones warm up, a bright blue dusting his face.

“I’m gonna write you one to solve too,” you say.

“you don’t gotta do that,” he chuckles.

“Don’t worry, it won’t be too puzzling for yah.”

Sans snorts, hands still stuffed in his shorts pockets. “i thought you said you didn’t do puns.”

“I don’t, but you’re really warming up to me,” you grin and shrug your shoulders so you jostle his coat he gave you, the fur of his hood brushing your cheeks.

Sans lifts a hand and covers his face, the sound of bone-against-bone making a quiet ‘tap’. He’s hiding half of his wide grin, shoulders shaking in silent laughter. You really were turning out too good to be true. All you needed to do now was share his love of greasy fast food and then he’s pretty sure you’d essentially have him in your pocket--

“How much farther is Snowdin?” you ask, and slip your hands into his coat again to fend off the chill. “I could really go for that burger you mentioned.”

Sans stares at you for a good solid ten seconds, his hand still pressed over half of his face, his eyelights nothing but tiny pinpricks.

“...yeah, i’d love a burg,” he mumbles. He doesn’t even realize he doesn’t answer the first part of your question.

Well, shit. Guess that means he’s in your pocket after all.

Frisk is quick to lead the two of you on and you call out to them and tell them not to run out of sight.

“Look what Papyrus made!” they shout, and Sans just smiles when you can only stare at the plate of spaghetti frozen to a table set out in the middle of the forest. Beside it is another table, but that one’s got an unplugged microwave on it. No doubt it was supposed to warm up the frozen plate, what with every setting on the microwave reading ‘spaghetti’.

“Papyrus made us spaghetti?” you ask, laughing.

“Yeah,” Frisk nods and holds up a note Sans’ cool brother had left behind. You take it and read it over silently. “He says that it’s actually a trick! So we eat it, and it’s so good that we don’t keep going.”

“Tricky,” you grin, and Frisk laughs. You pluck up the fork on the table and give the spaghetti a tap. It’s so frozen that it actually makes a ringing ‘ting’ sound when you tap it. You laugh under your
breath again and set the fork back on the little table. “I don’t think there’s any eating this though.”
You open and close the microwave, pushing a few of the buttons. “Microwave isn’t working either.”

“why don’t we spag et outta here and keep going?” Sans walks past you, giving one of your arms a light nudge with a bony elbow as he does. “that burg you’re lookin’ forward to is waiting.”

You snort and follow after him.

“Hey, so you asked me a question earlier, can I ask you one?”

“huh? oh, sure, yeah bud.” Sans shrugs and nods.

“Are you cold yet?”

He barks out a laugh and shakes his head. “no, and now i get to ask another one.”

“Ask away,” you hum.

“favorite instrument?”

“If I don’t say the trombone, are you gonna be disappointed?”

“immensely.”

“Well, then. I super like the violin.”

Sans lets out another loud laugh. “alright, alright. your turn.”

“What’s your favorite instrument?”

“piccolo.”

The answer seems to shock you into momentary silence, and he grins back at you over his shoulder.

“Wait, really?” you ask.

“nah, it’s the trombone. you got me.”

“Ha! I knew it. Alright, your turn.”

“what’ve ya got?” he asks.

“Eh? What? What do you mean?”

“you said earlier that you were sick,” he begins to elaborate, but he notices your footsteps slow and then stop.

Frisk’s stop a moment later, and he stops as well. He finds himself hesitating. Slowly, he looks back over his shoulder at you, and he feels his Soul seize up in concern. He was hoping you would just say something...easy. Or at the very least something that would be quick and simple to answer.

A cold. Anemia. Asthma? He was certainly no expert on them, but he was sure that any number of human illnesses could have triggered a weak spell like the one you’d experienced earlier, and a great many of them weren’t…frightening. But the expression on your face and the way you held your shoulders said otherwise.

Sans turns to face you completely.
“...what’ve ya got?” he asks again, voice much softer.

* why weren’t you on the surface when frisk stayed up there? why haven’t i ever met you until now?

* where were you?

You seem to be taking a moment to try to gather your thoughts and words, and each second that ticks by feels like a nail in his coffin. He watches you pluck at his coat sleeves, and your eyes dart anywhere but him.

“How...y’know, it’s kinda funny?” you mutter. “Like, I mean, you’d think I could answer this question super easy and fast. I guess I’m not used to being around someone who doesn’t... know?”

He watches you fidget with your hands, lacing and unlacing your fingers, picking at your nails and then scratching them lightly over your knuckles.

When his dim eyelights shift over to Frisk, the kid has moved closer to you. They stand at your side, holding onto your jacket, but their eyes are on the ground.

Sans realizes he’s afraid.

*...skip?

“...l-listen,” he shakes his head, and clears his throat loudly. Loudly enough for you to lift your head and blink at him. It looks like there are tears in your eyes, and he feels a horrible pressure begin to build in his chest. “nevermind, alright? i’m sorry i asked, you don’t gotta tell me anything. i was--i was just curious is all,” he says, words quick and stapled together.

“here, i’ll ask a new question. forget about that one,” he waves a hand and laughs like his Soul isn’t aching in his chest. “how ‘bout this one? what’s your favorite color?”

You pause, and you take in such deep breaths that Sans can count each one as you take them.

He counts three before you answer, your voice a little rough, but you give him a smile that makes him freeze.

“Ah...blue. I really like blue.”

“That so, pal?” he hears himself ask, and his voice sounds far away. “i like blue too. though i think i’ve always had a soft spot for orange myself.”

“Orange is nice,” you agree, that watery smile still there.

There’s a long moment of silence between the three of you. All Sans feels like he can do is just look at you, and so for a few long seconds he only does just that.

Finally, the white noise in his mind begins to clear, and he feels himself come back and touch back down into reality, shaking his head.

“I... need to go check on something,” he finally says.

He looks back over his shoulder, down the road you’re aiming to continue down.

When he looks back at you, he catches the concern in your eyes and shakes his head. “trust me, it’ll only be a few minutes. meet me up ahead?”
You nod, and he sees you take another deep breath, like you’re steadying yourself and trying not to cry.

Without letting his grin falter, his teeth clench, hard enough that his jaw begins to ache. He was a damn idiot. He was a damn idiot and he wasn’t going to ever fucking let you feel like this again.

When you turn and look at Frisk, the both of you looking away from him, he takes the opportunity to take one of his ‘shortcuts’.

When you look to the road again, he’s nowhere to be seen.

Chapter End Notes

oh sheesh oh no where he go

PS! Check out my lame Undertale Tumblr! Chat at me and be my frieend! Even if it has nothing to do with this fic, I’d love to talk Undertale with new pals all day every day omg.
Dog Marriage and some tile nonsense

Chapter Summary

You meet the cutest married couple ever. You're in for a shockin' good time!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

You’re feeling a big messy mix of things once you realize Sans has up and vanished again. On one hand you’re a little grateful because you can’t seem to stop crying, and on the other hand you’re worried about running into another dog-with-a-sword without him around to vouch for you.

“Are you okay…?” Frisk asks, and their voice is just a little whisper. You feel them tug on the side of Sans’ coat gently, and you take in a deep breath and sniffle a bit as you do. You don’t want to do this in front of Frisk. Hell, you don’t want to do this in front of anyone.

You tilt your head and look up, your watery eyes doing their best to focus on the dark cavern ceiling so high above you. You blink a few times and your vision slowly clears.

“Skip…?” Frisk asks.

You clear your throat and reach up, wiping the blue sleeve across your eyes.

“Sorry, kiddo, I’m fine,” you say, words a little quick and breathy. “It’s just kinda hard to talk about.”

Frisk leans their head against your side for a moment. “…I think you should talk to Sans,” they say after a pause.

“…Yeah?” you mutter in response. The idea of crying in front of him again didn’t sound too super.

“Talking about it makes you feel better, right? Talking about stuff that makes you sad helps?”

You chew on your lower lip, sighing through your nose. Well, yeah, it did. That was true. It felt a lot better than letting your fear and anger and sadness fester and bubble inside you if you bottled it up to deal with it all yourself.

“Yeah…” you admit on another weak breath.

“Or maybe talk to Papyrus? He’d be really good at listening, I bet,” they go on. They take your hand in one of theirs then, giving you a little squeeze.

Shit, what did you ever do to deserve this kid?

Letting out another heavy breath you kneel down and tug your little sibling into a tight hug. They wrap their own arms around your neck and shoulders in response without hesitation, squeezing you back.

When you finally let go, you’re feeling much better. Frisk hugs were like miracle medicine all their
own, and you ruffle their hair gently as you stand with a grunt.

You weren’t sure if you were going to take their suggestion though. You still barely knew either of the skeletons, no matter how friendly they seemed. No matter how comfortable and easy it felt to talk to Sans. Your problems were still your own, and you weren’t about to dump them on their heads, especially since you planned on getting out of here as quickly as you could.

It seemed almost cruel.

“Are you okay?” they ask again, lifting you from your thoughts, and you take their hand in yours when they hold it out.

“I am, I’m feeling better,” you say honestly. “You ready to keep going?” you ask, clearing your throat mid-sentence and stuffing your other hand back into Sans’ warm coat pocket.

“Are you?” Frisk gives your hand a little shake, and their little smile is almost teasing, trying to nudge you closer to a good mood.

“Pff, I’m always ready,” you grin.

The forest passes by slowly as you begin to march again. You’re glad that the snow is pretty stomped down on the road; it would have been killer to have to trudge through deep powder the whole way.

It’s a little too quiet for you without Sans to fill the silence with goofy knock knock jokes, but you try to focus on how pretty the snow looks on the pine trees, the powder seeming to glitter on the branches as you walk by. It keeps the silence from feeling like it’s pressing in on you.

You spot a wooden signpost up ahead off to the side of the path, and you hope that it has some sorta mile marker that’ll tell you how close that Snowdin town Sans mentioned is.

However, when you stop in front of the sign to read it, you end up squinting at it for a long time. ‘Dog Marriage’, it read.

Did you read that right?

You glance down at Frisk, who shrugs their little shoulders, and then look back at the sign.

Yep. You read that right.

“H’okay,” you mumble, brows bunching in puzzled confusion as you keep trekking on.

The path turns, going south, but you pause and decide to keep marching forward first. It looks like the road going straight stops with a dead end, and the fact that there are no trees at the end of the road has you hoping the view will be great.

Sure enough, this branch of the road ends with the edge of a cliff. And the sight before you takes your breath away.

“How big do you think it is down here?” you ask quietly.

Every once in a while during your march you would walk by a break in the trees that would show you were in fact on some sort of hill, or cliff. You’d catch a glimpse of numerous snow covered trees in the distance down below, and could barely make out the very edge of the giant snowy cavern you walked through.
And now, on the edge of this plateau, you see it all stretched out around you. The underground was massive, and you kind of just want to sit down and admire it for a moment.

In fact, a break sounds pretty good, and with a soft grunt you sit down in the snow a few feet from the edge of the cliff. Frisk plops themself in your lap, and you let them do so without a fuss, crossing your arms over their middle and resting your chin on the top of their head.

“Big enough for people to live down here,” Frisk finally answers with a little shrug.

Well hey, they weren’t wrong.

“Is that a lake down there?” you say, and point off at a spot in the distance.

“I think so,” Frisk hums. “Do you think Sans and Papyrus go on fishing trips there? Or sunbathe?”

You blink, and suddenly you’re imagining Sans and Papyrus wearing swim trunks and water wings, and the image makes you snort out an amused, ugly laugh.

“What?” Frisk grins, tipping their head to look up at you.

“Kiddo, it’s like. Cold as hell! Who’d sunbathe in this?”

“Skeletons don’t get cold!” they protest with a laugh.

“Kiddo, where’s the sun?”

“...” Frisk looks down, humming in thought. “...A conundrum...” they mumble.

You laugh again, squeezing your arms around their middle. “Shshsh, quit being so goofy--”

The snow crunches loudly behind you and you jump, holding tight to Frisk. Before you can turn around though, two massive and dark shapes take up both sides of your peripheral vision.

There’s a bit of a shuffle as they sit down next to you, and you continue to stare straight ahead, frozen.

“What are we smelling at?” the one at your left asks. It’s a deep, male voice, and you finally turn your head to look at your visitor.

You’re not really surprised to see another giant dog monster. This one, however, has a large hooded robe wrapping them up from the cold. When he tilts his head to look at you, you notice that his eyes don’t...seem to focus on you. They don’t seem to focus on anything, really. Was he blind? He’s also got a bit of a fluffy sort of mustache beneath his nose.

“I can’t smell much of anything but Sans,” the one on your right, a female voice, huffs.

You turn to look at them, and are surprised to see that they’re nearly identical to the dog monster on your left. Aside from the lack of a mustache and the addition of a lovely set of long eyelashes over their equally-unfocused eyes.

It takes a moment for you to register what they said, and when you do you can’t help but flush a little. “You know Sans?”

“Of course! He’s a good friend of ours,” the female dog monster says with a nod. She leans down close to you suddenly, and it takes a lot of effort not to jolt back away from her as she does. Her long snout stops only a small inch from your face and gives you a sniff.
“You smell a little odd,” she hums in thought. “I can’t place it.”

“I think they smell like a new friend!” the male dog monster pipes in. “A new friend, and their weird little...puppy?”

You look to your left in time to see the male dog monster lean down and give Frisk’s hair a curious sniff, your little sibling giggling and hunching their shoulders as if they’d just been tickled.

“You do smell like a weird puppy,” the female dog agrees after giving Frisk a sniff of her own. “And I’m always excited to meet a new friend!”

“Oh…” you smile, your expression no doubt a little wobbly and concerned, but this was a lot better than being attacked. And the fact that they apparently knew Sans was a relief too. “I...like meeting new friends too.”

“Let me introduce myslef,” the female dog cocks her head and smiles at you. “I am Dogaressa. This is my handsome and charming and perfect husband, Dogamy!”

“Oh, shucks,” Dogamy laughs. “Don’t listen to her, she’s the one who’s absolutely the most beautiful and graceful and perfect!”

“Oh, you!”

“Oh, you!”

The two suddenly lean closer to each other and you have to lean back to avoid getting smushed between them. They bump noses gently and nuzzle one another. Honestly it’s adorable as all hell.

The warm fuzzy feeling that’s started to rise in your chest halts however when you notice each of them has an absolutely gigantic battleaxe strapped to their backs.

Oh boy.

You swallow a bit thickly, your arms tightening around your baby sibling.

Frisk, as usual, seems quite a lot less alarmed than you are.

“So what are you guys doing out here?” Frisk asks, voice cheerful and curious.

“Oh! I’m sorry, we’re actually here for you!” Dogamy says, and he and his wife draw away from each other to look down at you. Or, at least, they tip their heads in your direction.

Your arms tighten even more around Frisk and you feel a cold sweat break out over the back of your neck, heart beginning to pound. Fuck, if the cancer didn’t kill you, your heart was going to at this rate real quick.

“What for?” Frisk asks before you can choke out any words of your own.

“Sans asked us to escort you to Snowdin!” Dogaressa answers cheerfully.

You let out a huge breath of air you hadn’t realized had been frozen in your chest, relief flooding you like the Relief Dam just broke open.

“Y-yeah?” you finally manage to say.

“Mmhm,” Dogaressa gives you a nod. “He told us a friend of his wasn’t feeling well and asked us if
we could help you on your way to Snowdin. As members of the Royal Guard, we couldn’t be happier to assist you!"

“If you’d like to give us tips in the form of pets or dog treats when we reach Snowdin, we certainly won’t say no,” Dogamy grins, and yelps out a laugh when Dogaressa swats his arm playfully. “I’m kidding, I’m kidding!”

“I’d, um. I’d actually really like that,” you admit. You were still wary as all hell, but these two seemed friendly enough, so you try to force yourself to remain relaxed. ...And not think about what those axes could do to you and Frisk if they changed their opinions about you.

You let Frisk go, letting them stand first, and then push yourself up as well. Your two new friends stand up with ease beside you, and you notice that on the front of Dogaressa’s robe is a little embroidered picture of Dogamy’s face. When you glance at the male dog monster, you see his robe has a picture of Dogaressa’s face as well.

Alright, giant axes aside, these two were really cute.

“Did Sans say if he was coming back…?” you ask, glad when Frisk takes your hand again.

“He said he was going to talk to his brother,” Dogamy begins.

“And that if he’s able to, he’ll meet us on the way to Snowdin and escort you from there,” Dogaressa continues.

“Otherwise,” says Dogamy.

“He’ll be waiting in Snowdin for you,” Dogaressa finishes.

Frisk gives your hand a gentle shake, grinning up at you widely. “See? Everything’s gonna be okay!”

You can’t help but smile, and you nod in response.

“Come on, let’s start the walk!” Dogamy says, and you see his tail wagging excitedly. “I love walks!”

You laugh at that, nodding. “Us too!”

“Are you dogs as well?” Dogaressa asks curiously as you begin the walk. “The little one smells like dirt and snow. Like a puppy. You smell a bit like snow, too. ...And ketchup,” she rumbles thoughtfully. “But that’s probably just Sans’ smell still on you. Unless you have...a weird liking for ketchup as well?”

Is that what that smell is? You knew Sans’ coat smelled like something familiar.

“Ah, I mean...ketchup isn’t bad. I like it,” you say, avoiding the question about whether or not you were a dog monster. What could you say you were? If you were going to try your best to stick to the not-human lie, what could you pass for...? Other than dogs, skeletons, flowers, and goats, you really hadn’t much of an idea of what else was possible.

“But would you drink it by the bottle full?” Dogaressa goes on, and you see her lift one fluffy brow at you, her eyes focused somewhere on the top of your head.

“Uh. No? Who does that? Does-- Does Sans do that?”
“It’s definitely a smell to smell,” Dogamy says with a shudder.

You’re pretty sure that was supposed to mean ‘sight to see’, but, you weren’t about to ask your new blind(?) companions if that was what he meant.

“I’m gonna make fun of him for that next time we see him,” you laugh under your breath, and you totally mean it.

Plus, maybe teasing him’ll help him forget about you crying earlier too. Bonus!

“Oh, trust us, we all do!” Dogamy says with a hearty laugh.

While you walk, you notice the four of you pass over a set of odd grates in the ground. Metal plates with holes cut into them, and you peer down at them curiously as your group simply walks over them.

“What are those?” you ask, turning your head to look back at the grates.

“The spike puzzle?” Dogamy asks. “Oh, we flipped the switch to get rid of the spikes when we went up to fetch you.”

“Spikes?” you glance down at Frisk, but as usual they don’t look even a smidge worried.

“Mmhmm. So you can’t just go on through without solving the puzzle,” Dogaressa says with a shrug. “Surely you have plenty of spike puzzles where you’re from? They’re a favorite here!”

“Say, where are you from anyhow?” Dogamy asks. “Other than all that ketchup, neither of you smell familiar.”

“Uh…” you swallow, mind scrambling to come up with some sort of answer that wouldn’t seem suspicious at all. Not with those two bigass axes still in the game.

“The Ruins!” Frisk suddenly chirps, and alarm jolts through you when this seems to surprise Dogaressa and Dogamy enough for them to actually stop and look down at your tiny sibling. “This is our first time leaving the Ruins. There was plenty of spike traps there, though. The switches were on the walls, mostly.”

“The Ruins? I thought the door was locked!” Dogamy says, voice colored all bright surprise.

“How did you manage to leave? I thought the only way in was if you could burrow under the door, or just. Phase through it like a ghost monster.” Dogaressa says, voice equally surprised and curious as her husband’s. “And you don’t smell like a ghost monster?”

Ghost monster? Well alright, add that to the list.

“It’s locked from this side,” Frisk goes on, and you just stare at them in a numb sort of shock as they continue to weave their story with absolute ease, while you just stand there with your mouth hanging open a bit. “But not from the other side. It’s a little sad—we had friends back in the Ruins we can’t get back to,” they say, and let out a little sigh.

“Oh, poor pup!” Dogamy leans down and gives Frisk’s hair a comforting little nuzzle.

“It’s okay though, nowhere to go but forwards! And we’re already making new friends!” they go on, and then they look up at you and grin.

You just blink. You knew Frisk was quick on their feet, and a lot more clever than most kids their
age, but damn. No hesitation, no stuttering, and not even, technically, a lie.

“No wonder you need extra help getting through here!” Dogaressa huffs. “And no wonder you aren’t feeling well! I bet the Ruins are much warmer than here. The shock of it must be doing a number on you.”

“It’s--okay,” you finally say, voice a little breathy. “Sans let me borrow his coat.”

Dogamy and Dogaressa take a moment to look at each other over your and Frisk’s heads.

“That explains the smell,” they say in unison.

“How are you feeling right now?” Dogamy asks, and he reaches out and puts a large paw on top of your head, as if checking for a fever.

“Um,” you swallow, and try to give an honest answer. “I’m...pretty okay? I’m feeling way better than I did a little bit ago,” you say.

You realize then that Dogamy isn’t checking you for a fever, but petting you.

It’s weird. And calming. Weirdly calming.

“Good!” Dogaressa says. “I have some doggy treats in my pocket if you would like one, though. They always do the trick of helping me get back to feeling like my ol’ smelf again if I’m not feeling well.”

“Aw, thank you,” you say, honestly a little touched at the offer. “But, um. I’m okay. Really, I’ll be good for a bit. Thank you, though.”

Dogamy takes his paw back after giving you a final pet and begins to lead the way again.

The four of you cross over a narrow wooden bridge that allows you to move over a sharp drop between two plateaus, one hand in Frisk’s and the other staying warm in Sans’ coat pocket.

There’s an odd setup of rocks and a button in the clearing in front of you now, and two odd glowing green circles shine up from the snow.

“What’s this thing?”

“Oh, one of Papyrus’ puzzles!” Dogaressa says. “Smells like he completed it for us! That’s fine by me, these puzzles are always a bit tough for me to smell my way through.”

If the glowing green circles were anything to go by, you assumed the puzzle was definitely more of a sight-based one, so that made sense to you.

Did Sans really get his brother to solve his puzzles for you? It honestly made you feel kinda bad—he’d seemed so excited for you to try them out. You make a silent promise to write him up as many sudoku puzzle boards as he wants when you get the chance to make it up to him.

You pass by the circles and over another set of spike-less grates in the ground, and you’re greeted with a similar puzzle set up as your furry escorts walk you into another cleared plateau. Peering towards the edge of one of the cliffsides you can see this spot boasts another pretty impressive view of the cavern outstretched below. This place really is incredible.

Turning your attention from the edge back to this new, albeit far more complicated, looking shape puzzle, you see that this one has been completed for you as well. Green circles light up the ground
inside the little maze of stones.

“This one’s done too,” you say, and Dogamy huffs.

“Smells like he tried to rearrange this one. I wish he’d let us know ahead of time when he wants to do that. These ones are so tough,” Dogamy rumbles.

“That’s Papyrus for you. Pulls no punches!” Dogaressa adds.

“yeah, my bro’s cool like that.”

The familiar voice has you grinning like an idiot before you even see him, turning around and spotting him walking up the path behind your group.

“Sans!” you say, and for a moment you feel surprised with yourself at how happy and relieved you are to see him.

For a split second the skeleton looks just as surprised as you feel, his lazily lidded eyesockets widening and his grin slipping somewhat as he blinks at you. Like he’s a bit stunned at how quick you brightened up at seeing him. But fast as the little surprised expression blinks across his face, that easy grin is back and he gives you a wink.

“sorry for ditchin’ ya back there. had to see to a few things.”

“It’s--that’s okay,” you say quickly, shaking your head.

“i take it your time with these two has been a pawsitive experience?” he says, and wiggles an eyebrow-like ridge of his brow at you.

Dogamy and Dogaressa burst out laughing, and you and Frisk laugh right along with them. Sans looks delighted, finally closing up the space between him and your group, stopping at your side.

You notice then that he’s wearing a bright red scarf, and you cock your head a bit, smiling at it.

“Is that Papyrus’ scarf?”

“the fact that i’m running around without a coat has been gettin’ under his skin, apparently,” he grins at you. “after i talked to him about a couple things he all but tossed it at me. doesn’t want me gettin’ a cold.”

“I thought you said skeletons don’t have to worry about that!” Frisk says.

“we usually don’t gotta worry about it, that’s for sure.” Sans gives his shoulders an exaggerated shrug. “see, the cold just goes right through us.”

You snort and your dog companions laugh again. Frisk giggles and buries their face into Sans’ coat at your side to muffle the sound.

“thanks for helpin’ out, guys,” Sans goes on, his grin still as easy as ever as he looks at the large dog monster couple. “i’ll see you two at grillby’s later, eh?”

“You know it!” Dogamy says with nod.

“And don’t mention it, I really like these two new friends of yours!” Dogaressa adds, and gives the side of your head an affectionate nuzzle that honestly leaves you feeling flustered and warm and fuzzy inside. “Will we see you again soon?” she asks.
You can’t really say no to the literal puppy-dog face she’s giving you, so you sputter out a laugh and nod. “O-of course! Yeah! Sans was gonna take us to Grillby’s too, so maybe we’ll see you there?”

“Deal!” Dogamy barks.

You and Frisk wave, whether or not they can see the gesture, as the two turn and march off back to their previous post.

Once they’re out of sight you drop your arm and look at Sans again, smiling.

Your smile falters for a moment when you see he’s been watching you, and his own smile is a lot less prevalent than it was just a few short seconds ago. He looks distracted, and his eyelight keeps jumping to different parts of your face and down to your shoulders. Like he’s checking you over.

“...I’m fine,” you finally say, voice gentle, and you give him a smile. “I promise.”

Sans pauses, silent for a moment as he looks at you. “...i really am sorry for leavin’ ya like that,” he mutters. “i guess i kinda ran off without thinkin’, didn’t mean to scare ya if i did.”

You shake your head. “It wasn’t too bad. Dogamy and Dogaressa swooped in to the rescue and they were super damn sweet,” you say with a shrug, smiling at him, trying to lighten him up a bit to smile back again. “Even offered me some dog treats.”

Sans makes a low rumbling noise somewhere deep in his chest and he huffs out a laugh, but it still sounds a tad forced to you. A little too breathy and distracted.

“You don’t believe me?” you arch a brow at him, and he seems surprised, shoulders straightening.

“What?” he blinks. “I didn’t say that.”

“You’re thinking it,” you hum, and you try to smile but it feels a little half-hearted this time.

“you a mind reader now, pal?” he smirks but it doesn’t quite reach his eyes, tilting his head slightly and peering down at you with only one eye, the other shut in a lazy, prolonged wink.

Before you can reply, Frisk clears their throat loudly enough to grab both yours and Sans’ attention, the two of you glancing down at your little sib.

“I can read minds,” they declare. “You wouldn’t believe the embarrassing secrets I’ve read.”

You and Sans look at each other for a moment, and your smiles are a lot more genuine and amused before you look back adown at Frisk.

“oh yeah, kid?”

“Oh yeah, kiddo?”

You and Sans speak at the same time, and whatever concerned, quiet tension had begun to tighten between you two suddenly snaps, and the both of you laugh.

Frisk doesn’t even bother to answer either of you then, letting go of your hand to lead the way down the path again. You and Sans both blink after them as they go, realizing at perhaps the same time that Frisk had just played the two of you and your feelings like a pair of fiddles.

“Hold up, you gotta say some embarrassing secrets! Not mine, though, of course,” you laugh after them, jogging to catch up the few steps they got ahead of you before slowing down into your regular comfortable gait.
“yeah kid, that’d be some trick. i’d love t’know what you think’s bumping around in my skull.”

“A magician never reveals their secrets,” Frisk says, and sticks their little nose up in the air. “Especially not about secrets.”

Sans snorts, reaching up to play with the edge of Papyrus’ scarf absently. “alright, alright. i can respect that.”

“I bet I can try to guess at a deep dark secret of yours, Sans,” you begin, giving him a sly grin.

He looks at you and your eyes meet, his smirk curious and his eyes narrowed challengingly. “hit me with your best shot.”

“A little bird told me you may or may not drink ketchup by the bottle full.”

Sans blinks at you. “...pal. buddy. i hate t’break it to ya, but that’s no secret,” he says, and the look on your face is enough to make him burst out laughing.

“That wasn’t a joke?” you demand.

“i mean, it started as a joke!” he grins at you. “i did it once just to see everyone’s reactions. and then i just kept doin’ it because it grew on me.”

“Holy shit, dude. No wonder your coat smells like the inside of a ketchup packet.”

“What can i say?” he shrugs lazily, chuckling. “i got a weakness for the stuff.”

You laugh, hunching your shoulders a bit, feeling the soft fur of the hood of his coat tickle your jaw. Well, hell, there were weirder things to have a penchant for, you guess.

“What’s this thing?” Frisk speaks up, and your attention shifts from Sans to the path ahead again.

There’s an odd setup of tiles on the ground, each one a different shade of gray. On the other side of the mass of tiles is an odd, boxy machine, and you can only assume they have something to do with each other.

“Uh, I dunno. Sans?” you look back to him, but he only shrugs.

“We don’t have to worry about this thing. pap isn’t here to turn it on, so it isn’t gonna activate. it’s just another puzzle.”

“Oh.” You pause as your little group begins to walk across it, Sans and Frisk moving ahead of you as you tap at the tiles with the toe of your boot, trying to guess what they’re made of. You even crouch down and poke at it with one of your fingers.

“What’re you doin’?” Sans asks, and you look up, seeing him and Frisk standing on the other side of the inactive puzzle. “i can promise you, it isn’t that interesting.”

“I dunno, this looks kind’ve neat. What would it have done? Did Papyrus make this one too?” you ask as you straighten up, grunting as you do.

You take a step.

And the tiles burst to life in a rainbow of flashing colors.

“Oh, shit,” is all you can think to say.
You hear Sans curse as well, and he hurries to the edge of the board, hesitating to step on it as the colors continue to flash. Each tile flicks to a different color randomly, surrounding you in a lightshow that makes your eyes physically ache.

“don’t worry, it’ll be fine,” Sans says. “just don’t move.”

“It’ll be okay, Skip!” Frisk calls, and they sound so damn sure of themselves that you just nod, believing them.

“Yeah, I’m just getting a headache looking at this shit,” you hiss, and the beeping coming from the boxy machine keeps getting quicker and quicker. It certainly doesn’t help the growing headache, that was for sure. You close your eyes, grunting.

“Tell me when it’s done flashing,” you call, and you hear Sans make a grunt of acknowledgement.

That beeping gets faster and faster, until suddenly it stops altogether. There’s no more shifting, flashing light blinking on the other side of your closed eyelids, and after a moment you wonder if it’s alright to open up.

“...Sans?” you call, and slowly peek one eye open.

You’re surrounded by a sea of different colors, and looking down you see that you’re standing on a pink tile. You have no idea what that means, but maybe since nothing was happening to you just yet meant that was a good thing?

“What...?” Frisk blinks down at the puzzle, and they look stunned. Their eyes are wide, and their hands lift to grip the front of their coat tightly. They look frightened, and you shake your head, holding out a hand and waving it so they look up at you.

“It’ll be okay! It’s just a puzzle, we can figure this out,” you say with a smile. But they still look shocked, blinking at you silently.

Even Sans looks surprised, and his reaction is the one that starts to make you nervous.

“We good?” you ask warily. “I’m not gonna explode if I step on the wrong color, am I?”

“uh...” he frows, and your heart speeds up. “…not explode, no. electricity and piranhas are a thing, though.”

“Oh, is that all?” you yelp, and your heart pounds harder in your chest. You look down, trying to study the tiles a bit more.

Sure enough, when you look close enough, you can see little...sparks and arcs dancing across the top of the yellow tiles. And the blue tiles actually look like square ponds of bright blue water, complete with little schools of bitey-looking fish inside, their teeth cartoonishly pronounced. The purple tiles look like they’ve got a layer of something slimy and shiny on them, and there doesn’t seem to be anything visibly special about the red, pink, orange, or green tiles.

“What kinda puzzle is this?”

“don’t move,” Sans says again. “just don’t move, bud.” He turns and moves over to the boxy machine. None-too-gently he jabs at a few of the buttons on its front, and you can see him scowling at it in frustration when each button press does absolutely nothing. “you miserable piece of scrap metal--” he growls under his breath, teeth bared, but you interrupt his thoughts (and insult) when you let out a concerned shout.
He looks at you, and you don’t notice the beads of sweat that begin to dot his skull as the colors of the tiles begin to shift again.

“Did you hit a wrong button?” you yelp.

“don’t move!” he calls again.

Frisk is bouncing up and down on their heels, biting their lower lip and staring at you with wide eyes. “It’ll be okay! Don’t worry, if you get scratched up at all we can just get you some monster food! You’ll be fine!”

It kind of sounds like they’re trying to comfort themselves right along with you, and you can really only grunt in response, now refusing to close your eyes as the tiles keep switching beneath your feet.

“Which ones are safe?” you call over the beeping that’s begun again, just as loud as before.

“pink and orange are the safest,” Sans says, and he’s standing at the edge of the puzzle again. “red tiles won’t let you go through them, don’t even try. purple is covered in soap, careful with those. you’ll slip right into the next tile.”

“Uh, okay,” you frown, eyes jumping around the technicolor board.

“yellow ones are the ones that are electrified, and the blue ones have the piranhas,” Sans goes on, voice rushed and clipped. “if a yellow tile is next to a--”

The tiles stop their shifting, and whatever he was about to say is interrupted by a startlingly strong ZAP that travels through your body, the previous safe pink tile that had spawned beneath your feet now having changed to a bright yellow.

Whatever the voltage of it is, it’s enough to make you shriek and jump about a foot in the air, scrambling blindly to get away from the body-numbing feeling.

It’s sheer luck that you happen to stagger onto an orange tile, and every inch of you feels like it’s buzzing as you stand there and catch your breath.

Well at least it wasn’t a fatal zap, you think to yourself. Silver lining and all that.

After a few seconds the ringing in your ears dies down and you hear Frisk and Sans.

Frisk’s voice is high and panicked, and you look up to see them jumping up and down in place, eyes on you.

Sans’ jaw hangs open slightly, and he mostly looks relieved you’re on a safe spot again.

“are you okay?” he breathes, looking tense. You notice then that there are several beads of blue-tinted sweat on his skull, and you squint at him for a moment.

“...I didn’t know skeletons could sweat,” you say a little breathily.

Sans blinks a few times, and his nervous frown shifts into an equally nervous smile. “only when we’re met with a shocking situation like this one,”

“Shut up and help me figure this dumb thing out,” you say through a breathless laugh, and he lets out a nervous chuckle himself. “And I’m okay, Frisk,” you say, and wave a hand dismissively through the air. “It didn’t really hurt, just. Y’know. Scared the hell outta me.”
“it’s gonna be fine,” Sans goes on, and he looks down at the board, trying to map out a safe route for you. “that bucket of rusted, obnoxious bolts over there needs a tune up is all--"

As if insulted, the machine begins to beep again, and the tiles begin to change for a third time.

“oh for fuck’s sake,” Sans snarls.

“Remember that one time a while back when I said touching the yellow ones didn’t hurt?” you yelp, watching the colors blink under your feet. “Yeah I was totally lying, oh shit, oh damn.”

“i’m gonna need you to close your eyes again, alright?” Sans says suddenly, raising his voice loud enough to yank your attention from the beeping. “shut them tight!”

You do as he says, not knowing what else to do or what he’s planning. You scrunch up your nose, muscles tense--

You feel his hands on your shoulders suddenly, and it startles you so much that you jump, back straightening.

One of his arms circle around the front of your shoulders, holding you tight to his chest, the information that he’s behind you surprising you. There’s an odd, tingling lift in your stomach, and it reminds you of the feeling you get when you drive over a hill too quick in a car.

And all at once the beeping stops.

The sudden silence feels odd on your ears, but you don’t open your eyes yet. You haven’t been electrocuted or bitten by piranhas, so you figure you’re in a safe spot, whatever the case.

“...ok,” Sans mutters, voice deep enough for you to feel the rumble of it against your back. “open up. you’re good.”

You do as he says, cracking your eyes open slowly.

You hesitate, a confused noise building up in your chest.

Wherever you were now, it certainly wasn’t where you’d been just a second ago.

It looks like you’re on yet a different platform, this one thin and very high up from the cavern floor below. A long wood-and-rope bridge stretches out in front of you.

You look down, noticing there’s no puzzle, but just white snow under your feet. No blindingly bright tiles, no beeping machine, no--


“i’ll go get ‘em,” Sans says, and you realize he’s still holding you against him. “they’re just a bit behind us, it’ll just take me a minute to fetch ‘em.”

“Wh?” you huff out a confused grunt, brows furrowing. You tilt your head back to look at him, but the eye contact he holds with you is a tad too intense for you at the moment, so you look back down at the snow at your feet. “How’d you do that?”

“didn’t i say?” he says, and you can hear the grin in his voice. “i know a few shortcuts.”

“If you didn’t just save me from getting my ears bitten off by a bunch of piranhas, I’d kick your ass
“Skip,” Sans snorts, his tone teasing. “Skeletons don’t have asses.”

“Will you--!” you huff out an ugly laugh, reaching up and grabbing a hold of one of the thick bones of his forearm, giving them a weak shake. “Go get Frisk!”

He hesitates long enough for you to frown, looking back at him.

“You sure you’re okay? Sometimes doing that can make people sick,” he mumbles. You realize then that he’s been holding you to keep you steady. Your knees feel noticeably wobbly when you pay attention to them, but other than that…

“I think I’m fine? And even if I was sick, I’d want you to go get them anyway.” You grunt and pull his arm from over your shoulders, and he releases you carefully. “Worst case scenario, you’ll come back and I’ll just be puking in a snowbank. S’fine,” you huff and wave absently. “Please go get Frisk? I really don’t like not being able to keep an eye on them.”

Sans nods silently, backing up a step. Without a word he lifts a hand and does a little motion with one bony finger, gesturing for you to turn around.

“…What, I can’t watch you do your shortcut thing?” you huff.

He just grins at you, giving you a wink and doing the finger twirl again.

“Fine fine fine!” you do as he asks, turning and looking away from him.

You hear a single snow-crunching footstep in the snow, and then nothing else. When you give a sneaky glance back over one shoulder, Sans is gone again.

“…Huh,” you mumble.

As your adrenaline begins to tank, you notice you really don’t feel all that great. Your body still feels… weird from that damn electrical shock you got, and all that stress has left your stomach feeling a bit on the sick side. Though that could also be due to Sans’ ‘shortcut’ thing, but you weren’t gonna blame him for anything.

You let out a breath and decide to try to get your bearings.

Looking around, finally paying full attention to your surroundings, you take in the steep drops that surround you. It makes you nervous enough that you move carefully to the bridge so you can hang onto it, afraid that a stray breeze or something might be enough to knock you off the edge without something to support yourself with.

You close your eyes and once again give that new breathing exercise Sans’ taught you a go, feeling your heartbeat slowly begin to calm and steady, and the anxious buzz in your chest eases up with every new breath.

“OH! HUMAN!”

You jump a bit at the loud, familiar voice. Opening your eyes, you see Papyrus crossing the bridge towards you.

“H-hey!” you say, smiling a little. Shit, he was so tall. He was seriously like almost two of you stacked on top of each other. You can’t get over that.
“I JUST FINISHED PUTTING AWAY MY LAST PUZZLE!” he says, and stops a few feet from you on the bridge. “HOW ARE YOU FEELING? SANS TOLD ME YOU WEREN’T FEELING WELL! AND I AM A FAIR SKELETON, I WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO TRAVERSE MY PUZZLES WITHOUT FEELING YOUR BEST!”

“I’m okay,” you say, “thank you.”

Papyrus lets out a long “HMMMM” and leans down, his gloved hands at his hips, eyes squinting as he appraises you for himself. “...YOU LOOK LIKE YOU’VE FELT BETTER.”

“You aren’t wrong?” you give him a little shrug, still smiling. “Just got electrocuted by a weird tile puzzle.”

“What?” Papyrus straightens, looking surprised. “THAT PUZZLE ISN’T SUPPOSED TO START WITHOUT SOMEONE FLIPPING A SWITCH! DID SOMEONE FLIP A SWITCH?”

“No, it just kinda...started up. While I was standing on it.” You shrug again.

“THAT’S SO WEIRD!” he huffs. “I’M SORRY THAT HAPPENED! HERE I WAS TRYING TO MAKE YOUR TRIP TO SNOWDIN AS EASY AS I COULD! AND YOU’RE GETTING ELECTROCUTED ANYWAY!”

“It’s okay!” you hold out your hands, shaking your head. Every time this guy opened his mouth, you couldn’t help but feel a little more endeared to him. He was just so genuine with everything he said. “It wasn’t your fault! Something just went wrong with the machine or something!”

“HM, PERHAPS.” Papyrus taps his chin with his hand, frowning. “I’LL TALK TO DR. ALPHYS ABOUT IT! IT WAS HER PUZZLE AFTER ALL!”

You file that name away for later and lean a little more heavily against the side of the bridge, your energy waning.

Papyrus seems to notice, dropping his hand from his chin and watching you. “ARE YOU ALRIGHT? YOU LOOK TIRED.”

“I’m a little beat,” you admit with a soft laugh. You reach up and rub the pad of your thumb across your eyes, and you notice that your earlier tears have cooled and frozen to your eyelashes. You brush them off, letting out another sigh. “I’m waiting for Sans to come back. He’s getting my little sib, Frisk.”

“AH, YES, THE SMALLER HUMAN!”

“...Could, um...” you hesitate, biting your lower lip. You look around, mostly to reassure yourself that you and he were the only ones around that you could see. “Could you maybe not...call me and Frisk humans so loud?” you ask softly. “It kind of seems to make everyone want to fight us, and we really don’t want to fight?”

Papyrus blinks and jumps a bit, as if startled. “OH! OH, I SEE! HAVE NO FEAR, HU--UH. ...SKIP! I WON’T DO THAT AGAIN! AND NOW I KNOW THE SMALLER ONE’S NAME, SO I DOUBLY WON’T DO IT!”

You feel yourself sag a little in relief, smiling up at him gratefully. “Thanks, Papyrus. Sans was right, you’re a pretty cool guy.”

“OH...” Papyrus covers his cheeks with his hands, and the same blue that you’ve seen dust Sans’
cheekbones now light up Papyrus’. “WOWIE! I MEAN, HE’S RIGHT OF COURSE, BUT IT’S ALWAYS SO NICE TO HEAR OUT LOUD!”

You laugh again, and he laughs with you, a loud and happy “NYEH HEH HEH!”

You hear the snow crunch behind you and look over your shoulder just in time to see Sans let Frisk’s hand go, the two standing in the same spot he’d brought you.

Frisk rushes to you, slamming into your middle with a tight hug and you squeeze them back, peppering the top of their head with little kisses.

“I’m sorry,” they say, and you realize they’ve been crying. “I didn’t think you would get hurt, I’m so sorry, I--”

“Hey, hey!” you say softly, interrupting them. You run your fingers through their hair a few times, coaxing them to look up at you. “None of that, kiddo. It wasn’t your fault. And I’m perfectly okay! See, look at me.” You smile and tip down, kissing the tip of Frisk’s red nose. “I’m flawless as hell.”

Frisk lets out a soft giggle, reaching up to wipe at their eyes. “You promise you’re okay?”

“I super promise I’m okay.”

That seems enough to calm them down, and they let out a soft breath. You hold out a hand in case they want to take it, and they don’t even hesitate to hold onto you tight.

“how you feeling?” Sans speaks up, and you look over Frisk’s head, meeting his eyes.

“Kinda tired, honestly,” you say. “Are we close to that Snowdin place?”

Sans chuckles at the same time Papyrus lets out another of his boisterous, happy laughs.

“pal, it’s right on the other side of this bridge,” he says. “we’re just about there.”

“Oh thank fuck,” you breathe.

Papyrus lets out a scandalized gasp and you feel your shoulders straighten.

“SWEAR JAR!” he booms, almost drowning out Frisk’s voice completely as they roar the same thing.

“Oh, sh--snap, sorry,” you apologize, shrinking sheepishly under his disapproving gaze.

“Wait, you have a swear jar too?” Frisk gasps, looking up at the tall skeleton.

“I DO! AREN’T OLDER SIBLINGS JUST TERRIBLE WITH THEIR LANGUAGE?” he huffs, exasperated.

“Skip swears all the time! Sometimes I get more from her than I do from my allowance--”

“Okay okay!” you let Frisk go and give them a playful, gentle nudge further across the bridge towards Papyrus. “Go team up on me somewhere else! I said I’m sorry!” you laugh.

Frisk giggles too, and begins to walk behind Papyrus as the skeleton begins to lead the way, the two gossiping about their loud mouthed older siblings and the great lengths they go through to control their bad habits.
You start to walk on the bridge as well, and feel Sans follow behind you. When you glance back at him his grin is wide and amused, his eyelights bright and trained on you.

You snort, grinning back. “What’re you smiling at--”

Your eyes catch a flash of bright yellow and green behind him.

For a split second, a familiar face smiles back at you from the snowy platform you’d just left.

Flowey the flower gives you a tiny wave with one of his leaves before he disappears back into the snowy ground beneath him, leaving only a little mound of disturbed snow.

Sans looks over his shoulder as well, frowning.

“...what’s wrong?” he mumbles, looking back at you when he doesn’t find anything behind him.

“you see something?”

“...Um,” you swallow a bit thickly, confused and frightened. You had hoped you’d left that thing behind when you left the Ruins. You already didn’t know what to expect coming out here, and now there’s another hostile variable in the mix, and it makes your blood a little extra chilled. “...Can I talk to you about it later?” you offer weakly.

The ridge between Sans’ brows furrow and he glances over his shoulder one more time. You notice the frown on his face tighten a bit, his jaw setting before he looks back at you.

The hard expression relaxes a bit and he gives you a nod.

“of course, pal. for now let’s just work on getting you that ‘burg i promised ya, alright?”

You nod, turning to start walking across the bridge again.

“Yeah,” you say, but even you can tell you sound distracted. “Yeah, that sounds good.”

Chapter End Notes

Frisk: Skip says at least 137 swear words a day, not including the ones she probably mutters when she sleeps.
Skip: It's true.
Papyrus: HORRIBLE. DOWNRIGHT BAD AND NOT GOOD.
Sans, deciding what color his tie is gonna be on his and Skip's wedding: nice

AY here's a chapter! I hope ya'll liked it! Leave me a comment to feed my soul! <3
And here's my Undertale Tumblr! Hit me up and be my friend! I've also got a Discord and a Skype for those interested in chattin' through one of those, too.
Welcome to Snowdin

Chapter Summary

Feelings are Discussed. Papyrus is a sweetheart.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Your nerves feel raw and your body feels exhausted. A whole hell of a lot of shit has gone down today. You met some skeletons, some giant weapon-wielding dogs, had like 3 panic attacks, got electrocuted…

Spotting Flowey behind you while you were on the bridge was like the little dread-cherry on the anxiety cake.

But as you step off the end of the bridge, for an absolutely magical moment you forget almost all about everything else.

Because how could you not when the little town in front of you is lit up like a Hallmark Christmas Special?

Twinkling lights cover a hand-painted sign that reads “Welcome To Snowdin”, and it looks like the ‘O’ on Snowdin has a little snowman face painted onto it. The buildings you can see are made of a warm looking wood, snow covering their rooftops. Through the trees you can see little wooden houses, smoke wafting up from a chimney here and there. Further down the road, even, you see what looks like an actual Christmas tree.

You find yourself stopping in front of the welcome sign, watching the colored light dance across the white snow in front of it. Your heart is still beating rather fast, but it feels quiet now. Somewhere distant where you don’t have to worry about it right this minute.

This place feels safe.

You can even hear music, the tune made up of cheerful bells. The sound of it is muffled as it drifts through the air, probably from somebody’s open window.

“‘Welcome to Snowdin’,” you read quietly. You can’t help but smile a little wider, glancing back and looking at Sans.

You catch him staring over his shoulder, looking back towards the bridge, and you reach out to gently nudge his arm with your elbow to catch his attention. His head turns, his eyelights focusing on you and brightening. It takes a second for his smile to reach his eyes.

“Did you have anything to do with that?” you ask.

“with what?” Sans pauses and follows your gaze when you look back at the sign. Immediately he understands what you mean, and chuckles. “nah. shocker though, huh? this town already had this ice name before we moved here.”
“Aw, shame! That woulda been great. ‘Snowed-In’ sounds like something you’d come up with.”

“You aren’t wrong, pal. and hey, we’re kinda fallin’ behind.” He looks over your head and nods, and you look to see Papyrus and Frisk are already a good way down the road. It’s a big enough distance between you and Frisk in new, monster-filled territory that you should have immediately felt the urge to bolt after them and catch up.

For some reason, despite Flowey still digging his dumb little thorns into the back of your mind, you’re not worried. Maybe it was because you already trusted Papyrus. Maybe it was because this town just oozed warmth and safety. It was a little surprising when you thought about it. You tended to lean towards a more paranoid ‘better safe than sorry’ side when it came to your baby sib.

You watch Papyrus say something that makes Frisk stop and giggle, their little hands reaching up to cover their mouth, and that feeling that you don’t have a thing to worry about at the moment solidifies even further.

“...It’s really weird,” you mutter almost absently.

“mm?” Sans moves so he’s standing beside you again after you turn to face the road completely.

“gonna have to be a little more specific, buddy. I’d bet there’s a lot here you could call weird.”

You snort, smiling. “Nah, I mean-- well, okay, yeah. But like, it’s weird how… calm I’m feeling right now? I mean, I’m still rattled. Still pretty, uh...freaked out about these past couple days. My fingertips are still kinda buzzing from that zap. I’m tired as hell. If you let me lean on you I could probably pass out in like five seconds flat.”

Sans snorts, but he doesn’t say anything.

“We just met,” you mumble. “But here I am, watching Papyrus walk next to my whole world in a place that apparently wants us...hurt,” you clench your fingers a little in Sans’ coat pockets. “And seeing them next to Papyrus just. I dunno. I’m not worried about them.”

You're still not worried.

You know--you know--that right now? They’re safe.

“This magic shit is weird. I dunno if it’s actual magic making me feel like this,” you say, voice soft. “I kinda can’t believe I’m not holding Frisk’s hand and makin’ ‘em stay next to me. Did that zap rattle something loose in my head? Am I just that scrambled and tired? I just-- met you and I...” you trail off, reaching up and playing with the zipper pull of Sans’ hoodie.

Sans remains quiet.

“...I dunno.” You laugh under your breath, dropping your hand. “Sorry, I’m really fucking tired. I think my brain lost its word filter, stuff’s just falling out,” you grumble.

You rub the pad of your thumb over your tired eyes. The cold air has really helped to dry them out quicker, making a nice bout of sleep where you could close them for a while sound real good. You’ve got no idea where you’re gonna crash yet, but you’ll get there when you get there.

You notice that Sans has remained silent for a good stretch and you look at him, tilting your head to
try to peek at his face.

He’s got his usual perma-grin on, but he looks a little distant. Like he’s zoned out, his thoughts miles away.

“You okay, bone boy?” you ask.

Sans eyelights cut to you, and that grin of his widens. “...never better, pal. and hey, you’re kinda right about that.”

“About what?”

“the magic thing,” he says, “remember how i said we’re made of the stuff?” he watches you nod, looking ahead again. Papyrus and Frisk are still by the Christmas tree. “our souls... we’re made up of love and compassion. it’s what we are. monsters tend to care quick, get attached quick, and apparently,” he turns his head to you again, giving you a wink. “we give off some neat therapeutic vibes without meanin’ to.”

You laugh, but it isn’t mean or teasing. You believe everything he says—it makes sense to you. Why the hell else would walking into this fluffy as hell town make you feel as if you could take a nap on the street and you’d wake up with a pillow under your head and a fluffy blanket over your body? Even the uneasy threat of Flowey’s presence was pushed aside for the moment.

“...What do you think humans are made out of?" you ask, voice curious and soft.

Sans grunts, and it takes a moment for him to reply. He looks back at the tree, watching his brother and Frisk.

“...don’t know,” he says, and you hesitate at the hint of...bitterness? in his voice. “our history proves that humans don’t need only love and compassion to survive. it’s why we’re down here. so there’s a lot more in the mix with them.”

He either sees you flinch in the corner of his eye, or he realizes his voice has gained an edge to it. He looks at you sharply, his eyes widening a bit. “that wasn’t...” he grits his teeth, and he looks guilty. “that didn’t come out right.”

“...I mean,” you shrug, and you try not to feel personally hurt. “You really aren’t wrong...? Humans can be...” you let out a breath and look down at the snowy ground in front of you. The lights from the welcome sign are still blinking against the snow. “...They can be terrible.”

“that doesn’t mean every human is terrible, though,” he says a little quickly. You hear the snow crunch as he shifts a tiny bit closer. “just like not every monster is a joy to be around. monsters just...for the most part, lack the capacity to hurt, in one way or another. but humans, despite having that capacity, often choose not to hurt anyway. i mean, look at you.”

You glance up at him, meeting his eyes. He’s grinning again, and it looks like it’s a genuine one, though there’s a concerned crease between his brows.

“even after having just met ya, i know there’s plenty of that love and compassion in you and frisk. you think it’s strange you feel safe near us? i think it’s strange i feel safe near you.”

You feel your face flush, hunching your shoulders slightly, the fluff of his hood bunching up around your cheeks.

Sans stares at you before tipping back suddenly, as if realizing he was having issues with his own
word-filter. His cheekbones turn blue and he looks away, chuckling under his breath almost nervously.

“...my bro says that sometimes i can be unsociable,” he says with a shrug. You kind of find that hard to believe with how he’s been around you. You’d have never have guessed. “but you’re easy to be around. you got this sort of...” he waves a hand in the air in front of him, trying to come up with the right words, his skull scrunching a bit in thought. “...vibe,” he finally decides.

You laugh, and when he looks at you like you just kicked him in the shin you can’t help but laugh a bit harder. “No, but--I feel the same way about you!”

Sans’ grin widens instantly, cocking his head. “yeah...?”

“Yeah! Usually I kinda hold people at arm’s distance, y’know? Like I’ll be nice, sure! I’ll be friendly and I’ll... I’ll try to make others happy, but most of the time I just kind of feel anxious with people I don’t know.”

“you did scream real damn loud when we first met,” he muses, and you tilt, nudging his bare arm with a shoulder. He just chuckles in response.

“That’s different! You were trying to freak me out to begin with!”

He laughs again, but doesn’t argue. Of course he doesn’t argue, he knew what he damn well did. Sneaking up on you like a damn forest spook.

“Only thing I feel like I gotta be wary about is if you’re gonna pull a Hansel and Gretel on us,” you say, laughing under your breath.

Sans narrows his eyes in thought. “and what would doing a ‘hansel and gretel’ entail, pal?” he asks, a curious grin on his face.

“Well, first... you’d have to lull us into a false sense of security...” you glance at him, and hold up a finger. “Check. Then you’ll have to fatten us up. And what with you taking us to get a burger...” you hold up a second finger, your smile widening. “Check.”

“i’m getting nervous over here,” Sans chuckles, looking even more curious. “then what’ll we do?”

“Then, you’ll throw us in your oven and eat us,” you finish.

Sans sputters, his head tipping back as he barks out a loud, rolling laugh.

You watch him for a moment, dropping your hand and slipping it back into the blue coat pocket, unable to keep from smiling even if you wanted to. You’d meant what you said, even if you hadn’t really meant to say it in your tired, weird-magic-calm babble. Something about this weirdo was special. If it wasn’t obvious enough already, you trusted him, and by extension his brother, with your life. With Frisk’s life.

Of course there was something special about him.

His laughter calms, shoulders still shaking as he quiets. His eyelights are bright as you’ve ever seen them when he tips his head and looks down at you.

“welp,” he snorts, and reaches out, tugging on the edge of your hood so it hangs lower over your forehead, making you yelp and swat at him playfully. “looks like you’re onto us. paps is gonna be real disappointed, he had a new recipe he was gonna try out and everything.”
Sans releases your hood and you laugh again, shaking your head and pushing it back enough so you can see.

“I knew it. This is revenge for me demoting you from your Snowball King title, isn’t it?”

“maybe.”

“Well, you can’t have it back. You didn’t even throw a single snowball.”

“hey, being the snowball king is hard work. sometimes you just gotta go with the floe.”

“I’m leaving right now immediately.” You grin and twist, marching down the road, following after Frisk and Papyrus, leaving a chuckling Sans to take a few larger steps to catch up to you.

Frisk grins at you when you reach them, pointing up at the glowing star on top of the Christmas tree. “Look!” they say excitedly. “The really nice bear said it was made out of magic! Isn’t it pretty?”

You look up at the star in question. It’s made out of a gently glowing, sparkling mass of what looks like… light, pressed into the shape of a star. It really is beautiful. You kinda wanna touch it, but the tree is at least 20 feet tall.

...You really wanna touch it.

“What were you guys talkin’ about for so long back there?” Frisk asks, cutting through your curiosity.

You look down at your little sib and smile, shrugging. “Just stuff. Like, when’re we gonna get that burger?”

Papyrus scoffs loudly, resting his hands on his hips. “REALLY, BROTHER. IF YOU WANT TO TREAT OUR NEW FRIENDS TO SOME GOOD HOSPITALITY, GREASY FOOD IS NO WAY TO DO IT!”

Sans chuckles, looking up at his brother. “I already said i’d get ‘em some greasy grub though, paps.”

“I COULD HAVE MADE US SOME OF MY SPECIALTY PASTA! A VERITABLE FRIENDSHIP FEAST!” He lets out a dramatic sigh, his shoulders slumping dejectedly.

You scramble to pacify him, and don’t notice Sans begin to sweat as he tries to come up with something as well. Seeing the big, jolly skeleton bummed out even in a joking sort of manner upsets you to a startling degree. “H-how about we have some pasta for dinner?” you offer.

When Papyrus straightens with a delighted grin, Sans relaxes, and you smile in relief.

“THAT SOUNDS WONDERFUL! I CAN GUARANTEE YOU WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

You grin, and you find yourself truly looking forward to it.

“That sound good to you, Frisky?” you ask, looking down at them.

They smile at you, but there’s an odd note in their expression, the smile genuine but their nose scrunched a bit. “I bet it’s gonna be…Indescribable.”

You lift a brow at them, reaching out and ruffling their hair.
“i was thinkin’, though,” sans begins, “since you’re so worn out from your trip so far, do you…” he
cocks his head to the side as he looks at you. “do you wanna come over to mine and paps place and
take a breather? i can grab a couple to-go bags from grillby’s so you can eat at our place.”

“That…” you let out a puff of air. “...That actually sounds perfect.”

“Yeah!” Frisk jumps in place, grinning wide. “Can I play with Papyrus then? Can I? Please?”

“OH! YES, THAT WOULD BE FUN! I COULD SHOW YOU MY ACTION FIGURE
COLLECTION!” Papyrus presses his hands together, shifting from foot to foot excitedly. Shit, these
two are fucking adorable.

Frisk gasps loudly. “Oh oh! We could play Heroes and Bad Guys!”

Papyrus seems to try to turn this into a competition by gasping even louder. “I LOVE HEROES
AND BAD GUYS!”

Frisk takes him up on his challenge and gasps even louder “ME TOO!”

The two whirl and look at you and Sans, and you both straighten at being met with such intense,
adorable stares.

“PLEASE?” they both beg at the same time.

“...bro, i already invited ‘em over,” Sans says with a happy laugh. His eyesockets are crinkled a little
at the edges, looking genuinely pleased as punch.

“Kiddo, that sounds awesome. I’m sure as hell not gonna say no to a burger and some action figure
fun.”

Papyrus and Frisk both let out an overjoyed whoop.

“COME THEN! I WILL LEAD THE WAY” Papyrus waves an arm and motions for you to follow,
turning on his heel and marching around the Christmas tree. Frisk stays right at his side, and your
heart fucking melts when you watch them reach up, and Papyrus doesn’t even hesitate to take their
little hand in his.

Oh, fuck. Ooooh, fuck. Oh, fuck. Forget monsters getting attached quick, you’re getting attached
even quicker.

How did that one line from the Grinch go? Where his heart grew like ten sizes in one day? Yeah,
you could empathize. You’re pretty sure your heart was actively growing right this second.

“...are you crying?” Sans voice cuts through your cotton-candy-thoughts, startling you. He sounds
actually concerned, so you lift a hand up to check.

“Oh--shit, that’s embarrassing,” you laugh, and wipe away the stray little drops. “I was literally just
thinking about how cute them holding hands is. Nothing serious or anything, I promise.”

Sans relaxes then, and his eyelights are bright as the sparkly lights on the tree. “scared me there,
buddy. c’mon, i’ll give you the grand tour on the way.”

You walk along side by side as you circle around the rest of the Christmas tree. You kind of wanted
to ask him about it, and the bright, beautiful packages under the tree, but everything else is so new
and shiny that you can’t really muster up the curiosity with what else surrounds you. Why ask about
something familiar? (or, at least, about something you assumed was familiar.)

“Ah, the Famous Grillby’s,” you say, reading the sign of the cozy looking bar as the two of you walk in front of it. It looks like the kind of place that would fit in in the downtown of your home city, and it’s a little jarring seeing something like it here. Peering in through the large front window, you see booths and tables. Shapes of different kinds of monsters mull about inside what’s no doubt a warm and friendly atmosphere. You can smell the french fries and pub food in the air, and you realize you really are starting to get hungry.

“best place in town,” Sans says with a grin. “...only place in town, really, but i’d still pick it over anywhere else in the underground.”

“Oh, damn, then it’s gotta be good.” A question pops up that you can’t ignore, looking at him. “How...big is the Underground?”

“to you? it’s probably going to seem really big,” Sans says. “but to us? It’s cramped. claustrophobic. this is just one part, where we’re at. there’s a couple other regions along the way. different temperatures and climate phenomena there.”

“Oh yeah?” you ask, curiosity thick in your voice. He catches it and humors you, chuckling and going on a bit more.

“this entire region is really just called snowdin. next up is a place called waterfall. after that we have hotland, and there’s also a city called new home.”

“...Who fuckin’ named those?” you say flatly, and Sans laughs.

“our king. he’s not a creative type.”

You open your mouth to ask about the king in question, but Sans points at a new building as you walk by its front entrance, cutting your thoughts off.

“this is our local little library,” Sans says with a smile. “or, as we like to call it, the librarby.”

“Wh--oh.” You squint at the misspelled sign, a giggle bubbling up into your chest. “I almost didn’t even notice that, actually.”

“the librarbian hopes most monsters don’t,” Sans says with a grin. “it’s a nice spot. i’ve read everything in there at least three times.”

“I think I might like to peek in there at some point,” you say. “I love libraries. They feel cozy. And just being in one makes you feel...I dunno, productive?”

Sans chuckles. “i think i know what you mean, pal. i love it when a lazy guy like me can sit around and still feel like i’m accomplishing something.”

You laugh under your breath, rolling your eyes. “Lazy days can be pretty great, I guess.”

You can see several other little houses dotted behind the trees around you, and an awed, quiet sort of fascination wells up in you as you look at the different monsters roaming about their snowy home. Most of them, you note, are fluffy to combat the cold. You’ve seen a couple large bears, a few tall bunnies, and a giant, bipedal wolf holding a cup of coffee (he had a sign hanging around his neck that read ‘break time’). As you continue you your walk, you see fluffy deer with massive antlers, and in the branches of tall tree you spot what looks like a little family of owl looking monsters, chattering away happily.
This place is surreal and magical and...you wish you didn’t have to go. You wish you weren’t in any danger here. If you weren’t, you would honestly be...tempted. Despite the numerous puzzles and monsters that would apparently be happy to capture you, you can’t remember a time where you’ve felt so happy and calm.

A tall, two story house looms up in front of you. Bright, twinkling lights line the roof and pillars of the front entrance, and a fresh green wreath hangs from the door, which Papyrus is in the midst of unlocking.

Your eyes fall on a pair of mailboxes beside the house. One is immaculately clean and empty, while the other is jammed full of so much mail it’s spilling out onto the snow underneath it. You had a pretty good guess as to whose that was.

“Can’t imagine who lives here, judging by that mess of a mailbox,” you drawl without looking at him, and your guess is confirmed when he snorts out a laugh.

“i’ll give you a hint. he’s tall, looks great in blue, and his name starts with an ‘s’ and ends in ‘ans’,” the skeleton chuckles.

You hum in thought. “The guy I’m thinking about… he’s pretty tall, yeah. Tall enough to at least to change lightbulbs and shit without having to stand on a chair,” you grin and look at him. “Then again, you know what they say about how many boneheads it takes to change a lightbulb, so maybe that pro is moot.”

Sans barks out a laugh, his eyelights shining. He looks proud as all hell.

Papyrus finishes unlocking the door before you can comment on Sans’ other ‘clues’, and he turns, waving a long, spindly arm excitedly.

“COME IN! IT’S MUCH WARMER INSIDE THIS BEAUTIFUL HOUSE THAT ISN’T FULL OF SNOW!”

With that, he bursts in through his front door, Frisk right on his heels with a loud giggle.

Sans gives you a lazy wink, still grinning. “after you, shorty.”

“Oh, you wanna play that game?”

“It’s a game i’ve definitely got a height advantage on.”

You do your best haughty heel-turn and stomp towards the cozy looking house. You pause though to tap as much snow as you can off the bottom of your boots, kicking them against the bottom stair leading up to the door a couple times. Once you step inside, the warmth of the house wraps you up like a fresh-out-of-the-dryer blanket, and you reach up to start pulling Sans’ coat off your shoulders.

You hear the door close behind you, glancing back to see Sans step inside after you.

“Here, hold up. Let’s trade.” You finish taking his blue hoodie off and hold it out for him. “I’ll take the scarf? You can go get us those burgers, and I won’t worry about you freezing your… you squint, trying to think of a bone joke.

“…patellas off,” you finish.

Sans takes his coat, lifting a bone brow at you. “...do you know what a patella is, pal?”
“Uh...thumb? Bones?” you guess lamely. Those high school anatomy quizzes really weren’t sticking with you, huh?

Sans snorts loudly and carefully removes Papyrus’ red scarf from around his neck, handing it off to you before shrugging his blue coat back on. “It’s kneecaps, bud,” he says, amusement thick in his voice. “So make sure you remember that, so I don’t have to *patella* you twice.”

“UGH, SANS!” Papyrus barks loudly as you laugh, and you turn to see him giving Frisk a tour of the kitchen. “GO GET YOUR GREASY FOOD! AT THE VERY LEAST YOU’LL SPARE OUR NEW FRIENDS FROM YOUR HORRIBLE JOKES FOR A FEW MINUTES!”

“aw, paps, there’s no harm in a little *ribbing,“

“SANS!!!”

Sans gives a sigh and shrugs. “Back into the cold I go. Is there anything else you want besides a burg?” he asks you, resting a hand on the doorknob and peering back at you.

“UH...fries? The air smelled like fries when we went by Grillby’s, and it smelled so good. I’d love some of those, if that’s cool?”

“Yeah, it’s cool,” he nods. And with that, he steps back outside and disappears.

Honestly you feel a little bad you didn’t offer to go with him to pick up the food, but at the same time you...really don’t think you’ve got the energy for it.

“HUMA--I MEAN, FRIEND SKIP!” Papyrus calls from the kitchen once his brother is gone. “WOULD YOU LIKE TO PERUSE MY FOOD MUSEUM?”

“You--what?” you laugh and make your way to the kitchen.

“It’s the fridge!” Frisk explains.

You peek inside, looking at the numerous plastic containers that look like they’re all full of spaghetti. “Reminds me of the Smithsonian,” you say.

“THE SMITH-WHAT?” Papyrus leans against the open door of the fridge. “WHAT’S THAT?”

“It’s this super huge museum up on the surface. Full of really cool stuff.”

“Oh! Wowie!” Papyrus looks pleased, and closes the fridge slowly and delicately once you and Frisk are done admiring his collection. “MAYBE ONE DAY I’LL GET TO SEE IT! AND MAKE THAT NO DOUBT ACCURATE COMPARISON FOR MYSELF!”

“I hope so,” you smile, and you mean it. You hold the scarf out for him to take, and once he’s got it he twirls it around his neck so it hangs behind him effortlessly.

Papyrus darts out of the kitchen, Frisk following him again with another giddy laugh. You’re glad they’ve got someone as high energy a Papyrus to goof around with at the moment. You could barely keep up with them nowadays.

“NOW I CAN SHOW YOU MY INCREDIBLE ACTION FIGURE COLLECTION!” Papyrus says as he moves across the living room of the very open home. “I USE THEM TO STRATEGIZE FUTURE BATTLES I WILL NO DOUBT HAVE ONCE I BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL GUARD!”
You smile absently, and you feel your exhaustion creep up on you even quicker. You step out of the kitchen as well, and lean against a large, sturdy table outside of it. Nothing is on the table but a plate, with a...rock? Covered in sprinkles?

You’d ask Sans about that later.

“You two go ahead, I ah...I’m gonna take a little break, okay?” you call up to them as the two start to trek up the stairs.

Frisk hesitates, and you notice that Papyrus does too.

“Are you okay?” Frisk asks.

“WOULD YOU LIKE A GLASS OF WATER?” Papyrus offers.

“No, I’m fine. I mean-- Yes, Frisk, I’m okay! Promise. But no, Papyrus, thank you. I’m okay, I’m just gonna sit down for a little while.”

Frisk seems to hesitate, but you give them a thumbs up and that does the trick at easing their little nerves. They smile and turn, hurrying back up the rest of the stairs. Papyrus takes their renewed excitement as his cue to continue his tour as well.

“WELL, ALRIGHT! PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME! I’LL HAVE YOU KNOW I’M THE GREATEST HOST YOU’LL EVER HAVE!”

“Thanks Papyrus,” you smile up at him.

He gives you a cheerful nod, and you see them disappear behind a door covered in different signs and stickers and what looks like police tape, and you can’t help but laugh under your breath.

How cute and endearing could the giant skeleton get?

After a few moments you gather up your energy and push yourself away from the table. Fucking heck, you were worn out. Felt like your energy has up and melted off of you like wax. With a few steps that feel a lot heavier and slower than you’d have liked, you collapse onto the bright green couch in the living room. You notice that the cushions jangle slightly as you do.

Maybe it’s because you’re so tired, but suddenly this couch is the most comfortable thing you’ve ever sat on. You feel yourself sinking a bit, leaning heavily into the crook of the armrest and the back of the couch, your eyelids drooping.

You look up at the exposed hall of the second floor, smiling again at all the decorations on Papyrus’ door. Your smile only widens when you hear his and Frisk’s muffled voices the two laughing together happily, no doubt playing that “heroes and bad guys” game.

There’s a painting of a giant bone on the wall, you notice next, and that has you laughing so hard (though really it only comes out as breathy huffs) that you sink a little lower into the couch, your chin disappearing into the neck of your sweatshirt.

You kinda miss the fluffy feel of Sans’ coat.

How long is it gonna take him to come back?

With a soft breath and a promise to yourself that you’re only gonna rest your eyes for just a few minutes, you let your eyes drift shut.
Papyrus and Frisk’s game is what you hear as your mind drifts off and your muscles go lax, the sound of their laughter like a cheerful promise of happy sleep.

Time passes in a hazy, calm sort of way. The ambient light outside dims, and the giggly games and battle strategizing have sputtered out, finally as tired as you.

You don’t wake up as a pair of careful, boney hands gently adjust how you’re resting on the lumpy green couch, letting you stretch out across it rather than slouch into the corner of it.

You don’t wake up as a pillow is placed carefully under your head, and you tilt a bit into it, rolling onto your side. You curl one arm under your new pillow, hugging it.

You don’t wake up when a blanket is draped carefully over you, the edge pulled all the way up to your earlobes.

Warmth settles over you, and something gentle thrums in your chest.

Following some urge or instinct you aren’t awake to control or ignore, your other hand reaches out from under your new blanket and your fingers curl into a familiar, fluffy hood. There’s an inaudible gasp, air being sucked through a set of teeth that never stop grinning, as the backs of your knuckles brush bone.

Large, bony fingers gently loop around your wrist and hand, but they don’t pull you away. Not just yet.

You don’t wake up when the gentle touch makes your Soul warm in your chest, that familiar sense of comfort and belonging settling any lingering nerves clinging to your sleeping mind.

You let out a soft sigh, relaxing enough for your grip on that fluffy hood to be easily removed. Your hand is placed gently back in front of you where you hold onto your new blanket for dear life instead.

The tender hold on your hand lingers for a moment, as if unwilling to end that comforting contact so quickly, but finally releases you with another inaudible breath.

* Skip - LVL 1 HP 6/8
* She felt lost for a long time, didn’t she?
* What is it about this place that makes her feel like she’s home?

The yellow flash of his magic disappears, leaving the silent room dark again, the Check complete.

Sans stares at a spot on the carpet in front of the couch for a long, long time.

When he finally goes to bed he doesn’t make a sound, and lies flat on his back on his mattress, staring unseeing at his ceiling.

You were something he’d never experienced before. And he doesn’t know what to do.

Chapter End Notes
Sans and Skip while their souls do this Weird Thing: ???? if you're gonna be acting like this with no explanation, you're gonna need to start paying rent

I love introducing characters to feelings they've got 0 clue how to handle or recognize. :D
Follow my dorky Undertale Tumblr! Talk to me and be my friend!! And possibly rp Undertale shit with me, I have a craving.
Broken record

Chapter Summary

A not so good dream.

Chapter Notes

Anxiety is wound tight in his chest. Terror. Outrage. Grief.
Balled up so densely in his Soul that it felt like a physical, solid presence.
He stands, silent and still in the Judgement Hall. Through the beautiful stained glass windows, golden light filters in, and he can hear muffled screams and cries as the city around him hurries to evacuate out of the murderous human’s path.

His eyesockets are extinguished voids as he stares blankly at the polished marble floor of the Hall. Papyrus’ scarf is wound around his neck, dust still lingering in the fibers of the bright red cloth.
* reset. fight it, kid. reset.
He lifts his head every so slightly at the sound of echoing, shuffled footsteps.
And his eyelights remain black as a tiny figure slowly steps into the Hall.

His Hall.

He was the Judge after all.

The kid makes their way closer, their shuffle awkward and heavy. As if they were wading through molasses. Their head lolled awkwardly from side to side like their neck couldn’t support it. Their shoulders trembled, and the rusted, worn garden knife in their little hand was coated in a thick layer of white dust.

Just like their hands. And their shirt. And the rest of them.

All dust.

Finally, the kid shuffles to a stop, their little chest heaving as if from exertion.

Sans lifts his head a little more, and his eyelights blink back to life with a dull flicker.

“...heya,” he says slowly, voice a rough, gravelly rumble in his ribcage. “you been busy, huh?”

The kid’s hands quiver, their grip tightening on the dull knife.

“lemme ask ya somethin’,” Sans says, and he feels so numb that he can’t tell if he’s still grinning or not. “do you think that the worst person can change?” he asks. “that everyone can be a good person if they just try?”
The kid rolls their head heavily to one side, and Sans catches a glimpse of a smile on their face. Their cheeks were flushed bright red as they continued to gasp for breath, shoulders trembling.

Sans had realized very early on that this was… not Frisk.

He lets out a chuckle when they don’t reply, closing his eyes for a moment.

“alright, well. lemme ask you a better question.”

He cracks open his left eye, staring at them. “you wanna have a bad time? cause if you take one more step? you are

**REALLY**

not gonna like what happens next.”

* i don’t wanna hurt you, frisk. i know that ain’t you doin’ all this. i know you’d never hurt pap. stop. reset.

The kid took a single, defiant step closer, shoulders hunching, their smile widening. There’s an otherworldly flash of red in their eyes, the glow making Sans think of the bright glow of a human Soul. Something else was in there with Frisk, pulling the strings, dragging the poor kid around like a ragdoll.

* even if that ain’t you frisk, i can’t let you go on any further.

Sans lets out a shrug, chuckling under his breath again and giving a half hearted shrug. “welp...” he sighs. He remembers Toriel, begging him through the door to spare the life of the child that might come through.

Stars, he hadn’t expected this would happen. He hadn’t expected the kid to come out with their hands all covered in the Queen’s dust. The Queen’s, and who knew how many others?

He remembers thinking it had to be a joke. Some sick, horrible prank Frisk was playing. The other possibility was too horrific to take seriously at first.

He’d watched them shuffle as if they didn’t have full control of their legs down the snowy path leading away from the Ruins, his unease and wariness and dread growing. He had been trying to piece together some lecture about how a joke like that was taking it too far, and how pranks shouldn’t do anything but make people laugh, but then…

Then, as he’d grown used to doing, he stepped up behind them. Told them to shake his hand.

Those hadn’t been Frisk’s eyes staring back at him.

He’d frozen, hand still outstretched, locked in place by those unfamiliar, furious eyes. Their touch when they’d taken his hand was cold, and left some of that dust behind when they drew back from him.

…Stars, he should have killed them right then. But even then, even now it was difficult to even imagine doing so. This was supposed to be Frisk. Their friend. His friend. The kiddo who worked their way into the hearts of every monster they’d met, including him.

He couldn’t do it. He couldn’t hurt them then. Not even after they’d…

He reaches up and grips Papyrus’ scarf, his grin widening.
But he would have to hurt them now.

“sorry, old lady,” he mumbles, chuckling again. “this is why i never make promises.”

One of his hands twitch ever so slightly in his hoodie’s pocket, and Frisk’s Soul is pulled from their body, beginning the encounter.

It glows a bright, furious red, and Sans takes a moment to stare at it.

“...it’s a beautiful day outside,” he says softly. He remembers the faces of his friends.

“birds are singing. flowers are blooming.”

All of them, dead.

“on days like these, kids like you...”

He remembers his brother.

His eyelights go black, and he lets the rage and hate and fury boil up inside him, the numb feeling in his bones being washed out violently by an electric current, leaving him gritting his teeth in a manic, enraged grin.

“Should be burning in hell.”

Sans holds a hand out, clenching a fist. All at once his magic takes hold of that red Soul, blue overwashing the red. His left eyelight burns bright, flashing blue and yellow, round and wide.

With a twitch of his hand, the Soul, and the kid themself, are slammed down against the unforgiving marble floor, gravity pushing them down hard enough to make the air leave their lungs in a violent rush.

Quick as a blink, he releases his hold, the blue magic leaving and letting the Soul return to its bright red color.

Before the kid could even stand back up, Sans lifts a hand.

Bones burst out of the floor, like a carpet of jagged splinters.

The kid lets out a sharp, gurgling gasp as several of those bones pierce their tiny body.

*i’m sorry, frisk.*

The bones disintegrate, and the kid’s body slumps to the ground, motionless.

The red Soul shatters, and Sans closes his eyes. All he could do now, was pray for the reset to come.

✧

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He stands, silent and still in the Judgement Hall. Through the beautiful stained glass windows,
golden light filters in, and he can hear muffled screams and cries as the city around him hurries to evacuate out of the murderous human’s path.

Sans lifts his head, and that anxiety in his chest ices over to a growing dread.

Whoever this thing was, they had a stronger hold of Frisk’s powers than he initially thought and feared.

He stands there, unmoving, and that rage bubbles up again when he sees their familiar tiny form step back into his Judgement Hall. Unharmed.

They shuffle to a stop some distance away from him, and he chuckles mirthlessly at the expression on the kid’s face.

“heya,” he grins, jaw aching he’s gritting his teeth so hard. “you look frustrated about something.”

The kid ducks their head, and Sans watches them spin the knife in their grip slowly, as if deciding on the most comfortable way to wield it. No doubt they were thinking how *great* it would be to use it against him.

He cocks his head to one side.

* you aren’t frisk. you killed paps. you killed everyone.

“guess i’m pretty good at my job, huh?” he says, and part of him is shocked at how easy it is to speak. No tremble in his voice. Nothing to give away his fear or fury.

* and i’m not about to go easy on you.

The kid’s Soul is pulled from their body, the encounter starting.

He laughs under his breath, humorless and miserable.

“it’s a beautiful day outside,” he says, and he’s grown so used to repeating himself throughout resets and loads that it only seems natural, it only seems fair to do that now as well. “birds are singing. flowers are blooming…”

Sans sees the kid shift from foot to foot, and he knows they’re bracing themselves.

“on days like these, kids like you…”

Despite the fact that he’s repeating himself, every ounce of malice and anger still crack hard through his words, fists clenching.

“should be burning in hell.”

Again, he slams the kid’s body to the floor, knocking them off their feet. But this time, the kid knows what’s coming, and when he lifts his hand to summon up the sharp shards of bone from the floor, they leap out of the way just in time, stumbling across the marble tiles.

He doesn’t give them time to catch their balance.

He throws his arm to the side, and a rolling wave of white bones burst into existence, rushing towards them. They try to sidestep and jump out of the way, but most of the attacks strike and cut
and bludgeon, the kid shrieking as blood begins to dot the floor of the hall, yet again.

He put his hands back into his pocket, eyelights black and merciless.

Kid wasn’t dead yet.

Four massive, draconic, wolf-like skulls materialize around the kid, surrounding them. At least, Sans thought somewhere far, far in the back of his mind, where he mourned for his brother and their friends, his wailing and screaming unending. At least this would be quick.

The Gaster Blasters open their jaws, each releasing a massive beam of pure, violent magic.

In a matter of seconds, whatever was left of the kid’s genocide-swollen HP is gone.

The red Soul shatters, and their body falls to the ground in a bleeding, charred heap.

✧

Sans expects it this time, when time seems to shift to only a few moments prior rather resetting completely. And once again, he can’t help but grin as the kid shuffles their way awkwardly into the Hall.

Their teeth are bared, and it’s so satisfying that he laughs out loud.

“that expression…” he chuckles, watching them, hands in his pockets. “that’s the expression of someone who’s died twice in a row.”

The kid growls, sounding frustrated and angry.

“well, suffice to say, you look real unsatisfied,” he says. “howsabout we make it a third?”

✧

“that expression…”

The kid attacks before Sans can finish.

He adjusts his magic over his own Soul, letting gravity shift him to the side, helping him dodge the fatal blow that the kid’s knife would have dealt him.

The kid stumbles a step and whirls to face him, gripping their knife harder.

“that’s the expression of someone who’s died thrice in a row. now that i think about it, what comes after ‘thrice’, anyway? wanna help me find out?”

✧

✧

“that expression. that’s the expression of someone who’s died seven times in a row. and hey, that’s good! seven’s supposed to be a lucky number, right? maybe you’ll hit the jackpot. and that number’ll multiply tenfold.”

✧
“let’s just get to the point.”
He’s lost count at this point. It’s a neverending dance, the floor paved with bone and blood. Despite each load reverting the Hall into its previous pristine state, he can still remember every smear, splatter, and pool of red on the tile. It builds up behind his eyes like an afterimage, and he can’t forget it. Just like he can’t forget anything else.

But the kid keeps getting closer.

The kid keeps dodging his attacks, learning his patterns, inching nearer bit by bit.

Sans doesn’t have the Hope in his Soul to allow him for much stamina. Every step in this fight is a resource he can’t afford to waste.

He’s growing tired, and it’s horrifying.

What happens to this world if this kid...this thing wins?

Sans steps aside, dodging another deadly stab the kid throws at them.

How much longer could he do this?

Sans reaches up and grips Papyrus’ scarf while the kid is broken in half by a rolling rush of jagged bones.

He’d do this forever, if he had to.

Sans lurches up with a sharp gasp. The glow coming from his left eyesocket is so bright it casts a dim light over his entire room.

He looks down at his quaking hands, and for a moment he can still see the spots and splashes of blood on his bones.

A wave of nausea washes over him and he closes his eyes tightly, clenching his hands into fists and pressing the heels of his palms to his forehead.

“this is a good timeline,” he whispers, voice desperate. “we’re all safe. pap is safe. everyone is safe,” he mumbles through clenched teeth.

That was true, right? He feels disoriented and panics for a moment. What timeline was he in? What’s happened? Was everyone alright?

Sans pushes himself up from his messy bed. The sheets had been once again balled up and shoved aside while he tossed and turned and thrashed in his sleep, and he steps over them clumsily. He stumbles a step before he takes a shortcut, disappearing from his room and reappearing in his brother’s.

For a moment, his Soul sinks upon seeing the empty bed.

But his attention shifts, and he turns his head to look at the rest of the room behind him.

There’s a giant blanket and pillow fort set up on the floor, little still-lit fairy lights hanging from the inside, giving the outside of the fort a soft, comfortable warm glow. The large blankets and sheets hang like towers from the computer desk, the bookshelf, a chair from the kitchen...

Slowly, and very carefully, Sans gently pulls aside one of the curtain-like sheets at the front of the fort.
His Soul eases into a soft calm. Papyrus is laying sprawled out on his back, wearing his favorite set of pajamas that are covered with little pictures of spaghetti and meatballs. Frisk is lying beside them, hugging one of his arms like it’s a teddy bear.

Open books and action figures litter the floor around them, and Sans feels warm tears prick the corners of his eyesockets.

He lets the sheet go and lifts his hand, pressing it over his mouth.

Everything was okay.

This was a good timeline. This was a safe timeline.

Without a sound, he shortcuts out of Papyrus’ room and into kitchen.

If there was one thing he knew would help his post-nightmare jitters, it was a midnight snack.

He opened the fridge, ready to rummage to the back to get his secret stash of ketchup, but hesitates when he sees a takeout bag from Grillby’s. Confusion has him tilting his head, frowning in thought. He never brought home food from Grillby’s, what was this doing here? He--

Sans nearly drops the ketchup, his body stilling.

You.

Without thinking, he shortcuts again, leaving the fridge open back in the kitchen.

A sense of relief he didn’t even realize he’d still been aching for fills him when he sees you, and his bony fingers dig into the front of the white tanktop he’d fallen asleep in. For a moment, his magic--his Soul--glows a soft blue in his chest, casting a dim shadowy outline of his ribs against the fabric of his shirt.

This was a good timeline.

You’re still asleep just as he’d left you, curled beneath the blanket he’d brought down for you, still half hugging the pillow. You looked peaceful as you slept, and Sans catches himself reaching for you, his fingertips just barely touching your cheek before he yanks his hand back, flushing a bright blue.

He shortcuts back to the kitchen and shakes his head, taking a moment to gather himself.

Sans has no idea why you get to him the way you do. He’s always prided himself on being absolutely in control of himself, of every aspect and facet of himself, but…

He heaves a sigh and grabs the bottle of ketchup from the back of the still-open fridge, nudging it closed with a bare, bony foot.

Staring down at the bright red bottle, Grillby’s familiar label stickered on the side, he can’t help the little smile that crosses his tired face.

You’re an enigma, and he really, really likes it.

“You’re an enigma?”

The sleepy voice makes him yelp and almost drop his ketchup bottle, hunching his shoulders and whirling to look at the kitchen entrance.
You’re standing there, the blanket wrapped around your shoulders, staring at him with half-open eyes. You kind of look half-asleep still. It takes him a moment to realize he’d said that last thought out loud, and clears his throat.

“...ha, uh, yeah,” he grins at you, tossing the ketchup bottle up in the air and catching it a few times. “you wanna give it a try?” he offers with a teasing smile, and laughs softly when you scrunch your nose a bit in response.

He’s surprised when you don’t turn around and go back to sleep on the couch, instead coming into the kitchen and sitting at the little table pushed against the wall instead, sitting at one of the three (now two, thanks to Pap bringing one up to his room for his and Frisk’s fort) chairs.

“You okay?” you ask.

Once again, he’s stunned quiet.

His silence must be answer enough, because you frown and your brows bunch up in concern. You shrug the big blanket off your shoulders, letting it drape over the back of your chair, and stand up.

“You got any tea or cocoa?” you ask, voice soft.

“why? got a craving for something sweet?” he grins, and you humor him with a smile of your own.

“Yeah, I’m super thirsty. Help me make a couple mugs?”

Sans feels his Soul warm in his chest, but he nods silently. He sets his ketchup bottle down on the counter and rummages through a cabinet. After a bit of digging, he puts a blue canister of hot chocolate powder on the counter beside the cabinet, and then fetches a saucepan.

The two of you drift through the kitchen like you’ve been doing this for years. Without saying a word to each other, he hands you the pan after filling it with water, and you set it on the stove while he gets the mugs. You measure out the powder into the mugs with a spoon he hands you, and then the two of you just...stand there.

Watching the water slowly begin to bubble on the stove.

You’re the one who finally breaks the soft silence, but you keep your eyes on the stove.

“Nightmare…?” you ask, voice quiet.

Sans just grunts. That’s a very kind thing to call the experience he’d woken up from. His smile grows a little tight, trying to push out the memory of watching your little sibling die by his hand, over and over and over.

“i... guess you could call it that,” he says after a long moment. His voice is quieter than yours.

“Do you want to talk about it--”

“no.” His voice comes out...harsher than he’d meant it to, and he winces, looking from the stove and down to you. “sorry, i...i don’t. want to talk about it, i mean. i’m sorry.”

You give him an understanding smile that makes his chest tighten.

“Would a deep, philosophical question help distract you and make you feel better?”

He snorts out a laugh, cocking one bony brow ridge. “coming from you? i’m sure it would.”
You glance at the water again, checking its progress, before you reach past him and grab his bottle of Grillby’s ketchup from the counter. He watches you curiously as you give it a little shake, grinning at him.

“If tomatoes are technically a fruit, does that make ketchup a smoothie?”

Sans’ little smile widens to a full on grin, and it takes a lot of self control to keep from laughing, managing to quiet himself down to a light, strained chuckle, his eyesockets crinkling a bit at the edges as he stares at you.

“That’s awful. Why would you ever say somethin’ like that,” he says with a snort, and reaches out, taking his bottle back. He gives it a little pat with his other hand, squinting at you. “It’s okay, pal, she didn’t mean it. You’re not a smoothie.”

It’s your turn to laugh then, and the sound makes his own smile widen even more.

The water looks hot enough now, and you’re the one to carefully pour it into both mugs, and Sans stirs both cups while you empty out the rest of the pan into the sink and set the empty pan back on the stove.

Sans carries both mugs to the table and sets yours down by the chair with your blanket still draped over it, sitting down in the seat across from yours.

You plop down and sigh, still smiling, shoulders shaking gently now and then from lingering laughter.

The two of you fall into a sort of quiet that’s beginning to feel familiar now—companionable and comfortable.

You blow on your cocoa a few times to cool it, taking a slow, careful sip.

Sans follows suit, and the warmth of the drink is like a soothing balm to the anxiety still biting at the back of his mind. In all honesty, it was an anxiety that never left, but he was grateful for the distraction, closing his eyesockets and savoring this moment.

“...I know I said it earlier,” you begin, and he cracks an eye open to look at you. “But...thank you, again. For letting us stay,” you say with a soft smile. “For protecting us. For protecting Frisk.”

You’re looking at him so damn tenderly that he feels his cheekbones flush, looking down at his cocoa instead of holding your warm gaze.

“Don’t...mention it, pal. It’s what any decent monster woulda done. And there are plenty who are just as decent as us,” he says, and takes another sip of his drink. “...Well, maybe not Pap. He’s the coolest guy there is down here. But definitely more decent than I am.”

Another blink and he saw more red.

He closes his eyes, letting out another, heavier sigh.

“I’d have still picked you, I bet.”

He hesitates, and looks at you with both eyes this time, his eyelights dim. “...What do you mean?”

“I think we’ve met a lot of decent monsters since coming down here. Toriel. Dogaressa and Dogamy. Lesser Dog. The rabbit that sold us the Nice Cream. That really sweet bear that told Frisk
about the magic star on the tree…” she laughs softly, watching him over the rim of her mug.

“I’d still pick the dorky skeleton that smells like ketchup.”

Sans blinks, and looks down at himself like he’s shocked at this revelation. “I smell like ketchup?” he asks, and there’s enough mock surprise that she has to muffle a bark of laugh into her shoulder. “nobody told me! well, now i’m just embarrassed.”

He smiles as you laugh again, but your words strike just about every chord he’s got, his Soul vibrating in his chest.

“you’re welcome to stay,” he says without thinking, and the familiar blue flush creeps across his cheekbones, tapping his fingertips against his mug. “i mean, you know,” he chuckles, looking down at his half empty cup. “for as long as you need to. or want. whichever.”

You smile, and your own face flushes. Sans can see the color wash across your cheeks.

He’s got no idea how to describe what that makes his Soul feel, or how you have made his Soul feel in general, but he’d give damn near anything to be able to keep this feeling close.

“Honestly…” you begin slowly, “I’d be… really tempted to stick around if I didn’t have Frisk here. But I gotta get them home. I need to get them somewhere safe and…” You rest an elbow on the table, and then rest your chin in your hand. “Not that I don’t think it’s safe here or anything,” you correct, and Sans snorts.

“i know what you mean, pal,” he smiles.

“I just...yeah. If it was only me I had to worry about? I honestly probably wouldn’t have left the Ruins with Toriel.”

Sans hesitates, confused.

The way you acted around Frisk, it seemed as if your whole world revolved around the little kiddo. He sure knew how that felt. Often it felt as if his very life and happiness hinged on Papyrus’ wellbeing. He couldn’t imagine the idea of just...not coming back to him.

He doesn’t think any less of you for it. He’s just...confused. He wants to ask why you’d say something like that. For someone who cares so much about Frisk and their happiness, you’ve got to know how important you are to the kid, right?

Fuck, he’s never seen Frisk so happy! You had to know that.

You rub a hand over your tired eyes, and that fear creeps back into Sans’ bones.

He takes another drink of his cocoa, mostly to keep himself from asking yet again... How sick were you?

“...i know you can’t stick around for very long,” he begins slowly, drawing your attention. “but, no offense, you kinda look like someone who’s had a rough day full of electrocution and spike puzzles.”

You choke out an amused snort, reaching up a hand to brush through your very short hair.

“how about just for a day or two?” he offers. “get your strength back a bit. we can help you set up a plan on where you’re heading. what to do and look out for.”

He thinks about something. About how his countless other timelines with Frisk had gone. How he’d
always only ever been a distant guardian, watching from afar. There had only ever been very specific points where he crossed paths with them on their journey.

Without hesitating, he changes his own role in the story, and crosses his arms over the table. “i’ll go with you.”

You blink at him, your eyes going wide. He can see something like relief in your expression. Hell, he can practically feel it, and he hopes he’s eased at least a few fears you had about moving forward.

“You mean that,” you say, but it isn’t a question.

“i never say anything i don’t mean,” he says with a smile, and a wink for good measure.

“...Shit, Sans,” you say with a soft, disbelieving laugh. You look down at your cocoa again, like you’re unable to hold his gaze. “...That’d… that’d be amazing, actually.”

“of course it would. cool guy like paps, and a funny guy like me around? this whole trip’ll be a treat.”

You laugh again, but this time the sound is broken by a yawn that catches you off guard.

Sans stands, peeping into your mug and picking it up off the table when he sees it’s empty. He sets both mugs in the sink and turns to face you, waving his arms. “up,” he shoos, smirking. “we can hang out and talk about how fun i am tomorrow morning after you get some more sleep.”

You laugh and hunch your shoulders when he all but nudges you out of your chair, gathering the big blanket and following after you back into the living room. When you turn to take the blanket from him he doesn’t hand it over, instead just nodding at the couch and motioning for you to lay back down.

You roll your eyes and flop back onto the couch, yawning again as you hug the pillow to your head.

Sans flaps the blanket out once before letting it drape over you. He makes a show of tucking you in, and even pats you on the head a few times once he’s done. “there we go, all set.”

You sneak a hand out from under your blanket and swat at him, playfully, squinting. “Shut up, go to sleep,” you say with a quiet laugh.

Sans smirks and turns to leave you be, but he freezes when you catch his wrist before he can take a step for the stairs. He looks back down at you, his Soul hammering in his chest suddenly.

“Thank you, Sans,” is all you say.

He stares at you for a long moment. Trying to think of something to say. Something that might mean as much to you as your trust means to him.

“...g’night, pal,” is what he ends up saying, and twists his hand a bit in your grip so he can give you a gentle squeeze. You let him go and he turns, making his way up the steps and back to his room.

He sleeps soundly through the rest of the night.

Chapter End Notes
AY follow me on my Undertale Tumblr! Be my friend at chat at me omg!
There's also a link there to a Discord server specifically for OMWF that a friend of mine made omg. Feel free to join in and be nerds with us. Lots of dumb memes and pictures of our fluffy pets.
You wake up to a little pat on your shoulder. Like a lil’ mouse hopping up and down on you to get your attention.

Whatever dream you were having fades into nothing, and you forget about it the instant you blink your eyes open, vision taking a moment to clear. You blink a few times, squinting, and before you can really start to get a hold of your surroundings, you feel the little hand pat your cheek this time.

“What’s up, my tiny muffin?” you mumble sleepily, and you hear Frisk giggle as you let your tired eyes slip closed again. You laugh under your breath along with them, and reach out, scooping them suddenly onto the couch with you, giving them a good ol’ squish.

“Papyrus asked me to tell you!” Frisk giggles harder, letting you hug them. “That it’s almost time for breakfast!”

“Oh dang, breakfast?” you crack an eye open, letting Frisk go and they wiggle until they’re standing in front of your face again.

“THAT’S RIGHT, HUMAN!” you hear Papyrus shout from the kitchen just around the corner. “IT’S THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY!”

You groan as you sit up, the soft blanket slipping from over you and gathering up by your hips.

“What’s on the menu, Papyrus?” you call, unable to keep from smiling.

“SPAGHETTI, OF COURSE!”

“What?!” Frisk leans away from you and then disappears back into the kitchen. “I thought you said you were making pancakes!"

“WELL, I WAS, BUT THEN I THOUGHT, YOU KNOW WHAT THESE PANCAKES
“Papyrus!” Frisk giggles louder, their little voice a mix of delighted and annoyed. “Pasta isn’t a human breakfast food!”

“You couldn’t help but laugh, and take a moment to stretch your stiff muscles. The couch was nice, but it was still a couch, and you felt a little sore in a few places. Or maybe that was just because you were gettin’ old. Your golden years were upon you, after all.

Frisk pops back up into your line of sight, leaning out of the kitchen. “So we’re gonna have some pancakes and also some spaghetti for breakfast,” they inform you, and you laugh again.

“My little sib lets out a pleased laugh.

“You got a question for you, kiddo,” you begin, and their attention shifts from the action figure setup to you again. “How would you feel if we stayed here for a couple more days? Just to sorta get our energy back while we get ready to head out?”

You’re pretty sure that if Frisk had magic like Papyrus did, their little eyes would have literally sparkled.

“You...we’re gonna stay?” they gasp, as if it’s the strangest, yet most exciting idea they’ve ever heard.
You laugh a bit, reaching out and ruffling their hair. “Just for a few days. Sans and I talked about it last night. That okay?”

“Yeah it’s okay! I’m—I’m gonna go tell Papyrus!” they say excitedly, and suddenly are off like a shot.

“No running down the stairs!” you say, tone adopting a more serious Big Sister edge, and Frisk obediently slows and moves down them one at a time, nice and steady. But the moment they touch down off the bottom step they’re sprinting again.

You hear Papyrus gasp loudly, and the two start babbling excitedly about even more games they could play together now. You hear ‘hide and seek’, ‘tag’, and ‘extreme poker’.

You glance down the little one-walled hall, and move down to what you assume is Sans’ door. Hesitating for just a moment, you reach up and knock twice.

Just as you had been hoping, you hear a sleepy “who’s there?” from inside.

Grinning, you give him the one joke that comes to mind. The worst one, ever.

“Banana,” you say.

“banana who?”

“Knock knock,” you begin again. Oh shit, you were excited for this one. You could only hope he hadn’t heard it already down here.

You hear him snort. “uh... who’s there?”

“Banana.”

“banana who?”

“Knock knock!” you grin.

“...who’s there?” He sounds a little closer to the door now, and your smile widens.

“Banana!”

“banana who?”

“Knock! Knock!”

“who’s? there?”

“...Orange.”

You can hear the wide grin in his voice, just on the other side of the door. “orange who?”

“Orange you glad I didn’t say banana?”

You feel a giddy sense of pride light up in your chest when you hear him burst out laughing, and you fade into your own laughter when he manages to open his door, doubled over and clutching the doorframe as he does. Hell yeah, you got him good!

“all my years,” he wheezed. “never heard that one before. where’d you hear that?!” he grinned up at
you, his eyelight bright, and you reach up to rub your sleeve over your eyes, still giggling.

“Probably my 3rd grade playground. Kids would just say the banana line on and on and on and on and on until you were ready to strangle someone. So when the orange line came? Oh, shit, it was like knowing what heaven felt like.”

Sans snorted, and stepped out of his room, closing the door behind him.

He had his hoodie on, his eyesockets half closed. “kids have the best jokes, it’s true,” he laughed. “speakin’ of kids, what has paps and frisk so excited?”

“I told Frisk we would be staying for a day or two extra,” you say, and cock a brow when the skeleton lights up, looking surprised as his grin widens. “…Did you forget about that?”

“…i guess i totally forgot, but i’m sure as hell not gonna complain. that sounds like fun.” He lifts a hand, scratching the back of the thick vertebrae that make up his neck, eyelight shifting to the side. Something changes in his expression, a softness crossing that grin of his. “…okay, now i remember. mornings always have to catch up with me after i actually, y’know. wake up.”

“BROTHER!” Papyrus says suddenly, making you jump while Sans just tilts his head to look down into the living room. “BLESS MY BONES, YOU’RE UP! NOT THAT I SHOULD BE AS ENTIRELY SURPRISED AS I AM, THIS IS A VERY SPECIAL OCCASION AFTER ALL!”

“i’d say so too, bro. you and the kiddo makin’ breakfast?”

“YES! PANCAKES AND SPAGHETTI! A CELEBRATION BREAKFAST FOR THE AGES!” Papyrus disappears back into the kitchen with a giddy ‘NYEH-HEH!’.

You snort, and head back for the stairs, Sans right behind you. “Hey, I wanted to ask, since we’re gonna be hanging out here for a little bit. Does the little store in town sell stuff like toothbrushes? Or, uh...maybe pajamas?” Or coffee? Or mittens? Or a hat? Or maybe that neat oatmeal with the dinosaur egg candy in it?

Sans chuckles and stretches his arms over his head with a loud yawn. “yep yep,” he says. “i’ll grab you and frisk whatever you need. and hey,” he reaches out and places a hand on your shoulder once the both of you reach the bottom of the stairs. He drops his voice, still smirking. “if, uh. the celebratory breakfast doesn’t hit the right buttons for ya, remember you’ve still got your grillby’s burg in the fridge.”

“Oh!” You grin, and your stomach actually growls, making him laugh. “Shit, I forgot about that! I’m sorry for nose-diving straight to sleep though, by the way. I can’t remember if I apologized for that last night when we were up,” you say as you let out a sheepish laugh, crossing the room and pausing by the large table with the pet rock.

“there you go, apologizing for things you don’t need to apologize for again,” Sans says with a smirk, and you squint at him. “i knew you were tired, pal. and monster food doesn’t spoil, so you don’t gotta worry about wasting anything.”

“...Huh,” you blink. “...Really? It doesn’t spoil?”

“nope.”

“So if I got, like. A giant, magic, 3-tier cake, I could in theory just keep it in the kitchen and munch on it for months without worrying?”
“no theories needed, it wouldn’t go bad at all.”

“...Whoa.”

Sans laughs, glancing into the kitchen. You follow his gaze, and the two of you watch your little siblings buzz around like they’ve been doing this together for ages. It reminds you of how easily it was for you and Sans to circle each other in the kitchen making that hot cocoa, and you lean against the large table with a happy smile.

“Question, bone boy,” you hum, and you see his eyelights jump from the kitchen to you. “...What’s with the rock?”

Sans snorts. “that’s our pet rock, and it’s on a strict sprinkles-only diet. if it asks for treats, don’t listen, we need to get it back down to a healthy weight.”

Now it’s your turn to laugh, and you reach out and give him a shove.

It’s at that point that Papyrus pulls a huge pot off the stove and cries out “BREAKFAST IS DONE!”

“Oh shit, nice,” you mumble, and push away from the large table.

“I WAS THINKING!” Papyrus grins. “METTATON IS HAVING A SPECIAL THIS MORNING, AND I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE WONDERFUL TO SIT AT THE COUCH AND WATCH WHILE WE EAT!”

“That sounds fun!” you say, and then pause, leaning over to murmur to Sans. “Who’s Mettaton?”

Papyrus hears you however, and he dances excitedly, practically vibrating. He hops from foot to foot, grinning so wide you wonder if his skull hurts. “METTATON IS ONLY THE GREATEST CELEBRITY THE UNDERGROUND HAS EVER HAD!”

“try ‘only’ celebrity,” Sans hums, but if Papyrus hears him, he doesn’t comment.

“HE’S DASHING! HANDSOME! COOL! AND YOU SHOULD SEE HIS HEEL-TURN!”

“it’s a real head-turner alright.”

“SANS, PLEASE! IT'S TOO EARLY!!”

You laugh and give Sans a playful nudge as you pass him to move into the kitchen. “Quit teasing your poor bro, especially after turning out such a great breakfast!”

Sans’s eyelights expand slightly in what you can only assume is pure delight while Papyrus grins and bows.

“THANK YOU! IT’S SO NICE TO FEEL APPRECIATED--” he straightens suddenly, gasping. “WAIT--THERE WAS ANOTHER PUN IN THERE! I TRUSTED YOU!!”

That makes you burst out laughing, and you hear Sans chuckling as well.

Frisk is giggling quietly as they take their own serving of breakfast. On one half of their plate is a pile of pancakes, and on the other is a scoop of spaghetti.

...Spaghetti soaked in maple syrup.

…Hmmmmmm.
You grab a plate and take a much smaller serving of the noodles, and just one of the pancakes. Despite your stomach grumbling and growling, you really don’t wanna overdo it and make yourself sick, so you’ll start small. Work your way up! You take your plate into the living room and plop down on the floor in front of the couch, setting your plate down on the zigzag patterned carpet for a moment as you get yourself good and comfortable.

“What do you think you’re doing sitting on the floor, hum—skip?” Papyrus corrects himself, peeking down at you after he heaps his own plate full. “That’s no place for a guest to sit! And I’ll not have my magnificent host status tarnished!”

You grin, taking your first bite of your fluffy pancake, and are happy to find there’s nothing odd about it. It’s just a plain ol’ yummy pancake. “I don’t wanna make a mess on your couch. Plus I can stretch my legs out like this if I sit on the floor,” you say, and let your legs stretch out in front of you, placing your plate off to your side.

Frisk clambers up on the couch behind you, and you go very still when they try to balance their plate on your head for a moment.

“Kiddo, if that thing falls, I’m gonna eat you for breakfast,” you promise. But you don’t budge, letting them fidget. And after a few seconds, they remove their little hands, leaving the plate balanced perfectly on your head.

“Ta-da!” they say.

Papyrus gasps and puts his plate on the armrest of the couch so he can clap. “Brilliant! Sans, sit down so I can try!”

“uh…” Sans grins and cocks a bony brow. He sits down, but glances back at Papyrus. “Think I’ll pass on that one, bro.”

“Oh Sans, come on! I bet I could do it!”

“Bro, I know you could do it, it just…” Sans trails off at the sparkling, crocodile-tear laden eyes his brother gives him. It only takes a moment for him to relent, letting out a sigh and turning back to look at the television. He smirks when he hears you snicker, and you see him glance at you from the corner of his eye.

Papyrus very carefully balances his own plate on Sans’ skull.

“Almost… almost… almost…”

“…hey, bro, isn’t that special you were talkin’ about coming on soon?”

“Oh! Right, hold on! Almost…”

You burst out laughing then, and Frisk has to reach out and grab their plate to keep it from falling off your head and making a big ol’ mess. Eventually the plate antics settle down and Papyrus finds the remote to actually turn on the TV.

The special has already started, much to Papyrus’s dismay.

“Oh no! We missed his opening dance number!”

“no worries, pap, i’m sure the rest’ve the show’ll balance it out for ya.”
“SANS!! THAT WAS THE WORST!!”

You grin and take another bite of your breakfast (the noodles were surprisingly not terrible if you mixed them in with a bite of your pancake) and lean back to focus on the show. Mettaton, it turns out, is a robot. A boxy, calculator looking robot that looks… jarringly like the machine that had caused that weird tile puzzle to go bonkers.

You shake your head though and ask Papyrus to turn up the volume a bit, which he does so happily.

“--And so, with our wonderful Fanmail Fanstravaganza segment over--”

Papyrus whines loudly again. Apparently the Fanmail Fanstravaganza was another part he liked very much. You reach over and give one of his knees a pat.

“--We can move on to our spectacular…” Mettaton snaps his fingers, and in a loud rush his newscast looking setup had changed completely. He was now seated at a desk covered in books and apples, a pair of thick glasses taped over the pixelated screen that you guess is his face, and the back wall of his set was now a chalkboard. “EDUCATIONAL EXTRAVAGANZA!”

You take another bite of your maple noodles. He really likes ‘ganza’ words, huh?

“Are you ready, my tiny beauties?” he hums, and what sounds like a live audience made up of real kids all shout out “YEAH!” And in fact that was confirmed when the camera swirls back towards said audience. Bleachers packed with tiny monsters of all shapes and sizes line the back of the studio. “Say hello, beauties!” comes Mettaton’s voice.

Almost all of the kids giggle and laugh, waving at the camera.

“Oh my god,” you grin, tipping closer. “They’re so cute! Lookit the lil’ baby sheep! Look at he lil baby cat!!”

Sans snorts, setting his empty plate aside as he leaned back, crossing his arms behind his head and letting one eye close lazily. “kids love the overgrown calculator. poor things.”

You get the feeling he’s not nearly as big a fan of Mettaton as Papyrus is, but you just grin and keep watching. You’re honestly excited and fascinated already, and the guy hasn’t even talked about whatever his show was gonna be about.

The camera whirls back to face Mettaton, and there are even more apples on his desk. It’s a bit excessive.

“Today, we’re going to have an exciting history lesson! Now, who here knows the story about how us Monsters were trapped underground?” he asks.

Your already amplified interest skyrockets.

The kids in his audience all roar out a mix of “ME” and “I DO”s.

“My tiny beauties are so clever!” he purrs, pressing his hands over the sides of his boxy head in delight. A pixelated heart appears on his screen-face, and you kind of adore this guy so far. You tip a little closer, resting your elbows on your crossed legs.

“Well, for those of us who haven’t gotten that history lesson yet, or need a refresher, it all began a thousand years ago! Almost to the day!” Mettaton whips out a long pointer stick and smacks it against the chalkboard behind him. Like magic, chalk begins to appear, doodling across the board.
Or, actually, you suppose it is magic. Magic chalk.

A picture of a human outline, and a monster outline, their shape reminding you somewhat of Toriel’s, appears on the board.

“We used to live in harmony with the humans on the surface! We had friends! Family! Thriving business partnerships!” He clicks his tongue, tutting quietly as he shakes his head side to side. “But…humans grew jealous of us, you see! We were so much more in tune with the magic of our Souls, and the magic of the world in general! They grew afraid of us!”

On the board, a jagged line slashes between the monster outline and the human outline, before the two were erased. A new image appears, an army of humans on one side, and an army of monsters on the other.

Absently you reach up and grab at the front of your shirt over your sternum, hesitating.

“Strong as we are with magic, humans are much more powerful than any monster in a battle,” Mettaton said sadly, and looked at the board. “For every one human we were able to defeat, a hundred of us fell. They pushed us back, back, back down into the caverns beneath Mt. Ebott. And knowing we would try to push back, to get back into our beloved sunlight and beneath our beloved stars, they summoned up their seven most powerful Mages!”

The board’s battlefield was erased, and seven human outlines appeared. Over each of their heads was some kind of elemental phenomenon. You make out fire, water, electricity, air? What you guessed was earth, probably plants, and the one at the center had a heart over their head.

You ignore the Captain Planet parallels and keep listening.

“Once every last Monster was forced underground, the Mages worked together to create the Barrier. The Barrier, as we all know, my tiniest of beauties, is what keeps us trapped. Anything can pass through the Barrier to get to the Underground,” Mettaton explains… and the image of the Mages disappears. A new image of a thick wall, with a small monster on one side of it pops up.

The little monster is animated, and tries to push against the wall, but to no avail. A little frowning face appears over the tiny monster’s head.

“…But nothing can leave it,” Mettaton hums sadly. He reaches out a hand and seems to pat the little monster doodle on the head to cheer it up. “Our only hope for escape? To collect seven human Souls!” he says, and his tone changes like he’s trying to sell the audience of kids a new car.

You swallow a bit thickly.

“With seven human Souls, the spell that keeps the Barrier together will be broken! And we can finally see our Stars! Our Sunshine! The Surface!”

He throws his hands in the air, and the kids all cheer excitedly, babbling and talking to one another.

The image of the wall and the little monster disappear, and six hearts are doodled up, along with a dotted outline of a seventh heart.

“We already have six! We’re so close, my beauties! That’s why it’s so important to stay vigilant! To stay true to yourselves and let your hope remain strong! We’re almost there!” Mettaton slaps his pointer stick into his other hand, and even though it’s impossible, when he looks at the camera with his eyeless gaze you feel like he’s staring straight at you.
“One more Soul, and we’ll be free.”

Something in the television fritzes, sparking loudly, and the screen goes black.

You blink, startled out of your thoughts as Papyrus shouts in dismay, leaping over his brother’s head and grabbing either side of the old, boxy television.

“OH NO! SANS! WAKE UP YOU LAZY BONES, SOMETHING’S WRONG WITH THE TV!!” Papyrus cries.

When you glance towards the smaller brother, both of his eyes are closed and he seems to be napping, his chest rising and falling slowly despite there being no lungs beneath that ribcage of his. ...Huh.

Sans cracks an eye open though, snorting. “eh? oh, no worries bro, i’ll fix it up later.”

“BUT METTATON’S SPECIAL!!” Papyrus huffs.

“sounded like it was almost over to me, bro,” Sans says with a shrug. He gets up with a yawn, and with a wave of his hand all of your empty breakfast plates float into the air, following after him as he walks into the kitchen. Despite his grin still being present, and the tone of his voice being just as even and playful as it was before the special started, you can’t help but feel his mood has dropped considerably.

“...Hey, Papyrus?” you speak up slowly, and Papyrus looks away from the television, stopping himself from smacking the side of it to pay attention to you. “Was all that true? Is that really what happened to you guys…?”

“WELL,” Papyrus gives you a shrug. “NOT US, PERSONALLY! THAT WAS A LONG, LONG TIME AGO!! BUT YES!” he glances back at the black screen, frowning in disappointment. “THERE ARE SOME EXTRA DETAILS HE WAS NO DOUBT GOING TO GO INTO IN THE REST OF THE SHOW! BUT...MAYBE IT WILL AIR AS A RERUN LATER AND WE CAN SEE IT THEN!!”

You bring your knees up to your chest and cross your arms over your legs, grunting as you feel Frisk begin to play their little fingertips through your very short hair. “And you only need one more Soul? Really?”

“REALLY REALLY!!” Papyrus puts his hands on his hips, standing and grinning down at you. “BUT FEAR NOT, HUMAN FRIENDS! WE WON’T LET ANYTHING BAD HAPPEN TO EITHER OF YOU! MARK MY WORDS, AS A FUTURE MEMBER OF THE ROYAL GUARD, I’LL KEEP YOU SAFE AND SOUND! YOUR SOULS ARE SAFE!!”

“you’re the coolest, bro,” Sans speaks up, and you look up to see him leaning against the open doorway to the kitchen, his hands stuffed in his hoodie pockets. He looks...tired. His eyelights jump to you, and he gives you a lazy wink. “don’t worry, pal. like pap said, we’ll keep ya safe. trust me when i say you don’t got nothin’ to worry about.”

“He’s right,” Frisk says from behind you, and the confidence in their voice would have startled you if you hadn’t begun to get used to how well they’d been taking everything that was tossed at them in this magical, crazy adventure you were both on. “Everything’s gonna be fine!”

“Pft,” you grin and reach back, giving Frisk’s side a playful poke, and your smile widens when they squeal out a laugh. “I’m not worried about me, you little dork! I just need to make sure my tiny baby sib gets to go home.”
Your gaze shifts back to Sans, and something in your chest...hurts. You press your hand over your sternum again, and watch him look away from you, the bone brows over his eyes furrowing slightly.

You wonder… if maybe you’d fallen down here with your little sibling for a reason?

You look back at Papyrus, who’s gone back to smacking the TV around. Your heart goes out to him, to Sans, and to every monster you’ve met so far. Trapped underneath a human-made barrier for a thousand years? Without the sun? The stars? The fresh air and the breeze and--

Before you can sink even deeper into this new train of thought, Sans clears his throat loudly and draws your attention back to him.

“hey, paps? keep an eye on frisk, will ya? skip said she wanted to head to the store to pick up some stuff for their stay, so i’m gonna walk her over there and help her out.”

“OH! GREAT IDEA!” Papyrus grins, leaving the TV alone again, turning to Frisk excitedly. “WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY--”

“Battle Strategy?! Heck yeah!” Frisk interrupts him, and Papyrus hops up and down in excitement before the two zip up the stairs. They leave you and Sans in a bit of a heavier atmosphere than you’d expected, but when you look back at Sans he’s grinned again.

He shucks off his hoodie and hands it to you, chuckling. “bundle up, pal. it’s still cold out there. always is.”

Chapter End Notes

YO checkout my nerdy Undertale centric Tumblr! (its sfw...mostly, so it survived the tumblr purge lmao)
SAY HI AND COME BE MY FRIEND <3

I'm gonna be grabbing a pillowfort account too as soon as those open up! I'll link it when I can c: <3
Just as he’d said it would be, it was plenty cold outside.

Sans holds the door open while you step down out of the house, and lets the door click shut behind him as he moves onto the snowy path back to Snowdin.

He doesn’t say anything at first, his hands shoved in his hoodie pockets, his sockets lidded tiredly.

There were a lot of ways you could have found out about the barrier, along with (a very abridged version of) the history of the Underground. And some part of him is glad that that’s done and over with. And another part was even glad that he didn’t have to be the one to tell you.

But damn it all, he wishes you’d found out a different way than from a Mettaton special.

It was...a complicated set to work with.

On the one hand, he knew how this story would end. How Frisk would inevitably break the barrier, with no lives lost despite what the rules and what history said was needed. He knew there wasn’t a monster in the Underground that wouldn’t adore Frisk by the end of all of this, that the happy ending they seemed to be pushing for had virtually no chance of not coming true.

But you’re the wrench thrown into the wheels of an otherwise smoothly running machine. A wrench he hadn’t noticed, but one that perhaps had always been there. He still had the feeling in his gut (heh) that you’re the reason for Frisk’s countless resets and re-tries.

And he still needs to figure out and understand why you’ve been absent every single time he’s had the chance to live on the surface for more than a few minutes.

“Hey, Sans?”

Your voice snaps him out of his thoughts and he glances at you. You’ve been walking silently alongside him for...what must have been a few minutes now. You’re already halfway through Snowdin.

“sorry, pal,” he gives you an easy grin. “lost in my head there for a second.”

“Are you…” you seem to hesitate, and your brows bunch up between your bright eyes in concern. “Are you mad? About something?”

He blinks, and the corners of his grin droop slightly. “mad? nah, don’t worry about me. i’m not mad. I’m…” he blew out a huff of a breath. “i’m just kinda wishing you’d learned about down here in a bit more of a delicate sorta way. rather than a crash course from the most irritating metal cube in the
underground,” he grumbles.

You smile at him a little, tilting your head. “Not a Mettaton fan?”

“eh,” he shrugs. “he’s a bit too full of himself for my tastes. but hey, i did take ya outta the house because i did wanna talk to ya.”

“About what was on TV?”

“about what was on tv,” he nods.

“Papyrus said it was all true when I asked. The barrier and everything, and…” You reach up and pluck at the front of your coat, and Sans makes a mental note to try to remember to get you a thicker one at the shop. “How...you all are really trapped and everything? And--”

“we need human souls to break the human spell, yeah,” he mumbles.

It was a bitter subject to so many, and a painful one for everyone else, truth be told. Humans seemed to love making them out to be the villains every chance they got, in every history book he’d ever read. And the few times he’d been able to live on up the surface told him that they’d hardly changed.

Sure, there were plenty of great ones. You and Frisk were proof of that. But there were also the ones who threw rocks, set fires, demanded walls to be built around the mountain--a new barrier to separate them.

And as for the barrier itself, they even left the key to unlocking it and freeing them something that would condemn his kind for using. What were they supposed to do? Rot for all eternity instead?

He feels the bitterness in him grow a bit, gritting his teeth.

“...I’m sorry,” you say suddenly, and he realizes he’s clenching his hands so tightly into his pockets that he’s nearly ripping through the fabric.

“what?” Sans glances at you, his bone brows lifting.

“I mean, I wasn’t there, of course, but-- I’m sorry we did that to you. To all of you, I’m so sorry--”

“buddy.” Sans blinks, snorting as the corner of his mouth quirks into a true smile. “remember that thing i said? a few times, actually. about you apologizing for things you don’t need to apologize for? that was a thousand years ago. if there’s one thing you definitely don’t need to feel sorry for, it’s the actions of a bunch of humans who’ve been dead for hundreds and hundreds of years,” he says.

“Still, that’s… I can’t even fucking wrap my head around how messed up that is, like--?” you struggle to grab at the right words. “Who could…? Just? Throw an entire race under a mountain? And for what? Was it really all about magic?”

Sans shrugs his shoulders. “souls, to be more precise. there’s... a couple things monsters can do with and to a human soul that unnerved your kind so bad they decided the risk outweighed literally everything else.”

“Can I ask what those things are?” you ask, voice soft with curiosity.

He hesitates.

If he did tell you, would you be afraid of them? Of him?
As if you read his mind, you clear your throat. “I’m not gonna run or anything, even if it does freak me out. You guys have been absolutely nothing but the fucking best since we got here. I meant it, Sans, I trust you.”

Sans chuckles, and stops walking. Maybe the shop wasn’t the best place to talk, and he tilts his head, motioning for you to follow.

“i know we just ate, but whaddaya say to a milkshake at grillby’s?”

“Oh, ah,” you pause, and cast a glance back towards the house over your shoulder, and he sees your fingers tick a bit at your sides, like you’re mulling over something. “...Sure, I think I can do that. They got strawberry? Or like, your good ol’ classic chocolate?”

“i’m sure grillbs can shake you up something to meet your tastes.”

“Booo,” you laugh, and follow him towards the monster pub. You slip inside when he holds the door open for you, and he watches you take in the little eatery quietly.

“here, grab us the back booth there, and i’ll get our stuff ordered. you wanted chocolate?” he asks, and when you nod and take a seat, he makes his way to the front of the pub.

Grillby is, as usual, behind the bar, ‘chatting’ away with the bird Monster who’s taken it upon herself to ‘translate’ everything Grillby says. Sans gives her an easy grin, and she greets him happily. As do several of the other patrons when they notice him.

“heya grillbs, two milkshakes for me and my pal back there. one ketchup, one chocolate.”

Grillby, great guy that he was, gives him a silent nod and turns, disappearing into the back to get the shakes made.

“Not sitting at your usual spot, Sansy?” the bird Monster--her name was Feathers--asks, curious.

“nah, me and my buddy have some catching up to do. the bar ain’t the best place for that, y’know?”

“Ooh,” Feathers grins, the smirk on her beak turning sly. “Is she a special buddy?”

“real special,” Sans grunts, his smirk growing. “but maybe not the kinda special you’re thinking.”

* Not yet, anyway.

The sudden, honestly intrusive little thought has him clearing his throat and turning around, leaving Feathers grinning after him as he makes his way back to the booth where you’re waiting for him. You’ve got your arms crossed over the table, playing with a spoon absently, rubbing your thumb over the inside scoop of it.

“hey bud, shakes are on the way,” he announces as he sits down across from you, and he rests his arms on the table as well.

“Cool,” you grin at him. “So, we gonna talk about cool Soul stuff?”

Sans nods. Alright then, right into the thick of it he goes.

“so, human souls and monster souls are...different. and sorry if i repeat stuff you already know, it’s easier to just go through all of it like a high school speech you stayed up all night memorizing, y’know?”
You laugh, and Sans smiles. “Gotcha.”

“okay, so, you already know that monster bodies are made up entirely of magic. It’s what gives us the advantage in using magic in everyday sorta things.”

He lifts a hand, and a blue glow encompasses the spoon you’re playing with. With a quirk of his finger, the spoon slips from your loose grip and twirls in the air slowly.

“from things relatin’ to work, or play, or whatever else. as long as we’re breathin’, we’ve got magic in us. now, humans, they barely have any magic at all in comparison. but the magic that you do have? it’s all hyper condensed into your soul. it’s like every one of you humans has the equivalent of an atomic bomb in your chests,” he says, and lets the spoon drop back into your hand.

“when a monster dies, we turn to dust. our souls disappear right along with our bodies. except for a few very rare occurrences, our souls will be gone before our dust even hits the floor.”

You look uncomfortable, and once again he finds himself wishing he didn’t need to tell you any of this.

“What causes monsters to die?” you ask.

“eh, a lot of the same stuff that can kill a human. old age, mostly. we’re a peaceful bunch, for the most part,” he grins. “anyway, so, there’s almost no possible way for a human, or anyone for that matter, to harvest or do anything with a monster soul after the monster’s death. that’s very much unlike what happens when a human dies.”

You shift in your seat, and he notices you begin to play with that spoon again, like you need something to fidget with. He doesn’t say anything about it.

“when a human dies, their soul often...sticks around for a bit. it’s different from human to human. i’ve heard stories about some souls disappearing just as quick as a monster’s, and some sticking around decades after death. but, the crux of the matter is, when everything is said and done, a human soul is vulnerable to monsters in a way that...in all honesty, nobody likes.”

Grillby arrives then, and sets two tall glasses on the table. His is obnoxiously bright red, and yours is a rich chocolatey brown.

Sans and Grillby share a small nod, and he watches you drag your milkshake closer to yourself, smiling again despite the tenseness Sans can see in your shoulders.

“Thank you,” you say, and Grillby gives you a little nod as well, pausing before he turns and leaves the two of you alone again.

“Sans, hold on, before you go on, is that a goddamn ketchup milkshake?”

Sans laughs, popping the straw Grillby gave him into the drink and giving it a loud slurp. “hits the spot.”

“That’s so gross! You’re so gross!” you laugh, and Sans is relieved at the little break.

Still, it also makes it more difficult to dive back in.

“monsters,” he begins again, after giving you a few moments to just enjoy your shake, “can absorb human souls.”
When you go still, he nods. “and when a monster does so, it...changes them. that’s a lot of raw power for a monster to handle alone, and the two merging supposedly turns them into something more akin to a...well, i’ve heard the word ‘god’ tossed around a lot, but it’s something powerful, that’s for sure.”

You prod at your milkshake with your straw. “And...humans were scared of the idea?”

“terrified.”

“Did it happen a lot?” you ask.

Sans snorts. “no. if it did, it was during...real bad times. grief, loss, all that. a monster absorbing the soul of a dead human lover, desperate to keep them around. or a friend, or...” he pauses, remembering the story of what happened to Asgore and Toriel’s children. “...or a sibling. but monsters don’t have it in them to weaponize something like that. it’s... it’s beyond taboo. it’s beyond unthinkable.”

He leans back, rumbling low in his chest. “humans can weaponize damn near anything though, from what i’ve heard. so if they thought themselves capable, they figured we were more than capable as well. and they locked us away for it.”

You lower your gaze to the table, brows bunching up again.

“...souls are something precious to monsters,” he goes on. “they’re everything we are. everything you are, too. you’re just a little less connected to yours, is all,” Sans shrugged. “but that’s how we’re able to collect the souls we need, as well. the human soul lingers after death, and we...capture it. bottle it up. keep it safe until we have enough soulpower to set us free.”

You take in a slow breath. “...And you just need one more?”

“yeah, but trust me when i say not to worry about that,” he grunts. “we’ll figure something out for that last soul. one thing’s for sure, though,” he settles a heavy stare at you, feeling his own Soul pulse in his chest. “nothing’s gonna happen to either of you. not frisk, and not you.”

You take in another very slow breath...and let it out just as slowly.

“But...something is going to happen to someone else?”

Sans reaches up and rubs a hand over his face, bone scraping over bone. “no, that’s not...that’s not what i meant.” He pauses and before he can think over the action he reaches out, grabbing a gentle hold of one of your hands on the table. “you said you trusted me, right?”

You blink and squeeze his hand, nodding silently.

“then trust me when i say that nothing’s gonna happen. not to anyone.”

He watches you let out a puff of air, your cheeks puffing out as you do so. “...Okay. Okay, I do, I trust you. I just...need to get Frisk back home, you know? I don’t have a lot’ve...”

You trail off, cutting your sentence short, and when you squeeze his hand a little tighter he lets his thumb brush over your skin automatically, and his Soul feels like it’s being crushed.

“...If it was just me, it’d be different, you know? You’ve got Papyrus, you know how it is. He’s your little brother,” you laugh under your breath softly. He knows you’re not going to finish that earlier sentence, and it makes him want to scream. “If Frisk’s not completely and totally safe, I gotta do
whatever I need to make them safe, you know?.”

*Stars*, Sans had never felt the urge to tell somebody about the resets so badly. He wanted to spill everything he knew, let you know that there was practically no safer place for the kid than down here. They were beyond an expert on how to stay safe and alive, and they were beyond an expert at how to free them all without the cost of a single life, just as Sans insisted.

But that also came with a whole lot of baggage to it that he didn’t feel you needed to deal with. And he just...groaned, ducking his head as he tried to figure out what the hell he was supposed to do, or say.

...And again, the fact that you’re here is the metaphorical wrench tossed into a machine he already thought he knew the ins and outs of.

“i get that,” he says finally. “believe me, i do, ‘course i do. i’m just tryin’ to plan ahead and think of the best way to make sure both of you get out fine.”

“And there’s no other way out? Some weird, magic loophole or…?” you wince and drop your chin into your free hand, still holding onto him with your other. “No, sorry. If ya’ll haven’t found some other way out in a thousand years, you would’ve left by now--”

“there’s another way for a human to leave the barrier,” Sans cut in.

When your head whips up to look at him, Sans is pointedly looking anywhere but you. He probably looks as uncomfortable as he feels, and dropping this particular chunk of truth onto your head feels almost cruel. Like dangling a little carrot of hope in front of your face before yanking it back. Because he knows you’re not the sort to even consider trying what he’s about to tell you.

“remember when i said that in very rare occurrences, monster souls can sometimes linger after death?”

“...Yeah?” you mumble.

“a very strong kind of monster is able to persist after death for a little while. we call them boss monsters, and… there are only ever a few of them alive at a time. at the moment? our king is one of them. our absent queen another.” It takes a lot to drag his eyelights to meet your stare. “if you were to take the soul of a boss monster after their death, you could pass through the barrier.”

You were already pale, and now you’ve gone all but chalk white. And he feels terrible for it.

To his surprise, the first thing you do is let out a soft, bitter laugh.

“We really did do, like. Everything we could to make you guys the villains, didn’t we?”

Sans looks away again, letting out a silent sigh from his nasal cavity. “it’s not your fault, bud.”

“So, death or murder? Those are the options,” you laugh again, and for the first time he finds he hates the sound of it. He doesn’t want you to feel like this.

“I’m sorry, Sans. I’m sorry if I’m coming off as ungrateful or anything, or-- I just--” you let his hand go so you can rest your elbows on the table, scrubbing your hands through your very short hair as you duck your head, your face hidden.

Sans scrambles for a way to fix this when he sees what can only be tears start to dot the tabletop.
“hey, hey, hey! it’ll be okay!” he reaches out with both hands, and wraps his phalanges around your wrists gently, silently noting the subtle tremble of your shoulders.

“i...i promise. i promise ya, bud, it’ll be okay. listen, i know it ain’t ideal, but worst case scenario that i’ll let slide? you and frisk stick around down here for a while while we figure things out. you’re going to see the surface again. you’re gonna get frisk home.”

“And you guys?” you manage through a strangled almost-sob.

He goes still, holding a breath he doesn’t actually need.

“...we’ll get out too, bud. we will. and you’re gonna be my favorite tour guide, yeah?”

He smiles when you snort out a laugh. “i mean it! i wouldn’t trust anybody else to show me the ropes up there!” His smile widens when you look up at him, even though he feels his Soul crackle at the sight of those tears on your face.

“besides, i heard it’s real big on the surface. i’m bound to get bonely without ya.”

You snort again, and to his quiet relief and delight you don’t shift back when he releases your wrists to reach out, brushing his thumbs over your tear-tracked cheeks.

“i know it’s scary as hell right now. and i won’t tell you a fibula, a lot of stuff’s in the dark right now. but i’ll watch your back. and frisk’s. like i said, pal, worst that could happen is we’ll have to actually buy you and the kid your own beds to crash in. build ya a little apartment. get ya nice and cozy.”

You laugh and reach up to rub the heel of your hand over your eyes. He wishes he could read your mind. He wants to know exactly how you’re feeling, and wants to do whatever he can to help you back up.

“. . .Thanks, Sans,” you manage after a few moments of getting your shaky breathing under control.

“ayyy, what are friends for?”

Sans brings his hands back reluctantly from you, and wraps them around his milkshake instead, watching you.

“do...you got any questions? about anything? i’m an open book, pal.”

You shrug, wiping your eyes off one more time, and drag your own milkshake closer again, taking a slow drink. “i can’t think of anything right now. is that offer gonna be open all the time?” you grin.

“pft. of course! but after today, each question is gonna cost ya 500g.”

“What!” you laugh, tilting back in your seat.

“you’re right, that ain’t fair. seeing as how you’re a friend and all, i’ll give ya a discount. 800g.”

“That’s not a discount!” you laugh a bit harder.

“you drive a hard bargain. 1000g.”

“Sans!”

He feels something like pride well up when he’s got you laughing in earnest again, letting out a silent sigh of relief at the sound. He wasn’t a fan of the conversation he’d just had with you at all, but it
was as inevitable and necessary as a shot at the doc’s. Even if it was a little painful.

“alright, alright! ...free of charge. just for you,” he grinned and took a long, loud slurp of his ketchup milkshake.

“Honestly I think you owe me money for making me watch you drink that.”

Sans smirks. “you’re gonna have to pry my gs outta my cold, dead fingers, pal.”

You squint at him. “...Was that another skeleton joke?”

“depends on if it tickled your funnybone or not.”

He makes you laugh again, and he’s glad for it.

For a moment, he lets himself believe--lets himself hope--that the hard part is over. That maybe it’ll be smooth sailing from here on out. Nothing but laughs, bad jokes, and an adventure to remember for always.

His grip tightens on his glass, and for a moment his smile doesn’t quite reach his eyes.

I don’t have a lot’ve…

What had you been about to say?

He’d bet all his hard earned gold that you had been about to say ‘time’.

That scared him so thoroughly it made his marrow go cold, and his nonexistent ears caught the slight sound of a hairline crack breaking across his milkshake glass as his grip tightened further.

He covered the sound with a cough and forced himself to loosen his grip before he shattered it completely, crossing his arms lazily over the table and watching you enjoy the rest of your chocolate drink.

Wasn’t it funny how the one thing he’d had more than enough of for countless resets was the one thing you might need more than anyone in the underground put together?

Sans took another drink and repeated his promise to you silently.

You’d be okay. He’d make sure of it.

Chapter End Notes

yO. The 15 Chapter mark!! I'm so excited!

Drop me a bombass comment and say hello! Or if you don't wanna comment or nothin', check out my Undertale Tumblr! Message me there and say hi!

Also lmao, for those of ya'll interested, my dumbass decided to write another fic while I work on this one. It's a Bendy and the Ink Machine one. If you like cute platonic shit, chekkit out yo.
With the heavy, terrible, no-good, and fucking awful conversation topics thoroughly out of the way, you’re more than happy when Sans seems eager to press into different things to talk about. You get the sense that he’s trying to distract you from the weight of all the new information he dropped on your head, and you’re grateful for it. Just like you’re also grateful for said info dump.

It was...terrifying to hear all of that, truth be told.

You wanted to trust what Sans said about how everything was going to be alright, but… after your diagnosis, and your terribly quick decline in health, the number over your head representing the days you had left shrinking quicker than you could bear, the phrase “Everything’s gonna be okay” didn’t sit the same with you as it once did.

Maybe you really would die down here. Maybe Frisk was gonna be stuck.

It was a terrifying thought, but… at least you’d die knowing Frisk had some fantastic new friends to look out for them. At least you’d die with those friends beside you, one way or another. At least you had a chance to hold onto that warm, happy feeling that had grown and grown in you since you practically fell into this strange and magical place.

...What would it be like, growing up in the Underground?

“...--okay?”

Sans’ voice takes a moment to reach you again and you straighten up, dragging your almost-empty milkshake glass closer.

“Sorry, what was that?” you give him a grin, shaking your head.

Sans pauses before he lets out a little knowing chuckle. “just asked if you’re feelin’ okay, pal. looked like you were zoning there.”

“Pft, I was,” you say with a snort, and drink down the rest of your chocolate shake. It’s honestly the best chocolate shake you’ve ever had, and you dunno whether to chalk it up to the magic, or Grillby’s skills at treat-crafting. Maybe both? Both sounded pretty good.

Sans has already downed his--you hold back a shudder--ketchup milkshake, and stands from the table with a grunt, stepping out of the booth. When he holds a hand out for you to take to help you up, you take it without hesitation. He tugs you up to your feet easily, and when he doesn’t let your hand go, a little warmth eases its way into your chest, soothing the worry and anxiousness a little more.

“put it on my tab, grillbz!” Sans calls, and you glance over your shoulder to see Grillby give the two of you a curt nod before Sans leads you back into the chill of Snowdin.

He doesn’t let go of your hand, keeping you close. You glance down at your joined hands, and you marvel again at how warm he is. How different he is. And when you brush your thumb over one of the inhumanly thick bones that make up his ‘palm’, he looks away from the road and down at you.
“...you’re doin’ that thing again,” he says, and when you look up at him he’s got that teasing smirk of his stretched across his skull.

“...Uh?”

“the hand thing, pal.”

You flush a little darker, but when you loosen your grip to let him go and quit squishing and prodding and bugging, his own grip tightens just a smidge. Keeping you from yanking away.

“didn’t say it was a bad thing. just wonderin’ if you’d actually like a little hands-on lesson,” he grins.

He stops then, the two of you alone as you stand in the snowy road, thick flakes beginning to accumulate gently on both of your shoulders. Still holding onto your hand, he lifts his own up, and then spreads his long fingers out wide for you to inspect up close, letting you go.

You don’t hesitate to reach up with both hands to start squishing and prodding and bugging, grinning a bit. Once again, you marvel at how cozy warm he is to the touch. But now that you can get a closer look, his hand is so much different than the pictures you’ve seen in your past science and health classes. Similar to what you saw of his bare arms, some of the bones seem fused, and they move and shift against each other smoothly. Like, well, magic.

Sans’ other hand comes up, and you distractedly notice that he’s shifted a bit so he’s standing directly in front of you rather than at your side. The blue of his hoodie fills your peripheral vision, and you try not to feel flustered as he gently starts to guide your touch over his own hand.

“these are the metacarpals,” he says, going over the thick bones that would make up his palm. He brings your fingertips up along one of his own, voice soft. “proximal...intermediate...and distal phalanges.”

“This is all vaguely familiar,” you grin, and you hear him chuckle over you. “Man, I’ve got these in my own dang hands, you’d think I’d remember what all the bits are called.”

“i’ve got a bit of a background in science. i’d never hear the end of it if i forgot somethin’ like my own anatomy,” he snorts, and when you look up at him curiously he’s...a lot closer than you thought he was.

The tip of your nose practically grazes where his own would be, if he had one. He’s hunched down a bit, both his hands still tangled with yours. His eye lights jump up from your joined hands and meet yours... and the both of you almost jerk back. Like neither of you had really been paying attention to how the two of you almost seemed to gravitate towards each other like a pair of lost magnets.

“sorry,” he says almost immediately, and you’re quick to scramble and brush the flustered feeling in your gut aside.

“A, um--! A science background, huh?”

Sans seems just as quick to hop onto the topic, making a noise like he’s clearing his throat as he nods. “mhm. nothin’ too fancy. used to work at the underground’s lab way back in the day,” he says with a shrug.

“That’s actually really cool,” you say, and you mean it. “You don’t strike me as the super sciency type.”

You hesitate, and when you look up at him he’s got that smirk on his face again, cocking one bony
brow down at you.

“oh?”

“That-- I don’t mean that like an insult or anything bad, like-- I mean, I don’t think I look like the sciency type either?”

“...it’s the ketchup, ain’t it?”

You laugh, ducking your head and squeezing his hands tightly.

He squeezes back.

“here, c’mon. i was takin’ ya to the store, and here you are distractin’ me with your un-sciency ways.”

“I'll have you know,” you quip, and your tired heart does a little flipflop in your chest when he continues to hold onto your hand as you start walking again. “That I got super average grades in science. Thanks.”

“welp,” Sans shrugs his shoulders, keeping his eyes on the road in front of him as his smirk grows. “we can’t all be perfect.”

You laugh and nudge your arm into his, and your smile widens when he laughs as well.

It’s a welcome mood shift from Grillby’s.

Sans brings you to the conjoined buildings at the beginning of the little sleepy town. The one labeled ‘shop’ and ‘inn’ just beside Snowdin’s welcome sign. He lets go of your hand and pushes the door of the shop open to hold it for you, letting you duck inside before him. The change in temperature has you shivering a bit, glad for the warmth, and your eyes are immediately drawn to a tall, soft looking rabbit monster behind the counter.

“Heya, Sans,” she says, lifting a paw in greeting. “Who’s your friend?”

“hey, bonnie,” Sans nods, and then touches a hand to your back. “this is skip. she’s gonna be crashing with me and paps for a bit. just got outta the ruins, can ya believe it?”

“The Ruins?” Bonnie blinks in surprise. “I wasn’t sure if there were any monsters still living on the other side of that door or not! But, here you are!” she grins. “Welcome to Snowdin! I take it you probably want a new jacket to help keep you warm? I notice you don’t have any fur of your own,” she hums.

You glance down at the coat you’ve got, plucking at it. It wasn’t a bad jacket, but… it wasn’t a Snowdin jacket either. “Ah…”

“Or are you like our friend Sans here, and the cold just… how do you say it, Sans?”

He grins, his eyelights practically sparkling at the chance to make a joke. “it goes right through me,” he says.

Bonnie laughs happily and so do you, and Sans looks like he takes a moment to just bask in it.

“but, yeah, you’re right, she’s gonna need a new jacket. got anything that’d fit her?”

“I’ll check!” Bonnie nods, smiling brightly. “In the meantime, browse away! We got some new
things from the dump yesterday, so you’re pretty much getting first pick!” She grins and ducks below the counter, rummaging through what you can imagine must be boxes or shelves.

“The dump?” you echo as you follow Sans a bit deeper into the little shop.

“it’s what it sounds like,” he says, and grabs a couple of boxes of spaghetti from a shelf. “it’s how we have any human tech at all. a lot of our stuff comes from the surface, actually. it all just filters down through a waterfall over in, uh. waterfall.”

“You gotta work on those names,” you laugh, and reach out to look over a mostly intact looking tin of earl grey tea. You pry the lid open and smile in delight when you see that the tea bags are dry and in good condition. “Can we get this? I love earl grey!”

“a’course,” he grins and takes the tin, setting it down on the spaghetti boxes in his arms. “anything else?”

“Frisk and I need toothbrushes…” you hum, and scan the aisles. Everything’s sort of mixed and mashed, there’s no real order to them, so you have to take your time to make sure you don’t miss something. You grin when you find a wide jar filled with clean, unopened plastic wrapped toothbrushes, and grab two of them.

“And then stuff like pajamas and…”

You hesitate and look back at Sans. You don’t say a word, but he seems to somehow read your mind, the skeleton shaking his head.

“don’t worry about paying for it. and don’t worry about paying anything back. and don’t,” he went on, and his eyelights dimmed slightly. “think you’re imposing. because you’re not. trust me, pal,” Sans snorts, and you huff when he makes a show of reaching over your head to grab a bag of mini marshmallows.

“if i didn’t like you, or want you around, you’d know.”

You laugh a little under your breath, but despite his words you still feel...weird about all this. You really don’t want to just dump yourself and Frisk on him and Papyrus, especially when the two have been more than brilliant and sweet to the both of you. “I just… I don’t wanna take advantage or anything, you know?”

Sans pauses, blinking his eye sockets several times (you wonder if you’re ever gonna get used to that sight) before looking down at you again.

“…remember that thing we talked about? about monster magic and our souls?”

“Kinda...hard to not,” you grunt, and you pluck at the front of your coat almost nervously, the conversation you’d had at Grillby’s still shiny and fresh in your mind.

“not that. before that. yesterday.” Sans turns a bit so he’s facing you. “intention means everything when it comes to magic and monsters. it’s why most of us are lousy at lying. it’s why we make friends so quick and so easy. or, i mean, it’s a part of why.” He adjusts his armful of items, and his eyelights are locked on you, bright and narrow.

“not everyone’s got the skill for it, but a lot of us have really good intuition. we can almost feel what someone else is feeling if we focus hard enough. all monsters have some degree of empathetic magic in their makeup. and a few can read the intentions of others like they’re an open book.”
You almost shrink a bit under his stare. Shit, were you an open book? That was embarrassing. You hope you were a cool book.

“that was a whole lotta words for me to just tell you that i know you’re not taking advantage of anybody,” he grunts. “i happen to have a real sharp sense for these sorta things. i’d know firsthand if you were the sort i’d rather not let stay under my roof.”

You shift a little uncomfortably, and despite him practically singing your praises, you feel like you’re under one of those really bright lights in a dimly lit interrogation room. Your eyes dart to the side, his stare a little too intense for you-- oh, shit, was that a jar of Biscoff spread?

“...hey.”

“Mm?” you grunt, and you feel yourself lock up a bit; flustered and nervous and lost.

A careful touch at your jaw guides you to look back up at him. Sans has his groceries tucked easily beneath one arm, and his other hand--warm as ever--stays at your jaw and cheek.

“you’re a good soul. i can feel it. paps can feel it. pretty sure everyone you’ve met can feel it. you and frisk are good, through and through. i’d be a real numbskull if i didn’t notice that.”

When you snort out a quiet laugh he seems to relax a bit, smiling at you like he’s relieved.

“sorry,” he says after a moment. “i know i got a little heavy. but i don’t want you thinkin’ you’re unwelcome or, stars forbid, that you’re some kinda burden when you aren’t. truth be told? this is kinda excitin’. a real jump from the norm, y’know?”

“Oh, so I’m just shiny and new, huh?” you grin, teasing him, and you laugh and feel more at ease than ever when he snorts and sputters out his own laugh.

Sans shakes his head. “nono, don’t go puttin’ words in my mouth, pal, my bro says i’m good enough at doin’ that myself,” he laughs again and grabs the jar of Biscoff you’d spotted, tossing it onto the pile in his arms.

“now let’s get you and the kid those pjs, eh?”

“Can I help carry anything?”

“nah, no need,” Sans grins. “...in fact i’m feelin’ a little too lazy to carry anything anyway,” he adds with grunt, and suddenly drops everything he’d been holding.

You yelp and go to catch what you can, but before any of the items can hit the floor they’re wrapped up in the familiar blue glow of his magic and float back upwards. When you squint up at him his shoulders are shaking in silent laughter.

“Don’t do that!” you grin though, and he just shrugs his shoulders and keeps moving down the aisle, the items floating alongside the both of you.

You manage to find a couple pair of pajamas and regular clothes for Frisk, but nothing that’ll fit you. Everything’s either way too small (and how come everything on the tiny side was patterned with stripes?), or way too big. Eh, you’re not too worried about it, though. You remember Toriel had said she’d tailored a few of her old dresses for you, so you know you could at least wear something like that to bed, and you’d have a couple changes of clothes.

“eh,” Sans shrugs again, letting the pajamas add to the floating trail of stuff behind him. “no worries
about that, you can wear a couple’ve my old shorts and shirts if you’re really keen on some pjs, bud.”

...Or you could do that, too.

“And if push comes to shove, pal? Paps and I could try our hands at helpin’ to make you some stuff, too.”

“Okay, hold up,” you hold your hands up and stop, and you sputter out a laugh when Sans stops to tilt his head back towards you. “Firstly! Okay, firstly,” you hold up a finger. “You’re being way too sweet, and if you don’t let me try to figure out some way to pay you and Papyrus back somehow, I’m gonna throw such a tantrum!”

Sans’ own smile quirks up a bit more, chuckling, but before he can say anything you hold up a second finger.

“Secondly! You can sew?”

“Eh,” Sans takes a hand from his hoodie pocket and wiggles it a bit. “I guess you could say I’m sew-sew at it.”

“...Shut up,” you snort. “That’s a really cool skill to have, I wish I’d learned.”

“I can teach ya, if ya want,” he offers, and then holds up his hands as if to ward you off as you squint at him again. “What, too sweet again? Sorry, pal, you just seem like the type that likes sugar.”

You sputter out another laugh and press your hands to your face.

The weight of the conversation you’d had at Grillby’s feels like it’s been forgotten completely. The feeling you get just talking to the tall, goofy skeleton in front of you is like filling up a void in your chest you’d been ignoring until now. Something in you lights up when he laughs along with you.

“Hey!” Bonnie suddenly calls, drawing both of your attentions. “Lovebirds, I got a couple different jackets that might fit!”

You turn your head as you hear Sans grumble, and you twist to head back to the front of the shop. Bonnie has two jackets laid out on the counter, both of them looking roughly the same size. And both of them look a tad too big for you, but... not big enough for you to brush them off.

“Can I try them on?” you ask, and when Bonnie laughs out a happy “Of course!” you pluck one up and slip it on over the measly fall-weather coat you’re already wearing. It’s got a hood full of warm fur, and all you have to do is pull it up over your head and tighten the strings before you let out a sigh.

“This is the one,” you hum, face half hidden beneath the fur-lined hood.

“Not gonna try the other one on?” Bonnie grins.

“The other one doesn’t have this super soft hood,” you practically purr. Plus, this one had a ton of pockets all over the front, and big buttons rather than a zipper. “One more thing though,” you push the hood back and watch Bonnie tuck the other jacket away under the counter again. “Do you have any jackets this warm for a kid?”

Bonnie gives you a wink. “That’s an easier size to find. What kinda monster is the kiddo? Same as you?” she asks.
Before you could answer, Sans spoke up. “They’re about yae high,” he said, and held a hand up to show Bonnie Frisk’s height. “And about yae wide,” he adds, and holds both of his hands apart.

Bonnie nods and dips below the counter.

“They got a favorite color?” she calls.

“Um…” you scrunch up your nose. Frisk’s favorite color tended to fluctuate. Sometimes they’d answer the question with “the rainbow!” or “whatever crayon I pull outta the box first!” But you grin and remember the beautiful color of their Soul. “Got anything in red?”

Bonnie pops back up, her long ears perked up in delight as she shows you a thick coat that looks like it would fit Frisk just fine. Fire engine red with shiny silver zipper. You take it and look it over, grinning.

“This’ll be perfect! Thanks so much!”

“Of course!” Bonnie pats the countertop with her paws happily. “Let me ring up everything else for you, then?”

Sans steps up beside you and shows her the items one by one, moving them onto the counter with his blue magic. She tallies everything up in her head, the tips of her ears twitching as she mentally keeps track, and begins to load up all your things into a couple paper bags.

“Since you’re new to Snowdin, and a friend of Sans, I’m gonna toss in a couple Cinnabunnies in on the house,” she grins.

You feel yourself turn pink; honestly how come everyone down here was so damn nice?

“Aw, shucks, Bonnie,” Sans grins. “There’s just no cinnamonster as swell as you, is there?”

“I said I was giving you a couple Cinnabunnies, not a discount,” she tacks on dryly, and grins when you bark out a laugh. “Welcome to Snowdin, Skip. Keep the bonehead outta trouble, will you?”

“Hey,” Sans chuckles as he hands over a little satchel that jingles with coins. “Puns are my thing. I don’t take kindly to competitors.”

“Well then, square up,” Bonnie huffs, sticking her nose in the air, and you decide you like her a whole helluva lot.

“Oh, shit,” you hum, tilting back. “Sorry Sans, but my money’s on Bonnie. She looks like she’s got a crazy strong kick.”

“Oh, Cinnahoney, you have no idea,” Bonnie says, and looks proud of herself when Sans laughs out loud, and even prouder when it pulls a giggle puffy puff of air from you too.

“Just take our cinnamoney so we can get outta here,” San grins through his laughter, plucking up the two large paper bags all your items fit in.

You button up your new jacket, delighted with everything about it. You were already starting to overheat standing in the shop with it on; you knew it would suit the outside here perfectly. “Yeah, we’ll get outta your fur before he can try to pull any more Cinnafunnies.”

Bonnie squeals in delight, and Sans starts laughing so hard you have to reach up and push at his back to nudge him back out into the snow through the shop’s door, grinning proudly under your new fur-
lined hood as he tilts his head back and lets you shove him along.

“It was nice meeting you!” you call over your shoulder back towards Bonnie before the door closes, and she waggles one long ear at you as she continues to laugh.

The snow crunches under your shoes as Sans finally grapples enough control to walk in a straight line on his own again.

“cinnafunnies. hell, that was a good one,” he says as his laughter slows, his wide shoulders shaking. He falls into step beside you easily, matching your pace as if it’s as natural as his own.

You feel light as a feather. Your insides feel bright and giggly, like there’s a sparkler going off behind your ribs. This wasn’t going to be so bad. This wasn’t going to be so scary. The monsters down here didn’t know what you were, and more importantly, they didn’t know what Frisk was. They were sweet, and welcoming, and kind. This would be fine. It would be okay.

You slip your hands into your new pockets and look up, and your bright smile fades a little, the sparkler slowly snuffing out in your chest as you eye the cavern ceiling so high above you.

...Were you really gonna give up on the idea of trying to leave so quick? The options to do so were unthinkable, so of course you weren’t going to actually consider doing what it took to get through that barrier, but… Shouldn’t you feel worse about it?

What about your parents?

What about your friends back up on the surface?

What about the life you had up there? What about the life Frisk was supposed to have up there?

You look down from the cavern ceiling, and that sparkler that had been burning so brightly a moment ago has snuffed out completely.

Were you really just gonna sit back and pretend you were gonna live happily ever after down here?

“S…”

Was it just so easy to accept because you weren’t going to be around for much longer to care or worry? Was that it? Was this new, happy acceptance just you giving up?

“Sans?” you hear yourself call without really meaning to, a thick question already forming on the tip of your tongue. You wince and look down, staring at the sparkling white snow.

“what’s up, buddy?”

“...I wanna ask you something,” you say slowly. “But you have to promise me you’ll take it as a hypothetical question. And that you won’t...dig?”

You hear Sans grunt almost inaudibly beside you. “a’course, pal. ask away. i told ya all your questions are free of charge, remember?"

You manage a little laugh, nodding. “Yeah, I… yeah.”

Was it fair to Sans? Or Papyrus? To dive into some new, impossible, crazy life? To make friends and promises, only to leave them all in probably just a few month’s time…?

It wasn’t fair at all. Or, at the very least, it… it wasn’t fair to dive in without telling anybody.
Especially not the skeleton you were practically trusting with Frisk’s life after you...go.

“Let’s pretend… that you’re sick,” you say slowly, and you look away from him as the two of you continue to walk, staring out into the snowy forest and catching bits and pieces of muffled laughter and conversations from the monsters living further in town.

“You’re sick, and you know you don’t have a lot of time left before that sickness catches up to you. And takes you away.” You reach up and fiddle with one of the buttons of your new jacket. You don’t hear the paper handles of the bags Sans is holding crinkle as his grip tightens.

“Suddenly, you and...Papyrus find yourself in a whole new world. Everyone you meet is supposedly dangerous, but you meet these two people that make you feel safer and happier than you’ve been since before you even found out you were sick in the first place. Escape from this new world is beyond impossible and...you’re stuck. And they tell you everything’s gonna be okay, they give you a place to stay.”

You breathe out a shaky breath, watching the air cloud in front of you.

“Hell, these two weirdos offer you a new home. You’re so grateful you can’t come up with the words. And it scares you how... h-how easy it is,” you go on, and your voice cracks. “To just...go with the idea. And maybe you’ll freak out about it later, maybe it hasn’t really even sunk in yet, but you’re okay with sticking around. And you’re really afraid it’s because you know that, for you, it doesn’t matter.”

You hear Sans’ footsteps stop.

You take a few more steps before you can stop as well. But you keep talking, your back facing him.

“You’re gonna die in a couple months, probably. So what’s it matter, right?”

You feel hot, burning tears glaze over your eyes and you hate it. You want to go back to laughing with Sans and Bonnie in the shop. You want to go back to those milkshakes at Grillby’s.

“But you realize that means you’re gonna leave Frisk alone, and you’re just gonna--gonna what? Expect these two people you’ve just met to look after them? I can’t do that t’you, I can’t do that to either of you,” you curl your arms around yourself, staring down at the snow in front of you, and your tears drip free. Absently you wonder if it’s cold enough for them to freeze before they hit the ground. ...Probably not.

“And I definitely can’t keep it to myself, right? I can’t just--make friends and then--a-and then fucking die,” you choke.

You lift your hands and press the heels of your palms into your eyes, your breath hitching roughly.

“But I need Frisk t’be okay, and I don’t know what to do.”

You’re sobbing now. Everything hurts.

“I don’t know what to do, and I don’t wanna leave them alone, and I don’t want to hurt you, or Papyrus, or--”

A pair of strong, warm arms wrap around your shoulders, and you feel your back press to the ribs of Sans’ chest as he holds onto you tightly. He’s hunched low enough to press his forehead against your shoulder, and with your own body shaking like a leaf you don’t notice the tremble in his own.
Your breath hitches again, and you drop your hands from your eyes so you can hold onto the sleeves of his hoodie, your knuckles going white.

“...you wanna know what i’d do?” he says slowly, and his voice is like distant, gentle thunder against your shoulder. You feel his voice vibrate against your back. “i’d say to hell with it. life is short, doesn’t pull its punches, and it’s not fair. it’s not fair at all.”

He squeezes you gently.

“i’d become the best damn friends i could with those two weirdos. ‘cause they’d want me to, even knowing everything. even knowing that time is short, even knowing what it’d mean and what it’d cost. ‘cause there isn’t a damn thing more important.”

You hiccup and duck your head, pressing your forehead into one of his arms, and your tears immediately begin to soak into the blue fabric. He doesn’t budge.

“i’d live out every moment i could to its fullest. those weirdos told me their souls ran on love and compassion and they damn well meant it. they haven’t known me very long, but it’s in their nature to care, and they already care so damn much.”

Sans moves, loosening his hold on you. You actually let out a breathy protest, clinging to his sleeves, but then he twists you with a gentle tug. You barely have time to take in a breath before he’s hugging you properly, his arms wrapped tight around your back and his teeth pressed to the top of your head.

“i’d…” Sans’ arms hold you even closer, and he lets out such a shaky breath when you curl your arms around his ribcage as best as you can that his bones actually rattle. “...i’d trust myself to know what was best for my family. i’d trust myself, and i’d know that i could go to my new friends for whatever i needed. they’d listen. they’d care. they’d do whatever they could to help. no fees, no strings attached, no nothing. ‘cause i know my friendship means the world to them.”

You press your face against his chest, squeezing him in that desperate hug. You feel like all your limbs are full of lead, leaning against him completely.

He lets you cry, going silent then.

You wonder if he’ll ever know how much his words mean to you. There’s no way you could begin to muster up the right words to string together to even begin to tell him. All you can do is hold on tighter and breathe out a quaking “thank you” into the blue of his hoodie.

Sans supports you like you’re made out of feathers and cotton fluff, one of his large hands stroking up and down your back while the other shifts up and cradles the back of your head, the tips of his phalanges (distal, you remember in a foggy haze) grazing over your scalp gently. Your stomach drops in a familiar, tickling sort of way, like driving too fast over a hill.

It’s a few long, tiring moments until Sans finally draws back. He doesn’t let you go, but he shifts just far enough away so there’s some space between you and him.

When you open your eyes, you’re startled that it’s equally as dark with them open as it was with you pressed to Sans’ chest.

“...brought you home,” he murmurs, voice barely above a whisper. The only thing you can see right now are his two eyelights. Like stars in the black. “feeling okay? i mean—not sick or anything from the jump…?”
You hiccup and shake your head. And then realize it’s pitch dark and he probably can’t see you, so you mumble out a soft “I’m okay,” and your voice is raw and drained.

“i figured you might not wanna walk through the front door like this,” he said softly. “we’re in my room. can i talk ya into maybe getting a little extra shut-eye? today was...full for ya, huh?”

You sputter out a breathy sob that you meant to be a laugh, and you feel him touch his teeth to your forehead.

“yeah, you’ve had a full day,” he mumbles. “and it ain’t even lunch time yet. here, c’mon.”

He summons up a blue bone that floats over his head, and the gentle glow of it casts just enough light to see his outline, your own, and the walls closest to you. He curls one arm around your waist and kneels down, dragging you along with him.

His bed just looks like a thick mattress shoved into the corner, and if you weren’t so worn out you might have teased him for it. As it was, you let him coax you into stretching out on top of it, and by the time he’s done wrestling with a ball of wadded up blankets beside you to lay them out over you, you’re barely awake.

“you sleep as long as you need to, bud,” he says softly. You feel his fingers comb through your very short hair. “pap’ll save ya some lunch. i’ll let ‘em know you’re taking a nap.”

You nod, exhausted.

“i need to head back outside though. kinda left all our goodies out in the snow,” he snorts, and draws his hand away from you. “i’ll leave ya to sleep. want me to check on ya later…?”

You don’t answer for a moment, and in the blue glow of his magic you can see his bone brows bunch up as he searches your face.

“...Sans?” you begin.

“yeah, bud?”

“...I meant what I said earlier,” you say, and let your eyes close. “...You better let me pay you guys back somehow or I’m gonna throw the biggest damn tantrum.”

Sans snorts, and you feel him tuck the blankets a bit more around you.

“get some sleep, skipper,” he says. Your heart warms through its tired, exhausted haze at the nickname.

“You’re not the boss of me, bone boy,” you huff, but there’s a smile in your voice, and he chuckles softly as he stands and leaves the space in front of you. When you crack one eye open you don’t see his magic or his eyelights in the dark, and you lift one arm to hug onto his pillow, fresh tears welling up in your eyes.

The pillow smells like ketchup and Sans.

You hug it a little tighter and fall asleep.

Chapter End Notes
Check out my [Undertale Tumblr](#) and come say hullo!
Sans stood there for what felt like hours. His hands stuffed in the pockets of his sweatshirt, shoulders hunched, staring down at the bags from the store, still sitting in the snow where he’d dropped them so he could reach out and hold you.

He’d been right.

That horrible, twisting feeling in his gut had been right.

You were sick, and you were--

You--

He can’t even think the word. Can’t let it form in his mind. Like doing so might make the cruel truth of it that much more palpable and real.

His regular grin was curved downwards in a hollow grimace, and the eyelights in his sockets had long been extinguished. In his chest, his Soul was *screaming*. It felt as if it were trying to rip itself out of his rib cage, *to hell with his 1 HP*, and get back to his room where he’d left you to rest. Every bone in his body wanted to go back to you. Every bone in his body was furious he hadn’t picked up the bags and gone back home yet.

But Sans *can’t* move.

There was still a damp spot on his chest where you’d cried, your tears nearly soaking right through to his ribs.

* stars, you were--

“Sans?”

A soft, familiar voice crackles up, pulling Sans from his thoughts just enough to make the skeleton lift his head slightly. His black stare falls on Grillby, the tall flame elemental standing just a few feet away, holding an umbrella over his head to keep the snowflakes from melting into his body.

“...Sans, you’ve been standing out here for over an hour,” Grillby says gently. The man never was one to speak much, and Sans always felt a little special when Grillby seemed to favor talking to *him* the most out of all the people in Snowdin. Hell, the entire Underground, even. Though maybe that had to do with ‘em being best buds, huh? Or, at least, the closest Sans had ever had to a ‘best bud’ before.

He thinks of you for a moment. And he thinks that...that you would have a real easy time taking up that mantle too. He was a big skeleton, he had plenty of room for best buds, right? His arms were as big as they were ‘cause he was great at huggin’. Yeah, you’d take up that title quick as a flash, wouldn’t you? Barrel in and grab it without even meaning to.

* why’s everything hurt so bad?*

A violent shiver crawls up his spine, and Grillby takes a step closer to him.
“...Sans,” Grillby says again, and his voice is more firm. More laced with concern than it was before. “Say something. Please. What is it?”

“heh,” Sans chuckles, though the sound is as empty as his eyes, and he looks back down at the bags in the snow. “was just thinkin’ of a new shtick for my stand-up act. might be my best one yet. s’gonna have balloons and everything. the kids’ll love it.”

“Sans,” Grillby growls, and there’s enough heat in his voice to make the skeleton pause and look up again. “Stop it.” He moves closer, holding the umbrella with one hand, and reaching out to touch Sans’s shoulder with the other. “...What happened?” he crackles.

“nothin’ happened,” Sans says, and he hates the disappointed breath he hears leave Grillby. “nothin’ happened! i just--! 1...” he trails off, and his eyes shut tightly, hissing through his clenched, scowling teeth.

“...Is this about your human friend?” Grillby asks very quietly, and his grip loosens on Sans’ shoulder when the skeleton jerks to look up at him.

Sans doesn’t realize he does it, but his left eye flares, a wicked blue glow that burns as bright as Grillby’s fire, defensive and threatening like a cornered animal.

Grillby doesn’t flinch or show any signs of taking that threat to heart, however. “I’m not going to tell anyone,” he promises. “I hadn’t planned on it in the first place.”

Sans relaxes, even if only slightly. The blue light in his socket goes out.

...Good ol’ Grillbz.

“She’s real sick, grillbz,” Sans hears himself mutter, and he winces, gritting his teeth. “D-don’t tell her i said that. don’t tell her i said anything. please.”

“I won’t,” he says, voice gentle. “...Is that why she was crying at my booth earlier?”

Sans flinches again, a low growl leaving his ribcage. “...nah,” he mutters. “That was what happened when i told her she might be stuck down here a while. till the barrier’s gone and all that.”

“...You mean until we get a seventh Soul.”

“yeah,” Sans bites out. “And it ain’t gonna be either of theirs.”

“Of course not,” Grillby nods slowly, and steps a little closer so the umbrella is partially shielding Sans as well, as snow has begun to accumulate over his shoulders and the top of his skull. “I just mean none of us know when that will be.”

“maybe we don’t need a seventh soul,” Sans grumbles.

* what did it matter? who cared if they got out or not now? you weren’t... gonna be there.

* what was he gonna do?

* what was little frisk gonna do...?

Sans shakes his head, shivering even though he never felt the cold.

Grillby goes silent. So silent for so long that Sans honestly forgets he stood just beside him, losing himself in his own thoughts again.
He’d do so much for you, and he wants you to know that. He wants you to know he’s in your corner. Papyrus is in your corner. And Stars knew that Frisk was in your corner, too.

Sans clenches his teeth, looking out into the trees.

“...You like her,” Grillby says after an eon, making Sans blink and look up.

“'course i like her,” Sans says gruffly.

“I’m not blind, for one, Sans,” Grillby hums. “You like her.”

“What is this, primary school? she’s a friend, grillbz. she’s a real good friend.”

“Oh, please,” Grillby, despite having no discernable mouth, was obviously frowning. “You’re going to look me in the eye and tell me I’m wrong?”

Sans does look him in the eye, but... growls out a sigh and looks away a moment later.

“...s’different for humans, grillbz. they don’t fall so quick as us.”

“And?”

“And what?” Sans snaps again, glaring down at the bags still in the snow. “i ain’t standin’ here needin’ to hear datin’ advice, grillby, i’m tryin’ to figure out what i’m gonna do when she’s dead and gone. and the way she was talking? that might be a hell of a lot sooner rather than later.”

He reaches up and drags one of his hands across his skull, his distals scraping the bone loudly, almost painfully.

“My soul’s wanting me to stay close and keep her safe. sticking at her side’s the only thing that’s made it stop hurtin’, grillby. and it’s been...it’s been feelin’ like it’s been trying to rip itself to pieces for years.”

Grillby was silent, watching Sans reach back and yank his hood over his head, tugging it low over his face.

“I want her happy, grillbz. y’know? and--and what if i can actually manage to help her be happy? i want to. i wanna help. i want her t’know i wanna help. i think she does, i mean... i told her i’d be here, i told her i’d do anything she needed, so? that has to mean something, right?”

Grillby remains quiet as ever.

“Maybe it’ll...take a bit, but...maybe i can be somethin’ for her. humans don’t listen to a damn thing their souls tell ‘em,” Sans gruffs, and stuffs his hands in his pockets again, hood still tucked over his forehead, hiding his eyes. “but i wouldn’t care how long it took. just... i hope i get... some of her time. is it selfish t’want that? some of her time?”

Grillby doesn’t say a word.

“...i dunno,” Sans breathes out a sigh, closing his eyes tightly. “especially seeing as how her time’s so damned precious. she means the whole world to frisk, and frisk means just as much to her, and... i don’t wanna butt in. i don’t wanna start hoping i could ever be more important t’her than frisk, y’know?”

“...Are you going to often compare Papyrus’ importance to hers?”
“what?” Sans looks up and blinks, frowning. “no. it’s completely different, it’s…” he hesitates, then rolls his eyes, the tiniest smirk lighting up his otherwise tired, sullen expression. “yeah, okay, i getcha.”

Grillby seems to smirk a bit, still holding that umbrella steady.

“i just want her happy. that’s all. even if it’s just for a little while, it… it feels like i’d rather fall down than leave her t’go through this on her own.”

Grillby adjusts his grip on the umbrella just slightly, and his voice was very soft, his fiery brows arching over the eyes hidden behind his fogged over glasses. “...Have...you considered that maybe…”

Sans looks up at him, cocking a brow, but Grillby trails off and simply shakes his head rather than continue.

“...Nevermind. But I think your Soul is in the right place, Sans.”

Silence settles between them, punctuated only by a gust of cool wind that Grillby angles the umbrella towards slightly to block a flurry of snowflakes.

“...Sans,” Grillby lifts his free hand and grips one of Sans’ shoulders. Gently at first, and then his grip tightens, sighing softly. “I am sorry. It’s...terrible, and I hope… I hope the both of you find that happiness you’re looking for. One way or another,” he crackles. “Near the end of your conversation... After what you had discussed, and you got her to laugh again? She was nearly glowing,” he went on. “Even if humans take longer to realize what their Souls want… there is very much, at the least, a very strong start to a very strong friendship there.”

Despite himself, Sans feels the tiniest spark of blue magic color his cheekbones, that distantly familiar feeling of hope muddling with that dismay and sorrow that tried to drown him.

He doesn’t want to be the pessimist anymore. It was difficult to wrap his head around trying not to be, to not feel hopeless, especially with… with a draining hourglass hanging over your head. At least until...the very last moment, he could try step up to the plate and try to hope for the best, rather than wait for the inevitable worst.

The fire elemental gives Sans a gentle nudge with one elbow, and Sans can hear his growing smirk in that crackling voice. “...And I knew I was right.”

“yeah, yeah,” Sans huffs and rolls his eyes again, shoulders bunching up.

“You should get home. Whatever is in this bags has long frozen.”

“nothin’ a little warmin’ up by the fire can’t fix, eh, grillbz?”

“...I’m going back to the bar,” the elemental deadpans, but he straightens slowly with another hidden smirk as Sans actually laughs. “Go home, Sans.”

Sans waves a hand absently, dipping down and finally grabbing up the bags he’d dropped, snow sliding off the tops where it had accumulated.

“thanks, grillbz,” the skeleton mutters quietly, but his tone is genuine as can be. “i’ll bring her around sometime soon for a proper introduction to your burgers, eh?”

“I’d be honored,” Grillby nods.
And with that, the pair part ways, Grillby leaving to head back to his pub, and Sans taking a single step towards his home before he shortcuts directly into the living room.

Papyrus pokes his head out of the kitchen, one hand holding onto one of Frisk’s ankles as they sit on his shoulders, the other holding a frying pan full of eggs.

“BROTHER! THERE YOU ARE!” Papyrus grins. “FRISK IS TEACHING ME A TRICK WITH THESE EGGS! SCRAMBLING! HOW DELIGHTFUL IS THAT?”

“pretty eggcellent trick i bet,” Sans hums, and his smile widens a bit when Papyrus jerks back into the kitchen with a disgusted scoff. “‘ey, is skip still asleep?”


“had some trouble findin’ my bags out in the snow!” Sans chuckles. “had t’dig ‘em out. almost had to enlist greater dog to help me sniff ‘em out.”

“AUGH, BROTHER, PLEASE. AT LEAST WAIT UNTIL AFTER LUNCH!”

Sans takes a moment to drape yours and Frisk’s new winter jackets over the armrest of the couch, along with the pile of clothes you had picked out. He brings the rest into the kitchen, setting the bag on the counter. “got ya some more spaghetti, paps. and hey, frisk, y’like marshmallows, right?”

Frisk blinks down at him before their little smile widens. “I love marshmallows! They’re my favorite!”

“figured,” sans grins and tosses the bag in the air, laughing when Frisk snatches it out of the air, immediately ripping it open and stuffing a handful of them into their mouth.

“FRISK! PLEASE, WAIT UNTIL AFTER LUNCH! YOU TWO ARE GETTING ON MY LAST NERVE!” Papyrus chides playfully.

“But you don’t got any nerves!” Frisk laughs, mouth full of marshmallows.

“THAT’S BECAUSE SANS HAS ALREADY TAKEN THEM ALL!!”

Sans snorts and moves out of the kitchen then, feeling exhausted. “wake me up when lunch is ready, eh paps? i’m gonna take a nap. i’m bone tired.”

“AUGH!!”

Sans laughs again, and flopps onto the couch, laying back and tugging his hood over his eyes as he let them close.

His smile slowly fades, thinking of you, asleep in his messy bed. He’d join you if you if that wasn’t...absolutely weird and not a cool thing to do. More than anything he just wants the reassurance that you’re still with them.

He’s comforted at the fact that somehow, he’s sure your Soul is still pulsing; strong and vibrant and very much alive. He focuses on the odd feeling, like he could just reach out and touch your Soul, despite you being on another floor and behind a closed door.

Sans falls asleep with the lingering thought that he’d give anything to keep your Soul safe and close.
You weren’t sure where you were.

All you knew was that it was warm. Much warmer than Snowdin. When you crack your eyes open, you were lying in a soft grassy patch of earth and staring up at a sky full of stars, glittering above you like gems--

...Wait.

You push yourself up onto your elbows and blink up at the sky.

Which...isn’t actually a sky at all.

It was the roof of a cave, all rocky stone stretching up so high overhead you were pretty sure you could stack at least two football fields vertically to reach it. You see stalactites reaching down like long teeth, and the glowing crystals embedded in the stone sparkle dazzling cyan blue and pink.

You lower your gaze and stare off to your right, where another source of light catches your eye. A slow, lazy moving river curls by, and the water of it glows a similar cyan to the crystals stuck in the ceiling of the cave. You gasp softly, amazed and awed at all of this, and scoot a bit closer to the edge of the riverbank.

The grass is a deep, beautiful shade of teal, soft to the touch, and you wiggle your fingers into it for a moment, grin widening.

You feel so safe and calm and at peace here. Like nothing could touch you. Like you were--

...Slowly, you lift a hand and touch it to the side of your head gently. You almost laugh at the feel of hair--long, soft hair that drapes over your shoulders in waves.

A dream then. This was a dream. You always had your hair back when you were dreaming.

So you sit back and cross your legs, looking back up at the glimmering ceiling, letting that peace wash over you again. With nothing to worry about--and wasn’t that just the super thing about dreams?--you slip off your shoes and socks and roll up your pant legs to your knees, letting your feet and ankles dip into the water.

It’s cool and tingly, and the feel of it makes you laugh. The only thing that could make this moment better would be if a dream version of Frisk were here to cannonball into the water. ...Or maybe if--

“kinda breathtaking, huh?”

The familiar voice has you yelping, and you nearly topple into the river completely as you jump. You pull your feet out of the glowy water and look over your shoulder, and none other than Sans the skeleton is standing a few feet behind you, his hands stuffed in his pockets as he grins at you sheepishly.

“sorry, didn’t mean to make a splash,” he grins and gives you a wink.

You immediately relax, laughing and leaning back onto your hands. Well, heck, alright, this dream just went from good to great.

“It is pretty breathtaking,” you agree, and look back up at the ceiling. After a moment you pat the spot beside you when he doesn’t move, and your smile widens when you hear him step closer. From
the corner of your eye you watch him settle down beside you.

Big bony dork is still taller than you even in your dreams. Bah!

“...we don’t have our stars to wish on,” he began, and you look at him, watching as he peers up at
the high ceiling. His eyelights are bright. “but this is the next best thing for us. we call this place the
wishing room. monsters like t’come here from all over the underground to whisper their wishes to the
lights.”

You look back up at the ceiling as well.

“That’s...really sweet.” you say slowly. It was also...also pretty sad. Thanks, brain. You let out a
breath and let your feet dip back into the cool water.

“oh, uh, i wouldn’t do that if i were you. that stuff’s radioactive,” Sans says, only to burst out
laughing when you yank your legs out of the water so fast you roll backwards. “i’m kiddin’! damn,
pal, shoulda seen your face!”

You glare for a moment and skitter back to the edge of the river on all fours like a goblin, and then
scoop an arm into the glowy water and send a giant splash his way. Seeing him sputtering and
shaking glowy cyan water out of his skull made you laugh yourself, cackling before you mercilessly
splash at him again.

“pal, you’re barkin’ up the wrong tree here!” he warns, laughter in his own voice.

“Don’t talk to me like that, Snowball Peasant!” you grin, and you marvel at how good you feel for a
moment. No aches and pains, no fatigue that threatened to have you napping away your day… there
was just you and someone who was very much shaping up to be your new best friend. “A Snowball
Queen stands before you!”

But then the Snowball Peasant reaches over and simply pushes you into the water. In hindsight you
should’ve seen that coming.

You stand up in the water easily, seeing as how it only reaches your waist, but it was still deep
enough to just dunk you completely when you first fell in. Glowing rivulets drip down from your
long hair and the tip of your nose, and you sputter out a laugh as your each up and push your hair out
of your face. “Treason!”

Dream-Sans is laughing so hard he’s flopped onto his back, and he laughs harder when you reach
out and grab onto one of the thick bones of his ankle. “whaddaya think you’re doin’?” he wheezes.

You heave, trying to tug him right into the water with you, but the big bony jerk doesn’t even budge.
“What the hell! Are you made outta rocks? Is the whole bone thing a cover? You got a big Acme
anvil hidden in your rib cage?” you laugh, and try as you might, you can’t pull him in with you.

Weird, seeing as how you’re usually pretty good at controlling everything that goes on when you’re
lucid in a dream.

“heh, nah, i just don’t think you understand the gravity of the situation,” he hums, and crosses his
arms behind his head smugly as he grins at you. You have a feeling there was a pun in there
somewhere, and you figure it has to do with how heavy he apparently is. Even in your dreams, there
was no escape from those puns. Thanks, brain.

“Good grief!” you let go of his ankle and laugh again though before turning and climbing up out of
the river on the opposite bank.
That makes Sans sit up, his grin widening as he watches you. “what’re you doin’ way over there?”

“Getting dry!” you huff through another laugh. You wring out your hair, the strands shimmering with that cyan magic. “No thanks to you!”

“you started this war,” he hums, leaning back on his hands. He must recognize whatever tricksy goblin expression crosses your face, because his eye sockets narrow as his grin widens even more. “don’t you dare--”

You kick one foot into the water, sending one more arc of cyan splashing into him before you turn on your heel, scramble to your feet, and bolt.

You can’t stop laughing. The grass is soft as silk under your feet, but you never slip up or fall. You hear Sans laugh behind you, and you yelp when you blink and suddenly he’s only a few steps ahead.

Hell no, he wasn’t catching you so easy! You dig your feet into the ground and manage to change your direction on a dime. You chalk it up to the lucid dreams where you’ve had practice with this sort of thing, ducking and dodging and giving yourself Indiana Jones-esque adventures to fill your night.

Honestly, this right here is better than any dream you’ve ever had before in your life.

What the hell is it about Sans that makes everything feel so much better?

“hey, hey, hey!” he calls after you, still chuckling. “quit makin’ me work!”

“Quit being so slow!” you shoot back. Another curve of the river is coming up, and you leap over it easily.

“damn, sugar,” dream-Sans says from just beside you, and you blink in shock as you watch him flying through the air at the same pace as you, reclining back with his arms crossed behind his head like he’s lying back on some invisible chair. “you got some moves.”

“Did you just call me Sugar?” you sputter.

“...shit, did i?”

“Quit cheating” you laugh and push at him as you continue to run, and he laughs hard enough to slow down whatever weird flying magic he was pulling. “I didn’t know you could make yourself float, too!”

“it ain’t cheating just ‘cause you don’t know!” he calls from somewhere behind you.

You’re in a more open bit of field, the sparkling of the stones glittering overhead and the glow of the river that loops through the massive cavern casting a calming blue light over everything. Even some strands of the teal grass seem to give off their own light, and dotting the field here and there in the distance are beautiful glowing blue flowers.

You shift directions, still smiling so wide your face would hurt if you were awake, wanting to get a closer look at one of those flowers. You’re getting close to reaching one when you feel a warm, bony hand loop around one of your wrists.

Sans gives you a gentle tug, and the momentum you’d poured into running is shifted, sending you spinning with him over the soft grass. He laughs as he pulls you into a twirl, and you both let out an ‘oof” when you end up thumping your back against his chest, stumbling over your own feet, the both
of you spinning and landing in on the ground with a thud.

You barely stifle a laugh, one of your hands still wrapped up in his, lying beneath him as he holds himself above you in the grass.

You forget about the flower.

“damn, if i knew all it would take t’get ya to fall for me would be a little chase, i’d have done a few things differently back in the woods,” he says, and snickers when you smack your free hand over his chest, trying not let his words fluster you as much as they did.

“That didn’t even count as a chase. I’m pretty sure you didn’t take a single damn step,” you laugh.

“i mean. you’re not wrong,” he chuckles.

The quiet that settles around you feels like a warm blanket, fresh from the dryer.

You stare up at him, taking in the lines of his odd, skeletal, but at the same time not human, face. His strong jaw, the quirk of his relaxed grin, the literal light of his eyes.

...Was it weird to find a skeleton attractive? Was that weird? He was bones! ...Well, okay, not...exactly, but--

Sans dips closer to you, and you feel butterflies fill your stomach, shivering as his forehead just barely brushes against your own.

You reach up in response and let your fingertips touch over his jaw. Warm and smooth, just like you knew he would be.

You feel a warmth in your chest, and you don’t notice the soft orange glow that starts peeking out from beneath the collar of your shirt when he finally leans down and presses his teeth to your lips.

You feel the magic that makes him up buzz against you, sending a tingling shock down your spine as your bare toes curl into the grass.

Before you can even start to wonder at the logistics behind kissing a skeleton, he shifts slightly above you, and his teeth pepper a little, nuzzling line of touches across your cheek and down your jaw.

And you know for certain more than ever that this has to be a dream, because you see something you’ve never seen before; Sans opens his mouth. The straight lines of his teeth separate like magic, and you feel yourself blush at the sight of the sharp canine teeth that box in his otherwise very square ones.

Oh hot diggedy dog, thanks brain.

You feel those teeth drag across the skin of your neck after he ducks down, gentle as the soft grass tickling your arms.

“Sans?” you hear yourself breathe, and you shiver again when you feel him nuzzle the side of your throat over your pulse, feeling dizzy. Your chest feels like it’s getting warmer.

He shifts, moving back into your line of sight, blue magic dusting his cheekbones. His teeth are closed again when he touches his forehead to yours, his eye sockets lidded.

Sans...doesn’t say anything out loud, but you’re suddenly sure he said something. Like the unspoken words are suddenly hanging in the air like a physical presence around the both of you.
“What…?”

“...it’ll be fine,” he says quietly, almost as if he’s talking to himself. “everything’s gonna be ok.”

You pause, and this time you’re the one tip up, and you hear his breath hitch when you kiss his teeth. You feel that buzz of magic against your lips and let your eyes close, lifting your free hand to wrap it around his neck and keep him close. To hug him to you. You want to believe those words, and more importantly you want him to believe those words, too. Even if this was only a dream, you didn’t want him feeling anything but...happy. Happy and sure that there was a good ending at the finish line of whatever life held outside.

You feel his body move, very, very gently pressing down over yours, that warmth in your chest growing hotter, and--

“BROTHER, WAKE UP!”

You choke out a gasp, and the moment shatters as you wake up, sitting up with a wince as you hear Papyrus’ familiar, booming voice from outside Sans’ closed door down in the living room below.

“You LAZYBONES, IT’S LUNCH TIME!”

You hear Sans’ voice grumble back something in return, and it seems to be enough to please Papyrus, because there’s no more yelling.

Your heart is hammering, your face feels warm, and you press your hand to your chest just over your sternum.

That was… sure as hell one way for you to come to terms with a crush, wasn’t it?

Chapter End Notes

:3c

HEY come hang out with me on my [undertale tumblr!!](http://example.com)!
I love answerin’ questions and makin’ friends omg.
You rub at your eyes, brushing off the salty crust of your tears (you’ve been crying a lot lately, huh? Aw well, there was no avoiding that, stuff was bonkers) as you sit up. You don’t know how long you’ve been asleep, but it was breakfast when you left, and now it’s lunch time, so not too long, you figure.

You sigh though, and just sit in bed for a moment. It’s comfier than the couch, the blanket soft, and you’re almost tempted to just curl right back into that pillow and let yourself doze again. ...But you don’t want to worry Frisk, or Papyrus. You don’t know what all Sans might have told them when he let them know you were napping up here.

Standing up, you stretch, taking your time, assessing how sore or sleepy or stiff your muscles are going to act. You don’t feel nauseous, so that’s a plus. And you think you’ve got the energy to at least make it downstairs to eat.

When you reach out for the door, you yelp when it pushes back towards you and opens before you can even touch the knob. Sans jerks forward to catch your wrist when you tip back and almost trip over your own two damn feet.

Having been successfully saved from falling flat on your ass, you sputter out a laugh, especially as he carefully tugs you back up, his grip careful, and he reaches out with his other hand to steady you as he holds onto your opposite elbow.

“well, rise and shine, bud,” he grins, and his eyielights scan over your face like he’s looking for something. “...how’re ya feeling?”

“Better,” you say honestly, and he lets go of your wrist when you reach up to rub at your eyes again. They still felt a bit dry from all that crying you did, but you felt...lighter.

Sans has your back. And you trust him. He’ll look after Frisk when all this was said and done, and…and for once, the future wasn’t as bleakly terrifying as it was before.

The memory of that dream comes back to the front of your mind as you realize Sans is still gently holding onto one of your arms. You remember him braced over you while your back was pressed to the grass, remember that blue flush of magic as he actually blushed, remember how it felt when he...

“...buddy?” Sans’ voice calls, and you blink a few times.

“Eh? What?”

“you’re turnin’ red. that’s a...what’s that human thing called,” he growls under his breath, glancing away. “...fever. a fever, right? hell, you sure you’re feelin’ okay?”

Oh jeez--

“I can totally promise you that I’m totally fine,” you say. “It’s just--it’s really warm? In your room? Like, that’s a good thing, it’s cozy, your bed is super nice, thank you for that, really, what’re you doing up here?”
Your words all string together into one big sentence, leaving you blinking up at the tall skeleton, almost out of breath.

Sans cocks his head at you, a smile quirking at one corner of his mouth and washing away some of that concern. “...paps says lunch is ready. But I take it he’s what woke ya up?”

“Mm, but I think some food’d do me good,” you say.

Sans just nods, and finally lets you go, stepping aside and nodding his head to motion you to follow him, stuffing his hands in his pockets. He does that a lot, you’ve noticed. “Wanna shortcut to the kitchen instead? Save ya the trip down the stairs?” he offers.

You laugh softly and shake your head, heading for the steps off of the loft-like hallway. “M’not that far out yet, bone boy,” you say lightly.

“Mm,” he grunts. “Just checkin’.”

You head down the stairs, and Papyrus literally twirls out of the kitchen holding a giant pot, and thunks it down onto the large table pushed against the wall. “OH! SKIP! GOOD AFTERNOON!” he says happily. There’s a crumpled chef’s hat on his head, and he’s got on a pink apron that has the words ‘PLEASE ASK BEFORE SMOOCHING THE COOK’ embroidered onto it.

“DID YOU HAVE A GOOD NAP?” he asks brightly. “HOW ARE YOU FEELING?”

You glance at Sans for a moment, wondering if he’d told his brother anything, and the grin Sans gives back doesn’t really tell you much.

“I’m fine, feeling much better,” you say honestly. “Had a nice dream, and...yeah, just woke up.”

“What did you dream about?” Papyrus asks curiously, smiling down at you.

Honestly that kind of takes you by surprise, and you’re left blinking up at him. No human in their right mind asks ‘what did you dream about’ unless they really wanted to buckle down for some weird, long shit. But then you remember that Papyrus is a genuine gigantic sweetheart, and you laugh, reaching up to brush a hand over your face.

“...Just this amusement park I went to as a kid,” you say after a moment.

“Oh, that sounds nice! ...SANS,” Papyrus leans a little closer to his brother, who just cocks a brow and peers up at him. His voice drops into what you can only describe as a ‘very loud stage whisper’. “I DON’T KNOW WHAT AN AMUSEMENT PARK IS, BUT WE SHOULD DEFINITELY GO TO ONE ONCE WE’RE ON THE SURFACE!”

“Oh, yeah, totally bro,” Sans chuckles.

Papyrus leans back and reaches up to adjust his crooked chef’s hat. “DID YOU HAVE ANY NICE DREAMS, BROTHER?”

Sans blinks, and you miss it when he glances at you as you lean over the table to check the contents of the pot. It looks like it’s just...a whole lot of scrambled eggs?

“Uh...yeah, i guess,” he says with a shrug. Before Papyrus can ask what that was supposed to mean, he grins and tacks on “won a ketchup drinkin’ contest with both hands tied behind my back.”

“UGH, BROTHER!” Papyrus scrunches his nasal ridge and spins around on his heel, stomping
back into the kitchen.

When your eyes follow after him, you see Frisk sitting on the counter, little legs kicking idly, smiling wide before they lean forward and wave at you.

“Hey, kiddo!” you call.

“Hey, Skip!”

“I see we’re having eggs for lunch?”

“Scrambled eggs!” they say excitedly. “I helped with it!”

“Oh snap, this is gonna be good,” you grin, and pull out your chair as Papyrus comes back with four plates and hands them out with silverware. For the first time you really notice that their plates and silverware is all mismatched. Some of the plates are cracked, and then you remember that Sans said they get most of their things from the dump…?

You look down at your plate; it’s made of tough plastic with cartoon bunnies and carrots around the edges. You smile a bit, and then scoop out yourself a good helping of eggs, seasoned with salt, pepper, and “A LOT OF LOVE!” Papyrus insists.

“Want some ketchup with those eggs, pal?” Sans grins, wiggling a bottle of ketchup he pulled from…somewhere.

“SANS, PLEASE,” Papyrus huffs.

“Yeah, actually, ketchup’s kinda rad with scrambled eggs,” you grin and he hands you the ketchup bottle.

You upend it, squeeze the bottle, and--

The cap falls off completely and practically the entire bottle’s worth of ketchup splurts onto your plate, covering your eggs completely.

Frisk slaps their little hands over their mouth and rocks back as they try their best not to giggle out loud. Papyrus’ jaw drops and his eyes seem to bulge out of his skull (Oh my god??).

“Oh, wow, what a bummer,” Sans says as he rests an elbow on the table and then drops his chin into his hand, grinning down at you. “Somebody must’a tampered with it.”

“SANS!!” Papyrus looks and sounds absolutely offended beyond belief at your behalf. “REALLY? I CAN’T BELIEVE THIS! SKIP IS OUR GUEST, YOU RUDE SACK OF BONES!”

“Hey, hey! firstly,” Sans grins nice and wide, his chin still in his hand. “How’d y’know it was me that tampered with the ketchup? and secondly, she ain’t a guest, she’s a housemate now. Official roommate. Honorary skeletons.”

You blink. Frisk blinks. Papyrus blinks.

“…WOWIE,” Papyrus presses his gloved hands to his cheekbones, and his eyes are sparkling again.

“Y’mean it?!” Frisk gasps loudly, leaning forward against the table to look at Sans easier. “Y--really? We can stay? Like? Live here?” they sit back with a gasp and then look at Papyrus. “For real?!”

“Well I guess so! Though I’d have liked to have been part of this
DECISION,” Papyrus chides lightly, squinting his still-sparkly sockets at his brother. “EVEN IF IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TO JUST ALSO CAST A POSITIVE VOTE FOR SAID DECISION!”

“This has never happened before, this is so exciting!” Frisk giggles with glee, and you cock a brow at what they mean by that, but you don’t interrupt them when they start excitedly shoveling their face full of scrambled eggs.

Sans snorts, and when you glance at him you see his expression has softened quite a bit, glancing between your little sib and you. The hand he isn’t holding up his chin with is on the table, fingertips drumming gently, and you reach out and cover it with one of your own.

His eyelights dart from Frisk to you, and you see that familiar blue light up his cheekbones.

“Thank you, Sans,” you say, and he sputters out a laugh.

“ah, fuggedaboutit,” he says, his grin widening and his eye sockets crinkling at the corners. “what’re friends for?”

“Is Skip gonna sleep with you in your room then?” Frisk asks, and now both you and Sans are sputtering at the same time, looking at the little beast as they smile innocently over their plate full of scrambled eggs.

“N-no, I’m-- I’ll be taking the couch again, Sans just let me crash in his room because it was quiet,” you say quickly, and when you glance at Sans he’s nodding up and down fast enough to make his skull blur.

Papyrus rolls his eyes. “UGH, HONESTLY, YOU THINK I WILL ALLOW OUR NEW HOUSEMATES TO CONTINUE TO ‘CRASH ON THE COUCH’? UNBELIEVABLE. YOU CAN HAVE THE COOL TOOLSHED!”

You cock your head and Sans snorts.

“...uh… don’tcha think it might be a little too chilly in there--”

“OH MY GOD, SANS! WE WOULD FIX IT UP, OBVIOUSLY!” Papyrus scolds. “SEAL THE CRACKS IN THE WALL, REPLACE THE WINDOWS… AND OBVIOUSLY I WILL HAVE TO GET RID OF THE BARS,” he muses to himself, rubbing his jaw with one hand.

“...MAYBE GET A NICE RUG?”

“Oh, can we have our own cool couch?” Frisk grins, bouncing in their seat.

“YES OF COURSE! A COOL NEW COUCH! AND A TABLE! PERHAPS EVEN CHAIRS!”

You turn and switch your ketchup-covered plate with Sans’ while Papyrus talks, your smile so wide it hurts and your heart once again just. So damn full it feels like it’ll pop in your chest.

“Oh, and maybe sparkly Christmas lights?!” Frisk gasps. “Can we keep the bars and cover them in Christmas lights?!”

“WHAT A FANTASTIC IDEA! OKAY, THE BARS STAY!”

“What bars is he talkin’ about?” you ask quietly, glancing back at Sans, who’s staring at his brother with a wide, proud sort of grin you recognize as one you’re often looking at Frisk with yourself.

“eh, he set ‘em up so if he ever caught a human, he’d have a place to lock ‘em up, but he built ‘em
too wide. They don’t stop anybody,’” he chuckles.

“Ah,” you nod, and start to eat your own scrambled eggs.

Other than having quite a lot of pepper on them, they’re super good. And if Papyrus and Frisk weren’t planning out this new room, loudly and excitedly, you’d have told him so right then and there.

“AND!!” Papyrus goes on. “WE WILL BUILD A LITTLE CONNECTING TUNNEL BETWEEN THE BUILDINGS! SO YOU DON’T HAVE TO WALK ALL THE WAY THROUGH THE SNOW TO COME SEE ME, YOUR FRIEND, THE GREAT PAPYRUS!”

“I’ve always wanted my own tunnel!” Frisk gasps.

Sans chuckles warmly. “Bro, you’re the coolest. That’s a great idea.”

“YES, I KNOW,” Papyrus grins. “AND YOU’RE GOING TO HELP ME WITH IT!”

“AS LONG AS I GET MY UNION SANCTIONED NAPS, THAT’S COOL,” Sans says with a shrug.

Papyrus stares at him for a couple of seconds in silence, his sockets slowly narrowing, like he’s waiting for Sans to look at him and yell ‘psyche!’ When Sans just keeps munching on his ketchup-slathered eggs, Papyrus hums in thought. “WOWIE. YOU’RE NOT EVEN GOING TO FIGHT ME ON THIS?”

“FIGHT YOU ON WHAT?”

“DOING WORK!”

“WHY WOULD I?”

“HMM…” Papyrus suddenly leans over your head to get a better look at his brother, squinting at him as you duck down to let him get as close as he wants. “...INTERESTING.”

Sans blinks, brow furrowed. “Whaddaya mean interesting?”

“OH, NOTHING, I GUESS, IF YOU AREN’T COMPLETELY OBLIVIOUS,” Papyrus finally takes his own serving of scrambled eggs, settling beside Frisk properly.

Sans grunts, hesitating before he shrugs and goes back to eating, and the rest of you do the same. The silence is companionable and nice and cozy, and damn you could get used to this. And you were going to, weren’t you? This was…

This was home now.

You feel your gut warm up, like somebody just lit a sparkler in your stomach, and the feeling zips out across your chest and makes you smile.

You wish you could say you’d miss your parents more. And, maybe as the end for you got nearer, you would, but… sitting here with your two new ‘housemates’, all you could remember was the heavy, tense silences that would fall over the dinner table during the rare times you would all sit together to eat as a family.

You tried your best to stay optimistic for them, at least in the open, but they had always seemed to want to just… be the ones to try to drag down the mood, the whole atmosphere of the room dropping as they continually looked at you with either pity, sadness, frustration, or some horrible mix of the
three.

But with Sans and Papyrus? And your little Frisk? You felt like gold.

When lunch is done, Papyrus sweeps away the plates and silverware like he’s a living tornado, balancing everything on both his head and arms like a cartoon waiter as he dances back to the kitchen to clean up.

“Can I help out, Papyrus?” you ask, beginning to stand from your spot, but Papyrus squints at you and scoffs.

“OF COURSE NOT! I COOKED, SO I CLEAN!”

“...That’s not usually how it goes where I’m from,” you laugh. “Usually it’s, like. If you cook, then the people you cook for are the ones to clean up. Like a thank you.”

“BUT I LIKE CLEANING!” Papyrus almost whined. “CAN’T YOU CLEAN UP NEXT TIME?”

You sputter out a laugh and sit back down. “Okay! Okay, next time then,” you relent with a snort.

Frisk suddenly scrambles over from their seat and settles themselves onto your lap, taking you by surprise as they loop their little arms around you and hug you around your neck and shoulders.

“Heeyy, short stack,” you grin and return the embrace, nuzzling the tip of your nose over their fluffy hair. “How you doin’?”

“I’m doing amazing!” Frisk grins and leans back so they can look up at you. “Is it true? We’re really gonna stay here?”

“If Sans and Papyrus are cool with it, yeah. We’re gonna stay here, until we can figure out a way to get through that Barrier without hurting anyone,” you grin.

You see something almost...dim behind Frisk’s eyes. They look guilty, even. Like they know something you don’t, or are hesitant to bring something up. You recognize the look well enough from your baby sib.

“Small fry?” you call gently. “What’s with the look?”

“...Nothing, just...” Frisk looks down and begins to play absently with the aglets at the end of your sweatshirt strings. “...If the barrier was destroyed, like...tomorrow,” the say slowly. “...Would you still wanna stay?”

“Frisk,” you say a little more sharply than you mean to. You think you know what they’re trying to say, and it honestly scares the hell out of you. “Nobody’s gonna get hurt, or lose their soul. Not you, and...not me,” you say, brows furrowing.

What a waste, an angry, intrusive thought growls. I’m dying anyway.

You shake your head and clear your throat.

“Even if that barrier broke tomorrow? I think I’d wanna stick with these two for a little bit. It’s been really fun here, huh?” you say, your tone much lighter, much more gentle. You watch the worried crease ease from between Frisk’s brows. “Even if the barrier broke tomorrow, I’d wanna go up with them to see the stars, and look at the clouds, and... well, I already promised Sans I’d show him around town,” you laugh softly.
“You did?” Frisk gasps, glancing back at Sans.

The smile on his face looks...distant. His eyelights are very dim as he stares down at the table like he’s distracted by something.

You nod, looking back at your lil sib. “I did. Me and Sans? We’re thick as thieves.”

“Like Bonnie and Clyde,” they supply, and you laugh and nod.

“Sure, yeah, and… you… seem happy here, too, huh?” you smile.

You don’t tell them that if the Barrier did in fact shatter tomorrow, of course Frisk would be brought home to your parents. Back to their solid, scheduled, safe life. You meant it when you’d said you’d be happy to stick with Sans and Papyrus, but you weren’t about to keep Frisk from your family. Not even in a fantasy. Not if you could help it.

You feel...guilty again. Like despite having the entire deck stacked against you, you could still find some way out of this if you really tried.

And you feel worse because you really don’t want to try.

You were so fucking tired.

And you hadn’t seen Frisk laugh and smile this much in so long.

“I’m really happy here!” Frisk practically sings. “Papyrus and me are best friends, everything feels nice, and we could--! You might--!” They hesitate, and lean back completely then, sitting in your lap, their back pressed to the edge of the table as they lean against it so they can look up at you. “...Do you think we could find something to heal you forever down here...?”

Sans seems to almost flinch he looks up so quickly, dazed eyes sharpening as his absent grin dips into frown.

Frisk sucks in a tiny breath and looks at Sans, almost seeming to wince, shrinking in on themselves. “...I’m sorry, I didn’t-- I didn’t mean to tell him--”

“He knows, baby,” you soothe quietly, and reach up to run your fingers through their little bob haircut. “I told him everything; he knows.”

Frisk looks back at Sans, and the skeleton’s brows furrow just a bit, looking as if he wants to say something but doesn’t quite know how, or even what. And hell if you don’t understand that. This shit was complicated and horrible, and the fact that Frisk had to deal with it at all was awful.

“D’you think there’s magic down here that can help her?” they ask softly.

Sans’ smile doesn’t return. He just stares down at Frisk quietly for a moment, and before you can start speaking up to spare him having to come up with something to say to that, he clears his throat.

“dunno, kid. magic’s kinda great, but it ain’t like we can snap our fingers and...” Sans hesitates, “...make everything better. it’s... it’s complicated, buddy. but listen,” he reaches out and touches one large bony hand over Frisk’s shoulder. “if there’s somethin’ down here that can help her? we’re gonna find it. not gonna stop looking either.”

Frisk looks up at you again, even as you’re starting to feel a little distant from the conversation. You tended to try to drift when this sort of talk came up. You didn’t want to cling to any sort of false hope
anymore. And the last little bit you’d had for some kind of literally magical cure had all but vanished with Toriel’s words back in the Ruins.

“Tori said that there was someone out here who can heal souls,” they say quietly. “...That would fix everything, right?”

“...I don’t know, sweetheart,” you say honestly. “I don’t know if it’s just my Soul that’s hurtin’. The kind of sick I’ve got is in my body, too. But listen to me, yeah?” You cup their little face again, leaning down so close your nose almost touches theirs.

“I promise I’m gonna fight and fight and fight. Never gonna give up.”

*That’s easy to say, because you already have.*

You shake the thought away and smile as brightly as you can. “So guess what. Me and you are gonna totally crash with these two big tall dorks. We’re gonna eat magic food, and build snowmen, and watch movies, and tell scary stories in the dark.”

Frisk sniffles a bit, but they’re smiling too. “Yeah?”

“Hell yeah! Here, say it with me, say hell yeah,” you grin.

“Pfff!” Frisk giggles then, shaking her head. “I’ll owe the swear jar money!”

“Hell yeah!” you say loudly, making Frisk giggle again. “Say it!”

“HELL YEAH?” Papyrus calls from the kitchen.

“hell yeah!” says Sans with a short laugh.

“*Hell yeah!*” roars little Frisk.

You burst out laughing, and Frisk joins you, hugging you tight. You squeeze them back, and you crack one eye open to see Sans watching you, his smile gentle, but at least it’s there again. His hand is still on Frisk’s shoulder, and it moves up to give yours a squeeze too, chuckling along with you.

“s’gonna be fine,” he promises.

That could mean a lot of things, and could tie in with a number of different endings to...whatever this was.

But you believe him. And at the way his smile softens when you nod, he knows you do, too.

With Frisk still holding onto you, and one of your arms still holding tight to them, you reach up and rest your hand over Sans’.

“I can’t believe you’re giving us a fucking house,” you say, and Sans laughs as Frisk mumbles about the swear jar into your shoulder.

“it’ll be a renovated shed. you’re makin’ it sound nicer than it is.”

“That’s because it’s nicer than how I’m even saying it! You guys are the best, you know that?”

“bah,” Sans grins, and turns his hand a bit so he can hold onto your hand, bringing it down from your shoulder and looking down at it. Now he’s the one that seems distracted with how your hand works, rubbing his thumb over your skin-covered knuckles. “you’re important. and i made a
“Bah!” you mimic him, watching his smile grow. “And you and Papyrus are amazing! Let me compliment you!”

“I’M FREE FOR COMPLIMENTS IF NOW IS THE TIME?” Papyrus calls from the kitchen, and you laugh as you happily oblige.

“Hey, Papyrus!”

“YES?”

“Your apron is really cool!”

“OH! I MADE IT MYSELF! THANK YOU!”

Frisk giggles and leans away from your shoulder. “And your chef hat is the coolest, too!”

“WOWIE, THANK YOU! I’LL WEAR IT MORE OFTEN!”

“hey, papyrus,” Sans calls, taking his turn. “i love ya a whole lot, y’know, bro?”

“I LOVE YOU TOO, SANS--”

“i love ya a skeleton.”

Frisk wheezes and you press a hand over your mouth as you push at Sans with the hand of yours he’s still holding, and the mirth in his eyelight is practically visible.

“THE WINDOW FOR COMPLIMENTS IS NOW CLOSED, THANK YOU,” Papyrus says flatly, and you can’t help it when you burst out laughing along with Frisk.

Well, this was it. This was your family now.

And you’re okay with that.

Chapter End Notes

oh my god, they were *housemates*

COME SAY HI ON MY [UNDERTALE TUMBLR!!!](http://www.example.com)

be my fren omg
construction? start?

The rest of the day is...nice. It’s nice, and calm, and sweet. The kind of day you’ve really been needing.

It’s soft, and slow, and full of jokes, excited plans for the layout of the future shed apartment, and one very lengthy lecture about the very specific daily ritual of feeding Rocky the pet rock.

(“STEP ONE” Papyrus had said. “YOU MUST GIVE ROCKY A SMALL PAT, LIKE THIS. IT LETS HIM KNOW HE’S APPRECIATED AND LOVED! STEP TWO! ROCKY REALLY LIKES IT WHEN YOU DO A LITTLE JIG, LIKE THIS, WHILE SHAKING HIS SPRINKLE JAR LIKE A MARACA. STEP THREE!”)

You end up taking another nap on the couch. You take a few naps, actually, but that’s really much more in your realm of the norm than anything else has been these past few days, that’s for sure, so it’s not surprising in the least. After your first power nap, you wake up with Frisk sprawled across your lap and the blanket you’d slept with the night before tucked under your chin.

Your second power nap, after you doze off again, you wake up with Sans napping beside you (you hear Frisk and Papyrus playing some kind of game up in his room), his chest expanding and deflating slowly as he breathes, even and deep. The fact that he needs to breathe at all is fascinating, like what the heck does a skeleton need air for, and you watch for a few long moments, counting his breaths. For every two breaths you take, he only takes one. Does he have lungs under that shirt? You want to ask, but you’re not gonna wake him up. You also kinda wanna take a peek, but you’re also not gonna do that.

You fall asleep again before you can get much further on that train of thought.

After your third power nap, you force yourself to get up. You don’t wanna be up all night.

...Really though, there’s no risk of that. You could sleep through the whole day if you tried. Your body was just so damn tired all the time. Still, you weren’t keen on the idea of just sleeping the whole damn day away, so you heave yourself up and shuffle into the kitchen.

You catch Frisk stuffing a handful of mini marshmallows into their mouth (literally, an entire handful, just all stuffed into their little chipmunk cheeks all at once) and laugh out loud as they manage to duck and weave under your arm before you can catch them, darting out into the living room.

Sans asks you if you want to head to Grillby’s for dinner once the ambient light from outside began to dim, but the exhaustion of the day has settled into your every muscle, making you feel heavy, even after all those naps.

That’s no biggie, seeing as how there’s still those leftover magic burgers in the fridge that never go bad or stale. So Sans gives you yours for dinner, gives Frisk the one he’d originally bought for himself, and he takes one for the team and muscles down Papyrus’ latest spaghetti dish instead of one of you.

Frisk begs to have Papyrus let them have another slumber party, which Papyrus gives into just as quick as you expected him to. Big tall softie that he was. You’re pretty sure they’re up there building
another blanket fort (you hear Papyrus exclaim “THIS ONE WILL HAVE EVEN MORE LIGHTS!!”) and you flop onto the couch again, feeling like you’re all full of lead.

You feel like the past day has gone by...so quickly you can barely recall any of it, and at the same time so damn slowly that every second is etched into your mind. Bit of a funny sensation.

“...Know what?” you say slowly, the weight of the day sitting on you like an ACME anvil.

“what?” Sans cocks a brow, finishing off the two bites of the Grillby burger Frisk didn’t feel like finishing.

“I just realized that, like. I super need a shower.”

Sans snorts, lifting a hand and pointing towards the door beneath the staircase. The tucked away little bathroom of the house.

“You cool if I hop in and out real quick?”

“What, y’think i’m gonna just let you live in my house, and you think you can just use the shower whenever you want? you got a lotta nerve, pal,” Sans grins, and flops down onto the couch with a laugh. “’course i don’t mind. you’ll probably have to wake me up when you get out. think i’m gonna take a nap.”

“Sure, bone boy,” you laugh, and then gather up a fresh change of night clothes for you to wear, and step into the little bathroom.

It’s small, with a single toilet (why though? The thought haunts you), a sink, and a tub-shower. You spot a bottle of green shampoo, the scent simply labeled ‘Wilderness Springs’, and you grab the bottle, grinning as you crack open the door again and peek out into the living room at Sans.

“Wilderness Springs shampoo?” you grin, and wiggle the bottle in the air, drawing Sans’ attention and that amused grin of his. The one that’s...kind of super cute. You’re allowed to admit that to yourself now, right? You had a dream where he kissed you, so you’re totally allowed to let yourself go a little hogwild and admit to yourself that you think that grin is really cute, yeah?

Hell yeah.

“eh, what can i say,” Sans shrugs, and you brace for a pun. “i’m bone to be wild.”

“Oh my god,” you sputter and laugh, glaring at the label of the bottle. “I couldn’t brace myself for that one, y’got me good.” You pause while he laughs, realizing something. “Hang on, what are a couple of skeletons doing with shampoo in their shower?”

Sans absolutely lights up, and you feel like you just walked onto a giant target painted onto the floor without even realizing it.

He reaches into the pocket of his shorts, and with the sort of twirl you’ve only seen in old gun-toting western flicks, he spins a little hair comb out over his fingers, grips it, and then runs it over the top of his very bald skull.

“How do ya think i keep this mane looking so sexy?”

He barely finishes and you’re losing your mind. And with every wheezing, gasping bit of laughter, he looks more and more smug, more and more proud of himself. He stuffs his little comb prop back into his pocket and leans back into the couch, arms crossed behind his head as he watches you try to
remember how to breathe.

“Oh-- f*ck you!” you wheeze through your laughter, and when you hear Frisk and Papyrus both scream “SWEAR JAR” you have to close the door so you can at least lean against it to keep from collapsing to the floor.

When you finally get into the shower, the shampoo actually doesn’t smell half bad. It smells like pine, mostly, and… actually, you recognize it. It had sort of been a lingering scent in Sans’ bed and on his pillow, but that leaves you wondering if Sans actually shampoos his skull, or if he just smells like natural pine.

...Probably the latter, but you know what? The first wouldn’t shock you too bad.

Once you’re feeling all squeaky clean and refreshed, you slip into your pajamas; a pair of Sans’ shorts and an old too-big-for-you shirt of his. They’re perfect for sleeping, and honestly back home you had similar stuff you’d wear to bed anyway.

Sans is snoring on the couch when you walk out, towel drying your short hair and hanging the damp towel on the edge of the bathroom door as you pad across the obnoxious zigzag carpet.

“Heeey, big guy,” you call, and reach out, giving one of his shoulders a gentle shake. “You gonna wake up? You’re kinda hoggin’ my bed, buddy boy,” you call quietly. You make sure to keep your voice down; Frisk and Papyrus have gone quiet, and you assume that means they’re either sound asleep, or playing the world’s quietest game of Battleship.

Sans cracks an eye open, rumbling deep in his chest like some big sleepy cat.

“whaddaya mean i’m hoggin’ your bed?” he yawned, grinning lazily. “i thought we were trading places until you got your new place all set up?”

“No,” you laugh under your breath, and laugh harder when he lets out a grumbly, pathetic whine when you start to push and nudge him to stand up. “I’m not taking your bed, I’m totally happy on the couch, so get up there! And get some sleep!”

Sans snorts, but finally, after you almost practically tug him off the couch onto the floor, he stands up.

With both of his eyes open then, he blinks down at you a few times, glancing from your bare feet to the top of your head. When his cheekbones dust a deep blue, you can’t help when you feel yourself mimic that blush.

“...you, uh… you comfy? in those?” he asks after a moment, nodding down at your pajamas. “i mean, just--are they gonna do the job for ya?”

You glance down at yourself and pluck the front of your white shirt. There’s an old stain on the front and you’re absolutely positive he spilled ketchup on it once upon a time. “Yeah, I guess these’ll do,” you say, and add a melancholy sigh as you turn your head and look up towards the ceiling wistfully. “If only I had my golden silk pajamas, laced with the finest, softest fleece, made from the clouds of Olympus and woven from the puffiest cotton fluffs. But these I suppose will have to do--”

“okayokay,” Sans laughs, and his cheekbones go a bit darker. “i’ll leave ya to it then, sleepin’ beauty,” he snorts, and takes a step back before he begins to turn and head back up towards the stairs, surprising you by not just simply teleporting away.

It’s also a surprise when you find yourself reaching out and grabbing him, wrapping your arms tight
around his chest as you hug him tight.

Sans returns the embrace without so much as a beat of hesitation, and that in itself makes you hold on just a tad tighter.

“...Thank you for today,” you say quietly.

“aw, pal, it’s… it’s okay, it’s nothing.”

“It means more than the whole world to me, and you know it,” you say through a breathy laugh. “I mean it. Thank you for everything, Sans. I dunno what I did to deserve a cool guy like you as a friend, but… hell, I did something right, huh?”

Sans laughs again, soft and breathy, and you feel his teeth press against the top of your head.

“...i’ve gotcha, skip. you ain’t gonna fall, and if ya do? i’ll catch ya.”

Now it’s your turn to laugh. “Crazy thing is, I believe you.”

You hold onto each other for a quiet, but long moment. You’re the one who draws back first, and Sans immediately loosens his grip around you when you start to shift back.

“get some sleep, skipper. i got a feeling tomorrow’s gonna be kinda crazy.”

You blink as you plop down onto the couch, cocking your head. “Oh yeah?”

“knowing paps… well, i mean, you’ll see,” he says with a wink, and before you can even blink he disappears.

You huff, but shake your head and stretch out on the couch, making yourself good and comfortable with your pillow and your fluffy blanket you’d slept with the night before.

...This was night 3 down here, right? Was it weird that it felt more like years?

You close your eyes, nestling into your pillow, and fall asleep with the decision that your favorite color is a very specific shade of blue.

A gentle shift of displacing air in front of you.

A soft, barely-there touch at your shoulder, the blanket adjusting around you.

* Skip - LVL 1 HP 7/8
* She’s long given up on finding a way to avoid the ending in her story.
* But now she’s hoping maybe that ending will be a happy one.

A pair of strong arms slipping beneath you, lifting you up, holding you carefully. Holding you easily.

No shortcut. You’re carried, step by careful step, until you’re set down gently on a bed that smells of pine and faintly of ketchup. It’s warm, and soft, and the blankets are tucked around you carefully.

A gentle touch to your forehead.
You don’t wake up until morning.

The first thing you see when you open your eyes the next morning is a box of bright blue.

Which, understandably, confuses the hell out of you. Your brain has never been one to turn on right away after a good night’s rest, so you just. Stare at the blue box covering your eye in silence for a good ten minutes, mulling over what it was, or what it could possibly mean.

Eventually you get the bright idea to reach up and touch it, and you realize there’s a sticky note stuck to your forehead.

With a sleepy grunt, you blink and turn it around, squinting sleepily up at it.

* dunno what happened, but it looks like we swapped spots. crazy huh?

Great, now you’re more confused.

At least, you are until you sit up, and realize you’re not on the couch. You’re in Sans’ room again, and you sputter out a laugh as you look back down at the sticky note. What...a big dork, you think fondly. And you end up just slapping the note to the wall his bed is pushed against before you stand.

You take a quick stock of how you’re feeling. You can usually get a pretty good read on how the rest of the day will feel by just the mornings alone sometimes, and… you’re feeling pretty good. No aches or pains, no nausea… Alright! You could do this.

You head downstairs, ready for anything.

Or, at least, you had thought you were ready?

You hadn’t really expected Papyrus to jump straight into the renovation project he’d literally just come up with the day before. If you had been asked how you thought that whole plan would play out, you would have been pleasantly surprised enough if the renovation took a couple weeks.

After breakfast was done and everyone was out of their PJs, the four of you had made yourselves comfortable on the couch, smushing into it with each other.

You had let Frisk sit in your lap, and you sat between the two skeletons, both of their arms thrown over the back of the couch behind you, making you feel all boxed in and warm and right at home.

Another Mettaton show had been on, and while Sans had grumbled under his breath every so often, Papyrus was loving every second. This episode though was less ‘educational’ and more ‘Mettaton is the love interest of 47 monsters who all think he’s perfect and wonderful’ and all the drama and triangles that fit into that mess.

It was...actually hilarious. You weren’t sure if Mettaton meant for it to be as damn funny as it was, but it had you wheezing a few times, which in turn got Sans laughing pretty fucking hard right along with you.

“Oh my!” Mettaton had said, pressing the back of his hand to his box of a forehead while a big, buff, red monster who reminded you a bit of Hell Boy stood stone-faced in the doorway. “Enrique! We just can’t! You’re the 33rd person to confess their love for me today!” Mettaton cried in despair.

When Enrique, still stone-faced and expressionless as ever, simply turned around stiffly and left, you
and Sans were howling.

“NYOO-HOO-HOO...POOR ENRIQUE...” Papyrus had sniffed.

You laughed so hard that Frisk had decided they had enough of you and your wiggling and sat on Papyrus’ lap instead, and the two of them moved from the couch to sit on the floor closer to the TV instead, letting you and Sans flop and flail and laugh even harder.

When that little fiasco ended (Mettaton had announced to his 47 broken-hearted admirers that he just wasn’t looking for a relationship! He was married to his work! But don’t give up, love is out there!), Papyrus hopped to his feet, turned off the TV (which made that old fashioned, high pitched, crackly noise as the screen went black) and turned around, Frisk tucked under one of his arms.

“I AM GOING TO THE STORE! I WILL BE BACK POSTHASTE, AND SANS! YOU BETTER BE READY TO GET TO WORK AS SOON AS I’M HOME!”

Sans had nodded, still letting his laughter fade, and he adjusted the arm he had let loop around your shoulders to help steady you both. “sure thing, bro, you got it.”

“I MEAN IT! NO NAPS!”

“Wait,” you’d said, still giggly as hell along with Sans. “What’re you going to the store for?”

“LUMBER!” he said, and then marched to the couch and deposited Frisk onto Sans’ lap.

Frisk then made themselves good and comfortable by sprawling across both of your laps, crossing their little arms behind their head.

“Lumber?” you’d repeated while Sans had playfully poked and squished at Frisk’s cheeks.

“WELL YES, OF COURSE, HOW ELSE IS THE COOL TOOLSHELD TO BECOME A COOL HOUSEMATE HOUSE?”

“Wh-already--?” you’d called.

But he’d left in a whirl.

And then he came back in a whirl.

And so here Papyrus was, buzzing like a hurricane full of those little 5 Hour Energy shots.

He grabs the table that was pushed against the wall and drags it across the room until it sits in front of the couch.

You, Sans, and Frisk stand up from the couch, ready to help with whatever Papyrus has planned. Or, at that point, you’re pretty sure you’re ready.

“WHO DOESN’T LIKE SOME GOOD OLD FASHIONED DEMOLITION?” Papyrus says with a wide grin, and you sputter and tense when he pulls a hammer out from behind his back—where did that come from??—and turns to face the wall the table had previously been pushed against. He rears back, you look at Sans, who does nothing but grin and shrug, and then watch Papyrus literally bash the hammer right through the wall.

Before you even feel the first gust of cold air from the big fuckin’ hole in the wall, you feel your new winter coat being plopped onto your shoulders, glancing to your side to see Sans tucking it around you while his eyes and his lazy grin stay tilted towards Papyrus.
“man, paps, talk about a hole in one, eh?”

“NOPE, YOU’RE NOT RUINING THIS FOR ME,” Papyrus declares, and strikes the wall in a different spot with the hammer.

Frisk giggles, and you watch Sans settle their new red jacket around their shoulders as well, taking a moment to help them get it on and closed. Honestly, that little sight warms you up more than any jacket ever could.

“alright, why don’t you two head over to the librarby and relax for a bit while paps and i finish this up?” Sans suggests, and he doesn’t even flinch when Papyrus lets out a mad cackle and uses the bottom of his boot rather than the hammer to kick out another chunk of the wall.

“Uh…” you hesitate, glancing between the brothers. “Are...you sure? You don’t need help?”

CRASH

“oh, i’m sure, buddy.”

BANG

“how ‘bout i come get ya when we’re done? that sound okay to you?”

Frisk whines. “But I wanna help!” they insist, and point towards Papyrus, who is now...outside, and cracking through the wall of the shed. “I could help!”

“No,” you and Sans both say at once, and you look at each other and laugh.

“No, small fry,” you go on, and ruffle their hair as they pout. “Demolition is a little outta your age group. Oh! Hey, I--” you grin, looking back at Sans. “Do you have any spare notebooks? While we’re at the library--”

“librarby,” Sans corrects you with a wink, and you snort.

“Sorry, librarby, but while we’re there, I can make those sudoku puzzles for Papyrus that I promised,” you say.

Sans huffs out a laugh, glancing away for a second, something in his expression softening, and he blinks out of the air right in front of you. You barely have time to react before he pops back into the same exact spot, and he just grins lazily at your sputtering. He really needed to give you a heads up before breaking the laws of space and time. Or however it was he did that shit.

“here, pal.” He holds out a frayed composition notebook, his thumb holding a mechanical pencil against the cardboard. “think this’ll be good?”

You reach out, taking the notebook and the pencil carefully. When you thumb through the pages, you see a few stray formulas and numbers and graphs and-- “Damn, kinda forgot you were a sciencey type for a sec,” you grin, showing him a couple of the pages.

Sans scoffs, stepping a little closer to peer at the formula you’d found, only to shrug his shoulders. “eh, those are all in my notes anyway. there enough blank pages in there?”

You nod, and tuck the journal under your arm and slip the pencil in one of your jacket’s pockets.

CRASH
“S-seriously, can I help at all?” you start to say, leaning to the side a little to peer out through the gaping hole in the house after Papyrus, but Sans puts a hand on your back and on Frisk’s and starts ushering you towards the door.

“believe me, skipper,” Sans begins.

WHAM

“we’re gonna be just fine.”

You hesitate, but Sans has already opened the door and gently nudged the two of you outside and off of the front step into the snow. He takes a moment to reach out and tug Frisk’s hood on over their head, and then tugs up your own, grinning lazily as he leans back and shoves his hands in his pockets.

“Will we have to keep our hoods up when we go into town?” you ask, pointing a thumb off towards the library.

Sans blinks, then laughs. “what? oh, nah, y’just don’t wanna get cold. keep your hoods up to keep the snow off, y’know, all that. you’ll be fine.”

SHATTER

“Oh my god, that sounded like breaking glass,” you sputter, moving to try to head towards the Shed on your own, but Sans catches you with an arm and easily twirls you back around, marching the first few steps with you and Frisk towards the library.

“that was probably just the windows, no worries. gotta replace ‘em somehow, right?”

You sputter through a bewildered laugh, glancing over your shoulder, but you decide to just stop fighting. You take Frisk’s hand in yours and shake your head, grinning. “Fine! Fine, I can tell when we aren’t wanted!” you tease.

Sans winks. “i’ll come getcha when you are wanted. have fun,” he grins.

There’s another CRASH, and the distant, muffled sound of Papyrus’ giddy laughter, and then Sans vanishes.

“...I wish we woulda fallen down here sooner,” Frisk says suddenly, and you squeeze their hand as you laugh again.

“Yeah, that woulda been neat, huh?” you grin.

You and Frisk head for the librarby.

Chapter End Notes

Literally everyone in Snowdin: what the hell are those skeletons up to now

YO come follow me and be my dang friend on my Undertale Tumblr! If ya’ll have discord, feel free to pop in and ask for it.
And yoooo for those of ya'll who don't know/might be interested, I got my dumbass to start writing a skeleton harem fic lmaooo
It's called Library of Hearts, and if you like fluffy shit, give it a look! :D
Librarby is a cool word for Book Museum

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

*Intent means everything. Every piece of magic is created with intent, whether it’s helpful or hurtful (but why would anyone wanna be hurtful?) The bullets and ‘attacks’ we can make can be whatever we want them to be with a little practice! And even monsters themselves are created with intent!*

In this paper I will talk about how important what we feel and how we express ourselves is to our magic and who we are. First, we can talk about healing magic, or green magic. It’s said that every monster can do at least a little healing magic, but that’s like saying every monster can do a cool handstand. It takes practice! And you’re not gonna do it on your first try! So don’t give up. But green magic is (at least my mom says so) the most noble branch of magic to learn! It starts by just wanting to help someone, and that’s it. After that, it’s supposed to be all about focus and...

You pause, looking up from a ‘book’ that was really no more than a collection of middle school papers all put together. Quite a few of the books in the library (hup, librarby, you mean) were actually assignments from the little town’s school.

And speaking of school, you had to look into that to try to enroll Frisk now, huh?

For the nth time since the talk with Sans at the booth, you feel like you gave up way too easily. Just rolled over and accepted yours and Frisk’s fate without really even trying to find some other way.

But hell, you’re just--you’re so tired, and you--

You shove the guilt aside, shake your head, and reshelve the book before you reach up to one of the higher shelves you can reach and grab a random one. It’s not a bunch of school assignments and you treat it a little more delicately when you notice that the words on the thick paper are written out delicately in very careful handwritten ink.

The inside title page reads *Matters of the Soul* and your curiosity immediately jumps off the charts.

With a soft hum you open the book to a random spot, finding a chapter title in big fancy calligraphy on the page.

*Soul Bonding*, the chapter title reads.

For whatever reason the very idea makes your cheeks flush and you snap the book shut before glancing around like you’d just been caught doing something you shouldn’t have been doing.

Nobody’s paying attention to you though.

Frisk is sitting with a handful of other friendly monsters at the single table the library has, a book full of stories that had to do with brave warriors exploring a dark cave to find a magical light open in front of them.

The three monsters sitting with Frisk are quietly gossipping and discussing their notes for articles and word searches they’re writing and creating.

The librarian (librarbian) is slowly and carefully building a little tower out of playing cards.
So you’re pretty sure you’re in the clear.

You let out a little breath and look back down at the old book, cracking it open to the table of contents instead of that previous chapter you’d flipped open to.

The book isn’t very long, and seems to be more like a supplementary book to something much bigger if the notes and forward tell you anything after you skim through it. Still, what information it does offer you? It’s all completely brand new, fascinating, and most exciting of all?

Everything in these pages had a very, very good chance of being as real as you or Frisk. Your soul was a real, tangible thing. You’d seen it with your own eyes (though you immediately push aside the memory, not wanting to recall the faded, cracked thing that represented your being), and for the first time since grade school when you learned how cool volcanoes were for the first time, you were excited to jam your brain with as much new information as you could.

You skip on ahead of the foreword and introduction, leaning against the shelf as you begin to read. *Soul Traits* is the first chapter title.

There’s an illustration of an upside-down heart alongside a rightside-up heart. The upside-down heart is white, while the rightside-up one is split into seven colors; red, orange, yellow, green, blue, light blue, and purple.

*Human souls have long fascinated Monster kind. Powerful and unique in that they burn with the personality and strength of their vessels and also in that they each show off one of seven vastly differing traits that Monster souls simply do not advertise. There have been several theories throughout the study of souls that suggest this is simply because Monsters are more adaptable, seeing as how the color white is actually every color imaginable in combination on the light spectrum.*

*Each of these different colors, save white, represents a core personality trait--*

Suddenly feeling like you’re reading a book about astrology, or like you just took a personality quiz and had been given the page your type was on, you can’t help but skim ahead to the section that you know has to do with you before anything else.

You skip three pages ahead and stop when you see an image of an orange heart over a wall of text. Excitement and curiosity bubbles up again as you begin to read. *Orange has long been said to represent bravery among--*

The book snaps shut and you close your eyes tightly, pressing the covers between your hands as you grit your teeth and try to ignore the flash of hot irritation.

Maybe it was because you were sick of that word. Family and friends, all of them well meaning, praising you for how ‘brave’ you were, facing down your illness like you were some knight against a dragon. You can’t explain why else the fact that your orange soul means you’re brave gets under your skin so much.

Was your soul always orange for bravery? Or did your disease change it? Morph it into something from what it used to be?

You’re so, so sick of your cancer hanging over you like a cloud, like it was taking over everything and defining you even down to your soul.
Brave. Ha. Being locked in a room with a hungry tiger didn’t make you brave. It made you unlucky.

“Skip? Are you okay?” Frisk calls, making you jump a bit and glance up. You hadn’t realized it but you’d been glaring down at the closed book in your hands, looking a few pegs passed ‘pissed’.

You reach up and scrub a hand over your face, tucking the book under your arm and nodding as you head back to the table, plopping down beside them in their chair.

“Yeah, just a sudden headache that sorta hit me outta nowhere, you know?” you lie easily. “Like the sort that...suddenly feels like you’ve got an ice cream headache?” you supply.

“Oh, those suck!” Frisk sticks their little tongue out in distaste. “You wanna go back to Sans’ and Papyrus’ house? Could watch ‘em break some windows and--oh, that probably won’t help a headache, huh?”

You snicker and ruffle their hair. “We’ve only been gone a little over an hour. Let’s give them a bit more time, or just wait ‘til Sans comes back to grab us like he said he would. I’m fine, small fry,” you promise. “Besides, I haven’t made Papyrus those sudoku puzzles. I can get those done.”

You set the book you’d grabbed down, drawing Frisk’s attention to it. You shuffle through your jacket, which you’ve left folded up neatly beneath your seat, and pull out the notebook and pencil Sans had given you when Frisk speaks up again.

“What kinda book didja grab?” they ask, curious. “It doesn’t have a title on the front or the side?”

“The title’s on the inside page. It’s about souls,” you say, but nonchalantly pick up the book and set it off to your side furthest away from Frisk to make room for your notebook, not really wanting them to thumb through it. “I’m curious, y’know?”

“Ooh, what kinda stuff about souls?” they ask curiously.

“I dunno much, yet,” you grin. “There’s stuff about soul traits? Like, colors? Like--”

You stop short, remembering the specific detail that only human souls had any colors other than white. You cast a little glance towards the other monsters around you, but they’re giggling over Mettaton’s latest program, not paying you any attention. Still, you don’t risk it, and shrug your shoulders a little loosely. “Human souls come in seven different colors, did you know?”

“That’s pretty cool,” Frisk grins knowingly up at you. “What’s orange mean?”

“Oh…” You laugh and awkwardly tap your pencil to the open page of the notebook you’d turned to. You’re silent for a few moments before you mutter out a quiet “Bravery.”

“Oh, that fits!” Frisk says, and you puff out your cheeks a bit.

“Y’think so?”

“Yeah! You’ve always been the bravest person I ever knew,” Frisk grins and looks back down at the book in front of them. They turn a few pages back and tap at an illustration of a monster wearing armor, facing down a massive black mass with teeth that takes up nearly an entire page. The large-print paragraph on the page calls it a Nightmare.

“You’re like a knight, y’know? Like this lady!” They lower their little voice a bit as they tap the drawing, casting a careful glance towards the other monsters, but nobody is paying attention to either of you. “I remember you telling me about how you saved that turtle from getting run over by a car.
And you climbed that really tall tree to help that kitten! And how that one time you were really really nervous to do your solo color guard routine, but you did really really good! And…”

Frisk goes on for a little while, bringing up a handful of things that you guess could loosely translate as ‘brave’ if you squinted at them. Mostly they were all just examples of you not being an asshole, but… but it did make you feel better.

Maybe having a brave soul wasn’t so bad. Not if Frisk is as excited about it as they were. If Frisk thought it was a good match, then it bugged you just a little bit less. And maybe you always did have a brave soul, and it wasn’t the dumb disease at all.

You tip down and interrupt Frisk when you press a smoosh to their nose, smiling when the bluster and laugh, nudging at your cheeks to gently push you away.

You wonder then what a red soul’s trait is. Kindness? Adorableness? Absolute perfection? You grin and lean forward, chasing little Frisk down with another kiss, making them laugh.

They nudge at you, breathless from their soft giggling.

“Go do Paps’ puzzles! You promised him!” they grin, and go back to where they had been earlier in their storybook.

You smile yourself and finally begin to draw out the Sudoku squares. You’d forgotten how damn therapeutic it can be, humming in thought whenever you find yourself tangled in the middle of the puzzle scaffolding and feeling that much more accomplished when you figure your way out.

You’re not sure how much time goes by. Every once in a while the wind picks up outside and you can hear the big fat magic snowflakes tap against the glass of the library’s windows. At one point you get up from the table and drag your chair over beside a window, crossing your legs up on the chair and using one of your knees as a desk to keep drawing out the squares.

It lets you keep that calming snowfall in your periphery, always. And it soothes you to the point where you almost feel like dozing. A nap kinda sounds nice, huh? Just the sound of the wind outside and the flip of paper as Frisk and a few of the other monsters turn the pages of their books. The occasional quiet gossip and the scratch of your pencil over the notepad. The creak of one of the old wooden chairs as somebody adjusts and gets comfortable.

You finish up a 12th sudoku square and lean forward, crossing your arms over the deep windowsill and resting your chin over your sleeves, eyelids drooping as you smile out at the snowy street.

---

You’re running. Laughing. Your hair is beautiful, whipping out behind you as you race over the grass. Your form is lit up from the crystals and the flowers, making you look like something ethereal; like an angel, or a spirit. Whatever you are, it makes his soul ache.

Even as he rushes after you, that wide grin ever present, playing with you while he gives into the chase, his soul is pounding.

He knows he’s dreaming. He knows this can’t be real. But something in his soul is trying to tell him otherwise, begging him to reach out and hold you, keep you close, keep you safe.

Sans catches your wrist carefully and pulls, causing the two of you to spin out and stumble.

He catches himself over you, hovering close--so close.
It’s...odd that you have a scent here, in the dream. He almost leans closer to catch more of it while you laugh and swat at him in response to his easy flirting--stars, is that what he’s doing? Is he flirting? You smell like life itself. Vibrant and glowing, unlike anything he’s experienced. Something bright, like cinnamon and spice, but sweeter. He gets close enough to let his forehead brush against yours, and he’s lost.

Dream or not, he’s certain of his own feelings now. It wasn’t an unusual thing; monsters were in tune enough with their souls not to be afraid to fall in love. And if you were a monster, chances were you might very well reciprocate just as fast (unless you were as cripplingly shy as someone like Alphys or as cripplingly oblivious as someone like Undyne).

But you aren’t a monster. You’re human. You’re human, and you’re sick, and you’re fading, and you’re--

Beautiful.

He leans down and marvels at how soft your lips are when he kisses you. Everything about you is so soft and delicate and alluring and it takes every bit of his self control to keep himself from touching more than just his teeth to you, his hands digging into the grass.

Dream or not, he’d behave. He’d--

Sans drifts away from your lips, drawn by the pulse of your soul. Orange--your soul is orange? Bravery. That...would make sense. It was a good guess for this dream to staple to you. It makes all the sense in the world to him as he nuzzles himself against your jaw, closer to your throat. He can hear the blood in your veins and it’s so phenomenally different than anything he’s ever experienced that before he’s even aware he’s doing it he has his teeth dragging over the soft skin of your neck.

He lets his sharp canines draw dual lines over your throat, and his jaw aches.

Something in his soul burns, and for the first time in his life he feels that age old instinct he’d ever only read about to bite--

Whoa. Whoa whoa. That’s a little intense, especially coming from him. A skeleton with the romantic, let alone physical, drive of a damn cardboard box and--

Stars, but you’re so warm and so alive. He’d give anything to keep you, just like this, breathy and gasping. You say his name and he loses himself again. Feels like his soul might just crack from the mere thought of losing you. Of not being able to keep you like every bit of magic that made up his body wanted.

He eases back, forehead touching yours as he lets his broad ribcage expand in a comforting breath he doesn’t need. It’s mostly to help him ground himself and thankfully it works.

A thought runs through his head, solid and heavy; a promise.

* I’ll keep you safe. I won’t let anything happen to you.

He murmurs quietly, telling you everything will be alright when you break the silence with a gentle question, like you were somehow able to hear what he’d swore to you.

You’re the one to kiss him then, and if he wasn’t already sure about where his soul was in regards to you he’d have taken it from his chest and handed it to you in that very moment if he had been able. He lowers himself, unable to resist the soft warmth of your body, feeling as much of you as he can as he gently lets his bones rest over you, dragging one hand through the grass nearer to your side--
“SANS? HOW IS IT GOING OVER THERE?”

Papyrus’ voice jolts him out of his own memory and he blinks blankly a few times at the floating hammer in front of him, poised to strike a nail stuck halfway out of the wooden board. The weird tunnel-thing that would apparently forever connect the house and the shed (rebranded the Cool Housemate Pad by Papyrus) was just about finished, though in all honesty he had zoned out a long while ago after helping Paps install the new windows.

“uh...fine?” he snorts, and lets the hammer finally fall against the nail, securing the board.

“REALLY? BECAUSE BY MY CALCULATIONS, YOU HAVE USED THAT HAMMER EXACTLY ONCE IN THE LAST...TEN MINUTES.”

Sans blinks--damn was he really in his own head that long?

“sorry, paps. preoccupied,” he says, lifting another row of nails with his magic without moving a muscle (heh) or taking his hands from his pockets. The nails line up on a new board, held in place with another sheen of blue magic, and he quickly hammers it into place.

“ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT OUR NEW HOUSEMATES? I KNOW I SURE AM!”

“heh, yeah paps,” he says. He tries his best to focus on his brother’s voice, he really does, but--

Damn, you’re on his mind something fierce. But that’s probably normal, huh? The whole...falling in love thing. He’s got no experience on this front. Dating? Sure. Some fun with no strings attached? Absolutely. But… this soul-bearing, mind-blanking, magic-drawing thing? Stars, he has no damn idea where to begin.

And that doesn’t include the added complicacy of you being human, or you being sick. He’s still got no idea what’s really wrong with you, and to make things...worse? He’s become very aware of something.

By this point in any other timeline? Frisk would have already broken the barrier. The King and Queen would be up to their horns in meetings and peace talks and negotiations regarding their people’s rights and integration into the human’s society on the surface.

And you would be nowhere in sight. You never were. And that has him assume the very worst.

Did that mean you were gone by the time Frisk could get to you? He’s already assumed, and he’s fairly sure he’s right, that every single reset has to do with you. Frisk’s been trying to save you, Frisk’s been trying to speed through the underground to get you help.

He’s sure he’s right.

So if, in any other timeline, you would be dead by this current point in time, what was keeping you here? How does he prevent you from slipping away--

WHAM

The hammer goes clear through the wooden board, his magic flaring brightly in his eye. Sans winces and reaches up, yanking the hammer out of the wood with his hand.

“SANS?”

Sans winces at the concern in his brother’s voice. “shit, sorry paps, you say something?”
Papyrus pauses before speaking again. “SANS HAVE YOU HEARD A SINGLE THING I’VE SAID TO YOU?”

Sans blinks and looks down the little tunnel-hall. Papyrus is standing at the other end, hands on his hips. His brow is bunched up in concern and one of his boots are tapping on the floor.

“ah...before or after ya asked about being excited?” he offered sheepishly, glancing down at the worn hammer in his hand. “sorry, bro. was in my own skull there for a while. what were you saying?”

“I WAS...SAYING,” Papyrus begins again, though he’s hesitant. “THAT I OVERHEARD SOME THINGS. WHILE CLEANING UP AFTER LUNCH.”

Sans grips the hammer a little tighter and lets out a breath, nodding. “didja?”

“YES. SOME THINGS ABOUT SKIP.”

“is that why you got so eager to finish this up so quick?” Sans laughs and motions at the nearly finished hall connecting the two buildings. The windows are fixed, the cracks in the walls are repaired, the floors are swept and cleaned... honestly the shed really does look more like a house now. Minus the furniture and stuff that actually would make it a house.

“WELL, I MEAN. I GUESS SO,” Papyrus says hesitantly, and he fiddles with the hammer in his hand anxiously. “I HAD ALREADY PLANNED ON WORKING MY VERY BEST AND AT MY MOST MONUMENTAL SPEED! I LIKE FRISK! AND I LIKE SKIP! AND…”

Papyrus goes quiet, and Sans shifts a little closer to his brother,

“AND I’M CONCERNED,” he says after a moment. “WORRIED, EVEN. THEY ARE OUR FRIENDS! AND, AS YOU SAID, HONORARY SKELETONS! AND SO I WANT TO HELP LOOK FOR A WAY TO HELP SKIP.”

“that’s why you’re the coolest, bro,” Sans smiles, soft and genuine. “that’d probably mean the world to her.”

“I HEARD THAT YOU WILL START LOOKING FOR A WAY TO HELP HER, YES? I AM, AND DON’T BE TOO SURPRISED, NOT VERY EXPERIENCED OR EDUCATED IN HOW HUMANS DO THEIR WHOLE...HUMAN...THING.”

Despite the topic, Sans snorts. “human thing?”

“YES! YOU KNOW, LIKE HOW THEY CONTINUE TO EXIST WITH SO MUCH COMPLICATED STUFF GOING ON WITH THEM. DOESN’T IT SOUND EXHAUSTING? DO THEY HAVE TO USE THEIR LUNGS MANUALLY? WHAT ABOUT THEIR HEARTS? IT MAKES MY HEAD HURT!”

Papyrus reaches up with his free hand and rubs his glove over the top of his skull. “PERHAPS KING ASGORE MIGHT KNOW A THING OR TWO ABOUT WHAT TO DO--”

“No.”

Sans winces, the bite in his tone surprising them both.

“...i don’t think that’s a great idea, papyrus,” Sans mutters. “you know asgore’s after souls.”

Sans chuckles, dropping his gaze to the floor.

He feels a twist of guilt curl around his soul behind his ribs. The most frustrating thing about all of this is he knows a very clear-cut, tried-and-true method of getting you back to the surface. Stars knew Frisk had it all figured out. Stars knew the clever kid could probably lead them all to freedom for the nth time blindfolded.

He knew Asgore would give up on his war-mongering. Hell, he knew the old monster had already given that up long ago, maybe even centuries ago, only clinging to the front of it for the sake of his people’s hope. He knew that it would be very easy indeed to win over everyone who could and would possibly stand against Frisk and Skip down in the underground.

And here was the kicker of it all; what was the right thing to do here?

Let you live down here, ignorant to the fact that he was hiding so much from you?

And if that was the case, did he let Frisk befriend and charm their way into the souls of the entire underground all over again? If he did that, this place would certainly feel more like a home to you than--

Than what? The only choice you thought you had?

A prison?

A grave?

A grave?

A grave?

“SANS? SANS, WHAT’ S--WHAT’ S WRONG?”

Sans blinks and realizes Papyrus is kneeling in front of him, those big red gloves cupping his skull.

“PLEASE, DON’T WORRY!” Papyrus says quickly. “YOU DON’T NEED TO FEEL LIKE THIS, EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY! YOU JUST HAVE TO BELIEVE ME, ALRIGHT?”

Sans hesitates and he feels his bones rattle.

Stars, he’s shaking--why is he shaking?

He’s dropped the hammer on the floor, one hand digging into the shirt over his sternum. Behind his ribcage his soul is pulsing brightly like a flaring, angry strobe light.

“i’m fine,” he chokes. “don’t worry ‘bout me, paps, it’s--”

Papyrus leans forward and clunks his forehead loudly against Sans’, surprising him into silence, his brother’s sockets narrowed as he all but glares down at him.
“YOU’RE NOT BELIEVING ME! LISTEN TO WHAT I’M SAYING, OKAY?”

Papyrus’ gloves press a little harder over Sans’ face and the malleable bone of his cheeks squish slightly.

“WE WILL FIGURE ALL OF THIS OUT! WE WILL HELP FIND A WAY TO MAKE SKIP FEEL BRAND NEW! OUR NEW FRIENDS WILL BE HAPPY, AND SO WILL YOU!”

Sans manages a tiny, strangled laugh, his grin strained. “paps, i--”

“NO! NONE OF THAT! I KNOW WHAT YOU’RE GOING TO SAY, AND I DON’T WANT TO HEAR IT! JUST THIS ONCE I WANT YOU TO TRY YOUR HARDEST TO BELIEVE ME! I, THE GREAT PAPYRUS, WILL SEE TO IT THAT ALL OF THESE FEARS YOU ARE HAVING… THEY ARE UNFOUNDED AND WILL NOT COME TRUE!”

Sans snorts weakly. “can’t hide anything from you, can i, bro?” he laughs softly, fondly.

“YOU REALLY CAN’T,” Papyrus huffs flatly. “NOW, I WANT YOU TO REPEAT AFTER ME, ALRIGHT?”

“aw, paps, c’mon--”

“NO ARGUING WITH ME ON THIS! OR I’LL STOP DOING YOUR LAUNDRY!”

Sans lets out a mock gasp, weak as it is. “you wouldn’t do that to your brother, would ya?”

“YOU KNOW I WOULD! NOW, REPEAT AFTER ME!” Papyrus barely gives Sans a moment to accept or struggle further before he starts speaking again. “I BELIEVE THAT THINGS ARE GOING TO BE OKAY.”

Sans hesitates, but of course he gives in. How could he not, with his little bro looking at him like that? “i...believe that things are gonna be okay.”

“AND I BELIEVE THAT MY BROTHER, THE GREAT PAPYRUS, WILL SEARCH FAR AND WIDE AND NEVER REST UNTIL OUR GOOD FRIENDS SKIP AND FRISK ARE HEALTHY AND HAPPY AND SAFE!”

Sans closes his eyes and lets out a very slow and steadying breath.

“and i believe that my bro, the great papyrus, will look far and wide and to and fro and not let himself get a wink of shuteye, even though he should, ‘til our pals skip and frisk are good and golden.”

Papyrus squints at him. “THAT’S NOT AT ALL WHAT I SAID.”

“yeah but you never said i had to repeat what you said exactly.”

“UGH.” Papyrus rolls his eyes, but he drops his hands from Sans’ face to his shoulders and leans back so there’s a little more space between them.

When Sans glances down he sees that the panicked light his soul was giving off is gone and his magic has calmed down. The anxiety is still there (though when isn’t it?) but it’s manageable. He’s not on the verge of a breakdown, and…

Well, what else could he expect from his brother? Papyrus was just the coolest.
“NOW, ARE YOU FEELING BETTER? TERRIBLE LISTENING SKILLS AND SENSE OF HUMOR ASIDE?”

“heh,” Sans lets out a breath before nodding. “yeah, bro, i’m fine.”

Papyrus hums but seems satisfied. He appraises Sans for an extra second before letting him go and standing up again, dipping down to grab the hammer he’d set on the floor. “WELL, GOOD! WE’RE ALMOST DONE WITH THESE RENOVATIONS! IT SHOULD BE MOVE-IN READY BY TONIGHT!”

He pauses, eyes shifting to the side. “WELL, I MEAN, ONCE WE GET THE FURNITURE FOR IT OF COURSE. THAT IS ALSO IMPORTANT. WE CAN’T JUST ASK OUR GOOD FRIENDS TO SLEEP ON THE HARD FLOOR!”

“nope, that wouldn’t do,” Sans agrees with a snort, and leans down to grab up his own dropped hammer. “think they’re doin’ okay over at the library?”

“YOU MEAN THE LIBRARY? HONESTLY, SANS.”

Sans snickers, “hey, that’s what the sign says!”

“ANYWAY!! I’M SURE THEY’RE HAVING A GREAT TIME!” Papyrus says, rolling his eyes. “AND I AM VERY EXCITED TO SEE IF SKIP WRITING ME THOSE PUZZLES!” He turns, beginning to head back down the hall to finish the last section of the tunnel when he stops again. “OH! SPEAKING OF BOOKS…”

Papyrus dips a hand into the big scarf around his neck and pulls out a little paperback book. He moves back to Sans and presses it down against Sans’ chest until the smaller skeleton reaches up to catch it. “I HAVE A FEELING THIS WILL COME IN HANDY. ESPECIALLY CHAPTER 17 I BELIEVE.”

Sans blinks and stares after Papyrus for a moment when his brother marches away again, humming a familiar tune as he readies his hammer again.

He glances down at the book and nearly drops it as his cheekbones flush a bright, glowing blue while his eyelights shrink in surprise.

It’s Papyrus’ Dating Manual.

Sans is still blushing when he stuffs the little book into his hoodie’s pocket, a wobbly and flustered smile lighting up his face while he clears his throat and gets back to his own work.

Man. He really can’t hide anything from Paps, can he?

Chapter End Notes

i warned you about feelings bro
i told you dawg

HEY SORRY THIS ONE TOOK ME A WHILE, hopefully I'll be back to posting a
chapter once every two-ish weeks now, rather than over a dang month oh my god. And yo! Come hang out with me and chat me up over at my Undertale Tumblr! Be my pal!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!