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**My Monster**

by AuroraDragon1983

**Summary**

You're just a regular Canadian woman living in a big city. A river runs through it. You're walking along that river when you get too close to the water and you find something you didn't expect: a skeleton laying in the mud. Why is there a Halloween decoration here? It's Spring. Wait, is it breathing?

You've never heard of Mt. Ebott, but you're about to begin a new chapter of your life.
River City. It's early Spring and for the first time in months, you go outside when you don't actually have to. You never liked the cold. You live in Canada, yet you despise Winter with every fibre of your being. Despite having a beat up car, the only reason you went out was for work and grocery shopping. You have a few friends you care dearly for, but they have lives of their own and you don't see them very often and you miss your tabletop RPG gatherings. The rest of your family lives a good distance away from you and being invited to Christmas dinner with your friends was a balm to your loneliness.

Now that the weather is tolerable, you figure you could try and curb that Winter depression by getting some fresh air. Plus it's Easter weekend. You don't celebrate Easter, but hey, it's time off work nonetheless. The change in the weather has also brought early storms. Last night's thunderstorm was particularly bad. You heard part of downtown even lost power for a while because lightning hit a power plant or something. On your drive to the park, you saw a few branches on the road and few shingles had been ripped off a few roofs. The park is where a popular walking trail begins. The trail follows the edge of the River that passes through your city and you're curious to see just how much damage the wind and heavy rain did to the trail and to see how much ice was left to melt in the river itself. After several minutes of walking, you come to a spot in the trail where the river is rather easily accessible. In the past, you've seen people fishing in this area, but there doesn't seem to be anyone else here. In fact, you haven't seen anyone else on the trail, either. Probably because it's still fairly chilly and it's getting late in evening. You've always preferred the night over the day.

Carefully, you push aside some of the alder bushes that separate the trail from the river's edge and look out over the water. There are still quite a few chunks of ice drifting with the current; probably from farther north in the province, but most of the solid ice has already melted. The river separates the North and South regions of the city and you can see downtown on the other side from where you stand.

You look from side to side just to survey the area when your gaze freezes on something laying in the mud on the edge of the water about fifty feet away from you. Your blood runs cold when your mind processes what you see. A body. The thought of someone falling into the river and subsequently drowning and then washing up on the river's edge makes your stomach turn. You fumble for your phone, preparing to call the police as you slowly creep towards it to make sure it actually is a body and not just a random bundle of clothes or a mannequin. As you get closer, it is indeed human-shaped and it's face down and partially obscured by tree roots and shrubbery. You see a blue hooded sweater and black shorts, but they're soaked in the muddy water. You're about ten feet from it now and something seems... off. You don't see hair or skin exposed; you see a skull and bones.

Shit, it's a fucking Halloween decoration. You groan internally as you step up to it for a closer look. The wet clothes sag into the empty space where the oblique muscles would be and you can clearly see the outline of hip bones in the wet shorts. You lean down to try to move the skeleton when you freeze again with your fingers just inches from the figure.

It's... breathing.

You stare, frozen. Unsure if your eyes are tricking you, but you're sure you see a very faint rise and fall of the cloth-covered ribcage. Against your better judgement, you place your hand flat on the body's back. It's true; you can feel it. Whatever you're touching, it's alive.
You cautiously move your hand around to the side of the humanoid creature's torso and carefully manoeuvre the figure onto it's back so you can finally see it's face. You audibly gasp as you see something that is not human. It doesn't look like a human skull. The eye sockets are tightly shut with what might be boney eyelids. The jaw hinge is fused to the rest of the skull like it was carved from ivory and the mouth only has a few teeth exposed from some sort of boney lip. As you study the being more closely, it's a bit more obvious that it's ribcage is indeed slowly and faintly expanding and contracting, yet the damp cloth still sags into the empty abdominal cavity.

You're having trouble breathing yourself to the point you feel dizzy. What is this? An alien? An undead alien? This can't be natural or something native to Earth. Why is it wearing human clothes? You realise you're still holding your phone; and it's getting dark. Should you call someone? Who would you even call? You imagine a scientist would want to see this. Your thoughts freeze at that; and start to drift to the memory of a well-loved childhood film. E.T. What will happen to them if an unscrupulous scientist gets a hold of them? You admit you have no idea how this being would fare in your care, but you can't in good conscience send them off to an uncertain fate. You crouch down to look more closely at the skeleton's face in the gathering darkness. There are smears of mud and dead leaves stuck to it and they just look so frail. You make a decision you will probably regret, but not for lack of trying. You put your phone away and tentatively reach your arms round the skeleton's ribcage and attempt to pick them up. They certainly aren't as light as plastic, but not as heavy as a human. You position the skeleton into a piggy back, which is a challenge due to having to support the body yourself and power-walk back down the trail as quickly and quietly as possible; checking your surroundings for other hikers along the way.

You manage to get back to the parking lot relatively unseen. There are still a few park patrons milling about, but as luck would have it, they are a good distance away or are simply distracted with their families as they also prepare to leave the area. The park is vacated and locked at night by rangers.

You arrive at your car and carefully set your charge down on the ground and lean them against the passenger door, obscuring them from view from passers-by. You open the back door and as quickly (and awkwardly) as possible pick the skeleton up, deposit them into the back seat, secure them with a seatbelt, cover most of them with a blanket and close the door. Sighing, you get into the driver's seat, start the car and pull out of the lot.

You drive carefully back to your apartment; periodically glancing back to make sure the skeleton is still secure in your backseat. What are you going to do with them? Will they even wake up? How long were they laying there in the water?

You pull into your parking spot behind the house you live in. The main floor houses a family with several children. You live in a basement suite alone. You like living alone; you like your privacy and freedom to do what you like in your own kitchen. Now, it's a blessing and you can bring a living, unconscious skeleton creature into the backdoor without your upstairs neighbours seeing you. Carefully, you drag the skeleton like an inebriated drinking buddy down the stairs and into your suite and then into your bedroom. Your room is a bit messy, but not unreasonably so. It's mostly filled with an eclectic assortment of craft supplies, books and pop culture trinkets. You shoo your cat off your bed and grab a towel from a laundry pile and spread it one-handed on your mattress before plopping the skeleton onto it. After positioning them fully onto the towel, you just stand there and stare at them for a few minutes.

Okay... Now what?
The Stars

Chapter Summary

Your skeletal guest remains unconscious as you try to figure out just what you brought home.

Chapter Notes

Most of you had the right idea to get our skeleton guest cleaned up, but it might be a while before he wakes.
Also, thanks for checking out my first Undertale fic. Hope it's a good read for you guys.

The first thought that comes to mind is that you should probably do something about those wet and dirty clothes. They might make your guest sick if they weren't already. Even now you weren't sure if this being had a gender. The clothes you like are pretty gender-neutral, but would be a bit big on this figure. Better than nothing. You find a soft blue sweater and some flannel plaid pyjama bottoms and set to work awkwardly peeling the cold damp clothes off of the skeleton; praying they didn't wake up just to find you undressing them. You're as gentle as you can be as you reveal the bare white bones of this creature's body. They truly are just a skeleton. No organs, no muscles, not even any discernible cartilage. The bones seem to be held together with some unseen magnetic force. You can't help feeling a cognitive dissonance brought on by seeing a skeleton (something that should be dead) breathing (without lungs), and thus seemingly alive. It's uncannily surreal.

After manoeuvring the skeleton's torso into the blue sweater, you hesitate with the shorts. It's probably just bones, and they are still unconscious, but... You can't help but shut your eyes, pull the shorts off, feel around for the pj bottoms and pull them up to the hips. You sigh and drop the wet clothes into your hamper. You need to do laundry anyway. Tomorrow. For now, you pull the towel out from under the skeleton and drop it into the hamper as well. You then get a damp cloth from the bathroom and start cleaning the dirt from the skeleton's skull and other bones you can reach without pulling the clothes off again; pausing every so often to marvel at the smooth porcelain-like bones of his hands and feet. You then pull your blankets over them. There's not really much else you can do now, but wait to see if your guest either wakes up or... doesn't.

You deal with your own personal hygiene before plopping yourself in front of your makeshift computer desk. You find yourself looking for obscure information on skeleton-shaped aliens, but you only find fiction and fantastical illustrations and most aren't even humanoid. You resign yourself to reading about alien encounters until you pass out in your chair. Your computer chair is a recliner. Which is nice.

You wake up a few hours later with a horrible kink in your neck. After stretching a bit, you manage to look over to see your guest hasn't moved and upon closer inspection, is still breathing. They
actually look a bit less dead than they did before. Now it just looks like they're sleeping. Maybe they are getting better?

It's still very early in the morning, but you can already hear the kids upstairs playing and probably waking their parents. You get your laundry started and wash the clothes you took off of your skeleton guest. You notice now, the clothes are old and nearly threadbare. It looks like they've been worn every day for years and have been repaired several times. They also have several stains, mostly water stains and some red colouring; maybe rust? You're tempted to toss out the socks as they both have holes in them, but for all you know, they might have sentimental value to your bed-fellow, so you wash them too. Once the clothes are dry, you hang them up in your closet.

You prop the skeleton into a bit more of a reclining position so you can better see their face while you're sitting at your computer. You make yourself breakfast and mostly spend the day looking up obscure articles and documentaries online, while keeping a watchful eye on your sleeping guest. You turn the ceiling light off, but keep the night table lamp on. Your cat seems content to sleep right next to them and you can't bring yourself to shoo him away again.

It isn't until that night, while reading about some weird wiccan history, you hear a non-cat sound come from your bed. There's a sharp intake of breath and the skeleton's skull lolls to one side. They bring a boney hand up to rub the still-closed eye socket and then the eyes open. As you might have expected, the sockets are dark, but there are tiny dots of light; like fireflies, floating inside the empty sockets. You stay absolutely still as the lights dart about from side to side, apparently they were like pupils? They seem to take in their surroundings before they focus on you. The skeleton is staring at you.

“Hello,” you say softly; with no clue if they even knew your language. They don't respond at first. Instead they look around a bit more, seemingly confused. “Can you speak?” You ask gently. “Do you have a name?”

You hear what resembles a wheeze one might make before coughing, but instead you hear a voice. “sans,” the skeleton says hoarsely.

You pause. “Your name is Sans?”

The skeleton nods. You don't like to assume gender based on voice, but you're pretty sure the skeleton in your bed is male.

“where am i?” he says, looking warily at your curtains.

“You're in my apartment,” you say vaguely. You tell him your name and you debate if you should go into detail about what area of the city you're in and what planet you're on.

“am i.. on the surface?” he asks tentatively.

“Well, we're in the basement, but you can still see the sky.” You get up slowly and make your way to the curtain and pull it to the side. “It's a clear night. You can see the stars—”

You hear a sudden shuffling and a thump and look back to see the skel... Sans on the floor, tangled in the blankets. He's bent down on one knee and is struggling to stand, but to no avail.

“Hey!” You go over to him and reach for (but don't quite touch) him. “Careful. You're probably still really weak.”
“i need to go outside!” He croaks desperately. “i need to see the sky!”

“Uhh... Okay...” You pull his freshly washed hooded sweater from a hanger in your closet and drape it over him and he allows you to help him stand with one of his arms over your shoulder; this time he is gripping you and you're not sure what to make of the sensation.

You can hear him wheezing and feel his ribs straining to draw breath as you methodically pull him up the stairs to the back door. As you open the door, the cool night air hits you suddenly and is surprisingly refreshing. You get Sans to the grass in the back yard and look around to make sure no neighbours are out and about; fortunately there are none.

“Okay,” you say gently. “Look up.”

Sans does so and stops wheezing. Instead he draws in a deep breath of the night air as he stares, fixated by the stars. He allows himself to drop to his knees and leans back on his heels. You look down at him and even in the darkness, you can see pure awe in his surprisingly expressive face. The lights in his eyes are bright and flicker slightly as he stares entranced.

You kneel down to his level and face his profile directly. “Where did you come from?” You glance up and then back at him. “Did you come from... up there?”

He finally looks back at you with bright eyes and slight.. amusement? “no,” he says with a soft chuckle. “i wish.” Sans's mouth doesn't open when he speaks. Just the flexible boney substance around his teeth seems to shift about as it forms words. Eventually, he lowers his gaze and looks straight ahead. “i came from under a mountain. mt ebott.”

“I've never heard of Mt. Ebott,” you say honestly. “Where is it?”

He tilts his head to one side as he thinks of his answer. “i think it's in america? near the western ocean.”

That's worryingly vague. “I could probably find it on the internet.” You didn't bring your phone with you and frankly, you don't want Sans to be outside any longer than he needs to be. “We should go back inside. I'll show you.” Sans seems to hesitate as he looks back up at the stars longingly. “I'll help you back outside later on. I just don't want any other humans to see you. It could cause a lot of trouble for you.”

Sans studies your face for a moment. Then sighs and nods. He tries to stand on his own and grunts when his legs just aren't strong enough. It's only then he actually notices he is wearing different clothes.

“Yeah,” you mutter when he tugs at the sweater you dressed him in. “Your clothes were dirty and soaked. I washed them.” You notice him looking wearily at the PJ bottoms. “I closed my eyes,” you say quickly. “I didn't see.” He gives you a sceptical look, but apparently doesn't see a lie in your eyes. He allows you to help him stand and slowly walk him back inside.
Once you get back inside, instead of setting Sans back on your bed, you have him sit in the recliner in front of your computer. He eyes your computer curiously, but it isn't a look that says he's never seen one before, but rather looks... impressed? Sure, your computer is a few years old, but it was a high-end gaming PC when you bought it. Back when you had money to burn. Damn, you miss your old job. Stupid recession...

You grab a small plastic storage bin from against the wall and sit next to him and pick up your keyboard and mouse. You open a search engine as Sans's eye-lights study the screen in front of him. You type in what you assume is the correct spelling for Ebott. The first thing that returns from the search is the official website of the City of Ebott located in western California. It was small city near the coast and not terribly far from San Francisco. The website has everything you would expect from a municipal website. Population, city size in square miles, local tourism and festivals, etc. The mountain itself was not particularly tall, but it was broad. The base of the mountain was about twenty miles east of the city limits.

The website also has a page for history and local mythology; similar to the likes of the Jersey Devil and Bigfoot. The articles were likely compiled by different authors and they speak of legends of a non-human race of sapient beings that shared that region of the country many centuries ago. There was a great battle between the two populations and legends say the magical beasts were sealed beneath Mt. Ebott by humans that apparently were magic users. Much of this information seems to have been passed down through word of mouth and crude illustrations of giant horned bipedal beasts. The authors suspect anyone who lived in that area who had real information on these events was, for the most part, killed by European colonists.

You keep reading to find an article with a blurry Lochness Monster quality photo of a tall horned creature resembling the illustrations in the previous articles. It recounts a sighting of a goat-like demon that appeared in the city during the 1970's and had apparently killed a child before the city residents attacked the beast until it retreated. This occurrence had prompted several enthusiasts to explore the mountain. All who climbed the mountain either didn't find anything to report or they didn't return. Travel to the mountain has since been forbidden.

Sans appears to be reading intently and several emotions cross his face. “so they never really did forget about us,” he says in a soft whisper.

You look back at the webpage. “You mean...” you begin incredulously while pointing at the screen. “This is real? Are you.. one of them?”

Sans looks down as his gaze becomes distant. He draws in a deep sigh before speaking again. “the battle was long before my time. but there's been a whole civilisation of us monsters trapped under that stars-forsaken mountain for centuries. we were so desperate to get out, we were willing to try anything, even some insane science experiment that could have easily killed me if my calculations were off...” That last bit sounded like he said it before thinking. He sighed again. “speaking of which,” he focuses on you again. “where are we in relation to ebott?”
You have so many questions, but they could wait. You bring up a map website and zoom out from Ebott until all of North America could be seen. You then zoom in to a large city in western Canada and then to the area of the city you lived in. Sans's eye sockets seem to widen as he sees how far from home he is.

You hear him swallow, which was weird due to him not having a throat. “and how did i end up in your bed?” His voice sounds very strained. So you tell him. You tell him how you were out for a walk and you found him on the edge of the river and brought him home in an attempt to nurse him back to health, despite knowing absolutely nothing about him and that he had been unconscious for a day. He contemplates this for a moment as he brings a skeletal finger up to scratch at his mandible; you can't tell at all what he's thinking. “did anything weird happen the day before you found me? weird weather or explosions?”

“There was a thunderstorm the night before,” you say pensively. “Lightning struck a power plant and half of downtown went dark for a few hours.”

“heh,” Sans apparently came to a conclusion. “that's a shocking co-incidence if i ever saw one.”

You blink. “What?” He looks at you and... smirks? “Watt!?” He actually starts to snicker; until he suddenly grunts in pain.

“okay, laughing takes too much energy,” he wheezes.

You get a pang of worry. “Is there anything I can do for you? Can you eat human food?”

“uhh,” he starts. “kinda? my kind needs a special kind of food only we can produce. we're made of magic and we need magic food.”

“Magic?” You never thought magic was actually a real thing, but it was pretty interesting concept. You're a fantasy nerd after all.

“yeah, we're pretty different from most earth creatures, we can eat some human food, but after a while we get diminishing returns because it's harder for us to digest. by the way, you didn't find anything else around me when you found me, did you? like a phone?”

“No,” you say, shaking your head. “It was getting dark and I didn't really look. But, if you fell in the river, you probably dropped it.”

“dang,” he says softly.

“Are you hungry now?” You ask nervously. “I can make something for you. What would be best for you?”

“as morbid as it sounds, anything high in protein. it's the closest thing to magic my body will recognise.”

You nod and pull up a new tab with the search engine before standing and handing the keyboard and mouse and Sans. “If you want to find out about something humans have to offer, just type it in there.” With that, you head to your kitchen.

Protein.. meat.. He needs something that was once a living animal. Good thing you aren't a vegan. You open your fridge to find a chicken breast you had forgotten you took out to thaw. You pop that into the microwave until you literally hear it popping. Won't be particularly tasty. You know you
could do a lot better, but Sans needs something right now. You're spreading some mayo on two slices of bread when you hear Sans's baritone voice calling from your room. “hey, do you have any ketchup?”

You do, actually. You say yes and that you'll bring it with you. You pull the chicken breast apart and make a sandwich and place it on a plate and bring it along with the ketchup bottle into your room. You hand them both to Sans as you glance at the monitor. Huh, NASA. Interesting. You also notice he's using the mouse in his left hand; and hadn't changed your settings.

His face lights up at the presented items and proceeds to open the sandwich and squirt a large dollop of ketchup into it, before replacing the bread. For the first time you actually see him open his mouth. Those look nothing like human teeth. They're larger and he even has rather sharp canines. You have a passing thought that the ancestors of his species might have been carnivores.

Sans barely chews as he stuffs the sandwich into his mouth. He must have been ravenous, considering he'd been passed out for a least a day. You can't help but watch as the food just disappears into nothingness until it's gone. Then he picks up the ketchup bottle and looks at you somewhat guiltily. “sorry,” he says softly before upending the bottle and squeezing its contents right into his invisible gullet. He breathes a satisfied sigh as you take the plate back. “thank you,” he says softly.

“You're welcome,” you say brightly as you leave to place the plate in the sink. You glance at the microwave clock and see that it's after midnight. You're suddenly reminded that you're really tired. When you sit back down on the storage container, Sans is reading about the Hadron Collider. He looks at you and grimaces slightly.

“you're tired,” he looks a bit guilty. “you should sleep.”

For a second, you're not sure you like the idea of sleeping with a stranger awake in your room, but you're hit with the realisation, this was entirely your idea. Sans is your guest and last you checked, he couldn't even walk. “Do you need to sleep?”

“nah, i'll be fine. besides, i'd like to read some more.” He gestures to the monitor.

“Hm,” you acknowledge. You hand him your headphones and pull up Netflix and show him how to find documentaries and films he might like.

You scoot your cat out of the way as you crawl into bed. Before you actually lay down though...

“Hey,” you say suddenly. He looks over at you just before he puts the headphones on his skull. “Can I ask you an awkward question?”

“shoot,” he says, seemingly as curious as you.

“Why do you breathe? You don't have lungs. Does your body use oxygen?”

Sans looks surprised that you'd ask him about how his body works. He chuckles softly at your curiosity. “no, i'm not breathing oxygen. i'm breathing magic. magic is part of the atmosphere. humans just don't have the technology to detect it. but, just like humans can't survive on oxygen alone, the magic we breathe isn't quite enough to sustain us; and it's less concentrated here on the surface.”

A sudden worry hits you. “So, if you don't get back to your people, you'll eventually starve.”

He grimaces at this. “yeah,” he mutters.
You think about this for a while. The weekend was already almost over and you have to go back to work on Monday. You haven't even been at your job long enough to qualify for vacation time. How is he going to get home? How long can he live like this? You sigh deeply as tell him honestly. “I'll do what I can to help you, Sans.”

His face is unreadable as he gazes at you, but then a look of resignation crosses his features. “thanks.”

You're not sure if he believes you.
Chapter Summary

Sans seems to be feeling better and some jokes are told. That is all

Chapter Notes

100 kudos?! Dang, thanks guys. Glad you're enjoying whatever this is.

dammit, alphys. why did i tell you about my shortcuts? i don't even get to tell you it worked. you probably think i'm dead. Sans sighs heavily as he queues up another episode of Star Trek: TNG. He's not really watching as he writes a mental letter to his friends and family whom he will probably never see again. paps, i'm so sorry. i can't read you bedtime stories anymore. you'll be okay. you still have undyne. she'll take care of you. just... stay away from that damn flower. He wheezes as another pang of weakness hits him. He gazes over at your sleeping form. It's been over two hours since you went to bed, but only a few minutes ago could he tell you finally fell asleep. humans. paps was so determined to capture one. everyone was taught not to trust them. now here i am, completely dependant on one because i'm so weak i can't even stand up. as much as i appreciate the excuse to be immobile, this isn't where i thought i'd end up. i can't even judge her properly. stars what was i thinking? going though with this with no idea where i'd end up? i was supposed to get another soul and just come back, simple as that. right... damn my hubris. i even lost my phone that had all my food in it. stars, i'm such a failure. He gazes over to you again. welp, time to what i do best. wait and see.

When you wake up, it is well into the morning. You instinctively look at your phone to see you had forgotten to plug it in and it's almost dead. You look over to where you last saw your skeleton guest to see him slumped and asleep in the recliner with his hands tucked into his hoodie pockets. The computer having long since gone into sleep mode and the headphones are around his neck. You stare at him for a few a seconds just make sure he's still breathing... yeah, he's just sleeping.

You quietly get out of bed to avoid waking him too soon. You use the bathroom and get a really quick shower before heading for the kitchen. You prepare some eggs and bacon for both of you. You'll have to go shopping soon if you're going to be feeding another person now and you hope you can afford it. You then look down at yourself... oh right. Your body is indicative of your own love of food. You could easily share what you have without putting any strain on your paycheck.

With breakfast cooked you return to your room to find Sans is awake now and has turned the monitor back on, still on Star Trek. You present him with his meal and he smiles at you; at least you think it's a smile. Sans seems to have a Resting Grin Face quality and if it was a smile, it was a cautious one. You get the impression he isn't quite ready to trust you yet, but has to due to his current health. You try not take offence to this thought. It's true, he might not really have a choice but to stay on your good side; and frankly you'd like to be on his.
“How are you feeling?” You ask softly.

Sans pauses before answering. “better than yesterday. a good nap really helps.”

After drowning his eggs in ketchup (you definitely need a new bottle), Sans picks up the fork and eats. As you eat your own breakfast, Sans clicks on another tab in the browser to bring up a list of articles featuring recent astronomical discoveries.

“You like science and space and things like that?” You ask based on what you've observed so far.

“eh,” he begins. “more space than science. haven't done much science in while. other than what sent me here.” He gestures with his chin to indicate his being hundreds of miles from home.

“Can you tell me about where you came from?” You ask cautiously; giving him an out in case he didn't want to talk. He studies you for a moment, as if scrutinising if you were genuinely curious and then looks away with a soft smile.

So he tells you. He tells you about the giant cavern under the mountain, about the different microbiomes within that range from perpetual winter to marshlands to lakes filled with magma. He tells you there are many different sub-species of Monsters, ranging from bunnies and bears to fish and fire. He even mentions a fire elemental named Grillby who owns a popular eatery in his hometown. He tells you about Monster society, the monarchy and economy. He tells you that most of what modern Monsters have came from human refuse over the decades and that electronics were particularly valued. He tells you about living in a town called Snowdin with his brother. When he speaks of his beloved brother Papyrus, you see pain in his eyes and you feel a pang of sadness. He must miss him so much. You have no siblings of your own, but you can at least try to sympathise.

It becomes more obvious that his brother means the world to him when he talks about how Papyrus wants to join the Royal Guard and make a name for himself. He was always the one motivating Sans, getting him out of bed, getting him to work. Even when it seemed futile and Papyrus would often call him lazy, it was his way of trying to get Sans to take care of himself.

“Well, someone's got to keep you on the straight and marrow,” you say, barely thinking of the implication. He is a skeleton and you'd heard him make a joke before. Sans goes still and stares at you. Then his sockets widen and you're sure the lights in his eyes get bigger and his grin becomes considerably wider.

“i'm stealing that one,” he says lowly, just barely holding back from hysterical laughter.

“You like jokes?” You quip with a smirk.

“i'm professional,” he says with mock arrogance. “i know a ton of them.” He pauses to see if you were picking up what he was laying down.

It takes a few seconds and he watches the gears turn until you tentatively answer. “A skele...ton?” Sans smiles a genuine smile. Oh wow, a nerd and a jokester. You can't keep the grin off your own face. “What does an astronaut use to keep his pants up?”

“an asteroid belt,” he answers quickly. “if you hear barking in the sky, where's it coming from?” A dog? A dog constellation? Oh! “From Sirius.” Sans nods while he snickers. “Why did the skeleton drop out of medical school?” His face brightened. Ohh, skeleton jokes are the sweet spot.

“he didn't have he stomach for it. what do you call a skeleton who cuts down trees?”
“A lumbar-jack!” Dang he looks so happy. “What did the skeleton bring to the barbecue?”

“spare ribs,” he actually winks at you.

“Wow, you're a really humerus guy,” you say in earnest. You honestly really like Sans despite knowing him for less than a day. Not to mention, his smooth and deep voice is really pleasant to listen to.

“oh?” he giggles. “and here i thought i was being sternum.” He rubs his knuckles against his chest for emphasis.

You chuckle and almost blush at that. “You done with that?” You point to his empty plate.

“oh, yeah.” He hands it back to you and you go to leave. “hey, uh,” he says sheepishly. “can you help me see if i can stand yet?”

“Oh! Yeah, sure. Here,” you hold both plates in one hand while you hold your other out to him while he scoots himself out of the recliner. He doesn't take your hand right away, instead tests his legs himself first. Carefully, he plants his feet and pushes himself off the seat. His knees don't buckle, thankfully, but he wobbles a bit and instinctively grabs your hand to steady himself. After a moment he stands up straight. It's now you actually notice he's shorter than you by a few inches.

“You okay?” You ask carefully.

“yeah,” he says, slightly winded. “you got a shower i can use? pretty sure i've still got dirt stuck in my joints.”

“Yeah. This way.” You lead him out of your room to the bathroom. It's small and has a stand-up shower. You wish you had a big tub, though. “The towel was washed yesterday and you can use my loofah on a stick and body wash if you want.” Sans nods and thanks you as you close the door and return to the kitchen to wash your dishes. You make a mental note to pick up a new loofah-stick for Sans's personal use next time you go shopping.

After washing the dishes and starting a grocery list for when you go shopping after work tomorrow, you hear the door to the bathroom open and you hear a distinct 'click click click' of what you assume are Sans's foot bones. He appears from around the corner dressed in the clothes you had lent him and his hoodie tucked under his arm. He does look a bit cleaner and less dishevelled. He had rolled the hems of the pj bottoms up so he wouldn't trip on them and tied the drawstring so it fit a bit better.

“The rest of your clothes are hanging in the closet if you want to wear them instead,” you say gesturing gently to your room.

Sans pats the sweater he's wearing. “these are comfortable. can i keep wearin' 'em?” He actually looks a bit sheepish asking this. You remember that the clothes he was wearing when you first found him were nearly falling apart and most likely came from the garbage. You could understand a desire to take advantage of nicer clothes when they were offered.

“Yeah. No problem,” you say with a smile. “You want some socks, too?”

You swear you saw a split second look of elation on his face before it's replaced by a more casual expression. “if you don't mind,” he says with a shrug.

You head into your room and Sans follows. You open your sock drawer and start rifling through what you have. “Any preference? Regular socks or fluffy socks?”
Sans peeks over your shoulder. “anythin’ comfortable. sock it to me,” he says coolly. Okay then.
You pull out some fuzzy black and blue striped socks (the kind you’d wear to bed) and hand them
to him. Sans smiles as he squeezes the socks before sitting on your bed to put them on. You’ve
noticed something here. It seems Sans really likes soft clothing. Are his bones really that sensitive?

You spend the day answering questions Sans has about just about anything and for any questions
you can't answer, you have the help of the internet. You teach him about different cultures and
countries around the world (not many atlases survive the underground). You tell him about Elon
Musk and SpaceX. Sans is even genuinely upset when he finds out Stephen Hawking had passed
away. You clarify some assumptions Monsters had about modern human medicine. Information
like that usually isn't thrown out and movies aren't always accurate. You show him how to navigate
Youtube to find instructional videos, music videos, news and more documentaries. You tell him
that you're an artist and show him some of your work which is mostly fantasy and video game
fanart.

It's late in the evening when you're getting tired. “Hey, uh, I have to go to work tomorrow,” you say
softly. “So you're going to be here alone. There's food in the fridge and you can eat what you want.
You seemed to be okay sleeping on the recliner, will you be alright with that? You can sleep in the
bed after I leave.”

Sans ponders for a moment. “i’ll be alright, but I'm probably going to want to go outside at some
point in the night, now that i can walk.”

You nod, remembering how desperately he wanted to see the stars. “Okay, but if you do, be very
careful. Don't let anyone see you. I don't want them to try to hurt you. The world isn't ready for
you.” You say that last bit with a hint of mirth.

Sans chuckles. “don't worry about me. i’m pretty good at not being seen when i don't want to be.
with or without magic.”

You smile softly before heading to the bathroom to get ready for bed.
The alarm on your phone wakes you up early with a start. You turn it off and groan; stretching and trying to wake the rest of your body. You immediately look at your recliner and, sure enough Sans is curled up on the seat with his head on the armrest. Seems your alarm didn't wake him.

Slowly you drag yourself out of bed and to the bathroom with your work clothes in tow. Once you're changed, you come back into your room and Sans is still sleeping. You step up to him quietly and are about to nudge him awake, when you notice an unfamiliar chalky substance on the armrest near Sans's skull. Weird. Must be a skeleton monster thing?

You gently nudge Sans's shoulder as you call his name. He twitches with a snort (how?) and angles his head awkwardly to look up at you. “I'm leaving now. You can have the bed for now. I should be back by five. I'm going to pick up some groceries on the way home.” You can tell Sans is still half asleep, but he acknowledges your words before stretching his own limbs out. He hasn't quite slid out of the recliner before you close the door behind you.

Your job as a retail associate at a department store is... a job. You were lucky to get a full-time position, so you aren't one to complain. It pays the rent and bills and keeps your fridge stocked, but as a relatively new employee, you don't get much wiggle room. You did work a bit of overtime last week, so your next paycheck will be a bit more generous. You might be able to get something nice for Sans. Sans rarely leaves your mind whilst you are working, but fortunately there aren't too many customers to talk to with it being Monday. You mostly just deal with restocking. You hope that chalky substance wasn't anything to worry about. You sigh when you realise just how quickly you became so attached to this strange skeletal being.

After clocking out, you head for your favourite grocery store. You pick up all the meat products you can afford along with a fresh bottle of ketchup and some new shower accessories. You even grab a Popular Science magazine from the rack at the till.

When you get home with your fresh stock and cram it all into your fridge, you notice your small saucepan on the counter where you didn't leave it; along with a few eggshell fragments on the floor. *At least he cooked himself some eggs.* You peer into your room to find Sans asleep in your bed; curled up under the covers and facing away from you. Your cat is asleep against his back. You decide not to wake him yet and sit down at your computer. The white powder on the armrest
is gone.

Looks like Sans was reading about energy conversion or something. You open a new tab and start to look at travel options for getting to Ebott by car within the span of a weekend. Looks like the trip there would take a whole day minimum without sleep. That's even if you can get Sans across the border without customs searching your car and finding him. Also, there's no way you're sending him on some creepy smuggling operation.

You're reading some dubious website about the weakest border security spots, when Sans appears to be waking up. He looks over at you and opens his mouth a bit in what you assume is a yawn.

“I got some more food,” you say gesturing to the kitchen. “I hope it satisfies your diet for the time being.”

Sans nods softly. “I appreciate that. I'll try to make the most of it.”

“I got you some stuff for the shower, too. Also,” you pick up the magazine from your desk, “I got you this.” You toss the magazine onto the bed next to him. He picks it up delicately and studies the cover.

“Thank you,” he says enthusiastically before carefully opening it and starting to read. You realise that books don't fare well against the elements, especially water, so physical reading material is probably rare where he comes from; in good condition would be even more so. Sans seems to highly appreciate fresh paper with science material.

As he reaches the back of the magazine, your eyes stray to the pillow he was sleeping on. There's that weird chalky powder you saw earlier. You, being not only insanely curious, are also worried it has something to do with his health. “Hey, Sans?” You say nervously.

“hm?” He looks up at you.

“Can I ask you another awkward question?”

“Okay..?” he says cautiously.

“What is that powder that's coming off of you?” You gesture to the pillow. “Is that normal?”

Sans twitches. His eye sockets widen and the lights in his eyes shrink. He looks like he's just been caught in a lie. He looks behind himself at the pillow and looks to the side as if he is trying to come up with an explanation. His eyes dart back to you, who is watching him intently, and a look of resignation comes over him. He takes a deep breath before bringing a hand up to his skull and scratching it lightly. A bit more of that powder falls away.

“We call it dust,” he says roughly. “Remember I told you monsters were made of magic? That's not all we're made of. Our physical bodies also contain an otherwise inert substance that's held together by that magic. It gives us our solid forms.” Sans briefly studies his own hand before continuing. “When a monster comes to the end of their life, either through age or illness, their body enters a comatose state for a brief time. We call this 'fallen down'. Afterwards, the magic will dissipate from the body and all that will be left is dust. The dust is later spread upon that monster's favourite things during the funeral.”

You take a moment to process this. You can't move. You don't even know what to think. You don't even realise you're shaking and your eyes sting. “Is that what's happening to you?” You say very quietly. “Are you... falling down?”
Sans stares at you for a moment. The distress in your face must have been obvious and he must have known you wouldn't let this go no matter how much he deflects. Sans nods slowly. “Yeah.” he whispers. “I am.”

You start to silently panic. Your hands are shaking as you try in vain to scan whatever you were reading. Your heart is racing and you can't breathe. You feel like your blood is freezing. “I have to get you home! B-but I don't know how! I-I don't know how to get you across the border! The American border security is so strict, they'll find you..! Isn't there a-anything? Anything I can do? A different kind of food, maybe--”

“Don't bother.” Sans says quietly and you freeze. “Don't put yourself out for me. I probably wouldn't make it. Besides, you have your own life to live. You have a job to keep, don't you?”

“But,” you can barely speak. “I don't want you to die.”

Sans smiles softly. “Don't worry about me. I appreciate you trying. I really do. I grew up believing humans were dangerous. I still think that, but not all of them are like that. I suppose all I can ask of you now is to remember me. If my people do make it to the surface, maybe you can tell them what happened to me. And tell my brother I love him.”

You can't stop the tears anymore. You get out of your chair and walk over to the bed. You sit on the edge of the bed and look intently into Sans's eyes. Slowly, you reach your hand toward his face. He doesn't stop you, but he seems cautious. You give Sans a second to move away before you place your hand on the side of his face. You rub your thumb against his zygomatic and Sans seems to lean into your touch.

“Please don't give up,” you whisper. “Please stay with me. I'll figure something out.”

Sans shakes his head sadly. “I gave up a long time ago. The fact I went through with the experiment that sent me here with no back-up plan is proof of that.” He places the heel of his palm on his sternum. “My soul just isn't in it.”

You can't really think of anything to say, but you try to say something just to keep him talking. “Are Souls a physical thing for you? I want to learn more about your people; and about you. I care about you. Please don't make me watch you die. Let me take care of you.”

Sans just looks so lost as he studies your face for a long moment, before nodding softly. “Okay,” he whispers. “I'll... try.”

You gently stroke Sans's skull once more before standing. “At least stick around long enough for me to make you a burger.” You say this in jest, but your sincerity is clear in your voice.

“Can't turn that down.” Sans smiles and you think you see a bit of liquid in the corners of his eye sockets, but you let it go and head for the kitchen.

Sans touches the side of his face where your hand was. It's in that moment he knows what colour your Soul is.
Chapter End Notes

Artwork by Myself
https://www.deviantart.com/kareokelidescope
How to Save a Life

Chapter Summary

Sans isn't doing so well and your Soul makes a decision you didn't know was possible.

Chapter Notes

This is one of my favourite chapters.
Also I'm introducing a headcannon about Souls for this story.

For the next few days, Sans seems to have stabilised. He is still frequently tired and spends much of his time sleeping. You settle into a routine in which Sans will spend the night in your recliner. You would prepare breakfast for both of you and Sans would either eat with you or he would go straight for your bed; in which case you would set Sans's breakfast aside for when he is ready to eat it. You're always reluctant to leave him in the morning, but rationalise that if you're going to try to get time off work to make a trip, you need the money.

When you come home, Sans is usually asleep in your bed, but would wake up shortly after you arrive. You would cook dinner and Sans would join you in the kitchen to watch and trade jokes with you. He does eventually tell you about Souls and that they are indeed physical representations of your essence. Everything that makes you who you are, contained in a palm-sized, heart-shaped beacon of light. He says that human Souls are stronger than Monster Souls and human Souls have different colour signatures based on that person's main personality trait.

Sometimes, if Sans is standing next to you when you're cooking, you can't resist patting his back or shoulder. It's mostly just to reassure yourself that he isn't going to immediately fall over, but he never seems uncomfortable with your touch; in fact you'd swear he's deliberately seeking it.

Your worries never leave you, however. You notice Sans is eating less, his bones are looking a bit more grey, you can hear his breathing becoming more strained and there's that ever-present dust indicative of his deteriorating body.

At work, you struggle to keep your performance up to standard. Your co-workers ask if you're okay and all you can say is that a friend has fallen ill and you're worried about him. You talk to your supervisor about getting one Monday off and the overtime you had put in recently made for a good bargaining chip. She says if you can find someone to take your place that day, you won't be penalised, however you will not be paid for that day. Fortunately, one of the newer part-time hires is more than willing to take the extra hours.

Your day off is the Monday after next. You have until then to find a way across the border; and you need to keep Sans alive for that long.

***

At the end of the week, you feel... off. Something is wrong and you feel like you need to get home.
The minute your shift ends, you're out the door. The longer it takes you to get home, the greater the sense of panic that comes over you. You practically run to your door when you get home and when you step into your bedroom, your blood runs cold.

Sans is curled up into a tight ball on the seat of your recliner. He's shaking and his breathing is laboured. You put your hand on his skull and he's cold to the touch. Your hand is now covered in dusty powder. Your chest tightens when you realise that Sans is dying.

“No no no no! Sans!” You try shaking him but he doesn't react. Your mind races. What do you do? Food won't help him, he's too weak. He's so cold. Maybe if you warm him up? Your heating blanket already packed up for Summer and it would be too slow anyway. The next best thing then... You wrap your arms around Sans's ribs and drag him out of the chair and onto your bed. You climb onto the bed behind him and pull the blankets over both of you. You wrap your arms around him again and rub your hand against his sternum to try to create some heat on his chest. You figure if you can warm his Soul, it might warm his body.

You can't stop yourself from crying as you bury your face in his shoulder. Please don't go! You're afraid to hold him too tightly, otherwise he might crumble in your arms. Please come back! You don't care that his Dust is getting in your eyes. Please don't leave me! I'll take care of you. I'll do anything!

You just lay there, holding Sans's failing body as tightly as you dared. Slowly, his shaking subsides and you fear it means he'll disappear any second. However, you notice he isn't cold anymore and his breathing evens out. Slowly, your panic dissipates and is replaced with relief. You press your face against the back of Sans's neck just to feel the warmth of life. Maybe he'll be okay for now.

Now that the panic has passed, you realise you didn't even take your shoes off or turn on the ceiling light; just the bedside lamp is on. You really don't want to let go of Sans, but you reach under the covers and untie your shoes and kick them out from under the covers. You put your hand around him again as a sudden wave of exhaustion overcomes you. You take comfort in the steady rise and fall of Sans's ribs and before you know it, you've fallen asleep.

You wake up a few hours later to movement against you. There's no light coming through your curtains, so it must be late at night. Your hand is still pressed against Sans's chest, and you feel Sans's own hand come up and cover yours. You feel him draw in a deep breath as if to confirm to himself that he is still alive. He then carefully rotates himself in place in order to turn over to his other side and face you. This is the closest you've been to his open eyesockets and you can't tear your eyes away from those tiny floating orbs of light in pitch black pools. You still have your arms around him and he just folds his arms awkwardly in front of himself. He looks exhausted, but seemingly less grey.

“Hey,” you whisper.

“heya,” he says just as quietly.

“How do you feel?”

His answer doesn't really surprise you. “like i got kicked in the chest by a gifrot.” You don't know what a Gifrot is. You assume it's a hooved monster.

“You okay with this? Me holding you like this?” You rub his side for emphasis.
Sans nods softly. “Yeah, this is fine.” He gives you a soft smile.

You sigh gently. “You going to be okay? Is there anything I can do to stop this from happening again? I'm pretty sure you were dying.”

Sans gives you a quirked smile. “You don't know what you did, do you?” Your confused expression prompts him to continue. “You really wanted to save me, didn't you?”

“Of course,” you say plainly. “I care about you. I'd never forgive myself if I didn't try to help.”

Sans's expression remains soft as he gazes momentarily at your chest before looking back at your eyes. “Remember I told you that human souls are stronger than monster souls?” You nod. “From what I've researched, humans for the most part don't know how to use magic any more, but that doesn't mean the magic isn't there. You just can't access it.” Sans takes a deep breath. “Not many monsters know this but, when a monster is dying before their time, like from illness or injury and has no access to healing magic, sometimes their soul will reach out for anything it can get, like another soul. But because most monster souls are generally the same strength, a normal monster soul isn't strong enough to sustain another life. Only rare boss monsters are that strong. The thing with that is, in order for the dying monster's soul to connect, the other monster needs to have a strong emotional connection to the dying monster and boss monsters tend to keep those connections within the family.”

You take a moment to process how those very specific circumstances would be hard to meet. “But you,” he continues, as he very gently taps your sternum. “You have a green soul. Green magic is healing magic. Your soul is easily strong enough to sustain the life of a monster. When my soul was reaching out for a lifeline, yours was right there ready to embrace it. Like an oasis to someone lost in the desert.” He chuckles softly and smiles. “Your kindness literally saved my life.”

Your chest starts to hurt, but you're pretty sure it's because you're trying not to cry. A few tears escape anyway and Sans reaches up to wipe them away. “We call this connection a soul link. Before the war, according to records, humans and monsters got along well enough that links would happen occasionally. It's similar to a soul bond, but not quite. It's not as intense. In fact it's usually meant to be temporary.”

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This is a lot to take in, so you try summarise it the best you can. “So, as long as I allow you to stay connected to my Soul, you'll be healthy?”

“More than healthy. I'll be able to convert your magic into my own and I'll be able to use my abilities again. As long as I come back to you regularly to, well, recharge.”

“Huh,” you say softly. You are rather curious about Sans’s supposed magical abilities. “I should probably still feed you, though,” you say with a much lighter tone.

“I'd appreciate that,” he says brightly. “I really like your cooking.”

You both chuckle for a moment before your softer expression returns and you gently pull Sans a bit closer to you, tucking his skull under your chin. He doesn't resist and moves his free arm to place it around your side. “I wouldn't know what to do if you died,” you say sombly. “I wouldn't be able to tell anyone about you. I'd be grieving with nothing to show for it. And your friends and brother might never know what happened to you unless I went down to Ebott myself. I think it would break me.”

Sans doesn't say anything, but you feel his fingers flex on your back and he nuzzles just a bit more into your chest. You're both silent for the rest of the night and eventually you fall asleep to the soft
rhythmic rise and fall of Sans's ribs.

Sans does not fall asleep right away.

damn, your soul is strong. gotta be the brightest green i've ever seen. Sans breathes deeply as your magic fills his body. He had to stifle the flow on his end, lest it overwhelm him. It was like a drug. It's raw and untempered. He didn't even have to Judge it; it practically threw itself at him as an open book. No wonder you were so willing to save him after only knowing him for a few days. Your Soul has no filter. Given the chance, you'll love someone with all your heart; and your Soul has suffered for it. Sans can see the hairline fractures from every time someone has betrayed you or taken advantage of your Kindness, yet your Soul remains bright. The cracks were filled in with the dark blue of Integrity. Even when you should be jaded as hell, you stay true to yourself. You still give your Kindness to anyone who will take it. You remind him of Papyrus.

Papyrus remains on Sans's mind as he dozes off again. With a bit more hope, he can get some proper sleep.
It's been one week since you brought Sans home. You still don't have a plan to safely get him to America, but he's alive and apparently much healthier than you've ever seen him. You wake up on Saturday sprawled out awkwardly on your bed with Sans's skull propped on your arm and his back pressed against your side. He's snoring; weird.

You carefully wriggle out from under Sans's head and crawl out of bed. You kneel down next to the bed in front of Sans and gently place your hand on the side of his face. He wakes up at your touch and his eyelights flicker a bit before focusing on you. He smiles upon seeing you. “'mornin’” he says softly.

“Hey, boneboy,” you say with a gentle grin. “Feel better?”

“better than ever,” he says. “doesn't hurt to breathe anymore.”

You don't hear the wheeze that had been worrying you anymore and the darkness around his sockets had faded. You run your hand gently over Sans's side and strangely, you don't feel his ribs as prominently as you remember and his clothes don't sag into the empty spaces of his body anymore. Almost as if he had formed a magical air pocket in his abdominal cavity. “You hungry? I know I am. I didn't eat last night and you haven't eaten much in a while.”

Sans pauses for a second. “y'know, it's weird,” he says thoughtfully. “because of your soul, i don't need to eat, but i want to. plus i can digest it no problem. i'd be content to eat anything you put in front of me.”

You chuckle. “Good to hear. So, I don't have to worry too much about your protein intake?”

“nope. interestingly enough, most monsters don't even eat meat other than snails and small cave fish. we don't exactly have animal farms for food down there. the burgers and hotdogs i'd eat or sell in the underground are made of water sausages.” You cock an eyebrow, not knowing what that is. “it's like a cattail. grows in the marsh. i'll have to make you a hotcat someday.”

You snicker at the thought. “That is interesting. Anyway, I'm gonna get something cooking.”

“sweet,” Sans says while stretching and sitting up. “i'm gonna use the shower. pretty sure i really need it.”

“Me too. Oh, would you mind changing into your regular clothes for a bit? I'm gonna wash the ones you're wearing. I still have your old socks, too. Wasn't sure if you wanted to keep them. They were pretty worn out.”

Sans shrugs. “i like socks. i keep what i can get even if they're worn out when i find 'em. i just like
havin' my boney feet cushioned.”

“Well. You're free to raid my sock drawer any time.”

Sans smirks. “scandalous.”

By the time you have a hearty breakfast of grease and starch prepared for the two of you, Sans has strolled out of the shower dressed in the blue hoodie, white t-shirt and black shorts you had found him in. You had no previous reference for what a healthy Sans is supposed to look like, but if it was supposed to be pearly white bones, bright eyelights, straight posture and looking slightly... plump; despite being a skeleton, Sans is the spitting image.

He tosses his borrowed clothes into the hamper in your room before joining you at the table. “this looks egg-cellent,” he says as he picks up his fork. “but i seem to be missing something.”

Oh, right. Ketchup. “Oh, come on. You're bacon my heart,” you mutter as you get up to fetch a bottle from the fridge.

Sans snickers at the pun. “it's nothin' against your cooking, it's just part of who i am.”

“Heh,” you chuckle as a weird thought crosses your mind. “Apparently, my Soul is part of who you are now. If I interpreted what you said right.”

Sans pauses squirting the ketchup for moment as he contemplates your comment. “you're not too far off. think of it as a blood transfusion, but not quite. the magic your soul is feeding me is taking the place of the magic i'd usually produce myself after eating magic food. monster food is produced by monsters who are adept at using green magic. they produce more magic than their own bodies need so they use the excess to infuse products that we wouldn't be able to digest efficiently. if that makes any sense.”

So it's just cutting out the middle-man. “And that's just what they do? They're not.. obliged to produce food for the Monster population? They do it out of their own free will?” Geez, you hope slavery isn't a thing for them.

Sans shrugs. “it's their nature. there are many subspecies of monster. each one has a role in society. but if a vegetoid didn't wanna work in food production or medicine and instead wanted to do somethin' else with their life, it would be unusual, but they wouldn't be shamed for it.” Sans takes a few more bites of his food before speaking again. “besides, in the last century, monsters developed technology that converts geothermal energy into magical electricity. we have ovens that produce artificial green magic, but nothin' beats the real thing.” You almost miss his eyelights glancing at your chest before returning to his breakfast.

“You said Green magic was healing magic. So it does more than just feed you?”

“right. green magic can be infused into food for energy and to heal minor wounds. it can also be used directly by those who know how to control it. that's what you did even though it was unconscious; your soul knew what to do. my body was falling apart and the magic in your soul healed what was the result of dust falling off of me.”

You suddenly had a morbid image of what that would be like for a human. In a way, his skin was falling off and your Soul regrew it. You stare at your own hand for a moment. “Could a modern human learn how to use magic?”
Sans blinks at you for several seconds. “i dunno,” he says plainly. “i dunno why they stopped being able to in the first place.”

You think back to your history classes. “Might have had something to do with the Crusades and European colonialism. Religion really changed the Old Ways early in the Millennium.” You chuckle humorlessly. “Maybe that's what started the War you told me about.” Sans's sockets widen slightly. “Eh, what do I know? I wasn't there and most of that information is gone. But, getting back on topic, I imagine learning to use magic would require a new form of thinking. A level of transcendence that the most secretive of humans may have achieved.” Sans looks pensive, but doesn't say anything.

You finish your breakfast and just watch Sans casually for a moment. “Sooo... now that you have a supply of magic, you have magic powers or something?”

Sans chuckles at this. “i wouldn't call them 'powers', really. i'm not a superhero despite my uncanny resemblance to ghost rider.” He winks and does a finger-guns at you. “but i do have certain abilities i can do that use magic. for example...” He leans back in his chair and holds his hand out in front of himself, palm up. He concentrates on the space above his palm for a second before a small blue ethereal shape forms in mid-air. A second later, what appears to be a bone pops into existence and falls into his hand with a quiet clink. He holds it out to you and you gingerly take it from him. Up close it resembles a common chicken bone, but it is pure white and polished.

“You just.. made this out of magic?” You hold it up in fascination. It looks very much like the bones that make up Sans's hands and feet. You suddenly have a mild concern. “This isn't made of Dust, is it? Like your body?”

Sans grins, amused. “nah, it's pure magic.” Suddenly the bone just vanishes from your hand. You look back at him in confusion, but he just winks at you.

You can't help but be both impressed and fascinated. “Anything else?” You ask with a curious grin.

Sans's own grin twitches and he looks away slightly. “my body is still adjusting to converting your magic. don't wanna get too crazy.” You nod, accepting that explanation. “and,” he says much more quietly. “i don't really like showing off my magic. it's harder if i have a lot my mind. maybe down the road you'll see more.” He looks at you almost pleadingly. Maybe magic use is a private thing for some Monsters? You smile softly and nod, letting him know you won't pry.

Later in the day, you've washed and dried Sans's borrowed clothes along with most of your bedding in order to remove any reminder of Sans's near-death. You're still researching ways to get Sans back to Ebott, but even he can see you're getting frustrated. He convinces you to take a break and do something else for while. He had gone through your DVD collection and there were a few movies he wanted to watch with you so you move your computer monitor so you can see it while sitting in bed. When he holds up his first selection, Galaxy Quest, you know you're in for a good time.

Chapter End Notes
Sans does not have a sock fetish in this story, nor are socks considered 'intimates'. If they were, I don't think Sans would be leaving them on the floor for Papyrus and Frisk to see.
I have an idea. I will give you a CELL PHONE!

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sunday morning. Sans had fallen asleep against your shoulder the night before after exhausting your collection of comedy and sci-fi films and moving on to action adventure. Pirates of the Caribbean was oddly fascinating to him, but you're pretty sure he passed out partway into National Treasure.

He doesn't wake up when you get out of bed. He looks so peaceful, you don't have the heart to wake him to tell him you need to do some supplementary grocery shopping; particularly for more milk, which Sans seems to drink almost as much as ketchup. So, you write a note for him and leave it on the night stand before heading out. You make a mental note for yourself to not stay away for too long. You still don't know everything about how this Soul Link works and you hope that separation won't cause some kind of negative reaction.

You move quickly through the grocery store. You grab milk, some more ketchup, some vegetarian hotdogs and buns just for heck of it along with some more vegetables and fruits. You're gone for less than an hour and you're surprised to find Sans is already awake when you get back. Sans however seems to be even more surprised about something else as he's standing in the door to your room with wide sockets.

"You okay, Sans?" You ask in response to his seemingly shocked expression. "I didn't hurt the Link by going out, did I?" You wince at this thought. That would be the worst.

Sans instead starts laughing nervously as if he had just solved an incredible mystery. "no," he says finally. "i just realised something i didn't think was possible." He looks up at you with wonder in his eyes. "when i woke up, i knew you weren't here, but i also knew where you were. i mean- i knew you went shopping because of your note, but i-i could feel where you were. how far away and what direction." That's pretty awesome, actually. He's rubbing his palm against his sternum absentmindedly. "now i'm really curious to know what the range is."

You ponder on how you two would do that. Maybe if he had a phone? "I wonder.." you mumble as go to enter your room, Sans steps aside and follows you as you pick up a small box off of a shelf. The box contains a collection of perpetually unsorted junk which you start rummaging through. After a moment, you pull out... a cell phone. It's the phone you used before getting the one you have now. The older phone is still relatively functional, it's simply old and it no longer has a SIM card or a phone number attached to it.

"I wonder if I can get this reactivated and added to my current plan,” you muse as you turn the plastic rectangle about and clean the dust off of it.

Sans is looking at it curiously. "mind if i take a look at it?"
You hand it to him and he takes it and studies it intently. “Not sure how much charge is left on it, but it should be compatible with my current charger. It won't connect to any satellites without a SIM card.” Sans nods, vaguely acknowledging your words as he sits down on your bed while you sit in your chair. Instead of turning the phone on, he produces a thin pointed bone and pries the back of the phone off and then pops the battery out. He holds the phone close to his eyesockets as he studies its inner components; turning it this way and that to see as much of it as he can. Then he hovers his phalanges above the exposed electronics and a soft blue glow emanates from his distals. His eyes unfocus and his lids droop. A similar blue glow emits from his left eyesocket. You have a feeling that if he's seeing anything, it isn't what's right in front of him.

After a moment his eyes reopen and refocus. His hand and eye are still glowing as he quickly replaces the battery and turns the phone on. You can't see what is on the screen, but he starts tapping on what you assume is the keyboard. “what's your number?” he asks, oddly distant. You wonder if Sans sees the humour in the implication of asking a girl for her number. “I don't usually give my number to random guys, Sans,” you say flatly. He gives you a confused look, which looks even stranger with his glowing eye. Yeah, definitely didn't get the joke. You rattle off your number and he seemingly taps into the keyboard. A few seconds later your own phone chirps. How did he send you a text without a signal? You pick it up and sure enough you have a message from your own phone number: 'should i buy u dinner first?'

You look back at Sans who has a huge shit-eating grin on his face. You just got trolled. “How did you..?” You don't even know how to finish that question. Magic, probably.

Sans's features become serious again. “hey, there's another thing i wanna try. it's gonna use a lot of magic, so let me know if it starts to hurt you, okay?”

This concerns you, but you nod and watch him carefully. Sans grips the cell phone tightly in both hands and closes his eyes. The blue glow becomes more intense as he concentrates on.. something. A vision? A sensation? His browbones furrow as his head twitches slightly as if he were manipulating something with his mind. You swear you feel the air become charged with electricity.

After a few breathless minutes, Sans's eyes snap open and he immediately holds the phone up to the side of his skull. The look in his ever-glowing eyes seems nearly desperate as he waits for the phone to perform some sort of function. Then you hear the familiar sound of a ringtone over the speaker. The ringing stops and you hear a somewhat high-pitched and cautious voice on the other end of the call. “H-hello?"

Sans's face lights up, both literally and figuratively. “bro!” he says with obvious excitement.

The responding voice is distorted and static-filled, but you can still make it out. “SANS!!” Sans's face is filled with relief as he speaks with whom you assume is his brother. “SANS! WHERE ARE YOU?! ARE YOU OKAY? ARE YOU LOST? WHAT HAPPENED??”

“paps! i'm okay! you won't believe it, but i'm on the surface! i'm using a human phone to call you.”

Suddenly, you hear a second voice. You're not sure if it's female, but sounds fairly gruff. “Why didn't you use your own phone, punk? Alphys is losing her mind trying figure out what happened to you. She thinks you're Dust.”

A look of guilt crosses Sans's face. “I lost it.”

“BUT THERE'S NO MONSTER FOOD ON THE SURFACE. HOW DID YOU SURVIVE
Sans looks up at you with soft features. “it's a long story. i, uh. i made a friend. a human friend. she's been takin' care of me. i'm able to use my magic to this extent because of her.”

“A human?” The gruff voice sounds annoyed. “It hasn't hurt you has it?” Did they just call you an 'it'?

“no, she's been really good to me. she's trying to find a way to get me back to ebott. we're far north in another country and she doesn't want me to be caught by authorities.”

Just then, you start to feel an uncomfortable sensation in your chest; like something is squeezing your heart. You rub the heel of your palm against your chest to try ease it but it doesn't help. Sans sees this and a slight look of panic comes over him. “guys, listen. i can't keep this call for too long. undyne, you need to tell alphys that i'm okay. i'll try to contact her as soon as i can.”

Ow, that's really starting to hurt. “COME HOME SOON, BROTHER! I MISS YOU.”

“i miss you too, bro. i love you.”

“Keep us updated, punk. That's an order.”

“i will.”

With that, Sans ends the call. The pain in your chest subsides as the glowing fades and he bows his head with the phone pressed against his frontal bone. You can't really see his face like this, but you can see him shuddering slightly with each breath. “Sans?” You call softly. He looks up at you with tears streaming down his face, but also with a huge smile. He really misses his brother. “i'll get you home, Sans. I don't know how, but I'll do whatever I can.”

Sans just nods. He then replaces the back cover of the phone and hands it to you. “can you take a picture of me? if i can make a phonecall to the underground, i'm pretty sure i can send texts and pictures with much less magic.” You take the phone, which is quite warm. The screen looks the same as you remember it. It still has no signal, but somehow Sans was able to connect it to a phone sealed behind a magical barrier. Sans wipes the tears from his face as you bring up the camera and point it at him. He holds up the Popular Science magazine you gave him and smiles genuinely as you snap the photo. You hand the phone back to him and Sans takes a look at the picture. “i'll send this later. your soul needs some time to replenish itself. thank you for lettin' me do that.” he looks up at you with gratitude.

You nod and smile. “Any time,” you say softly. Sans then lays down in the bed and sighs heavily; his little trick obviously having taken a lot out of him. It isn't long before he falls asleep.

Shit I forgot to put the milk away.

Somewhere, far far away, a tall skeleton is alerting an entire neighbourhood that a beloved skeletal comedian is alive and well. Elsewhere, a tall blue-scaled armoured woman is coaxing a small yellow reptile out of hiding while a rectangular robot looks on.
Artwork by myself
Monday again. Sans had woken up just as you were getting ready for bed and he stayed in the recliner after discovering new seasons of Dr. Who. As you're having breakfast together, Sans brings out his (yes, it's his now) phone. You both figure while you're both here and rested, it's as good a time as any to splurge on a bit of magic and send that picture to his brother. He takes the opportunity to take a candid photo of you to send at another time. He also informs you that he can only send messages and calls to the Underground and won't be able to receive anything unless he initiates a call.

At lunchtime at work, you get a text from your own phone number; now knowing it's from Sans: 'you wanna help with an experiment?'

You send a message back: 'how?'

He responds a minute later: 'wanna test range. let me know when u get off wrk.' You cringe at the poor spelling and grammar. To each their own I guess.

You clock out at 4:30 and send a text to Sans as you're walking to your car: 'Off now. What do you need me to do?'

By the time he responds, you're sitting in your car in the parking lot: 'can sense u now. go further from ur house.'

Okay then. You pull out of the lot and drive in the opposite direction of the route you would normally take home. You drive for about five minutes and then pull into a random parking lot. You send another text: 'Now?'

He responds: 'keep goin. ill tel u wen to stp.' Ugh, is it getting worse? You keep driving, not too quickly and now and then you pause in a parking lot and check your phone. You've got to be almost 10 kilometres away from home when you hear your phone chirp. You pull off and check: 'cant sense u anymore.'

You respond: 'don't usually go this far from home. almost 10km. what now?'

He responds after a couple of minutes: 'stay in this range. go somewhere ur sure ur alone.'

You pause to think. Then you get an idea. The park is in this range, but it will take a while to get there: 'ok. Give me some time.'

You pull into the park about twenty minutes later. You didn't get any text saying Sans 'lost' you
again so you start walking down the path you took just over a week ago. It's a bit warmer today and there are a few people walking or jogging intermittently. Eventually, you come upon the break in the bushes where the river comes close to the path. You hang about on the path pretending to watch the water as you wait for the path to clear of other park-goers. After a quick back and forth to make sure you're in the clear, you send a quick text to Sans: 'alone now. what are you going to do?'

A few seconds later, you hear and feel a strange electrical charge in the air. Suddenly, Sans appears out of thin air next to you. You suppress a shriek and stumble backwards. “Sans! What-? How?” Sans is wearing his original clothes and your animal print slippers along with a huge grin. You sort of just stare at his smug face for a moment before you remember you're in a public area. You grab his arm and pull him through the gap in the bushes and pull the hood of his jacket over his skull. Once you're separated from the path, you try to speak calmly. “Another one of your magical talents?”

He shrugs with a smirk. “normally i can only do that in places i've been before. but thanks to you, i can go anywhere you are within a ten kilometre radius.” You huff, but are undeniably impressed. Sans looks around finally at the river and the edge of downtown just visible over the hill on the other side. “is this..?”

You nod. “This is where I found you,” you say pointing to the familiar patch of mud and dead grass. Sans steps up next to you to see for himself and kneels down. He pulls at some of the branches and moves some of the grass, but eventually makes a noise of disappointment. “You looking for the phone you lost?”

He stands up. “yeah, it's a monster phone. has magical tech that humans would lose their minds over.”

You're genuinely curious now. “Like what?”

He turns to you and seemingly considers whether you're ready for that information. After a moment, he speaks. “it can store inanimate physical matter inside a personal pocket dimension. put stuff in and take stuff out with the push of a button. when i came here, my phone was stocked with monster food. that was supposed to sustain me while i was here.”

“That is pretty amazing tech,” you remark, but that brings up a question that has been lingering in the back of your mind. You didn't ask because you hoped he would volunteer the information, but he never did. “Sans?” He looks at you cautiously. You think he knows what you're about to ask. “Were you on a mission here on the surface? Why did you risk your life to come here?”

Sans looks uncomfortable. He takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly. “i don't wanna talk about that out here,” he says quietly.

You're slightly annoyed that he still won't say anything, but you admit, this place isn't the best location for a private conversation. “Fine, at home then.” He nods reluctantly before stepping back and vanishing with a crackle of magic.

When you get home, Sans is sitting on your bed; back to the headboard. He looks like a little kid who's been told to 'wait for their father to come home.' You sit down in your recliner and turn it to face him. “Have you eaten?” You ask, hoping to break the obvious tension.

He shakes his head. “not hungry,” he says quietly.
You sigh. “Okay then,” you say lightly, trying to make it clear you aren't actually upset with him. “So, can you tell me why you came to the Surface?”

Sans doesn't answer for a moment. He takes a deep breath, holds it for a second and exhales slowly. “a long time ago, there used to be a lot more of us monsters. an entire population. they lived in peace with humans and back then many humans knew how to use magic.” He paused. “but a seed of distrust was sown. the humans became afraid of the magic monsters had. it didn't make any sense, though because humans are so much stronger than us. conflicts grew and eventually humans decided monsters were too dangerous to roam free. they killed so many monsters, including skeletons. there were only a few skeletons left and now it's just me and my brother. the last of our kind.” He makes eye-contact with you for the first time since he started speaking.

“in the end, the monsters lost. our king declared surrender to spare the rest of monsterkind from extinction. the humans forced us into the cavern under the mountain and seven of their strongest sorcerers created the great barrier; sealing us away from the rest of the world for centuries.” Sans paused again and looked at you, seemingly waiting for you to ask any questions.

“There were no humans on the monsters' side? No sympathisers?” You tried to picture yourself in that time. How would you have acted in that environment?

“They were executed if they were found out,” he answered shaking his head. “i don't know what happened after the barrier went up. judging by the records on that webpage you showed me, some of the survivors who were on our side kept knowledge of us alive. for centuries, monsters tried to break the barrier from the inside. nothing was ever strong enough. we tried draining power from it and converting it for our own use, but nothing monsters made was ever compatible.”

“You see,” Sans starts to look ill. “the barrier was made with human soul power. the power of seven human souls. our scientists theorise that those seven sorcerers died shortly after they created it. and so, they also theorised that we need the power of seven human souls to bring it down.” You don't like the sound of that.

“That photo, on the webpage. i know who that was. about 50 years ago, a human child fell into the cavern, near where the royal family lived. probably one of the few that survived the fall and the elements combined. they adopted the kid and their young son became quite close. but the kid got sick. when they died, the prince absorbed their soul.” Sans cringed at his own words. “a monster absorbing another being's soul is extremely taboo. it.. changes you.. you lose yourself in the power if you're not careful. it made him strong enough to cross the barrier. that's what the people saw back in the day according to our king. the humans were afraid of the beast created by a monster absorbing a human soul; so they attacked him. he died just after getting back into the barrier and telling the king what happened to him. the king was so angry from the death of both his kids, he declared that any humans that fell into the underground would be killed and have their souls harvested. with enough, he would absorb them and break the barrier, freeing us.”

Sans looks exhausted just from telling this. Like he just confessed some terrible sins no one was ever supposed to know about. “but, truth be told,” he said in a softer tone. “our king is a coward. i'm not saying he's a bad king, but he avoids conflict whenever possible. another human fell not long after the royal children died, probably looking for the 'beast of ebott'. they didn't survive the elements of the underground and their soul was taken to the king. instead of absorbing it, crossing barrier and collecting the souls he needed out there, he just... waited. waited for more humans to fall. now he has six, but it's been years since a human fell. i was just a babybones when the last one came through. we're... getting impatient.”

Sans starts to fidget. “and then i had the bright idea to find out if i could supercharge my short-
cutting ability. i'm the only monster with that power. what if i had enough power to slip into the void and navigate my way to a weak point on the surface? so, i admittedly coerced an old scientist coworker of mine to hook me up directly to the underground's main power supply.” He looks up at you with a pained smile. “you have no idea how much that freakin' hurt.”

You cringed at the thought. “Probably felt like getting electrocuted. You know humans are mostly water, right? Now run a few thousand volts through that.”

He nods. “probably not much different. i think i missed a variable or a wire shorted out, but i got a bit too much and i lost consciousness. couldn't navigate and ended up coming out during that storm you mentioned. the electromagnetic explosion must have weakened space-time just enough for me to be thrown through it.”

Sans stops for a minute and scratches the back of his skull. He looks really upset. You think you know why. “So, you're here... to collect a Soul?” You suddenly feel... almost violated. Your chest tightens and you feel a chill through your whole body. “Where are you going to get a Soul?” You say a bit louder than you intended. “Are you going to kill someone? Are you going to kill m-”

“no!” Sans is on his knees with a look of horror on his face. “i'm not gonna hurt anyone, i swear!” He's shaking and his breathing is sped up in fear. “i don't have to hurt anyone to get a soul. i just need... to be there when they die.”

“That doesn't sound much better,” you say, barely keeping your voice down.

“i know,” he tries to rationalise. “but, i have a bit of an advantage here in a big city. you have... hospitals. retirement homes. places where people... usually die.” He curls in on himself a bit. “look, i-i can sense when a soul is about to leave a body. i-it's a thing skeletons can do. sounds bad when most humans' representation of death is a skeleton.”

You stare at Sans as he sits back down and wraps his arms around himself and pulls his knees up to his forehead. You don't see him pressing his palm into his chest and the pain in his features. You draw in a deep breath and exhale slowly. You realise your hands are shaking and you fold your arms over yourself. You're angry, but not sure exactly what you're angry at. At the humans that killed all those monsters and sent the rest to live underground? At the monsters for killing people that subsequently fell in? At the king for not taking responsibility for the future of his subjects? Or are you angry at having been painfully reminded that Sans is not human; not even close? He came here out of desperation and nearly died as a result; just so he could do what his king would not. To save his people, his friends and family.

Also, under these circumstances, Sans still needs you. He can't survive on the surface alone. If you abandon him, his people would lose even more hope. But do you want to be an accessory to... 'soul collection'? If what he says is true... You address Sans in low serious tone. “You won't hurt anyone? You won't create a circumstance that causes someone to die?”

Sans looks up and shakes his head vigorously. “i won't lay a single phalanx on anyone, and no-one will see me. i just need to be there when the soul leaves the body and place it in a protective vessel.”

You sigh heavily. You're still upset, but this is your life now. You made the choice to bring Sans into your home. You linked with his Soul and now you're going help him save his people. “Then let's go for a drive.”
Title is a reference to the old Verizon commercials.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPwPo-IAQ-E&ab_channel=jwyoung5
Reconcile

Chapter Summary

You and Sans come to an understanding.

Chapter Notes

Hope this chapter isn't too boring.

Sans... is not well. Why did it hurt so much when you were angry with him? He felt it when you nearly cut the Link out of anger. For a moment you were... afraid of him; and it upset him that he had upset you. Why did he care so much about how you felt about him? Sure, he respected you to a certain extent for what you've done for him, but even in a neutral state you could have maintained the Link and it wouldn't have hurt if you cut it; but this time it hurt. This is a Link filled with emotion. You care about him and for some reason, Sans cares about you. A lot. You never said an ill word to him. You talked to him like a person and not some alien creature. You never stopped him from going anywhere; you just told him to be careful. You were gentle and respectful every time you touched him, and every time you did, he felt that pulse of Green magic seep into his bones. He felt himself drawn to you. Why did he trust you so much? Why did he tell you so much about his life and his home? what is this feeling? He felt.. safe.. with you. Like you would stand between him and the Gates of Hell if it meant you could protect him from the universe.

Sans physically lurches in his seat, his hand instinctively clenching at his chest. You're driving him around the city in the pitch black and pouring rain. “You okay, Sans?” You look over at him momentarily taking your eyes off the road; street lights and raindrops casting kinetic shadows on your face.

“yeah,” he mutters, looking away slightly. “just a hiccup.”

You quirk an eyebrow, “how does a skeleton get hiccups?”

“i'd tell you, but it's a lung story.” It feels good to tell jokes again. You look like you're trying stop yourself from smiling, but you can't help it.

“So, this is the University Hospital.” This is the second hospital you've shown him and you had one more you knew of in range of the house. He had told you that technically he could go anywhere once he had become familiar with a point in space (compensating for the movement of the Earth). However, with his limited magical resources, he didn't feel comfortable going outside the range that he could sense you.

Sans could see fine in the dark. He could see several places he could shortcut to in order to scan the windows. He'd be limited to the rooms near the windows as the emergency rooms are further inside the building and he'd be too easily seen. It's a start at least.

Sans barely speaks during the ride. Occasionally he would tell you a random knock knock joke, but
for the most part he is very deep in thought. A short while later, you're in a more residential area and pull up near a large one-storey building. The monument outside reads 'River City Seniors Home and Palliative Care.'

“This is where people go when they're... Falling Down.” You figure Sans wouldn't mind if you used Monster terminology. “They live here with nurses on staff if they don't want to spend their last days in the hospital.” Sans takes a long look. Lots of windows, minimal outdoor lighting, he can even get on the roof from the ground. Plenty of scouting locations. Sans nods to you, indicating he's memorised the location and you move on to the last stop.

It's almost midnight by the time you get home. It's still raining and you think you see some distant lightning bolts, but don't hear any thunder yet. Sans changes into his borrowed clothes in your room while you get ready for bed in the bathroom. When you come back in, he's laying crossways on the recliner with his head on an armrest looking straight up at the ceiling. He looks rather sullen. You step up next to the back of the chair and look down at his face; he looks mildly surprised to see you standing there. Dang, his eyes are beautiful. You put a hand gently on his shoulder. “I'm not upset with you, Sans,” you say softly. “I am upset, but not at you.” He doesn't respond, but he does take a slightly deeper breath and he blinks slowly. “Goodnight, Sans.” You step away, crawl into bed and turn out the light.

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Sans reluctantly joins you for breakfast. He pokes at his ketchup-smothered eggs while supporting his skull with his other hand. His browbones are creased like he has a million thoughts running through his mind at once.

“I had an idea,” you say finally. He looks up at you curiously. “When I was trying to find a way to get you across the border, my biggest concern was that border security would search my car for contraband and they would find you. Even if by some miracle I could disguise you as human, you have no credentials. No identification. They wouldn't let you through. If they found out you weren't human, they'd probably assume you're an alien and try to hold you for scientists to take you away to some lab to study you. Given your health prior to this Link, you'd probably die within days.” Sans nods sadly.

“However, now that you've demonstrated that you can teleport to anywhere you can sense me, I was thinking that I could drop you off at a concealed location a little ways away from the security office, I go though as if I were a tourist since I have a passport and no criminal record. Then when I'm past the border, I can pull into another concealed area and you just shortcut to me and we carry on our way?”

Sans blinks, looks away as he ponders, then back at you. “you think that'll work?”

You shrug. “It's the best we've got. I've still got to make it look like I'm supposed to be there. I have to make an itinerary, make contact with an American friend I have, prove I can support myself financially while I'm there and maybe make a reservation at a campground or something. I also need to ask my upstairs neighbour to look after my cat while I'm gone.” Then you fix Sans with an intense look. “And you need to do your... thing by Saturday morning, because that's when we're leaving. And don't go back on what you said. Don't force a Soul from anyone. If you don't get one
by the time we leave, you'll have to do it in America.”

Sans nods. “yeah, i understand,” he says roughly. “hey, do you know any places in the city you can see the stars really well?”

You think for a moment. “The only place I can think of is the park, but it gets locked up and patrolled at night.”

Sans quirks a smile. “i'm sure there's spots i can get to where they won't find us.”

“Us?” you quip.

“yeah, i want you to come with me.” Sans's eyes seem brighter than usual.

“I won't be able to leave my car in the lot. I'll get ticketed and they'll know someone is there.”

“you don't have to. i've been there before, remember?”

Wait. “You mean you can bring me with you, literally? In a shortcut?”

“mhm,” he nods at your fascination.

“What would that feel like?” You hope it wouldn't make you dizzy or anything. You hate feeling dizzy.

“uhh, it might feel different for you than it does for me,” he muses, looking pensive. “considering what we're made of.” He sees your hesitation. “tell you what. before we go, i'll take you on some really small ones, like across the room or somethin'. you can see what it feels like.”

You nod, smiling. Your curiosity can't be denied. “Okay!”

“also,” he says hesitantly, scratching the back of his vertebrae. “when you go to work today, can you take me with you? i'll hide in the back seat. i just wanna see the building.”

“Uh okay...” You say a bit confused. “Why?”

He shrugs, “just curious.”

“Alright, I'm leaving now. It's in broad daylight, so you should probably cover up.” Sans got up and darted into your room to grab his hoodie as you got your shoes on. It's overcast today and it's supposed to to stay like that tonight; might even rain some more. Fortunately for Sans, he can see your car from the back door so he short-cuts into the back seat and wraps himself up in the blanket. The nice thing about not having flesh is Sans is surprisingly flexible and can curl himself up into looking like just a lump of cloth.

“You okay back there?” You ask as you get into the driver's seat.

“yep,” came the muffled reply.

It takes about ten minutes to get to work and when you tell Sans he can look now, he unfurls himself and looks around the parking lot and at the building in front of you. Then he simply says, “cool,” and gives you a thumbs-up. “see you after work.” With that, he vanishes from under the blanket. You shake your head in confusion.
Your day is relatively normal. Some co-workers ask what your plans for the weekend are and you tell them you're taking a trip to the States, but don't go into detail. You're pretty sure the one with the scraggly beard was trying to hit on you. Around lunchtime, you start to feel drained. You're not usually this tired, even if you were up late driving Sans around. Hold up. You send Sans a quick message: 'Are you near my workplace?'

You get a message back a minute later: 'Maybe ;p'

*What? Is he on the roof? 'Why?*

'did sumthin that used alot of magic. needed recharge'

'You're draining me, Sans. I'm exhausted.'

'Its temp. you'll be fine.' Fortunately, by the time your lunch break was over, your energy was back.

Sans isn't at the apartment when you get home. You also notice your favorite canvas backpack is missing. You assume, at this point, Sans has begun his 'mission' and he needed a recharge due to the shortcuts he must have been making between the locations you showed him. You send him a text just to confirm he's alright and he replies that he's just making his rounds and that he'll be back soon.

In the meantime, after seeing what he could do with an old phone, you wonder what he could do with an old laptop. You pull out a heavy satchel from your closet and bring out a laptop your parents got you for your birthday nearly ten years ago. It's heavy and the fan is loud and isn't even compatible with modern wifi without an adaptor. You spend the next half hour uninstalling or updating software and pulling any personal files off the hard drive.

Sans appears in front of your door just as you're changing the desktop background to a galaxy. Just as you suspected, he has your backpack. He smiles tiredly at you as he sets the bag on the floor. "Any, uh, luck?" You use that word loosely, obviously.

Sans shakes his head. "Nah, I'll try again later. I'm beat." He kicks off his borrowed slippers and climbs onto the bed next to you to see what you're working on. "Whaddya got there?"

"My old laptop. I don't use it anymore, but it's still in good condition. I'm giving it to you."

Sans looks up at you in surprise. "Seriously?"

"Yeah," you answer with a smile. "I had to stick an adaptor in it so it can connect to the wifi, but this is for your own personal use now. Change the password if you want. Write a journal, maybe. See if you can send emails to your friends? Whatever you like. Just don't download any viruses." The operating system is the same as your computer, so Sans figures out how use it fairly quick as you're cooking dinner. He passes out shortly after eating, so you turn the laptop off and return it to its satchel which you place next to the canvas bag. You don't bother moving him out of the bed, so you sleep next to him.
Glow

Chapter Summary

You and Sans go stargazing.

Chapter Notes

Another one of my favourite chapters!

Sans is gone when you wake up on Thursday morning; so is your canvas bag and the laptop. You text Sans letting him know you're headed to work and that you'll leave some breakfast for him. He replies with a smiley emote. As you're cooking breakfast for yourself, you notice a glass jam jar you had washed for future use is missing from the top shelf of your cupboard. *Did Sans take that too? What for? Oh... 'protective vessel'. Right.*

Your day goes by uneventfully. Other than some tiredness that hits you at lunch, it's business as usual. You don't even have to text Sans to know he 'stopped by.' The sky has also cleared up so it should be good night to stargaze.

When you get home, you're surprised to find Sans at the stove cooking the vegetarian hot dogs you had bought. He gives you a soft smile when he sees you. You suddenly get a weird and oddly pleasant feeling in your chest at the scene; Sans cooking and seeming genuinely happy to see you. You give him a quick rub on his back when you peek at the hot... cats? You notice he had cut tiny triangles in the wieners so they would perk up when they cooked and come out looking like little cat ears. You snicker at that. “That's adorable.” You change into your home clothes just as Sans is setting dinner on the table. Sans is actually a pretty decent cook. Vegetarian substitutes never really interested you, but Sans seems to have seasoned it just right so it's pretty tasty.

“So what did you do this morning?” You ask generally knowing he'd gone out on the town.

“visited some hospitals. i think someone actually died in the early morning,” he says grimly. “but it was too far inside the building and i couldn't get to the soul before it dissipated on its own.”

You nod, solemnly. “That's a shame.”

“I'll keep trying later tonight,” he says softly. You finish eating and Sans puts away the leftovers. Then he turns to you and holds out a boney hand. “you ready to try out a shortcut?” *Why does him holding his hand out like that look go good?*

You stand up and Sans takes your hand and leads you to one end of the sitting room and points to the other end near your bedroom door. “gonna end up there. might be better for you if you close your eyes and hold your breath.” He tightens his grip on your hand and puts his other hand on your side while you put your other hand on his shoulder. “ready?” You do as he instructed and you feel him pull you forward, but you suddenly feel like you're falling. The floor disappears from under you and you feel weightless for a split second. Immediately after, you lurch forward as the
momentum hits. You stumble over as your head spins and your stomach catches up with you. You
don't even realise you had let go of his hand and you were now hunched over him with your arms
around his shoulders as he stops you from falling over. You step back and place and hand on the
wall and shake your head a bit as you try to regain your focus. Sans is looking at you like he wants
to snicker, but is suppressing it.

“Well, that was something,” you say a bit flustered. “Did you feel dizzy the first time you did
that?”

He shrugs. “don't remember. feels fine for me, but i have less mass than you do.”

“Makes sense.” He *is* a skeleton made of magic and Dust while you're a fleshy human made of
meat and water.

“wanna try again?” He holds his hand out again.

You instead put both hands on Sans's shoulders. “I need a better grip.” He looks slightly startled
and places his hands on your sides.

“ready?” You close your eyes and nod. His hands pull you forward and the weightless sensation
hits again, but you're more prepared this time. You anticipate the moment just as the you feel the
floor again and only stumble a bit as you keep your balance. When you open your eyes, you're in
your bedroom and you swear you saw a slight blue tint on his cheekbones before it vanished.
“better?”

You nod. “Yeah, just takes some getting used to.”

Sans smiles. “good, 'cause we're probably going to do that alot while we look for a place to
stargaze.”

“I see,” you muse. “The park gets locked at 9 and the rangers will probably be doing a main
sweep before setting into regular patrol. Might want to wait 'til around 10 before we start sneaking
around.”

Sans nods. “sounds good.”

You both spend some of the time on your respective computers. You show Sans a satellite image
of the park so he can figure out some places he can get to while you find an older spare blanket to
sit on once you're settled. Sans also packs some leftover hotcats and water in your canvas bag. You
remember you had a backup pair of sneakers you had put away for the winter and ask Sans if they
fit him. They were a bit big on him, but some extra fluffy socks solved that problem.

Ambience

At 10'clock, you put the bag on your back and tuck the blanket under your arm. “ready?” Sans asks
as he holds a hand out to you. You take his hand and brace yourself as he pulls you into a shortcut.
When you come out, you can hear water and peepers. You're standing on the patch of land where
you found Sans and subsequently visited not too long ago. You can barely see; the only light being
from downtown, the moon, and Sans's eyes. *His eyes.*

He doesn't say a word, but holds onto your wrist as looks back and forth on the walkway. Without
warning he pulls you into another shortcut and you appear at a crossroads of the path. You see why
he said you should close your eyes; you're a bit dizzier than the last one. You can just barely see a
clearing of grass and there's a large one-story building you recognise as the indoor pool. He pulls
you down to crouch behind a shrub as he waits for a patrolling ranger to pass. Then Sans calculates
something in his mind and shortcuts again with you in tow. You are now on the roof of the pool house. The roof is covered in gravel, but the blanket would take care of that. Sans smiles and nods, indicating this is the spot he's chosen.

You set down the blanket and sit down. From here you can see quite a bit of the park and the large pond, but not much of the ground nearby, so it would be difficult for anyone to see you, but you still need to be very quiet. Sans sits down next to you and bumps your shoulder with his. You take off the bag and open it and pull out a still-warm hotcat and hand the bag to Sans who does the same; you sit in silence as you enjoy your snack and listen to the peep frogs and crickets.

At some point you both lay back onto the blanket to look at the stars. In hushed tones, you take turns pointing out constellations you recognise; Big Dipper, Orion, Draco, Cassiopea...

Then Sans starts to tell you about a place underground. “there's a place in the marsh where the ceiling is covered in magical bio-luminescent stones. they glow bright enough that they look like stars. a part where it's really dense is called the wishing room. monsters would go there and pretend they were real stars and make wishes on them. sometimes their wishes would be caught by these magical glowing flowers called echo flowers. they mimic sound and echo it back until it hears something new.” He sighs softly. “looks like mine came true, but now i wish i could share it with my bro.”

“I can only imagine, but it sounds like a really beautiful place. Wish I could see it some day.” You look over at him smiling.

“wish i could show you someday,” he says softly.

“You know, your eyes look like stars. Anyone ever tell you that?” Sans turns to look at you. It's too dark to see his face clearly, but those beautiful lights in his eyes almost seem to sparkle. You think he looks embarrassed as he turns back to look at the stars again. “Can you see light differently than humans? You seem to be able to see fine in the dark, is that from living underground?”

“that, and most monsters can see ultraviolet light,” he says passively. “specially ones that live in waterfall.”

After several minutes of companionable silence, he sits up and gazes out towards the pond. “hey, yn?”

“Hm?” You look back at him. You can just barely see the side of his face, but there is an odd bluish tint on his cheekbones.

“can i, uh..” He's nervous? “can i kiss you?”

Wut? Sans wants to kiss you? He.. likes you? Like that? What would that even feel like? After a moment of processing this, you sit up and tilt your head to one side and ask, “How does a skeleton monster kiss?”

Sans shifts onto his knees and shuffles towards you. You do the same and turn to face him. You position yourselves so his knees are between yours. His face is about a foot away from yours at this point. He looks uncertain, but he brings up his right hand to the side of your neck, causing the hairs on the back of your neck to stand up and a shiver runs down your spine. Slowly, he brings his face closer to yours. Your heart is racing at this point and your pretty sure Sans can feel your pulse. You find yourself staring intently at the firefly-like pips of light that you had complimented. How
do those even work? You're not sure what to expect, but then he touches his nasal ridge to the tip of your nose. It's surprisingly not scratchy as he very gently rubs his nose against yours. You can feel his breath on your skin as his thumb gently rubs your cheek.

After a moment he pulls back a few inches and looks into your eyes to see if you were okay with what he had done. You feel really relaxed, yet excited at the same time. You want (no, need) to do something, so you lean forward and kiss him on what would be his lips. His teeth are smooth and the ridges of bone around his mouth aren't hard. Sans seems startled at this, but he leans into you and wraps his other arm around you, pulling you against him. You wrap your arms around him, feeling his ribs and the boney points of his spine under his sweater.

You weren't expecting a particularly passionate kiss, but then Sans opens his mouth slightly. You do the same, and you feel something that feels like a tongue probing your open mouth. It isn't wet, but it is warm and... tingly; probably made of pure magic. You gently run your own tongue along its length as Sans's hand tangles in your hair.

A moment later, your mouths part from each other, but your foreheads remain touching. You're both panting slightly and you gaze into each other's eyes. You nuzzle a bit more until you're distracted by an unfamiliar light emanating from just below your peripheral vision. You look down to see a soft white light coming from within Sans's shirt. Or rather from within his ribcage.

You look back up at Sans's face and he has an embarrassed look of resignation on his features. “Is that what I think it is?” Sans only nods. “It's beautiful. What does it mean when it glows bright like that?”

Sans takes a deep breath before he can think of a suitable answer. You can barely hear him when he speaks. “it means i'm falling for you.”

You feel heat rise to your face. “Why? We're so different.”

“are we?” he asks curiously. “we're both living sentient people, aren't we?” He brings his other hand up to the side of your face. “i feel safe and warm around you. i trust you. you saved my life. twice, at least.”

Wait. You pull back a bit. “Sans, I don't want you to feel bound to me because of that. You don't owe me anything.”

Sans looks intently into your eyes. “you don't have to worry about that. that's not the case here. look, if i didn't want to be here, i could have taken enough magic from your soul to sustain myself and left on my own to try and get back home by myself.” Sans takes a breath before continuing. “but my soul sees something in you that it would have felt regardless. the circumstances of us meeting doesn't change that. it's only because of you it's strong enough to express itself. it sees a mate in you.”

A mate? You're incredulous. “How? We're not even the same species.”

Sans smiles softly. “it doesn't matter. our souls are compatible. monsters are heavily attuned to their souls. if my soul knows somethin', the rest of me will know. and i know... that i want to be with you.”

You're not sure if it's fear you're feeling. You don't exactly have the best track record when it comes to relationships. One was cheating on his girlfriend, one was long-distance that just didn't work out, and one was borderline abusive. That last one took your self-esteem down quite a bit and ultimately, you just decided it wasn't worth it. You've been alone for some time. The thought of
committing yourself to someone again so suddenly did weird things to your gut.

“It’s only been a couple of weeks,” you protest.

“I know,” Sans says softly. “I know it's different for humans. You need some time to know your feelings for sure. I'm not tryin' to force anything on you.” He reaches down and gently takes your free hand and places it against his chest. “I'm just tellin' you what I feel.”

The heat radiating from Sans's glowing Soul is pleasant and inviting, like a warm cup of tea or a fireplace. This is a lot to take in. Your heart is racing and you don't know how to feel. You take a deep breath before speaking. “You're right. I will need some time. I'm not saying no. I'm just... saying I don't know.”

Sans smiles. “That's okay.” He leans in and kisses you gently on the corner of your mouth before pulling you in for a hug. The heat of Sans's Soul so close your own is such an intense feeling, you shudder slightly. Sans seems to mistake it as it a shiver from the cold. “You wanna head home?”

You nod and you both stand and he picks up the blanket and backpack. He holds you close and shortcuts you back to your room. He kisses you goodnight before heading out to do his nightly soul-searching.

You spend much of the night deep in thought. Sans wants to 'be with you.' Does that mean he wants to date you? Marry you? How would it even work? Would he still feel that way after he goes home? Does he want you to stay with him in Ebott or would he be allowed to live in Canada with you? You can't just uproot your life and move to another country. At least not with your current financial state. You have debts to pay. Your job pays your expenses, but not enough to save for something like that. How would you even move your stuff? You realise you're just stressing yourself out like this. You have to work in the morning. You'll talk to Sans tomorrow.

You have to tell him you can't stay with him... no matter how badly you want to. You've been living the fantasy for long enough. It's time to let go.
Tenderness

Chapter Summary

You wake up feeling awful and Sans has a proposition for you.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Friday. Last day before you leave town and two weeks since you found Sans. You feel like you didn't even sleep, but you didn't hear Sans return and fall asleep in the recliner. If he didn't get a Soul last night, he's running out of time. Your eyes are swollen and dry as if you were crying and didn't realise it. Your chest hurts, too. How much did he drain from you this time? You regrettably drag yourself out of bed and head for the bathroom. You see yourself in the mirror and you look terrible, but you have to go to work. That's just how it is.

You get into work and somehow manage keep up with everyone. You help an old man carry a toaster oven. You show a family of immigrants where the children's clothes are. You clean up a mess of glitter made by a wayward toddler. You silently wish on the stars you saw last night that Sans could just spirit you away to Ebott and live with him there. You don't realise you're crying until your supervisor comes to see what's taking you so long. You apologise profusely for the delay, but your boss says it's okay if you head home early.

When you get to your car, you don't start it right away because you wouldn't be able to see through the tears. Doesn't help that you have a headache now. Why does it hurt so much? You'll miss Sans, of course, but you'll see him again, won't you? You still have the drive to spend with him, right? Will you be strong enough to say goodbye? You wipe your eyes the best you can and pick up your phone and send a text to Sans: 'are you at the house? if you aren't, can you be there in 10? i really need to see you.'

He responds in less than a minute: 'not a problem'

You get home as fast as you can and Sans is there waiting for you on your bed. As soon as he sees how upset you are, he's on his feet in front of you. You don't even think about it before pulling him into hug. “I'm sorry, Sans.” You can barely speak through the pain in your chest. You just sob into his shoulder as he wraps his arms tightly around your middle. “I'm so sorry. I can't stay with you in Ebott. I want to so badly, but I have financial responsibilities.” The words just spill out like you were spitting out poison. “I have debts to pay. I'd have to give my landlord proper notice to move out. I'd need a bigger vehicle to carry my belongings. I'd need to support myself in America. I can't rely on your people for that. It wouldn't be fair.”

Sans stiffens and pulls back a bit to look up at you. He has an expression of shock and sadness in his eyes. “not fair??” He says in exasperation. “after everything you've done; and everything you're still doing, you still think you don't deserve anything in return?” He reaches up and places his hands on either side of your face and gently tugs you down to look him more closely in the eyes. “why are you like this? you just give and give and you never ask for anything in return. you've taken care of me like i was the most important thing in your life. you literally gave me part of your
soul and all you wanted was for me to stay alive and tell you about myself. why do you keep surprising me?” Sans seems to have worked himself up and is breathing hard and shaking. There are even tears starting form in his eyes.

“What was it you said about Vegatoids? It's in my nature. It's just what I do.” You sniff loudly and try to wipe your face. “And I love you, Sans. I was afraid to admit it because I didn't think something this good could be real. It's only been two weeks and it's crazy, but I love you.” Sans stares at you in awe for moment; he can see it. Your Soul is on the verge of cracking under it's own weight. He pulls you down a bit more in order to kiss you. You stroked the back of his skull and after a moment he parts from you, but his forehead stays in contact with yours.

“you need money, right? that's all you need? you'd stay with me if you could afford to leave here?” You don't say anything, but your silence is the answer he needs. His gaze into your eyes turns intense. “do you trust me?”

Oh no. “Sans...” You protest.

He knows that tone. “i'm not gonna rob a bank! relax. i won't break any laws. i might... bend a couple. but i won't do anything bad. don't worry. that's not a skeleton you need in your closet.” You want to protest. You want to find a reason for him to not go out of his way for your sake, but you're just so tired. “give me the weekend. cancel your plans to leave tomorrow. let me take care of you now.”

You bow down a bit more from your emotional exhaustion until your forehead rests on his shoulder. “Okay,” you say weakly. “Don't go out tonight. Please, stay with me. I need you to stay close.”

Sans nuzzles you gently. “absolutely.”

Sans stays by your side for the rest of the day. You text your upstairs neighbour telling her of the change of plan and you cancel your reservation at the campground. He rubs your neck and back until the Asprin you took for your headache finally kicks in. You cook and eat together and watch a few more movies. He even holds his hand still so you can draw it. You finally allow yourself to accept how you feel about Sans. He isn't human, but that doesn't matter to you. He's a person; a funny, intelligent and fascinating individual whom, frankly you can't get enough of.

Sans has apparently done the same. He's allowed himself to believe that his own Soul is telling him he's in love with a human. With you. The look of adoration he gives you every time you meet his eyes warms your heart; or is it your Soul? Either way, you feel incredibly comfortable around him. Later in the evening, you're just lying awake in bed snuggled together in the darkness. There is no talking between you two. You simply hold each other and experience each other's presence; occasionally nuzzling and giving each other feather-light kisses. Feeling Sans breathe against you does cause you doze off now and then. At some point you have to roll onto your back, but when Sans doesn't let go of you, you pull him along and he ends up laying on top of you like you're a human body pillow. His weight on you is actually rather comforting and he just nuzzles into your chest and you're pretty sure he falls asleep listening to your heart.

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You wake from a night of sleep that was a hundred times better than the night before. Sans is still fast asleep on you and you can't stop yourself from blushing now that you realise how intimate the position is. Can he even..? You push that thought down. That's for another time. Right now your
back hurts and you need to use the bathroom. You gently stroke Sans's skull in an attempt wake him slowly. He stirs and tightens his grip on your sides. You rub his back and he starts... purring. **Oh wow, skeletons purr when they're comfortable.** You can't help it; you start snickering. Your shaking ultimately wakes Sans fully and he looks at you in confusion. “wha's so funny?” He slurs.

“You were purring!” You say in laughter. “I was rubbing your back and you started purring. It was adorable!”

Sans is clearly embarrassed and there's a blue tint on his zygomatic. You reach up and hug him tightly and roll over onto your sides. You can still rub his back like this and for a second your hear the purr again before he stifles it. “Does that feel good?” You ask more calmly.

Sans huffs and looks to the side, but he's still smiling. “it feels good when you touch me. i just don't usually open up like that.”

You smile, understanding. “I'd like to touch you more if you're okay with it. I like exploring with my hands.”

Sans chuckles softly. “heh. me too. guess i'm more of a sensi-bones than i thought.”

You gently stroke the side of his face and lean in and kiss his forehead. “Welp, I gotta get up and do human stuff.” You climb over him and dart to the bathroom.

Sans rolls over onto his chest; occupying the space you just vacated. It's been a while since he's been this relaxed. You actually want to be with him? You really said that? You said you'd stay with him if you could cut financial ties to this city. He breathes deeply and he can still smell you. **maybe it isn't a dream after all. if it is, i don't want to wake up. ever. it's more likely it is real and even if it all ends soon, i might as well enjoy while it lasts.**

Nihilism aside. Sans doesn't know all the legal requirements that you have to deal with if you're going to stay with him in Ebott. **you're a smart girl; you can figure that out. i've got another mission to do now. why is money so important to humans? it's like they need it just to exist. not to mention it's really hard to get a lot of it at once without doing something illegal or immoral.** He'll have to do some research of his own. He has a few leads, but for now he's already starting feel cold without you near him. Better get up.

Sans is cooking some cheesy scrambled eggs when you get out of the bathroom. You sidle up to him and put a hand on his shoulder. He looks up at you and smiles and leans himself into your side, prompting you to hug him closer. As you're eating together, you feel the need to understand the nature of your relationship. “So,” say as casually as possible. “What are we? Are we boyfriend/girlfriend? Is there another word for that in Monster culture?”

Sans stops eating for a second before shrugging stiffly. “i dunno,” he says passively. “i don't have any experience in the field of relationships. i'm just doing what feels right.”

**He's never been in a relationship before?** “What would this kind of relationship even be like? Humans have a hit and miss approach to stuff like that. When humans do what feels right, a lot of the time it doesn't work. There's insecurity, jealousy, greed, dissatisfaction, infidelity... The best of intentions can become tainted over time. Not all of them, but a lot of them. Humans... aren't really that great...” You trail off as Sans looks at you concerned.

“hey,” he says softly as he fixes you with a gaze. “do you think that just because you're human,
Your intentions will change despite how you feel now?”

Your own insecurities are choosing the worst time to raise their ugly heads. “I don’t want to hurt you,” you say quietly.

Sans reaches forward takes your hand. Despite his hand feeling like ceramic, it is warm and comforting. “look, i’ll be the first to admit that it’s hard for me trust people. even people i’ve known my whole life.” He looks to the side briefly with slight expression of guilt. “i’m the kind of monster to keep people at arm’s length because there’s things about me i’d rather keep to myself. i hope you can respect that.” You nod. You know there's nothing wrong with some things being kept private. “i never thought i could trust a human. you're right, they're creatures of flesh and what the flesh wants can be different than what the soul wants. at least, that's what i've read. people sometimes go against their soul and that causes the soul to suffer and they can become a different person.

“that doesn't really happen with monsters. we don't... really change. because our soul is our flesh, so to speak, if we go against our own soul, it's bad; really bad. that's already affected our king. he didn't want to kill, but he did it because had to. as much as he tries to hide it, he's a broken monster.”

“Humans can be like that too. They can feel remorse for the wrong they've done.” You think of soldiers who have come home permanently changed from what they had to do during wartimes.

“i don't doubt that,” he says passively. “i’m sure they’re good people, but i haven't met them. i have met you. i feel your soul in me. i've experienced it. i know you. the fact you're scared of what you think you could do, tells me you would rather die than go against your own soul.”

You shake your head stiffly, mostly out of confusion. “I can't picture myself doing something to hurt you without feeling sick. Do you really believe in me that much?”

Sans smiles warmly. “you're a good person. you need to believe in yourself more. i can already tell you've got more backbone than me.”

Chapter End Notes

Sans has some theories about human nature that may or may not be accurate. I was kind of pulling stuff out of my ass when I was writing that.
Breaking... Something

Chapter Summary

Sans goes out on the town and causes a bit of a disturbance while making good on his word to take care of your financial woes.

Chapter Notes

Time to put that Moral Ambiguity tag to good use.
Mild references to drugs and firearms. Mild violence.

Somewhere far far away, a yellow reptile named Alphys is squealing at the idea that Sans *likes someone*. Both she and a tall skeleton known as Papyrus have been updating a public message board on the Undernet with texts, photos, and the occasional email from the outside world. Sans has been making good on his word to Undyne to keep her informed of his progress and of what he's learned on the surface. Many residents of the Underground are increasingly curious about the human who has managed to befriend Sans. King Asgore was initially very upset to learn of the experiment that he had performed on himself, however he has been just as curious as to how much the world has changed since the War and if Monsters could possibly negotiate peace with humans. Perhaps this human friend could be the example to follow. Only time will tell.

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After breakfast, Sans says he has some research of his own to do, so you both spend much of the day on your computers while you do a bit of packing here and there. By now, you're pretty sure he's infused his laptop with his magic much like his phone. The fan isn't as loud and you have yet to see him charge it. You don't feel a drain of your energy, so it must not use much magic to run whatever function he's made it perform. You're quite curious to know what he's reading about, but you've made the choice to trust his judgement.

You make an appointment with your vet to get your cat's vaccinations up to date and you browse some classifieds for minivans you could potentially trade your car in for. You even start a draft of a resignation letter you would give your boss if Sans makes good on his word.

It's well into the afternoon when Sans turns off his laptop and puts on his borrowed sneakers. “Got places to be?” You say in a slight teasing tone.

Sans smirks at you. “got some investigatin' out in the field to do. might come back early if i end up short-cutting a lot.”
You gave him a nervous smile, “Ookay... Just... don't... y'know...”

His smirk softens. “don't worry. i'm not gonna fuck shit up.”

You sigh, slightly less nervous. “Alright. See ya later, investigator.”

Sans winks and gives you a casual salute before picking up the canvas bag and laptop and vanishing. Welp. In the meantime, you decide to rummage through some of your things you haven't touched in a while and do a cull of your stuff. You'd been meaning to send some of it to a local donation station, anyway.

Nightfall. It's cloudy; can't see the stars. dang. Oh well, Sans isn't watching the skies tonight. He's watching the streets. Nice thing about downtown with buildings of different heights is it's easy to get to the roofs of many of them.

Thanks to Netflix, Sans had been introduced to Breaking Bad. Apparently selling a narcotic called methamphetamine is a lucrative and highly illegal business. Also thanks to the news, sting operations tend to uncover large amounts of drug money stashed away not far from where those drugs are made. If there's one thing Sans is good at, it's observing. So he watches the people milling about bars. He watches the unfortunates without homes look for a place to sleep. He watches the body language of a few creeps as they discretely pass objects amongst themselves. bingo. so there is activity in the area. He follows his chosen mark around what he assumes are the slums of downtown. The buildings look run down and there is graffiti everywhere. The mark meets up with another man and quickly passes a handful of paper bills to him and they part ways.

Sans follows the new mark. He takes a complicated route; most likely to avoid being followed. It might have worked if Sans was on the ground and wasn't a Monster, but Sans is above him. He follows until the man enters a presumably abandoned one-storey house and doesn't come back out. Sans shortcuts onto the roof of the building and closes his eyes. His hood just barely obstructs the blue glow emitting from his left eye.

After concentrating for a moment, Sans can detect two Souls inside the building and one Soul in the alley next to it. Within his mind's eye Sans creates an ethereal blueprint of the building's interior. First floor doesn't have much. It's messier than his own room back home. A couple of old dirty mattresses and garbage everywhere; bad enough even Sans is revolted. He keeps probing with his magic, sensing with ghostly feelers as he scans the basement. Lots of glass and plastic; toxins being combined into volatile reactions. He keeps looking in other rooms and finds something interesting. A safe. One of those fireproof ones to protect the stash in case there's an accident. that's my target, but i need to get those guys out. He opens his eyes and looks into the alley to see who the third Soul is. It's a homeless man sleeping in the doorway of the building next door. Sans shortcuts to the ground to the opposite side of a dumpster from him so the man can hear him, but not see him. “hey buddy. you should find somewhere else to sleep. this house is probably going to be surrounded by cops soon and you don't wanna get caught up in the mess.”

The man looks around confused. “Who's there?” Sans doesn't answer. “Gonna bring down the hot house, eh? Good luck with that.” Sans watches as the man shuffles out of the alley and away from the vicinity.

He turns his attention back to his target. how to get them out? easy. Sans does a quick scan of the area and walks up to the front door... and knocks. He then shortcuts back to the roof and watches from above. After a minute, the door slowly opens and a man cautiously peers out. Sans can see he's holding a gun and scanning the area for whoever knocked. time to put on a show. Sans
deliberately scrapes part of the roof to get the man's attention. He spins around to look up and catches a brief glimpse of Sans's face before pointing his gun at him and pulling the trigger. The shot could be clearly heard for several blocks. Sans retreats from view just as the bullet hits part of the overhang. He hears yelling from inside the house. “Whatchu shootin' at?!”

“There's a dude on the roof! He's wearin' some kinda mask!”

Sans hears some scrabbling towards the back of the house as someone is climbing onto something in order to corner him. He short-cuts onto the roof of the building next door and watches the second occupant climb onto the roof of the house. “There's no one here!” He yells.

“Probly jumped into the alley.” The other man runs into the alleyway and starts knocking over garbage cans. Sans uses some Blue magic to knock over the boxes and pallets the second man used to climb to the roof.

“What the fuck?!” He screeches as he goes back the way he came and tries to jump back down for a much more difficult landing.

After a few more somewhat amusing moments of the perps running around the house with Sans drawing their attention to various points, he can hear a police siren in the distance. The perps hear it too and make the wise decision to run. perfect. Sans takes this brief window of time to shortcut inside the basement of the house. The smell of the chemicals makes his proverbial stomach clench and he grimaces as he locates the safe. He places his hands on the safe as his magic scans the interior and manipulates the mechanical lock. The sirens arrive outside the house just as the door clicks open. Just as Sans had counted on, there is money in the safe; quite a bit of it but there's no time to count it now. Instead, he quickly scoops the bundles into the canvas bag and returns it to his back. Just as he hears police officers loudly announcing their presence, Sans snaps his fingers and vanishes from downtown.

You're in your room sitting on your bed in your pj's sorting through some old paperwork and minding your own business when a hooded skeleton appears in the middle of your room and scares the shit out of you. You jump back with a “gah!” that you hope wasn't heard upstairs and drop the papers you were holding. Sans catches your eye and gives you a tired but smug smile. “Dare I ask what you were up to just now?”

“cashing in on my promise,” he says with a smirk as he plops the canvas bag on the bed next you and steps back with his hands in his pockets. You assume he wants you to open it and you look at it reluctantly. Carefully, you pull the top flap over and peek inside the opening... and immediately close it.


Sans sits on the bed on the other side of the bag and flops backward with a rough sigh. “i robbed a meth lab,” he mutters.

“You what??” You squeal, standing up. “Did anyone see you?”

“they didn't know what i was,” he says calmly. “didn't hurt anyone. didn't even do any property damage. wanted to though, but the cops showed up and i had to leave.”

“That was so dangerous. You could have been killed!” You're pacing now with your hands in your hair. “This is drug money. It's probably coated in drug residue.”
Sans sits up and fixes you with a serious gaze. “is what i did illegal? the police are all over that house by now. even if the guys running it don't get caught right away, at least i shut down the operation. that money is much better off in your hands than theirs. it would just end up another statistic anyway.”

“They kind of need those statistics...” You stop pacing and close your eyes and take a deep breath and exhale slowly and try very hard to clear your mind and think rationally. Sans has demonstrated a lot of trust in you here. This is probably not something he'd do under normal circumstances; this was very 'out-of-character' for him. Sans needs your help and this is him helping you help him, but this is dirty money and must be handled with care. You keep your voice low and calm. “This has got to be the most chaotic neutral thing I've ever seen.” Sans seems confused at the reference. “We need to be really careful how we use this. There's no point in putting it in a bank, but... if this is why you did this, I'm probably going to use some of it pay off my credit card. When it comes to collection agencies, they don't really care where the money comes from.”

Sans nods, glad you've calmed down. “of course.”

“We need to count it, but I don't want to touch it with my bare hands.” You go to the kitchen and grab your box of latex gloves that you use on the rare occasion you have a whole chicken to handle. You come back and put on a pair; Sans declines to use them. You grab a plastic garbage bag and lay it flat on your bed. You then proceed to turn the canvas bag over and empty its contents on to the plastic. You both spend the next half hour or so counting the bundles of green, red, and brown.

Sans counts a lot faster than you despite never seeing Canadian money before. He mutters something about feeling like a mobster. Most of the bills are twenties with a few bundles of fifties and couple of hundreds. Your brief time in retail has given you a bit of experience in spotting counterfeits and manage to catch a few obvious ones and show Sans the difference. When you finish, you end up with just short of $18,000. While you've heard of drug busts coming up with hundreds of thousands of dollars, it's still more money than you've ever had at once that wasn't a student loan.

You make a mental note to write down everything you need to help you make the move, but you'll deal with that tomorrow. Both you and Sans are exhausted. You put the spoils in the plastic bag and hide it the best you can in a corner of your closet and turn out the lights and roll yourself into bed.

Sans doesn't even bother to leave the room to change his shirt. It's dark in the room, but his stark white bones are fairly visible. You fail to suppress a squeak at the sight and Sans turns to look at you. Why are bones so attractive now? “like what you see?” He teases as he holds his arms out to the sides; putting himself on display for you. Your silence makes him snicker as he puts on the sweater. “where do you want me to sleep? bed or chair?”

You reach out to him and he crawls into bed next you. You pull him into a spooning position as you mutter “You're crazy, you know that?”

“you like it,” he replies smugly.

Chapter End Notes
I do not condone the creation, sale or use of dangerous and illegal drugs!
This is just the most neutral plan I could come up with. Also, I have no idea how drug-dealing works. I have no idea if this is realistic at all. Forgive me for my creative license.
Look at Me; Adulting Everywhere!

Chapter Summary

You go about the mundane tasks of preparing for an extended stay in a different country.

Chapter Notes

Life is imitating art! I have recently moved from my own "River City" and am now living in a very small town in central Canada and starting a new job. So... it's possible my chapter updates might slow down a bit or become irregular in the coming weeks. I hope to have a chapter at least once a week. In the meantime, I'm really glad you guys are enjoying the story so far.

The next morning, you wake snuggled into Sans's shoulder. He had turned onto his back and your arms are still around him; one under his neck and one slung over his chest. You lean in to give him a soft kiss on the side of his skull and he stirs and turns his head to look at you. “mornin'” he says sleepily.

“Good morning, Sans,” you say softly. “Did you sleep alright?”

He yawns before answering. “like the dead.” You cringe slightly at the morbid joke, but nuzzle into his shoulder again. After a moment of just breathing together, Sans speaks again. “y'know, you never did answer my question.”

“hm?” This confuses you.

He reaches up to the loose collar of his sweater and pulls it forward slightly, exposing his clavicle and sternum a bit more. “do you like what you see?” He has a bit more of a serious and almost hopeful expression on his face.

You ponder his question as you gaze at his pearly white bones, star-like eyes and pleasantly round skull. He wants to know if you're physically attracted to him. You tell him the truth. “I think you're beautiful, Sans.”

Sans's browbones twitch upward in surprise and he quirks a curious smile. “you really think so?” You nod decisively. “you still wanna touch me?” You look back at his exposed bones and carefully reach forward and trace your fingertips over his collarbone. Sans sighs gently at your touch. The bone is smooth and warm and moves with every breath.

After tracing his clavicle and one of his uppermost ribs you take your hand back and set it flat on his clothed ribcage. “I do want to, Sans. I want to make you feel good, but I think I would enjoy it more when I have less on my mind. I need to make a to-do list and keep packing. Despite it being my day off tomorrow, I have a lot to do.” Sans looks slightly disappointed, but he nods and smiles and reaches up to tug you down for a kiss. You nuzzle for a bit before pulling him out of bed to
make pancakes with you.

Out of morbid curiosity you look up the news on your phone to find a brief article of the police finding a small drug operation downtown. No cash was found on site; only an empty safe.

There aren't many official things you can do on a Sunday, but you make your to-do list. You send an email to a reputable used car dealership informing them of your plans to purchase a minivan on Monday and possibly trade in your current car. You send an email to your landlord informing him of your plans to move and that you intend to give him the following month's rent due to you not giving proper notice. You get an email shortly thereafter from him saying he is sorry to see you go and not to worry about the additional rent as he has a potential tenant available to take your place. You arrange a time to do a final inspection the following Saturday. You spend the rest of the day packing some of your essentials and setting your donation items aside. The less you bring with you, the better. That evening, Sans returns to his Soul-searching task.

When Sans returns early Monday morning, he says he may have a lead at the retirement home and that he'll be going back and forth over next day or so. He promptly falls asleep on the bed as you are getting up to start the day, but you take your time leaving so Sans can recharge. You also take an appropriate amount of cash from the plastic bag in your closet before you leave. You stop in at carwash to get your car cleaned up before heading to the dealership you made contact with. After taking your chosen minivan for a satisfactory test drive and the dealership has your car inspected, you make the trade and cover the difference in cash. The DMV is within walking distance so you take your bill of sale and registration there to have it transferred and then you call your insurance to have it transferred as well. You have no idea how long you will be in Ebott and you used your current address despite the fact you'll be leaving the country and you'll technically have no address when you leave... but you'll cross that bridge when you get to it.

You get back to the dealership to switch plates and leave with your 'new' minivan. Your next stop is a car parts/junkyard. You make the unusual request to have the two rear sets of seats removed in order to create as much cargo space as possible. It takes a couple of hours to complete the task and the manager gives you discount on the labour since you're letting them keep the seats.

You stop into your workplace to hand in your one-week notice; you haven't been there long enough to warrant two weeks. Your boss is surprised and a bit disappointed, but knows it wouldn't be terribly difficult to find workers to fill your position in that time. She agrees to direct deposit your final check and hang onto your R.O.E. until you give her a place to mail it.

Finally, you have just enough time to stop into the vet to pick up a sedative for your cat so he doesn't put up a huge fight while getting his shots tomorrow. The pet store is right next door so you get a pet crate big enough to contain your cat's carry-case, litterbox, food and water. You fit that easily in the extra space in the back of the minivan. By now, you're kind of tired and you head home. You still have a few days for the rest of your list.

It's the evening by the time you walk into your bedroom door. Sans is there and has taken the liberty of haphazardly folding the clothes you had hanging in your closet and placed them in a prepared plastic storage bin along with the books you had laying about your room. He's on his laptop as you give him a kiss on the top of his skull before sitting in the recliner.

You pick up your phone and start sending a lengthy text to a good friend you have in the city. He's that kind friend who connects you to your other friends; you've known him for years. Your text essentially tells him that you've had a mental break and you're moving out of your apartment and going on an extended road trip into the USA and that you're going to miss your group of friends and
that you don't know when you'll see them again. You get a text a while later that tells you he's really surprised and he asks if you're okay. He also says he'd like to try and get some of your friends together for a going away party if you're up for it. You tell him you're leaving Sunday morning and he says he'll see what he can do.

You haven't turned your computer on yet. Instead you just slump into the recliner feeling mentally exhausted. “hey,” Sans calls your attention. “does your, uh, family know what you're doing?”

You mentally groan. “No,” you grumble. “And I'm kinda scared to tell them.”

“you don't get along with them?” Sans asks cautiously.

“Quite the opposite actually, we get along fine.” You thank your lucky stars that you have good parents. “But my mom is really curious and always wants to check in on me and make sure I'm doing well. If I tell her I'm up and moving to America out of the blue like this, she'll have more questions than I can count. Even if I tell her it's just a trip, she'll ask me where I got the money... hmm, maybe I can say I won it on a scratch ticket.”

“hm,” Sans huffs thoughtfully. “y'know, in the underground, we don't really have much. monsters don't live as long as they should because of a lack of hope as result of being trapped. down there, family is everything because that's really all have we have that's, well, ours.”

You look back at him and smile lovingly. “Your brother will be very happy to see you.”

Sans nods and smiles in return. “i know he will. my brother is my everything. he'd really like you.”

You blush slightly. “He sounds like a great guy. I'd love to meet him.”

You sigh tiredly and turn on the computer to create an itinerary of your intended route to support your guise as a tourist. You'll call your mom; later. For now, you print out your itinerary and snuggle with Sans until he leaves for the night.

You go back to work on Tuesday and your coworkers ask you how your trip was and they are surprised and confused when you tell them you didn't go anywhere, but that you are leaving town indefinitely at the end of the week. You mostly just say you're in need of a hiatus from life. You do your job as per usual and the day goes smoothly. Before you leave for home, you make a call to a collection agency that had been sending you letters as of late and negotiate a settlement to get rid of your debt to them.

When you get home, you enlist Sans's aid to hold your cat (gently!) while you pry the feline's mouth open to feed him his sedative. A half hour and dinner later, you're off to the vet; your cat complains while he's there, but doesn't fight. Your sluggish furry friend spends the rest of the evening curled up on your boney friend's lap.

After Sans heads out for the night, you allocate part of your dubious financial spoils to bring to the bank tomorrow and pay off your credit card. Also, you send a dubious text to a gamer-turned-trucker American friend of yours to get back to you when he gets the time. It helps your case as a tourist if you can prove you know people across the border who can vouch for you and say they'll be responsible for you while you're there. He responds just before you go to bed, saying he'd be happy to vouch for you.
Across town, Sans is following up on a lead he sensed not too long ago. It's a clear night. The roof of the senior's home is actually a pretty decent place to stargaze. Sans breathes in the night air. He'd felt a chill shortly after arriving, despite the hoodie being zipped up and the hood over his skull. The cold never was the issue, however, he knew what it meant. Someone's time had come. He just had to wait. He's laying on his back above the bedroom that housed a Soul preparing to move on.

The backpack containing the infused jar sits next to him and when he's sure everything is clear, he shortcuts into a shadowed corner of the room. From there he can see a bed. Sleeping in the bed, is a very old woman. He stands and watches with darkened sockets. He keeps an eyesocket on the partially open door as he waits.

As he stands next to the dresser against the wall he breathes in deeply as he prepares to approach. However, his inhale causes his elbow to touch a knick-knack on the dresser, scooting it slightly against wood. This woman may be old, but her hearing is flawless. She wakes gently and Sans freezes in place and holds his breath, hoping she doesn't notice him. She notices him. shit.

A soft “oh,” leaves her lips as her aged eyes focus on the dark corner Sans stood in. run, dammit! Sans doesn't move. Why won't his body move? His body is charged with magic but it won't obey him. why?

“Have you finally come for me?” ...what? Sans still can't move, but he can feel his eyelights reigniting slowly. “I knew I would see you when my time had come.” oh no. Sans is so confused. Why does his chest hurt? He can't breathe. “But, I never thought you would be so handsome.” The old woman reaches out a trembling hand towards him. Sans lurches forward without even realizing it and takes her hand in his. Sans lurches forward without even realizing it and takes her hand in his. “You'll take good care of it, won't you?” Sans takes a shuddering breath. He can feel it; the faint tugging of the old lady's Soul calling to him. She just looks at him. There is no fear. why isn't she afraid of me? She only smiles. does she think i'm an angel, or something? Sans's voice catches in his non-existant throat as he stands there frozen, gently holding this sweet old woman's hand. His body shivers with each breath, until what felt like an eternity has passed.

Before he realizes it, the old woman's hand slips from his and his eyes are drawn to the faint light blue glow emerging from the woman's chest. Sans had never seen an exposed human's Soul with his own eyes. It's so bright. The light illuminates the woman's peaceful features as Sans gently cups
the beacon in his palm. He didn't even realize he was crying until he hears the tears land on the blankets. Then he hears someone approaching the door and he vanishes from the room just as it opens. He reappears on the roof next to the backpack. His hands are shaking as he digs the jar out of the bag and uses blue magic to unscrew the lid. Before placing the Soul in the jar, it is almost instinct for Sans to Judge it. What he sees breaks his metaphorical heart.

*Name: Pearl
*HP: 0/20
*LV: 0
*XP: 0
*Knew everything would be okay in the end. She was waiting for you.

Sans gingerly coaxes the pale cyan Soul into the glass vessel and completes the seal with his magic; keeping the Soul in suspended animation. He places the jar in the backpack and stands on his shaky legs. He draws in a deep breath to calm himself enough to shortcut to your room.

His legs give out as soon as he touches the carpet. The impact and Sans's subsequent sobbing wakes you with a start. He's hunched over himself holding the backpack to his chest as you crawl out of bed and kneel in front of him. “Sans, what happened?” Your voice is thick with concern. He just keeps shaking and sobbing on the floor. You reach down and gently place your hands on the sides of his face and coax him to look up at you. His face is wet with tears and he looks so distraught your heart breaks. You pull him against yourself and cradle his skull as he sobs into your shoulder.

“i-i didn't know,” he says between choked breaths. “i didn't know-- what it would feel like.”

You sigh softly. “You did it, didn't you? You got what you came for?” You stroke Sans's back as he shivers.

“when i said i could sense when someone is 'bout to die,” he manages to calm himself slightly. “i'd never done it before. it's just somethin' i read about skeletons in the past. i had no idea it would be- -that intense.” He presses his palm into his sternum and tries to calm his breathing. “she was just... so calm. she wasn't even afraid of me. she just... let me take it with a smile on her face.”

“Shh..” You hold him a bit tighter and stroke his skull. “Just breathe, okay? You did what you came to do. Just treat her Soul with respect and you'll get through it.” Sans sobs silently into your shirt and wraps his arms around you. You have no idea of the circumstances of how Sans had collected the Soul, but you think you both figured out that he is grieving for whomever 'she' was.

“I'm sorry i dragged you into this,” he says quietly.

“I'm not,” you say softly. “We're here now. You're here with me. I love you, Sans. I made a promise that I would help you free your people. That's what we're doing.” Sans draws in deep shuddering breath and hugs you a bit tighter. “Come on. Come to bed.” He nods and picks up the bag as he stands. He sets the bag gently in the closet before crawling into the bed with you and clinging to you for the rest of the night.
Sans is reluctant to let go of you in the morning and he stays close to you as you're cooking breakfast. The bone around his eyes is discoloured and it looks like he didn't sleep much. He welcomes your arms around his shoulders and wraps his arms around your middle when he gets the chance.

“You okay, Sans?” You ask softly as you stroke his skull.

He nods stiffly. “yeah,” he says with a strained voice. “just tired. rough night.”

You kiss his sephenoid bone and hug him tightly. “You'll try and get some more sleep while I'm gone, right?”

Sans sighs deeply. “yeah, i'll try.”

You eat breakfast in silence and you kiss him goodbye before you leave for work.

***

After work, you head for the bank and hand the dubious teller several bundles of cash and an account payable. After the transaction you make another call to confirm you are finally debt-free. While you're at the bank, you have some money converted to American funds.

When you finally get home, Sans is awake and wearing his sweater and pj bottoms and sitting on your bed looking pensive. You sit on the bed in front of him. “Whatcha thinkin' about?” You ask with a curious smile.

He doesn't answer at first, but reaches a hand up to scratch at his sternum a bit. “i wanna show you
You sit fully on the bed cross-legged and facing him. He reaches a hand towards the lightswitch; which turns off. There's still a bit of light coming through your thin curtains, but it's still dim in the room. “Wha-?” You stutter.

“That wasn't it,” says with a slight smirk. He leans forward and reaches over his head and pulls the sweater off. The first thing you notice is a soft white light glowing within his ribcage. He places his hand over his sternum and fixes you with an intense gaze. “When a monster shows another person their soul, it's a very private thing. It's... intimate. They would only do it in front of someone they trust implicitly. There are certain exceptions where a soul can be exposed in a non-intimate situation like a fight, but that's not what I'm talkin' about here and now.” He takes a shaky breath as his fingers flex slightly. “You've earned my trust many times over and I wanna show you that. I want you to see it.”

You stare at Sans with fascination. Your heart starts to race at the implication of what he is telling you. “You want to show me... your soul?”

He nods slowly and motions for you to come closer to him. You shuffle forward until your knees are touching his. He sits up a bit straighter and bows his head and closes his eyes. His ribs expand as he draws a deep breath and what dim light there is in the room seems to fade to near blackness. The still-bright light within his ribcage fades and a new light appears within his cupped palm. He exhales slowly as he retracts his nearly closed hand from his chest. You can't see a solid form from which the swirling light is radiating, but it looks like he's holding a star.

He lowers his hand until it is right between the two of you and he uncurls his phalanges to reveal a pure white ethereal inverted heart. It's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen. You stare at it in reverence as you realize that you are looking at Sans. Everything he is; his whole life laid bare in the palm of his hand held out for you to see. You get a strange feeling of being very small, yet very special at the same time. You manage to tear your eyes away from it to look at his face. He's smiling fondly at you. His other hand is resting on his knee and you reach out to take it and squeeze it gently.

“I told you the truth, Sans,” you whisper. “You're beautiful.”

Sans sighs deeply; apparently relieved you weren't afraid. “You see that green halo?” You tilt your head. Oh, you do see it. A faint green glow combined with the white swirling light. “That's you.” Your eyes prickle with tears slightly; you really are part of him. Part of you is encircling him like a protective shield. “Do you, uh, want to touch it?”

“Can I?” You feel like touching his soul would be incredibly intimate.

“If- if you want to...” You study his face. He's trying to hide it, but he's scared.

“Are you sure?” You ask him very seriously. He hesitates. You squeeze his hand again and speak very softly. “Sans, I won't think poorly of you if you aren't ready. We can do this again another time when you're more comfortable.” Sans looks at you with a soft expression and nods shyly. “Thank you for showing me this, Sans. I'm truly honoured.”

Sans retracts his hand and guides the glowing beacon back to his chest as it slips back into his ribcage. It doesn't stop glowing from behind his sternum and he looks down at it with a soft chuckle. He scratches the back of his cervical vertebrae with slight embarrassment. “You were
right. i... wasn't ready. no one's ever touched my soul before. i didn't know what was gonna happen if you did. how i would feel.”

“You've touched it yourself before, right?” You ask in a quiet voice, uncertain if that's an inappropriate question.

He nods. “yeah. touchin' one's own soul is a really private thing. sometimes i do it if i'm havin' an emotional dilemma. it's sort of like meditation or self-hypnosis, but it's really intense. you see yourself from an outside perspective and your thoughts and emotions are less clouded.” He scratches lightly at his sternum. “to touch someone else's soul, you see them. everything. every thought, every memory, every emotion. you... experience them and i'm not... comfortable with myself enough to share it with someone else. not yet”

“That's alright, Sans. I'm happy to wait,” you say softly. Although your curiosity is piqued. “Are you able to do that with human Souls?”

His eyes immediately flick to your chest. “i can,” he says pensively. “it would be more intense than seeing mine, because it's alot stronger. but i can show it to you.”

“Would you?” You say invitingly. He smiles as if you're offering him an amazing gift and he's too shy to accept it. He shifts into a kneeling position. You're still sitting cross-legged and he shuffles forward to wedge his knees under yours and sets his right hand on your thigh. He slowly raises his left hand toward your chest and looks at your eyes to make sure you're okay. You nod and he touches his distals to your sternum. You feel a pulse of warmth inside your chest and a gentle tugging, like he's 'asking' something inside you to come forward. You feel like you could resist if you wanted to, but you don't. You trust Sans and you're ready for him to see you. You feel the tug again and something comes loose. A bright green light suddenly fills the room. You close your eyes for a second because you aren't prepared for how bright it is.

After a few seconds you're able to focus on the bright glowing green heart floating in front of you; cupped gently in Sans's upturned palm. It almost hurts your eyes but you gaze at it; into it. It's you. Your human brain can only do so much to hold your memories and personality in its neurons, but your Soul is your essence; your core. Your brows furrow when you see the fine cracks throughout, filled in with dark blue. You almost ask out loud what they are, but you already know. You've been hurt in the past, but you've never let it change you. Despite everything, it's still you.

You look past the the glowing heart to Sans's illuminated face again; there are tears in his eyes. He's staring at it like he's seeing more than you can imagine. His fingers are twitching like he wants to touch it, but he's holding back. “Sans?” You say softly. “Do you want to touch it?”

He has a look of longing in his eyes, but also a look of resolve. “i want to, but not yet. not until i'm willing to reciprocate.”

You nod and return your gaze to your Soul and tilt your head slightly. “Maybe I'll touch it myself sometime, but not today.” You put you hand near it and try to pat at it in an attempt to coax it back into you. “Um...” You look to sans for help. He smiles broadly and without touching it, guides it back into your body. You shiver now you're all one piece again. “Whew, you weren't kidding. That was pretty intense, but I have to ask...” Sans looks at you curiously. “Why can't humans see Souls normally? It's pseudo-science at best for us.”

Sans smiles. “magical resonance. human souls are dormant for the most part, but they resonate when in close proximity to a magical entity; like a monster.”

“That's so cool,” you whisper in fascination.
Sans is silent for a moment before he says very quietly. “thank you for doin' that with me. that experience.”

You smile happily. “Feeling's mutual.”

There's silence between you for a moment and you find your eyes drawn to Sans's still shirtless ribcage. He sees you looking and smirks shyly at you. You feel your face heat up and you look away embarrassed. “y'know...” He drawls. “i might not have been ready to have you touch my soul, but you're still welcome to touch the rest of me.”

You don't even try to hide your blush anymore. Sans also has a cyan flush on his zygomatic. “What about you? Are you attracted to my big fleshy body?”

“heh,” Sans smiles fondly. “don't matter what you look like. monsters all look different and we love the soul first. body's just a bone-us.” He reaches towards you. “c'mere.”

You happily crawl up next to him and he wraps his boney arms around you and nuzzles you sweetly. You spend the evening in each other's arms, nuzzling and exploring each other's bodies.

Chapter End Notes

If any of you are dirty sinners looking for a nsfw chapter to go with this one, you can find it Here
You spend some time with your human friends before your last night in town and contemplate whether to introduce them to Sans.

Thank you all for being patient! My new PSU came in the mail so I can finally get back on track. Also I started a second job working at a bar. Yay!

The rest of the week is a bit of a blur. Your days at work start to have a sense of finality. Your co-workers say their goodbyes and you make sure you haven't left anything you own in the lunchroom. Despite you only working at your job for a few months, some of your regular customers come in and you take a moment to thank them for their patronage and that you'll miss them when you leave town. They say they are sorry to see you go, and they thank you for being such a helpful associate.

You stop at a car accessory shop and pick up a glass tinting kit to put on the back windows of the SUV. It makes it nearly impossible to see anything in the cargo space so you and Sans can sleep in the back without being seen. You finish packing nearly everything and prepare to move it to your car tomorrow. You bring a load of unwanted items to your local donation/thrift store. You also pick up a foam mat to place in whatever space would be left after loading your belongings.

Sans elaborates on the Blue magic he used to operate the light switch from afar and shows you he can manipulate gravity on both animate and inanimate objects. Your cat is not impressed. When he uses it on you, it's a jarring experience. You actually don't like it due to a predisposition to motion sickness, particularly when flying on a plane. You think you'd only be comfortable experiencing Blue magic if you take an anti-nauseant first; at least until you get used to the sensation like you did with his shortcuts. Nonetheless, you think it's pretty cool.

At one point, Sans requests your help as he makes a phone call to 'Alphys', informing her that he had acquired a Soul and that he would be returning with you in tow shortly.

Eventually, Friday rolls around and one of your co-workers brings cupcakes at lunch as a mini goodbye party. You change into street clothes at the end of the day and leave your uniform with a co-worker who volunteers to wash it for you. You and Sans spend about an hour or so cleaning the apartment. Sans comments that he rarely has the energy or motivation to clean anything, but this time he has a very good reason to help you.

Your local friend texts you confirming your get-together later that evening. You collect most of the perishables you have left in your fridge to bring with you since you won't be able to keep them
fresh on the road. You nuzzle Sans before you drive to your friend's house. It's a small group consisting of your gamer friends and your best friend Dean, a stocky blond guy and his wife Kels, a plump lady with long brown hair and glasses, are cooking dinner for everyone. You offer up the food you brought and it is much appreciated as you help stringbean-with-a-goatee Steve load it into either the fridge or freezer. Your other friend Mike, a big bulky guy whom you used to have to have a crush on, but became good friends with instead, is in the sitting room watching hockey.

They ask you what your plans are and where you're going. You give them a half-truth that you're going to Ebott (among other locations) as a tourist out of curiosity and that you need to get out into the open and away from stagnation. You kind of feel bad, because you honestly want to tell them about Sans. Your friends are awesome cooks, by the way.

As the night progresses, you and your friends start up some card and board games. A few drinks are consumed, but you restrict yourself to one since you have to drive. You don't have many friends, but the ones you do have, you care about a lot. You start texting with Sans between turns and ask him hypothetical questions about whether he'd be interested in meeting some other humans. As far as you are aware, you are the only human Sans has ever held a conversation with and you start to worry that he might be feeling lonely and isolated throughout the weeks he'd been living with you. He responds asking if you trust your friends that much. You do; you really do.

It's getting late in the evening and you've exhausted at least three different games. Out of the blue, you pipe up in a weirdly flat tone. “You wanna know the real reason I'm going to Ebott?” Your friends give you curious looks. “I'm gonna go all Morpheus here and say: what if I told you... that the line between fantasy and reality is a bit more blurred than people think? What if I told you that about a thousand years ago, an entire population of intelligent magical beings was sealed under a mountain and nearly all information about them was destroyed leaving only myth and legend?” Your friends give you dubious looks but seem to consider the idea.

“Would be a hell of a story if could be proven,” your buddy Mike said curiously.

“What if I had proof, but I don't want it to be a story? Not yet, anyway. But it isn't fair to keep him all myself. He's probably lonely.” You kind of ramble that last bit.

“Him?” Kels looks at you slightly worried for your sanity.

You take a breath. “Can I trust you guys with something super secret? Like, Area 51 E.T. level secret?” You study your friends' faces. You can tell Dean wants to ask if that 'mental break' you mentioned has some bearing.

“You hiding an alien?” Steve asks sceptically.

“He's not an alien,” you bemoan. “He's from Earth. He and his people have been trapped underground for centuries. He came here partially by accident to get help to free them. I'm leaving because I'm going to bring him back to Mt. Ebott to help him.”

“...can we see him?” Kels says in a quiet voice.

“Can I bring him here?” You ask hopefully. “He's able to teleport to where I am.”

Your friends look at each other very curiously and shrug and nod at you. You can tell they really want to believe you. You stand up, shaking nervously as you text Sans that your friends want to meet him if he wants to meet them. You step back a few feet from the game table just as you feel that magical charge you recognise as Sans establishing a connection with your location.
Suddenly, Sans is in front of you; facing you and away from the table. He's wearing his long pj bottoms and his hood is up, so from behind he could be mistaken as human; aside from his skull being slightly larger than an average human's. He jumps upon hearing the surprised shouts of your friends upon seeing a strange new person appear out of thin air and you instinctively pull him a bit closer to yourself to reassure him that he is safe. You look up at your friends, who are clearly shocked, but also very curious. Kels is standing and leaning over to try to see Sans's face. Sans looks up at you before slowly turning his head to look behind himself to see your friends.

Your friends are speechless as they gaze upon Sans's inhuman face, although Steve breathes a soft “woah...”

You keep your hand on Sans's back as he studies your friends as closely as they study him. “His same is Sans. He isn't human and he isn't an illusion. He's a Monster of the skeleton variety. I found him knocked out on the edge of the river after a science experiment allowed him to leave the Underground. He's been living under my care for the last three weeks.”

Kels, who is still standing, steps around the table and approaches Sans carefully. She seems just as enamoured by his eyes as you were. She extends a hand to him and says “Hi, I'm Kels.”

Sans pauses and looks at her hand. He then smiles and extends his own boney hand and takes hers. “sans. sans the skeleton. nice to meet you.” Kels holds onto his hand for moment as she looks in fascination at his skeletal metacarpals before withdrawing. The rest of your friends introduce themselves in turn, but they have trouble hiding the fact they are staring. Sans doesn't seem to mind at all.

Dean stands up after introductions are made. “I'm gonna go get another chair.” And he wanders off to grab a folding chair that was leaning against a wall.

Mike starts clearing the game pieces of the board game you had just finished. “We were just about to start a new game if you wanna play.”

Sans sidles up to the table as Dean sets down the new chair; they shake hands amicably. “you might have to teach me. we kinda make up our own games where i'm from.”

You sit down in your chair as Sans sits in the new chair next to you. “Where Sans is from, they make do with what humans discard. Clothes, technology, movies, magazines. Anything they can salvage. Intact game sets are probably non-existent.”

“we play monopoly with checker pieces and marbles,” Sans says with a grin.

“Sound like fun,” Steve quips. Sans shrugs as Dean brings out a new board game that has a fantasy RPG theme. You're familiar with the game so you run to the kitchen and grab some leftover dinner and bring it back for Sans who has chosen a tinkerer's role to play and he's currently reading the rules paper.

Sans picks up the game rather quickly and seems to really enjoy the interaction. You're seeing a new side of Sans here now that he's in a social environment. He's cracking jokes and conversing with your friends; especially Steve who shares his love of astronomy and science. Your friends seem to accept him as one of their own and you smile thinking that this was a good idea. They are obviously very curious about where Sans comes from and he answers most questions candidly; although some things he does prefer to keep confidential. When they mention the pen and paper role-playing games with figurines, Sans mentions that his brother has a similar hobby of arranging action figures for 'theoretical battle scenarios.'
It's fairly late at night when you and your friends are getting tired. The lot of you call it a night and say your goodbyes and your friends wish you good luck. Dean also says he intends to watch the news for whatever happens; whether it be a population of monsters emerging from a mountain or a missing persons report. You know he says this mostly in jest, but you don't miss the glances some of your other friends give Sans.

Sans opts to ride home with you instead of short-cutting back. “i like your friends,” he says passively. “they're good people.”

“Oh?” You reply. “That's good to hear. They seem to like you.”

“yeah... kinda gives me hope that there are more people like them out there.”

“I think there's lots of people like them.” You frown slightly. “There's also lots of people who aren't. Your people will have to be very careful when interacting with the general population. I've no doubt there are people out there who will want to take advantage of you and your resources and technology.”

Sans nods sadly. “i know. papyrus likes to see the good in everyone. if there's anyone i want to protect from dishonest humans, it's him.” You nod in agreement.

“I mean...” You ponder. “A lot of them will be very curious. Even I'm curious. Humans in general are curious; some aggressively so. They're going to want to know about you and what you're made of. What even is Magic? Is it matter? Energy?”

Sans sighs tiredly. “i suppose it's a sort of energy, but works a bit like nerves. animal nervous systems use electricity, right? it's like bio-energy.”

You make a semi laugh. “Energy-based lifeforms are science-fiction level of science. You said you like science-fiction stuff? You are science-fiction made real.” Sans snickers a bit, but doesn't say anything. The rest of the drive is spent in silence.

As you're both snuggling together for your final night before leaving town, Sans says, “thank you” just as you're both falling asleep.

Chapter End Notes

The OC's in this chapter are loosely based on my real friends.
The Road

Chapter Summary

You and Sans start your journey to Mt Ebott

Chapter Notes

I've been on really long car rides before, but I was never the one driving. Hope this chapter isn't too boring.

You're woken up early Saturday morning by your phone ringing; it's your landlord. “Hello?” You mumble.

“Hey, yn. Did I wake you?” Your landlord is lovely East Indian man.

“Yeah, but I need to get up anyway.” You roll over and hold your phone a bit closer to Sans so he can hear the conversation.

“I'm going to be in your area of town in about an hour, so if you want to get your final inspection out of the way as soon as possible we can do that when I get there.”

“Yeah, that would be great actually. The quicker I'm out, the better.”

“Wonderful,” he says brightly. “I'll be there in about an hour.”

“Alright. See you then.” You end the call and put your phone back on your night stand. “Welp, guess you'll have to make yourself scarce in about an hour.”

Sans nods. “right. i got a place i can go and wait for whatever you need me to do.”

“Yeah, I'll text you. I gotta use the bathroom and give it a once-over. Can your strip the sheets off the bed and stuff them in a bag or something?”

“sure,” Sans says yawning. You both get out of bed and do your last-minute cleaning and you start moving boxes and storage crates into your minivan.

Your landlord pulls up as you're loading one of the last smaller boxes into the undercarriage storage. You speak animatedly with him as you're entering the apartment to make sure Sans knows you aren't alone. When you open the door to your vacated room, Sans is nowhere to be seen. The inspection goes smoothly and you sign the closing papers as he gives you back your security deposit. You shake hands and say your goodbyes. You send a text to Sans as you carry your cat out to car letting him know you're leaving the house. He texts back saying he's hidden near the University hospital, which isn't too far from your route out of the city.

A few minutes later, you pull up in a shaded area in front of the hospital and you're about to text Sans to ask where he is when he suddenly appears in the passenger seat. He grins at you and looks
back into the cargo area of the vehicle and does a mini-shortcut into the padded sleeping space. “are we good to go?” He says from behind some of the storage crates.

“Yep,” you say, adjusting your rear-view mirror slightly. “I might grab something from a drive-thru before we leave the city limits, but we're on our way.”

“sweet, i'll probably come up front if we're still driving when it gets dark.”

“If we make good time, we should be near Portland before I need to stop.” You study the route you made for yourself of your printed map. “I'd also like to stop in a town called Vulcan before we leave the province. I think you might like it.”

You stop at your favourite burger chain drive-thru before leaving the city and get burgers and extra ketchup for yourselves. You also plug your phone into the stereo and load up a suitable playlist of mp3's for the drive. You haven't been on the highway in several months, so driving this fast is something to get used to again. Sans spends most of the first hour watching the scenery, which mostly consists of farmland, forests and hydro-electric stations. Sans mentions he had never seen a cow or a horse in real life before, but there are cow and horse monsters.

You become increasingly aware of how much you've taken open sky and land for granted. You're a self-proclaimed introvert and don't go outside very often, especially if it is very cold or hot. Sans, however, had been denied that privilege for his whole life along with a vast majority of his species. The wistful expression on his face that you catch glimpses of in the rear-view mirror makes your Soul ache.

“Y'know...” You say a couple hours into the trip. “After this is all done and if you're allowed to come back to Canada legally, we should go camping with your brother at Skeleton Lake.”

He looks at you with an amused smile. “what? is that a real place?”

You smile back. “It is. It's north of River City.”

“sounds like a great place for a shin-dig,” he says thoughtfully. “my bro likes the outdoors. i think he'd appreciate that.”

After a while Sans lays down on the sleeping mat on his back and just watches the sky through the side windows. Occasionally he would stick his fingers into the cat crate to scratch your cat behind the ear.

Eventually, you notice your playlist is starting to repeat itself to the point of annoyance, so you turn it down. Sans seems to still be awake, so you encourage him to tell you more about some of his friends and more about his life in the Underground. He had vaguely alluded to his life when you had first met him, but you were still in the process of earning his trust at the time. You'd love to know more details about where you're returning him to. He starts out telling you about his job as a sentry in Snowdin along with Papyrus. It was their job to watch for humans who might fall into the cavern. He never pursued a place in the Royal Guard, but his brother did.

Sans tells you about Alphys; a reptilian monster who is the Royal Scientist and a lover of all things nerdy, especially anime and manga. He also says he owes her an apology. He tells you about his
colleagues, the Canine Royal Guard Unit and of Undyne; a powerful and headstrong fish monster who is the captain of the Royal Guard, also his and Papyrus's boss. He's pretty sure Alphys has a thing for Undyne. He lovingly tells you the story of Papyrus's efforts to join the Royal Guard by pestering Undyne until she agreed to 'train' him by giving him cooking lessons. Undyne had told Sans in confidence that she didn't want to send him into real combat due to his kind and positive nature; Sans agreed with her. It goes without saying that Sans is extremely protective of his brother.

Sans tells you more about Grillby, the fire elemental who owns Sans's favourite hang-out. He mentions very briefly that he had a crush on Grillby early in his life, but had to 'extinguish' those feelings when it became apparent that their Souls were not compatible. Not to mention Grillby is much older than Sans. They still remain very good friends.

He also mentions a strange woman who lives in the ruins of the Underground with whom he regularly trades jokes with and tells stories to though a great stone door. He doesn't know very much about her or even who she is, but he still considers her a friend.

A few hours into the trip, you're coming upon the small town of Vulcan you had mentioned. It's mostly a tourist town that features a Star Trek museum. Sadly, you can't bring Sans inside, but you do drop in for a few minutes to grab as much promotional material as you can and you purchase a t-shirt with an old-style star chart printed on it from the gift shop. You hand your spoils to Sans who is trying to snap a photo of the large scale model of the Enterprise from a partially open window. He grins happily at the shirt and sets it aside to wear in the near future. He spends the rest of the first leg of the trip reading the various pamphlets and booklets you snagged from the tourist displays.

It's well into the afternoon when you're nearing the Canadian-American border. Both you and Sans had studied the satellite images of the area and settled on the plan to pull into the duty-free shop which had a small wooded area within view that Sans could conceal himself within along with the Soul and your dubious finances. You need to use facilities anyway and gather all the paperwork you need. You then pull up to the customs office with your documents in hand. The officers ask you the standard questions such as your purpose for entering the country, how long you're staying (you gave yourself a couple of months. you can work on extending your stay if the monsters want you to stick around) where you're going, etc. You give them the cover story of going on an extended road trip and you provide contact numbers for a few American friends you had asked permission from. You prove you have financial means to support your trip and that your cat is properly vaccinated, chipped and collared. A canine unit sniffs your car for drugs and weapons and finds none. They seem satisfied with your supposed intentions and stamp your passport accordingly. You text your concealed companion that 'you were free to go and that you'd contact him shortly'.

You get back in your car and carry on with the plan. You keep an eye out for a roadside attraction and pull into the small parking area. You wait until you can't see any cars and give Sans the go-ahead to shortcut to you. He does so and ducks out of sight of another vehicle just coming into view and promptly re-enters your car. With the border-crossing a success, you pull out of the parking spot and continue your journey South-west.
You and Sans continue your journey and meet up with another of your friends.

After crossing the border, you head west for the seaside highway. This leg of the journey alone takes many hours and Sans spends most of it asleep. However, at one point you mention that you want to get an American SIM card so you aren't penalized for roaming while in a different country. You didn't get a roaming package from your phone company because you didn't know how long you would be there. Sans, the brilliant skeleton he is, infused your phone with magic so it would connect to American providers without that penalty. He had used his own reserve of magic so it wouldn't wear you out too soon.

You get a single text from your gamer-turned-trucker friend telling you he would be spending the night at a truck stop that is fairly close to your planned route. He also says there are spaces available for normal cars to park there overnight. You made it clear to Sans that he's a just a good friend, but he seemed more confused as to why you felt the need to emphasize that.

The evening is fast approaching and you definitely want to catch the sunset over the water. You make it just in time to a seaside highway and park at a roadside look-out spot. You get out of the car and lean against the passenger side door while Sans stays inside and looks out from the rear passenger window. You both admire the increasingly colourful sky as the sun sets over the Pacific Ocean. You opt to watch Sans more than the sun and apparently looking at the sun directly doesn't hurt his eyes as he just stares unblinking with a bittersweet smile on his face. You're pretty sure there are tears in his eyes, too.

While the sky is still a bit light, you make your way to the truck stop that you can spend the night at. You purchase an overnight parking pass while Sans prepares some blankets and pillows on the mat. You're getting a late-night meal when a familiar face walks into the diner.

Your gamer-turned-trucker friend Danny does not look like your average trucker. He's skinny, pasty and gay as hell. “YN!” He yelps just as you were leaving with your bagged food. He runs up to you and hugs you while you're only able to give him a one-arm hug back. “How's your trip goin'?”

“Good!” You say smiling. “Didn't have any trouble at customs or bad traffic. I should make it to Ebott by tomorrow evening.” You both make your way out of the diner and back towards the parking area where his semi is parked.

“Why are you goin' to Ebott anyway? Isn't it, like, tiny?”

“I'm interested in the mythology surrounding the mountain there.” A half-truth since it isn't mythology after all, but you're still curious about Sans's world.
“Where are you parked?” Danny asks looking over at the overnight parking stalls.

“It’s the minivan. I’ll be sleeping in the back.” One of the back windows is partially open so you know Sans can see and hear you.

“You eating that here?” He asks pointing to the bag of to-go boxes.

“Uh, one of them. The other one is for later,” you deflect.

“You wanna eat in the cab?” He gestures to the truck he rode in on. A long time ago you said you'd like to ride with him someday.

“Yeah...” you say curiously. “Just let me put one of these in my car.”

You dart over to your minivan and open the driver's door. You hand one of the boxes to Sans who is looking at you curiously. “your friend seems cool,” he says passively.

“You can tell from in here?” You ask with a quirked grin.

“i can see his soul. he's a good guy.” He says that like he was saying the sky was blue.

“You can see people's Souls without pulling them out like you did with me?” You had no idea.

“i didn't tell you that? yeah, i can see 'em, but takin' them out is what's intimate about it. when i first met you, i couldn't see yours because i didn't have enough of my own magic to resonate with.”

“So, you could see my other friends' Souls, too?”

“yep,” he says with a smug smile. “they're cool, too. hey when you're done eating, you should bring him over here.”

“You want him to see you?” You think it's pretty cool he wants to meet another one of your friends.

“i have to get used to humans seeing me,” he says with a serious tone. “if monsters are gonna make it on the surface, i need to see how people react to me so i can see who to trust and who to avoid. i'm already predisposed to avoidance and distrust, but so far you've shown me people i can trust.”

You nod silently with a soft smile and close the door and head back to Danny's truck. He's standing by the open passenger door. “Do you have someone else in your car?” He asks curiously, probably wondering why you took so long.

“Uhh, I was just checking on my cat,” you lie. He quirks an eyebrow at you, but doesn't press. You climb into the cab of the truck and he climbs into the driver's side. He has his own food in the cab and you both eat while he shows you some of the mechanical aspects of driving an 18-wheeler and tells you some anecdotes of his travels while working. You tell him of a few stories from your own work and you lament that you'll miss your tabletop RPG sessions. The get-together you had with your friends before you left was a very special occasion.

When you finish eating, you carefully climb out of the cab. “Hey, you wanna come over to my car for a sec?”

“You wanna introduce me to your cat?” Danny asks jokingly.

“Yeah...” You say slowly.

You lead him towards your minivan. The back window is still cracked open and you instinctively
freeze when you see Sans's eyelights peering out at you.

“What's that?” Danny says from behind you. Before you're able to answer, the lights disappear and the sliding door opens just a bit. “Thought you said you didn't have anyone else in there.” He doesn't sound upset, but rather confused as to why you would lie about that.

“He's a secret.” you say quietly. You motion for him to follow you as you approach your vehicle. You put your hand on the open end of the sliding door and slowly push it open. There are a few storage bins obstructing entry into the vehicle, but there's enough room for Sans to be seen leaning casually against one of the bins like it was desk. You step aside and lean against the driver's side front door while Sans and Danny stare at each other for a moment.

“Wha..?” He says clearly confused as to what he was supposed to be looking at.

“This is Sans,” you say calmly. “He is a non-human energy-based lifeform. His people have been trapped under a mountain for about a thousand years. I'm on my way to help him free them.”

“you say that so casually,” Sans says with a grin.

“He's not an alien?” Danny mumbles while still locking eyes with Sans.

“nope,” Sans answers for himself. “we were all born on earth, but most of us have never seen the sky. i'm a special case.” He holds out a skeletal hand. “nice to meet you, by the way.”

Danny's eyes finally drop to Sans's hand. He cautiously takes it in his own and doesn't hide his fascination. “Shit,” he mumbles. “Do all your people look like you?” He looks away a bit, apparently worried he'd offended Sans.

Instead, Sans just chuckles. “nah, just me and my bro look like skeletons. everyone looks different.”

“That's really cool,” Danny says with a fascinated grin. “Gonna be quite the spectacle if a whole new kind of people start popping out a mountain.” His expression turns a bit grim. “Hope humans don't try to kill you all. We don't exactly have a good track record when it comes to tolerance. A lot of humans hate each other. I can speak from experience since I'm gay.”

Sans looks surprised, “that's actually a thing? people hate people like you because of that?”

“Is it different for you?” Danny looks genuinely curious.

“most monsters are... what's the term? 'gender-fluid?' 'pansexual?' we kinda swing both ways depending on who we fall for.” He glances briefly in your direction. “i didn't know until recently that i could swing for a human.”

Danny looks at you in pleasant shock. “Ohhh! You-?”

“Yeah,” you say softly.

Danny smiles sweetly and chuckles. “Maybe there's hope for me, yet.”

Sans chuckles, too. “heh. maybe i'll introduce you to aaron when the time is right.”

Danny look curious. “Aaron?”

“big beefy seahorse monster,” Sans says with a smirk. “likes showin' off his muscles, but i think he just needs some validation. he's a good dude.”

“Yeah, we still have a ways to go. Maybe if we wake up at the same time, we'll have breakfast together.”

“Maybe,” he says suppressing a yawn. “I'll see you then, if we do.” Danny shakes Sans's hand again and gives you a little hug before sauntering back towards his truck.

You open the back hatch of the minivan while Sans closes the sliding door. You climb inside and onto the sleeping mat. There isn't very much room to manoeuvre, but you manage to change into some pj bottoms while Sans averts his gaze respectfully. You open the pet crate so your cat isn't confined to the crate during the night. Finally, you both flop down and snuggle together with a throw blanket over yourselves.

You don't fall asleep right away and Sans is gazing at you lovingly. “it's really happening, isn't it? seems almost too good to be true that you're doin' this for me.”

You sigh deeply. “It's pretty crazy for me, too. A month ago, if someone told me I'd meet an adorable skeleton monster and that I'd love him so much I'd follow him to the ends of the Earth, I'd say they should write a novel about it.” Sans eyes sparkle a bit as he nuzzles you. “But, here I am. Together with you.”

He snuggles into your chest and sighs softly. “i love you,” he mumbles.

“I love you, too, Sans.” You stroke his skull and back until you both drift to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

What Sans saw when he looked at your friends:
Dean - Green
Kels - Yellow
Mike - Orange
Steve - Cyan
Danny - Indigo
Homeward Bound

Chapter Summary

You and Sans arrive at the Municipality of Ebott.

Chapter Notes

500 kudos?! That's amazing! I didn't think my story would be this popular so long after the Undertale craze has passed. Thank you all.

Your phone alarm wakes you up at 7am. You and Sans yawn and stretch at the same time. You're a bit stiff due to not being used to sleeping in a car, but you got enough sleep at least. You twist your body about to see the Danny's truck is still parked across the lot; you can just barely see movement inside. You decide you don't care if people see you in your pj bottoms right now and you just put your shoes on, grab your purse and give Sans a second to cover himself with the blanket before opening the back hatch.

You meet up with Danny and grab some breakfast together. You eat in your car and make some more small talk with Sans who is now wearing the starchart t-shirt you got in Vulcan. Afterwards, you part ways and Danny carries on with his journey and you carry on with yours.

You stay as close to the water as you can as you travel South for the last leg of your trip. Again, Sans spends much of the ride staring out the window at the water. Occasionally, you'd spot a boat of some sort cruising along the waves. “Can you swim, Sans?”

Sans pauses, apparently trying to remember something. “i don't think so. i fell in the water in waterfall as a kid once. found out the hard way that skeleton monsters don't float. the current was strong enough that i might have been carried away if one of the water monsters hadn't grabbed me. never tried it again after that.”

“Yikes, that must have been scary,” you comment, glad he survived that. “Would you consider trying it again if you were in a controlled environment? Like with float board and supervision?”

“maybe,” he says curiously. “those inner tubes i've seen in magazines look like fun.” You smile at the thought of Sans in just swim trunks and sunglasses sleeping in a pool, just floating around in a big inner tube.

The hours pass into the afternoon and you can see a mountain range in the distance. From what you've seen online of Mt. Ebott, it's the biggest mountain among a range of foothills that border the Rocky Mountains and you can just barely see a shape resembling the photographs you've seen online. Sans is asleep in the back of the car.

“Hey, Sans,” you call him gently. “Wake up.” Sans snorts awake and meets your eyes in the rear-
view mirror. “Can you see that range of mountains up there?”

He climbs over some of the storage bins to look between the front seats. “Yeah,” he says curiously.

“See that big one? That's Mt. Ebott. We're almost there.”

You hear Sans exhale in relief. “Damn,” he says quietly. He looks over at the water for a moment and you see a wistful sadness on his face. “Can't believe we've been denied this all these years.”

You reach up with one hand to stroke the side of his face. You don't need to say anything. You both know what you mean. Soon.

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About a half-hour later, you start seeing road signs directing you to the Town of Ebott. “I think I’d like to stop in the town first. I'd like to see what kind of people will likely be some of the first to see your people.” Sans makes a sound of agreement and settles back into the car.

The town of Ebott seems normal enough. It has the usual amenities you'd find in your average town. You also notice an abundance of window sill and roadside flowerpots filled with yellow flowers that resemble large buttercups. You carefully navigate towards what appears to be a tourist stop/souvenir shop and park in front. “Be right back,” you tell Sans, who is studying the surrounding businesses and people nearby through the tinted glass.

Stepping inside, you are greeted by a door chime and a slight salty scent. You look around and see various trinkets and snacks commonly seen in a seaside shop. There's a portly man with a handlebar moustache behind the counter and he gives you a friendly wave of greeting. “Hello,” you say in return. You pause as you scan the shop for reading material. “Do you have any information on local mythology? Anything special about that mountain?”

The shop owner gives you a curious look and toddles over to a small bookshelf. “Got this,” he says holding up a small unassuming sepia paperback; there's a stylized illustration of a maned goat-like portrait on the cover. “A local guy's been studying the story of the War of Humans and Monsters for years. He's convinced it isn't a myth.”

“What about that thing that happened in the seventies?”

“Pretty sure that was a hoax. Some freak in a costume.” You read the name of the author ‘Robert Pennington’. Welp, this guy's gonna have a field day. You flip through the pages briefly, which contain hand-drawn illustrations, written research notes, photographs of supposed monster-made structures and anecdotes of verbal stories. “So where'd you come from?” The man asks casually. “You're obviously not from around here.”

“Oh, I'm from up North,” you reply. “I decided to go on a road trip and learn about obscure legends around America.” You hold up the book before he can pry anymore. “I'll buy this.” He meets up at the counter and rings up the book along with a package of saltwater taffy. You pay in cash and you bring your purchase back to your car and hand the bag to Sans. “Some more reading material for you and hopefully those taffys don't glue your teeth together.”

You don't notice the shop owner making a phonecall as you're driving away.
It's later in the evening when you approach the base of Mt. Ebott. There are several 'no trespassing' signs posted about stating that climbing the mountain either by foot or vehicle is ill-advised and could result in a hefty fine. Sans has moved up to the front seat and is gazing up at the mountain ominously. He had been reading the book you had bought and said many of the theories made by the author were exaggerated or inaccurate, but not entirely wrong.

When you finally reach a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire, you stop your car and park it. Sans looks at you nervously. “y'know,” he says slowly. “you don't have to come in with me. i'll give asgore what he needs to break the barrier and we can get back together afterwards. they know your face so they won't question if you show up after the fact.”

You ponder for a moment. “It's not your people I'm worried about. I'm worried about the authorities guarding the mountain. No one's supposed to be up there and if the rangers find out about anyone, monster or human wandering around up there, they'll be liable to investigate and confront you. I'm worried that if your people don't have some sort of...” You gesture as you think of a suitable word. “Mediator or ambassador familiar with the the ways of humans, diplomacy would be a lot harder than if you did.” You look back at Sans's hopeful face. “Besides, I already promised myself that I would follow you. I want to see your world, Sans. Obviously, I can't experience what it was like to live down there for generations, but it's a start to understanding your lives.”

“you're offerin' to be our ambassador?” He looks dubious, yet also very surprised.

“Well-” You say suddenly. “I doubt I'd be anything official or long-term. I'd just be a first-contact sort of spokesperson. I imagine your king would be better at explaining your situation than me. I just don't want violence to be the first thing you see.”

Sans looks back up at the looming mountain. He closes his eyes for a moment and breathes a deep sigh. “you're sure?” He asks again. You nod nervously. “okay, then. i'm gonna go up and try to find an entrance. there should be one near the throne room. it might even be big enough to drive through. give me a few minutes. i'll be back.”

He vanishes from his seat and you see him appear a good distance away from you on the other side of the fence. He makes a few more shortcuts until he disappears behind the terrain of the mountain. While you wait, you pick up your phone, hesitate, and touch a contact number. The tone rings a couple of times before someone picks up.

“YN! How are you?” Comes the all-too-familiar voice.

“Hey, mom,” you answer with a tired smile. “I'm good. How are things at home?”

“Good, good. I'm working on a quilt for one of your cousin Sara's little girl and your father is at his weekly LAN party with his friends as usual.” You smile as a slight sting comes to your eyes. You're an artist and a gamer; traits you inherited from your parents.

“That's great,” you say before bracing yourself for the inevitable. “I wanted to tell you that I'm on a trip. I won some money on a scratch ticket and I quit my job to go the States for a while. A long while. I have enough money support myself and I'll be able to get a job when I come back.”
“Oh my goodness, YN!” You knew your mom would be shocked. “Did you plan this or was it just out of the blue?”

“I've been planning it for a couple of weeks. I drove down to Ebott. It's near San Francisco. I wanted to learn about the mythology here. I have a friend with me. I trust him a lot.” You look up momentarily in the direction Sans went and you see a few clouds of dust rising from behind the trees several hundred feet away.

“O-okay,” your mom stutters slightly as she processes. “Do any of your other friends know where you are?”

“Yeah, I told my gamer friends. I'll be down here a few weeks at least.”

“Alright,” she says more calmly. “Keep in touch okay?”

“I will. I promise. I love you, mom.”

“I love you, too, YN.” You end the call reluctantly. When you turn around, you see Sans leaning against the chain-link fence watching you with a soft expression.

“last chance to change your mind,” he says carefully.

You shake your head. “I'm going with you.”

Sans nods and takes your hand and short-cuts you to somewhere on the mountain. You see a large cavern entrance leading into the mountain. You're standing on some sort of plateau made of dirt and rocks that appear to have been recently moved; must have been where the dust came from. Sans leads you to a spot on the plateau close to the side of the mountain. “stand right here and don't move. be right back.”

He disappears for a few minutes, then suddenly your minivan appears in front of you with a whiff of air. Sans had his hands on the hood and he stumbles backwards. You're able to run over and catch him before he falls. His eyelights unfocus for a few seconds before he shakes his head and blinks a few times. “never moved a car before. lot of moving parts and a cat to keep track of.” He chuckles a bit before righting himself on his feet. “the barrier is through there,” he says gesturing to the cavern. “you should be able to fit if you're careful.”

You both get back into the car and you start it back up and shift it into drive. You take a deep breath in preparation and exhale slowly. Now or never, you think to yourself. You take your foot off the brake and the car moves forward slowly. You keep your eyes on your mirrors to avoid scraping the edges of the cavern entrance. You have to squint a bit when your headlights reflect off of something shimmering and translucent. You glance over at Sans, who has his eyelights fixed straight ahead. He hands are clenched and he seems to be mentally preparing himself to return to the Underground.
Welcome to the Underground

Chapter Summary

You've returned Sans to the Underground. Time for you to start following his lead.

Chapter Notes

I'm not sure if I should consider this the second arc. The next few chapters take place over a short period of time and are very dialogue heavy. We'll be concentrating on the interactions of Sans and Reader with the residents of the Underground as well as with each other in a new environment.
I hope I do the characters justice.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

As you and your car pass through the Barrier, you feel a strange sensation. It feels as if you are passing through some sort of magnetic field within a cold mist. It isn't painful at all and you might not have noticed it if you weren't anticipating it. Before you know it, it passes and you hear Sans exhale a breath you didn't notice he was holding. You also notice an increase in the air pressure.

You continue to drive forward for a few more metres before the cavern narrows and you can't move any further. “you'll have to leave the car here. we're inside now.” You nod and put the car and park and turn it off. “i have to report to asgore. will you be okay for a few minutes?”

“Yeah, I'll make sure my cat will be okay for now,” you say quietly as you unbuckle your seatbelt. Sans nods nervously and vanishes from his seat. You get out of the car and look around. The cavern is dimly lit through whatever you drove through. You cautiously walk back the way you came in and discover you can't really see out of the so-called Barrier. The light shimmers and refracts in an almost discernible pulse. The Barrier has been here for nearly a thousand years and yet it almost seems alive. You reach towards it and touch the shimmering surface and are met with a not-quite solid resistance. It feels more like a strong electrical current that gets more intense and painful the more you push. Human bodies are stronger than Monster bodies right? If it hurts me to try to get through, it would certainly hurt a Monster even if they forced their way through. That would probably kill them. Such a simple yet cruel trap. Easy to get in; impossible to get out.

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Sans exits his shortcut inside a large room. The floor is covered in golden flowers and a large golden throne sits in the middle. Another throne covered in a white sheet sits in one corner. There are rays of light just barely peeking out from cracks in the stone ceiling of the room.
Sitting upon the throne is a very large horned and bearded Monster with pristine white fur. The bulk of their form is garbed in a flowing purple robe and golden pauldrons. “Asgore.” Sans addresses the King of the Underground as he approaches the throne. His tone is not its usual drawl. It is authoritative and formal. King Asgore focuses his gaze on the comparatively small skeleton before him and his expression turns to a warm and welcoming smile.

“Sans,” he says with a deep rumble. “Welcome home.”

“thank you,” Sans replies, returning to his casual stance but his expression remains neutral.

King Asgore rises slowly from his seat. “Dr. Alphys has been keeping me informed of your journey. I trust you're in good health?”

Sans nods stiffly. “i am,” he says casually. “thanks to a new friend.”

“She informed me you had a acquired a seventh Soul. I assume she was not referring to your friend.”

Sans barely suppresses a scowl. “no,” he says gruffly. “she's waiting for me just inside the barrier.” He reaches into his hoodie pocket, which should not have been able to hold what he pulls out of it. He brings out the magically sealed glass jar containing the pale cyan Soul given to him peacefully. He holds it close to himself for a moment. “her name was pearl,” he says in a rough voice. “she, yn, and some of her friends made me realize that there might just be hope for humans if you choose to be peaceful with them. it will be difficult and complicated, but it will be far more rewarding than if you choose to attack. we would lose, i guarantee it. many humans are unkind and the human military would decimate us in minutes if provoked. you might survive if you have all the souls in you, but the rest of us wouldn't. we need their protection, not their wrath.”

Asgore considers Sans's words carefully and nods solemnly. “I agree with you,” he says softly. “I believe diplomacy would be a more suitable approach. I understand if you don't want your friend to meet me at this time, however I will likely seek her advice. You would know more than I what the modern human world is like now. You've seen it yourself. You are the first Monster to see the Surface since...” His face falls briefly. “Well, you know how it is. And here you are, returned with a beacon of our freedom in your very hands.”

Sans looks down at the jar in his phalanges and sighs deeply. He steps forward and holds it up for Asgore to take. The jar is minuscule in his great paws as he holds it gingerly like it was spun sugar. “I will need a day to prepare myself. I will make a public announcement in the morning. Thank you, Sans. And again, welcome home. Please give my regards to your companion.” Sans nods and vanishes.

He reappears next to you as you're refreshing your cat's food and water so he can wander about inside the minivan while you're away. You can see the tension in his shoulders and you promptly pull him into a gentle hug. He wraps his his arms around your middle and nuzzles into your neck. “You okay?”

“yeah,” he says roughly. “i completed my mission. now it's up to asgore.” He squeezes you again and pulls away. “ready to go my house? it's cold there, so you should bring a jacket.” You grab your heavy hoodie and put it on and you close the back hatch of the minivan. Sans takes your hand and pulls you into a shortcut.

When your eyes refocus, you appear to be in a house. The floor is a gaudy zigzag pattern and there
is a stained green couch against one wall and a slightly cracked flat screen television against the opposite wall. There is an upstairs that leads to two doors. There is also a large wooden table against another wall that has a partially completed paper-mache breastplate of some sort. Finally, there is a large archway that leads to another room with a checkered floor. You can hear some clanging and movement coming from within. “paps!” Sans calls out happily. “i'm home!”

Suddenly, you see a figure appear in the doorway. You barely register a very tall skeleton wearing a graphic shirt, cut-off jean shorts and a bright red scarf or ascot before it barrels towards the two of you and scoops Sans up into a bearhug. “SANS!” Yelps the other skeleton's muffled voice. “BROTHER! WELCOME HOME!” You're pretty sure this is Papyrus. Sans is hugging his brother and you can barely hear him whimpering into his shoulder.

After a few minutes of the two skeleton siblings comforting each other, Papyrus sets Sans back on his feet. He looks him over one more time before he stands up and finally acknowledges your presence. “GREETINGS, SANS'S HUMAN FRIEND!” He reaches out with both hands and clasps yours tightly and shakes vigorously. “I AM THE GREAT PAPYRUS. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BRINGING MY BROTHER HOME! I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE PROUD OF HIM FOR CAPTURING A HUMAN LIKE HE WAS SUPPOSED TO.”

Sans chuckles softly. “more like she captured me.” He gives you a sly smile.

“Well,” you say, trying to play along. “You kinda did capture me, too. I mean, I'm here, aren't I? You captured my heart.”

Sans's face softens and a blue tint spreads across his zygomatic. “Nyehh?” Papyrus gets a curious look in his eyes. “SANS, ARE YOU... DATING?”

Sans sighs melodramatically. “yeah, i s'pose i am. we're bone-fied datemates.”

Papyrus smiles happily. “NYEH HEH HEH, I KNEW YOU WOULD FIND SOMEONE RIGHT FOR YOU SOMEDAY!” His voice drops slightly. “You Have So Many Friends, But I Couldn't Help But Think You Were Lonely.” Then his smile turns sly. “YOU JUST NEEDED TO... GET OUT MORE! NYEH HEH HEH!”

Sans's face lights up and he starts snickering; which evolves into a hearty belly laugh. “paps, i missed you so much!” He warbles while wiping a tear from his eyesocket. He settles down after a moment. “hey, paps. there's a few other people down here i need to check in with. how 'bout you show yn around the house? i'll be back real soon.” Sans gives you a kiss on your cheek and a firm squeeze around your waist. “stay here with paps 'til i get back okay? i won't be long.”

You nod with a gentle smile. “Okay.” It isn't lost on you that he's leaving you alone with his brother. He really does trust you, doesn't he.

“and paps,” he says in a more serious tone. “if undyne shows up while i'm gone, make sure she knows asgore already has what he needs to break the barrier. yn stays here with you.”

“WORRY NOT, BROTHER! I'M SURE UNDYNE AND THE HUMAN WOULD BE GREAT FRIENDS!” Sans looks dubious, but shrugs and gives you a wink before disappearing. You barely have a chance to look around before Papyrus enthusiastically grabs your hands and leads you to the open archway which you see leads to a kitchen. “COME ALONG, HUMAN! I WAS JUST ABOUT TO MAKE SOME SPECIAL SPAGHETTI TO CELEBRATE SANS'S RETURN. WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP?”

You can't keep the grin off your face. “Would love to!”
Chapter End Notes

Nyeh heh heh! Sans trusts Reader to not harm his brother and he trusts his brother to keep reader safe.
Friends

Chapter Summary

Sans has a few people to talk to and you have someone to avoid.

Chapter Notes

Warning: Slight panic attack

When Sans appears inside the large cube-shaped laboratory, Alphys immediately runs up to him. She frets over him short of actually touching him to make sure he is in good health and to make sure there are no lasting injuries from the experiment they had performed. Once she is satisfied that Sans is in better-than-normal health, her enquiries turn to the human friend he had been living with. “W-where is she? You d-didn't leave her with Asgore, d-did you?”

“what? no, she's with papyrus. asgore has the seventh soul. he says he'll be making an announcement tomorrow.”

“I-I was so worried that experiment had k-killed you,” she says nervously. “Undyne was r-really upset when she f-found out we had done, but I was s-so relieved when she told me you had called Papyrus from the S-Surface. The experiment w-worked after all, even though it was t-terribly d-dangerous...” She trails off, but doesn't notice Sans slowly hunching over and his face becoming increasingly guilt-ridden. “I had to r-replace a fuse afterwards, b-because part of the Underground went dark and-”

“alphys...” Sans's sullen tone gets her attention right away. “I need to apologize to you. sure, the experiment worked, but it was the wrong way to go about it. i shouldn't have used my knowledge of the amalgamates against you. it was... cruel and insensitive of me and i'm sorry.”

Alphys is silent as she considers his words then she sighs sadly. “I f-forgive you.” says slowly. “It w-wasn't all bad. It made me r-realise that I can't keep them a secret f-forever. I-it isn't fair to them or to th-their families; especially if the B-barrier will be gone soon.”

“I'll have your back when you decide to bring them out,” Sans says softly.

“I-I would app-p-reciate that, Sans,” she replies, fidgeting slightly. “S-so, when can I m-meet your human f-friend?”

Sans smiles at you being mentioned. “you'll meet her soon enough. we're both really tired from the drive, so we just wanna chill in Snowdin for now. paps will probably wanna watch an mtt rerun with us or somethin’” Alphys nods smiling softly. “might bring her by tomorrow dependin’ on what asgore does. you might like her. she's kind of a nerd, too. i saw her dvd collection and she's got some anime i didn't see in your collection.”
Alphys makes a distinct squeal of approval. “I'm so happy th-that you're happy, Sans!” She pauses. “Y-you are happy, r-right?”

Sans's breath shudders slightly and his grin falters. Sans is more than just tired, he's exhausted. Normally he'd be able to hide his insecurities, but not this time. It takes him a few seconds to find his words. “I'm scared...” he says in the tiniest voice. “I'm scared it isn't real.” He grimaces slightly. “that i'm just gonna wake up and find out it never happened. that i never left the underground at all.” His breathing speeds up and she starts to shake. Alphys steps up and puts her hands on his shoulders. “or if it did happen, it's all just going to go away.”

Alphys has seen this before. Sans is on the verge of a panic attack. He's had them before when they used to work together; before Sans hung up his lab coat for good. She reaches up and grips the sides of his skull. “Sans, l-look at me,” she says firmly. Sans focuses his eyelights on her reptilian magnified eyes. “This is real! You're here n-now and we'll be f-free soon. Y-you can be with her. You j-just have to trust her and t-trust yourself.”

Sans knows Alphys doesn't really understand what he means, but he knows she tries to. Monster Souls are weaker than humans' but some monsters have traits. Alphys's Soul trait is Justice, similar to one of his own. She always tries to do the right thing even if it goes askew sometimes. The Amalgamates were a mistake, but she was doing what she thought was right and Sans can't fault her for trying and for being ashamed for what had happened. He reaches up and gives Alphys a gentle hug. “I'm sorry,” he says again.

“It's okay,” she says softly. “Y-you should get back to her.”

Sans nods and is about to turn away before stopping and pulling his phone out of his pocket. “hey, you wanna upgrade this for me? i dropped mine in the river.” He hands the phone over.

“Oooh,” she says curiously. “Of c-course. I have a s-spare matrix handy. Y-you should be able to m-match it with your magic signature and a-access whatever you lost.” She toddles off to a workbench and rummages through a drawer.

It's at that moment, a rectangular robot on a single wheel saunters through the door on the opposite end of the laboratory. Mettaton, or Bucket of Bolts as Sans knows him, makes a show of being surprised to see him, but with how much Alphys likes cameras, Mettaton probably already knew he was there and chose that moment to make an appearance. “Sans, darling!” Came the robotic, yet musical voice. “Wonderful to see you've returned! You simply ~must~ introduce me to your special someone. A human, no less. I would absolutely ~love~ to have her on the show.”

Sans grumbles and grits his teeth. He doesn't like Mettaton very much. He can forgive Papyrus's high self-esteem because he does his best to bring others up with him, but Mettaton tends to be more... exploitative.

“yeahh.. i doubt that's going to happen,” Sans grumbles. “at least not without me right there with her.”

“Hmm,” the robot muses. “I'll have to make contact with the human media when we get to Surface. The humans need to know who look to for the latest Monster news.”

“i think it would be best if my friend talks to them first. it probably won't even be media we see at first, but local authorities instead. we need an ambassador, not an entertainer.”

“Shame,” Mettaton warbles. “You'll change your mind~” He wheels himself up the escalator to the upstairs workstation for whatever reason. Alphys returns with the upgraded phone and hands it to
Sans.

“D-don’t worry about him,” she says quietly. “I t-told him if he got t-too close to your friend without p-permission, I’d s-stop working on his new body.”

Sans smiles softly as he fiddles with the upgraded phone. “thanks. i’ll be around. see ya later, al.” He gives her a salute before disappearing into a shortcut.

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Back at the Skele-house, you have a fake grin plastered on your face as the pasta in the pot on the stove in front of you threaten to catch fire. “I, THE GREAT PAPYRUS SHALL DEMONSTRATE THE MASTERY OF MONSTER COOKERY! NYEH HEH HEH!”

While you admire the tall skeleton's enthusiasm, there's only so much indulgence you're willing to dish out. “That's really cool, Papyrus,” you say sweetly. “Maybe when we all get to the surface, I can teach you how humans cook pasta. You seem like the type who likes learning new things.”

“NYEH! YOU ARE MOST OBSERVANT!” He smile brightly “I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND MY REPERTOIRE. I PROPOSE AN EXCHANGE OF SKILL. PUZZLES FOR PASTA!”

“That's sounds like a great idea,” you say honestly. “Humans love puzzles. I'm sure you'll find people willing to trade with you.” You discretely turn the heat on the stove down a notch while Papyrus is distracted with idea of human-monster interactions.

“NYEH HEH HEH!” Papyrus says cheerfully.

You manage to force down a few bites of Papyrus's concoction, but call it quits under the guise of not wanting to overwhelm yourself with greatness. Papyrus then invites you into his room and shows you his prized collection of action figures. When he tells you about his past-time of theoretical battle scenarios, you propose you teach him a game popular among humans that involves creating fantastical characters and creatures and a combination of strategy and luck. Papyrus seems intrigued and you impart a 'bare-bones' guide of how the game is played.

You're drawing a battle map when you hear a banging on the front door of the house. Papyrus, for the first time, looks a bit nervous as he leaves you in his room to answer the door.

“UNDYNE! WHAT A SURPRISE. WHAT BRINGS YOU TO MY HUMBLE HOME?”

You hear a rather familiar voice. You're pretty sure you heard it on Sans's phone. “I heard Sans was back in town. Is he here? Is the human here?”

You hear a firmness in Papyrus's voice you wouldn't have expected. “THE HUMAN IS HERE, UNDYNE. HOWEVER SANS HAS ASKED ME TO NOT LET YOU SEE HER UNTIL I HAVE INFORMED YOU OF OUR CURRENT STATUS.” There is a slight growl of frustration, but you don't hear a commotion. Yet. “ASGORE HAS WHAT HE NEEDS TO BREAK THE BARRIER AND THE HUMAN IS TO STAY HERE UNDER MY CARE UNTIL SANS RETURNS. SHE IS VERY IMPORTANT TO HIM.”
You hear a yelp and a few thumps that seem to be coming up the stairs. “I didn't hear that from Asgore! I'm still under orders!”

Oh shit! You left your purse downstairs along with your phone!

“UNDYNE, WAIT!” They're right outside the door now. You see a tall armoured figure block the doorway. You think the person is female, but don't want to assume too much. She has blue scaly skin, sharp piranha-like fangs and long bright red hair in a ponytail. Her one yellow eye stares you down and her grin turns malicious.

Sans exits a shortcut into a familiar scene. A great stone door embedded in the cavern wall stands before him. He had tried in the past to sense what lay beyond, but the door seems to have been enchanted with powerful magic to prevent it. Only Ghosts could get through the door and he never could get a straight answer from them any time he asked. He approaches the door and thumps the heel of his palm against the hard surface. “lady!” He calls out. “are you there?” He continues knocking and calling for a few minutes until he hears a voice respond.

“My friend. Is that you?” The feminine voice sounds relieved. “I was worried. You've been gone for so long and I believe your brother came here searching for you. I had to tell him I had not heard from you.” Sans sighs at the thought of Papyrus calling out to the lady behind the door in a desperate attempt to find him.

“yeah,” he says softly. “i did something crazy in hotland. did an experiment to get me to the surface. heh, it worked.”

There is an audible gasp from behind the door. “You were on the Surface all this time? How did you survive?”

“i almost didn't,” Sans mumbles. “i should have died. i didn't have any food and the experiment itself almost killed me. but a miracle happened. a human found me. she took care of me and then she brought me back here. she's with my brother now.”

There's a silence for a moment. “You brought a human... down here? After all she did for you, you'd bring her here to be killed?”

“no!” Sans says suddenly. “she won't be hurt. i- i already collected a seventh soul. peacefully. i didn't hurt anyone. it was a sweet old woman who died of old age. she just let me have it without so much as frown.” Sans sighs at the emotional memory.

The woman behind the door seems to process this. “Does Asgore have this Soul now?”

“yeah. he's going break the barrier soon. we're getting out.”

“And what of your friend? What will become of her?” Her voice seems cautiously optimistic.

Sans pauses before answering. Will you keep your promise and stay with him? “i love her,” he says finally; his voice weak. “i hope she'll stay with me. we already have a soul link between us. that's how i stayed alive on the surface, but i don't know if she'd want to bond with me. i want to be with her.”
“Hmm,” came her soft voice. “I am very pleased to hear that you found someone so kind. Perhaps I will meet her one day.”

“Why don't you meet her now? Or are you still not ready to open this door?” Sans's sad frustration shows itself at last.

“Soon,” she says softly. “But not yet.”

“Hey, knock knock,” Sans says meekly.

“Who is there?” The woman asks, happy to hear a joke again.

“Aaron.”

“Aaron who?”

“Aaron you even gonna open it for me?”

The woman snickers and then sighs. “Don't worry my friend. We will meet soon.”

Sans appears in the sitting room of his house. He can still smell the aftermath of Papyrus's cooking and there's a plate of spaghetti left on the kitchen table. He can tell that you're not far; you're in Papyrus's room. Just as he's about to head in your direction he hears something that makes his proverbial blood run cold. “I'm gonna kick your ass!!”

Sans immediately shortcuts into Papyrus's room expecting to see you in a stand-off with the Captain of the Royal Guard. Instead he sees you, Papyrus and Undyne (out of armour) sitting on the floor surrounding a large sheet of paper. Papyrus's action figures are placed in various locations on what appears to be a map of some sort drawn on the paper. Everyone also has a piece of paper with information written on each one. Sans must have the most confused expression on his face, because you look like you're about to start laughing at him.

“You look so confused!” You say with an amused smile. Sans just nods, unable to come up with any words at the moment. “You remember when you met my friends and they mentioned this fantasy role-playing game with maps and miniature representations of characters? That's what we're playing.”

“SANS, YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE ASKED KING ASGORE TO INFORM THE ROYAL GUARD NOT TO CAPTURE HUMANS ANYMORE. I HAD TO CALL HIM WHILST ATTEMPTING TO STOP UNDYNE FROM BEING MURDERY.” He gives Sans a stern look.

Sans finally finds his voice. “I thought he woulda done that anyway. guess it slipped his mind.”

“THE LADY HUMAN AND I SOMEHOW CONVINCED UNDYNE TO PLAY A GAME OF STRATEGY AND IMAGINATION AS A FORM OF CAMARADERIE.”

He looks at Undyne, “you actually agreed to that?”

Undyne puts her hands on her hips and puffs her chest out. “Not right away, silly,” she says with a smirk. “But after Asgore told me that we needed her alive and I couldn't kill her, I decided to beat her at her own game.”

Sans gives her a slightly sceptical look. He knew Undyne wouldn't hurt someone if she didn't have to. Sure, her bite is pretty bad, but she prefers to use her bark. Sans plops himself on the floor
between you and his brother. “so how does this work?”

You proceed to explain that you, Papyrus and Undyne are pretending to be various imagined characters that are on a quest of sorts. Papyrus is Paladin with diplomacy on his mind, Undyne is a Warrior seeking more intensive training and you are playing the role of a Cleric searching for magical artifacts as well as taking the Narrator role. You're also using an app on your phone that takes the place of rolling dice.

At the conclusion of the imagined adventure, everyone is quite surprised that Undyne actually enjoyed herself, although she does prefer a more physical sport. She leaves the house, stating she needs to pass the word on that the human hunt has been called off. Papyrus then suggests the three of you spend some time together and watch some MTT specials. You see Sans cringe at this, but he doesn't say no.

You all arrange some appropriate monster-food snacks and some cushions and blankets. Papyrus settles himself on a cushion on the floor so you and Sans can have the couch. You both end up laying on the couch in a spooning position; Sans promptly dozes off. You have your hand gently stroking his sternum and you can't hear it, but you can feel him purring.

***

You're about halfway through the second of Mettaton's films that Papyrus has queued up when he starts to wobble in his seat. A soft 'nyeh' escapes him as he shakes himself. Sans looks over at him with a fond smile. “gettin' tired, bro?”

“NYEH,” he says adamantly. “THE GREAT PAPYRUS NEVER GETS TIRED! I SIMPLY NEED TO PREPARE MY MIND AND BODY FOR A BIG DAY TOMORROW.”

“heh heh,” Sans chuckles. “i suppose it's about time i told you a bedtime story. i'm a bit behind, eh?”

“IT'S BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, I SUPPOSE,” he sighs forcefully, but there's no hiding the loving expression he gives his brother.

“welp, ulna-ver miss one again.”

“Nyehhh...” Papyrus tries and fails to pretend he didn't miss Sans's puns.

“how about you go on up and get ready for bed? i'll come up in a bit,” he says softly as he carefully extricates himself from your arms.

Papyrus stands up and turns to you as you reposition yourself into a sitting position. “GOODNIGHT, NEW HUMAN FRIEND. I WILL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING. CAN I TRUST YOU TO SEE THAT SANS GOES TO BED AT A REASONABLE HOUR?”

You smile brightly at him. “Sure. And I'll make sure he's up bright and early.”

Papyrus heads up the stairs and into his room as Sans stands up and stretches. “papyrus doesn't usually go to bed this early. he probably hasn't been sleeping that well since i've been gone. i
usually read to him at bed time and he's probably really curious about what i did on the surface.”

You think you get what he's talking about. “Go on, Sans,” you say with a gentle smile. “Take as much time as you need. I'll clean up the snacks.” He leans down and nuzzles you before heading up the stairs as well.

After you clean up the wrappers and spilled popcorn, your curiosity draws your attention to the front door. You can see outside through the window, but have yet to step out the door. So you put on your heavy hoodie and boots and open the door and step outside. The chilly and damp air makes you shiver on contact, but it isn't unbearably cold. Your Canadian resistance has made you a bit more resilient than you'd care to admit.

You take a few steps away from the door and into the snow. It's incredibly quiet. It's also very dark, but there are lamp posts lining the path that stretches as far as you can see. In front of you, opposite of the skeleton brothers’ house appears to be a forest of coniferous trees. You can see a few more buildings to your right, which you assume is Snowdin. You can just barely see a few residents out and about, but they don't seem to notice you, yet. Above you appears to be some sort of haze or fog. You can feel a faint drizzle of moisture that makes up the ice and snow on the ground.

You catch a brief glimpse of something yellow out of the corner of your eyes, but it's gone when you try to see it again before you hear footsteps in the snow behind you and you turn around to see Sans with a soft smile on his face. He steps up and pulls you into a hug and you wrap your arms around him in turn. After a moment you separate and he takes your hand and leads you further into town.

The both of you stroll slowly past a few wooden buildings. You're quite amazed at the variety of monsters that stop to watch you and Sans pass by. You see a few anthropomorphic bears and rabbits along with some reptilian birdlike monsters and some others that elude description. They all seem incredibly curious, yet cautious which you can understand. They keep their distance, however and some of them have a look of near-reverance as they watch you pass. Some of the buildings are recognizable as residences or businesses and even have signs on them identifying them as such. You do a double-take at the misspelled library sign.

After passing what looks very much like a Christmas tree, Sans eventually leads you to a cozy-looking building with a large neon sign on the front reading “Grillby's”. You recognize the name as Sans's favourite social hangout. He smiles at you before opening the door a crack. You feel a whiff of warm air waft through the door. You can see the flicker of firelight on the walls from various sconces and you can clearly hear several voices in conversation. Peering inside, you see the room is full of patrons of various types of Monsters; mostly Dogs. You can also see most of that flickering light is coming from a tall fire elemental in a bartender's uniform and glasses standing behind the bar.

The door chime sounds as Sans opens the door fully and everyone stops talking and turns to look at the door. There is silence for a few seconds, then all voices shout “SANS!” Sans barely reacts to the mass greeting. He shrugs and smiles. “hey guys,” he says casually. “miss me?” The various patrons are all excitedly asking Sans questions at the same time, some of them are looking at you with curiosity. You remember Sans telling you about the Canine Unit of the Royal Guard and all of the Dogs here are wearing armour and/or carrying weapons. Up until recently, it was their job to capture and possibly kill humans like you. Right now, however they seem content to greet a new face.
Among the voices, you hear Sans introduce you and you hear a few howls and yips of approval and your face goes red. He didn't say you were his girlfriend or anything, but you supposed they were aware Sans has a certain interest in you. Sans takes your hand and leads you up towards the bar. The fire elemental, who had been silent this whole time gives you a curious look. At least you think so, Grillby's facial features are mostly obscured by a pair of glasses and small flames across his face. You can feel the pleasant heat of living fire radiating off of him and the scent of coal and surprisingly it isn't uncomfortable.

“hey, grillbz,” Sans says casually. “keeping the home fires burning while i was gone?” Grillby makes a subtle hand gesture and nods his head in your direction. “yeah,” he says softly. “that's her.” Grillby 'smiles' and reaches over to shake your hand. Cautiously, you take his hand which feels not quite solid, but certainly very warm. The heat from his hand seems to penetrate your skin and warms your whole body. “could we get a couple of burgs, grillbz? she's really new to monster food and i really missed your cooking.” Grillby nods and heads into a door labelled 'Fire Exit.'

You both sit down on barstools and you glance curiously around the room. Many of the patrons are looking back at you with the same curiosity and titter among themselves in quiet conversation. Two of the Dogs seem to be a mated couple and keep nuzzling each other whenever they get the chance. You wonder briefly if you and Sans would be like that one day. Sans turns towards you and leans his side against the bar and looks at you with a lovestruck expression. “so you like my bro? he's pretty cool, isn't he?”

You can see why he's asking. He told you his brother was his everything and you imagine Sans has a 'love me, love my brother' mentality. Fortunately, you don't have to lie to appease him. “He's awesome,” you say with a grin. “The ray of sunshine the Underground needs.” Sans's eyes sparkle for a moment and his smile widens.

After a few minutes, Grillby returns with two burgers on plates. They look normal enough, but you can see the patty is made of plant matter. You pick it up and take a bite. It tastes really good. It also makes your mouth tingle a bit, probably because of the magic that's been infused into it. You feel a bit more invigorated after you swallow your first bite despite having been awake and driving for many hours. Grillby must be one of those monsters adept at using Green magic. You and Sans enjoy your burgers in companionable silence. You can tell Sans really missed eating Grillby's cooking and you wish you could learn to use the Green magic in your Soul to cook food like that.

After you finish eating, you don't really feel 'full', but you do feel full of energy and Sans also looks a bit less tired. He tells Grillby to 'put it on his tab' as he gets down from the stool. Grillby makes a series of hand gestures that resemble Sign Language, but you don't know what he said. Sans has a shocked look on his face, then chuckles and shakes his head as he turns to leave. You give Sans an inquisitive look and he tells you that he has a sizable tab at the bar, but Grillby says if the Barrier really does come down, he would clear the tab. You both wave goodbye to the patrons of the bar as you step out the door.
The burger you ate seems to have the added effect of keeping away the cold as you both wander towards the edge of town. You can see a long rope bridge that extends to another plateau. You gaze out past the cliff and gape at the vast forest thriving in such a dark and isolated environment. You look up at the ceiling of the cavern to see the clouds or fog accumulated in the air. You look back down and something odd occurs to you. Sans looks up at you and sees the confusion in your eyes. “what'r ya thinkin' about?”

“How am I able to see? There's no ambient light and human eyes can barely see even under moonlight. How am I able to see the forest and where is the light in the fog up there coming from?”

Sans smiles at your curiosity. “remember i told you that magic is part of the atmosphere and that it's more concentrated down here than on the surface?”

“Yeah...” You try to think what he might be getting at. You look at him and he raises a phalanx and taps the edge of his eyesocket. You look at his eyelights for an answer and after a moment you realise his eyes are the answer. “It... glows!” You look back out to the open cavern. “The magic is its own light source. That's why Souls glow so bright; it's more concentrated than anything. It probably keeps those trees alive, too.” You look at Sans and he's smiling broadly at you. You're so enthralled by something so mundane to Monsters, it's actually rather refreshing.

“you might not be able t' see it, but quite a few monsters actually 'glow-in-the-dark' with magical bio-luminescence. especially waterfall monsters. i bet if you could see uv light yourself, you'd see it.”

“Maybe I'll have you stand under a blacklight, one day,” you say with a smirk.

“let’s go for a walk.” Sans takes your hand, and leads you in the opposite direction and back past his house. You can’t actually see very far at all. The further you walk, the more it feels like you are walking into a cloud. After a moment, you come out of the cloud and the temperature and humidity changes drastically. It’s still incredibly dark, but as your eyes continue to adjust, you start to see small glowing specks of blue and purple scattered about on the walls and ceiling of wherever you are walking.

You step a bit closer to a cluster of the glowing objects in the wall and you see they are actually stones. You remember Sans had told you about a place in the Underground that contained magical
glowing stones; some of which were treated like stars to be wished upon. You continue to walk with Sans until you reach an area with a small wooden structure and a few monsters hanging around. There’s an orange fish monster standing next to a large beautiful glowing blue flower. When you approach the flower, the fish monster pipes up. “Are you the human who brought Sans home? He’d been missing from his post for weeks. All I’ve had to keep me company is this echo flower.” You’re about to respond when you hear a fainter distorted repeat of what the fish monster had just said. “all i’ve had to keep me company is this echo flower.”

You blink at the flower for few seconds. “That’s cool,” you say curiously. You gently touch the petals of the flower and some glowing pollen floats off. The petals are actually quite thick and rubbery. You guess such a large flower would need to be strong.

Sans is rummaging behind the wooden structure when a small yellow armless lizard-like monster approaches you. Maybe this is who you saw in the trees? “Yo!” came the childlike voice. “You’re a human, right? Did you meet Undyne? I heard she’s trying to catch a human. She’s so cool, she could catch anyone.”

You quirk a smile at the little monster child. “I did meet her. She did try to catch me, but we told her she doesn’t need to catch humans anymore. I became friends with her instead. She is pretty cool when she isn't angry.”

“Cool!” The kid says cheerfully. “Wonder what else she’s gonna do now? Later, dude!” They run off further into the sparkling cavern.

Sans comes up to you, apparently having found whatever it was he was looking for in the wooden structure. He takes your hand and gives you wink before pulling you into a shortcut.

When you come out of it, you’re somewhere else within Waterfall standing in front of some sort of mineshaft. Sans steps in and you follow him into a small mined-out cave. You round a corner to find a desk or worktable of sorts and sitting in a chair at the desk, fast asleep is a large elderly tortoise monster.

“hey, gerson!” Sans calls out.

The tortoise, known as Gerson, wakes up with a snort. He looks over at the two of you and a grin curls over his old scaly face. “Sans, my boy,” he croaks. “Back from the Surface, eh? And this must be your lady-friend I keep hearing about, wah ha ha.”

Sans looks away shyly and then he turns to you. “gerson's been around since before the war. he's not a boss monster, but he's a tortoise so he's lived a really long time.”

You raise your eyebrows in surprise. Then this monster is at least a thousand years old. You reach out a hand to the old monster. “Pleasure to meet you. You lived on the surface? Before the Barrier?”

Gerson seems surprised at your friendliness. “Aye,” he says, gruffly as he takes your hand. He has a really strong handshake. “Fought in the War, too.”

“You raise your eyebrows in surprise. Then this monster is at least a thousand years old. You reach out a hand to the old monster. “Pleasure to meet you. You lived on the surface? Before the Barrier?”

Gerson seems surprised at your friendliness. “Aye,” he says, gruffly as he takes your hand. He has a really strong handshake. “Fought in the War, too.”

“Oh shit,” you mutter, looking at Sans and remembering what he told you about what happened. “That must have been awful.”

“It is what it is,” he says passively. “Not a warrior anymore. Just tryin' to keep what we have left intact and keep up with what's happening on the outside.” He nods over to a makeshift bookshelf against a cave wall. It's filled with ancient books, scrolls and artefacts along with a few slightly
more modern books and reading or writing instruments. It looks like he's been collecting any form of written or crafted knowledge.

“So, you're like a... an archivist? Historian? Lorekeeper?” You fumble with the words, but Gerson smiles at the attempt.

“S'pose any of those would count, heh heh.”

“Mind if I look at what you've collected? Some of the items on those shelves look really interesting.” Your inner nerd can't contain itself and just has to see what eclectic collection lay within.

He gestures to the shelves, giving you consent. “Nice to see you young folk still have an eye for the written word.”

You carefully step closer to the shelves and start scanning the spines of the books. Many of them don't have titles and seem to be written by hand. There's a collection of out-dated roadmaps, calendars, encyclopedias and much more. Just about all of it is heavily water-damaged and rotted. You pick out an old leather-bound book at random and open it. It seems to be a journal of some sort. It's even dated for the 1800's!

As you read about the journeys of this 19th century scholar, Sans discretely hands Gerson some Gold coins and whispers something you don't notice. Gerson digs something out of small box on his worktable and hands it to Sans. Sans looks at the small object carefully before nodding and pocketing it.

After a few minutes of reading, you return the book to the shelf and Sans sidles up to you with a soft expression on his face. “ready to keep going?”

You smile and hold a hand out to him. “Lead the way.” He takes your hand and leads you out of the mineshaft and you give a small wave to Gerson.

Sans pulls you into a shortcut and you appear on some sort of plateau covered in bluish green grass, glowing mushrooms and a flowing stream several feet away. Looking down from the high plateau, you can see more streams and bridges along with patches of marshland. It's really quite beautiful. You look over at Sans and he looks up at the ceiling and you follow his gaze and you nearly fall backwards. The ceiling is covered in sparkling luminescent dots. The colours range from purple to blue to green and all shades in between along with some sort of glowing lichen. “Oh wow...” You breathe. “This is incredible.”

“i spent a lot of time here,” Sans says softly. “specially as a kid. only i know about this particular spot and only can i get up here.”

“I can see why you'd want this little patch of the world to yourself. Being stuck down here in a confined space, who wouldn't want some privacy when you can get it?” You can speak from experience. You really like your own privacy.

Sans nods. “speaking of privacy, i wanted to give you something.” He sits down on a dry patch of grass and motions for you sit next to him as he takes something from his pocket. When you sit down, he hands you a glowing object. It's a stone; a glowing green stone about the size of a chicken's egg. “i knew gerson likes to collect them, but i wanted to get one that reminds you of your own soul.”
You hold the smooth stone gingerly and gaze at it in fascination. “It's beautiful, Sans. Thank you.”

He smiles shyly and scratches nervously at the back of his cervical vertebrae. “there was one other thing...” you look at him curiously. “i'm ready.” He pauses. “i'm ready for you to touch my soul.”

Chapter End Notes

Who thought it was going to be a ring?
Who I Am

Chapter Summary

Sans allows you to touch his Soul.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

You stare at Sans intently. “Are really sure?” You ask gently. He nods decisively. You can already see the faint glow from within his ribcage shining through his shirt. “If you're truly sure you're ready, then I'm happy to do that with you.” Sans smiles softly. You put the stone in your pocket as he nervously sheds his jacket and shirt and sets them to the side. You have a feeling he doesn't actually need to do this shirtless since he was able to pull your Soul through your shirt, but you think he does it to emphasize the vulnerability aspect of exposing one's Soul. Might be a cultural thing.

He positions himself to sit in front of you and places his hand against his sternum. Much like when he showed you his Soul not too long ago, he breathes deeply and concentrates on pulling the glowing beacon from within his chest into his hand. He gazes into your eyes as he reaches his empty hand towards yours and holds it in front of himself and slowly guides his Soul to be cupped in your palm. It's so warm and radiant with energy, it feels like you're about to grasp a charged electrode. Slowly, he covers your fingers with his own and closes your fingers around his Soul.

You have no idea what you're expecting, but as soon as your fingers make contact with Sans's Soul, your mind is flooded with so many thoughts and emotions at once; you're only vaguely aware of
Sans’s body shuddering with a sharp intake of breath. Your free hand clutches at Sans's hands, which are still wrapped around the hand holding his Soul. The only thing you can do now is close your eyes and try to sort through what you're seeing and feeling; much of which isn't even coming from you.

You see flashes of Sans’s memories that you can barely interpret before they change. It's like watching a film when the scenes are only two or three frames long and they're out of order and superimposed on each other. Slowly, they seem to clear up and somehow you become acutely aware that Sans can see how you see into his Soul. Sans can see so much! He can see things that don't shouldn't exist. He told you many monsters can see ultraviolet light, but that's just part of their biology. Sans... is different. Even among Monsters, he is different. Sans is astonishingly smart too smart for his own good and it's difficult for you to keep up with what his Soul is trying to communicate. Sans's Soul is trying to understand how you see the world so you can understand him, almost like learning a different language. Ultimately, it decides to start from the beginning.

You see white. White walls. A laboratory? Is this Sans's earliest memory? You're looking up and everything seems so big, so Sans must be very small. You're standing in a doorway looking into a room filled with lab equipment; analyzers and monitors and the like. There is a tall thin man working with some of the equipment and he appears to be studying some paperwork. You 'remember' him muttering something about a substance called Determination and that if he could extract it from human Souls and infuse it into magical constructs he tentatively called 'blasters', they might be strong enough to destroy the Barrier. A human had fallen into the Underground shortly before this memory, providing another source of Determination to extract and study.

The scene shifts and you're somewhere else. It's an unfamiliar house and the tall man isn't around, but you aren't alone. His name is Papyrus, he said. He's just barely learning to walk.

Another shift. You're back in the lab and you're a bit taller. Papyrus is in a corner surrounded by puzzle boxes and papers that he's been drawing on. You're standing next to the tall man as he explains what the various pieces of lab equipment do. Sans had taken an interest in what 'his father' was doing in the lab. He spends so much time here, it must really important, right? Maybe if I try to do what he does, he'll spend more time with us.

It's a couple of years later. Sans is an adolescent. Dad seems frustrated. The Core needs repairing and he's the only one who knows how to fix this particular piece. He'll have to draw up some blueprints so his apprentices can do it on their own without having to call him every time something goes wrong.

It's broken again. His apprentices can't fix it this time and they need him. Sans and Papyrus go with him and are told to stay in his office, but Sans is painfully curious and follows him without him noticing and watches from a partially open door. Dad's moving something with Blue magic while his apprentices watch monitors and try to calibrate the energy flow and stop the flux from overloading the buffers again. The catwalk under his feet needs to be repaired, too. You learn that after the fact. It breaks. He falls. He drops the buffer and it explodes; sending a shockwave of flux into the room. All the apprentices are vaporized. The shockwave makes it to the door and hits Sans in the eye before he can move out of the way. He can see his father holding onto the catwalk as it bends downward into the central energy matrix. “Dad!” Sans calls out in terror. The man looks at 'you'. He looks so scared and so sad. And then he's gone.

“WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, BOTHER? WE DON'T HAVE A FATHER.” Why doesn't anyone remember him? He built the Core. He built this Lab. Now everything that had his
name on it is completely anonymous and no one remembers who the Royal Scientist is. Papyrus doesn't remember where he or Sans came from. As far as he knows, they just appeared in the lab. When Sans goes back to their house, it's empty; like no one ever lived there. The neighbours said it had been empty for a long time and Sans is incredibly confused and distraught. Whatever happened in that Lab, it erased his father from existence and Sans is the only one who remembers him. Was it that shockwave? Is that why I didn't forget?

With nowhere to live and no one to take them in, Sans and Papyrus remain in the lab and Sans makes the decision to raise his brother on his own. Fortunately, Vegetoids are more than happy to provide food for them and Sans does his best to keep his brother entertained and educated while he himself pours through whatever physical material remains in the lab. He finds discarded children's books in the trash dump in Waterfall and reads to Papyrus every night.

He finds a photograph of himself standing among the apprentices that no longer exist. Sans was an apprentice at this point and he had just received his lab ID badge. He finds one of Pap's old drawings of Sans, Papyrus and a tall man. The paper seems to have been burned to the point he can't be identified. When asked, Papyrus says he doesn't remember drawing it. Sans keeps it anyway and writes 'don't forget' on it.

It's been about a month and Sans has read just about everything he could find. He doesn't understand all of it, but he must have inherited his father's brains since he understands a vast majority of it, particularly quantum physics. Blue magic is quite versatile and with a bit of practice, he might be able to do some pretty cool stuff.

There are people in the lab. Sans recognizes one of the voices as King Asgore. Investigating, he also sees a yellow lizard monster he had seen at the dump several times before. Asgore doesn't remember where they came from, but he takes an interest in his and his brother's well-being. Sans offers to be Alphys's (the new Royal Scientist) assistant in exchange for a place to live. Asgore gives them a home in Snowdin and checks in on them regularly.

Sans and Alphys become good friends and colleagues. He grows up in the lab as he teaches himself as much as possible about quantum physics and how it can be used with magic. He learns that he can create micro-wormholes and travel to other parts of the Underground that he had been to. He discovers he can 'see' beyond solid obstructions allowing him to get inside locked rooms. Unfortunately, remaining in the scene of the accident that erased his father from existence took it's toll. He started having panic attacks that he couldn't really explain to Alphys. Ultimately, Sans realized he couldn't stay in the lab for very long at a time so he collected some of his father's tools and scrap materials and short-cutted it into the basement of the house he shared with his brother who was then going to school.

He tried in vain to build something to find out what happened to his father. He discovers through various simulations that whatever happened in the lab destabilized reality just enough that he slipped through the cracks of the void and Sans is the only one who survived the shockwave of flux and thus he can 'see' through those cracks allowing him to remember something that no longer exists. In the end, his endeavours to reverse the accident prove to be futile and Sans gives up. He still visits Alphys now and then and helps her with projects when he can, but science just leaves a bad taste in his mouth now. Asgore lets him and Papyrus stay in the house, but recommends they get jobs. Papyrus decides to try to join the Royal Guard and convinces Sans to at least take a job as a sentry.

Then things start to get strange. An overwhelming sense of deja-vu starts to consume him. Strange memories/dreams/nightmares of time repeating itself over and over. He remembers vividly a strange talking yellow flower befriending everyone in the Underground only for time to reset itself
and he watches everyone in the Underground be murdered; even himself. He distinctly remembers
the smell of his own Dust as vines crush him to death. So many scenarios of some being killed and
some left alive. Some making strange life choices or adopting uncharacteristic behaviours. Each
time Sans would wake up in his bed and everything would be same as it was a few days, weeks or
even months before. He tried to explain the phenomenon to Alphys and she tried to understand, but
then time would loop around and it would be as if he never said anything. He began to fear that he
was losing his mind. So he stopped trying to tell people about it. He stopped trying to do anything,
really. He follows his brother like usual as he recalibrated his puzzles again and again. His heart
breaks again and again as his friends die. He just lets things happen because it will just be undone
again.

While Papyrus doesn't know why, he does know that Sans is different than he was when he was
younger and he tells him so. His passion for science is gone. He lacks any motivation. Even his
speech has become lazy and his HoPe has fallen dangerously low. He tries his best to motivate
Sans even if his methods seem harsh, but nothing seems to work. Sans feels terrible about it
because he loves his brother, but he just can't muster any energy no matter how hard he tries. At
least he found some solace in a new passion for comedy, but really he just uses it to mask his
despondency.

One night, whilst secluding himself on a plateau in Waterfall and silently wishing he was strong
enough to shortcut past the Barrier, he wondered if it was actually possible. Besides, if this
experiment killed him, time would probably just reset and he's just start over anyway. So, he asked
Alphys to help him with his idea. She adamantly refused. So Sans started sneaking around the
basement of the lab when Alphys was out. There he discovered what she had been doing in his
absence: The Amalgamates. Monsters who had Fallen Down and subsequently revived with
terrible side effects. His encounter with Endogeny left him covered in white goo made up of
liquified monster Dust. When he confronted Alphys shortly thereafter, he said nothing. Just his
expression said 'this has to stop. help me.' And so, after many calculations Sans attached various
electrodes to his body and flooded it with with raw power from the Core.

The next thing he knew, he met you. You told him where he was and it became apparent that Sans
would likely die soon. This human who had done her absolute best to take care of him would be
left with nothing but a pile of Dust and a memory. The least he could do was leave you with some
modicum of a legacy, however pathetic it was. So he told you about the Underground, despite his
presumption that he shouldn't have trusted you.

And then you saved him. You loved him so much it brought him back from the edge of death. Sans
had never felt such an overwhelmingly powerful comfort like he'd been wrapped in the warmest
and fluffiest blanket imaginable. Your human Green Soul embraced him with such gentleness he
felt he would burst. You loved him and he realized that he loved you, too. You trusted him and
gave him hope, but he's still afraid. So afraid that it will all just end and he'll lose you and you'll
forget him. If that happened, it would kill him. Time would reset and he'd Fall and never rise again.
So all this time, he's been begging and pleading the universe to just let him have this. let this one
stick. let her stay with me.

Sans's Soul is telling you he wants to spend the rest of his life with you, but he also understands
that you don't know what a Soulbond really means. He knows you aren't ready for that and he'll
teach you all about it when you are. For now, he just wants to be with you and love you the only
way he knows how; with his Soul.

The visions fade and your senses return to the plateau in Waterfall. Sans is kneeling in front of you
shaking with his eyes closed and tears running down his face. You realize you're crying, too and you gently uncurl your fingers from Sans's Soul and carefully guide it back into his chest. Sans shudders and gasps when your hand lays flat on his sternum. He looks into your eyes with a slightly dazed expression until he remembers where he is and what he had done. You smile softly and stroke both sides of his face with your hands and then gently pull him into an embrace. He remembers that you had offered to let him touch your Soul, but he doesn't dare ask. Even a Green Soul would be too much for him to handle right now.

After a few minutes, you've both calmed down from the experience and you pull back a bit to look his face. “Sans, did you just propose to me?” You ask softly.

Sans chuckles a bit. “is that what you want?” He leans in to rest his frontal bone against your forehead.

You think about this for a while and Sans gives you all the time you need. It's been a month. One single month since you found Sans on the edge of the river and took him home. Did you bring home a life partner that night? Do you love Sans enough to stay by his side forever? You take a deep breath as you realise you can't imagine life without him. Sans knows right down to his Soul what he wants and somehow you can feel your Soul resonating with his. It's still scary and you're both heavily emotionally charged, so you agree that you'll talk about how it all works when you're both ready.

“I want to know more about Soulbon..." you say softly as you stroke the back of his skull. “But I want to be with you for good. I want to be your...”

Sans looks like the happiest Monster on Earth and has the most beautiful smile on his face. “then i'm yours,” he whispers and kisses you as passionately as a skeleton can.

He claimed you as his Mate that night.

Chapter End Notes

If you want a NSFW chapter to go with this one, you can find it here.
A Thorn in my Side

Chapter Summary

A tiny flower voices it's displeasure at your presence.

Morning. You wake up on a bare mattress with a shirtless skeleton wrapped around you. You stare at the ceiling and try to imagine waking up each morning not knowing if anything you did yesterday actually happened. Frustrating would not be a strong enough word. Sans must have felt so helpless not knowing why it was happening or how to stop it. You look over at the peacefully sleeping skeleton next to you. While you didn't Soul-bond with him, you are for all intents and purposes his Mate now. You suppose the first order of business as such is make breakfast. You're about to get up and get dressed without waking him, when you suddenly get the thought: What would he think if he woke up alone in his bed? You reach over and stroke the side of his face. He stirs gently and opens his eyesockets. He smiles when his eyellights focus on you. “hey, babe,” she says softly.

“Good morning, verte-babe,” you reply with a smile. Sans's eyesockets squint as he grins further at your sweet pun. “I'm gonna see if I can make us some breakfast.”

Sans yawns and stretches. “sounds awesome. i'll be down in a bit.” You finish getting dressed and head for the door. You just barely hear Sans mumble “thanks for waking me.”

You grab your hoodie and boots and head downstairs. You can hear that Papyrus is already up and cooking something. “Good morning, Papyrus,” you say cheerfully.

Papyrus turns and smiles at you. “GOOD MORNING, LADY HUMAN! WILL YOU AND SANS BE JOINING ME FOR BREAKFAST SPAGHETTI?”

Guess you won't making breakfast. You catch a glimpse of the contents of the fridge and it's mostly just plastic containers filled with spaghetti. “Yeah,” you say cautiously. “I was also thinking I might go to that shop down the road to get something to... compliment it. But... I don't have any monster currency,” you mumble. “I wonder if they'd take human money.”

“NYEH!” Papyrus says suddenly. “THAT WOULD NOT DO TO HAVE MY GUEST LEAVE PENNILESS.” You're about to protest when Papyrus raises his hand and a small cloth pouch appears in his hand. He pulls it open and plucks a few coins out of it and almost forcefully hands them to you. “I HIGHLY RECOMMEND MISS ROSIE'S CINNAMON BUNS!”

You're looking at Papyrus in stunned surprise. “o-oh kay...” You stutter. “I'll get enough for all three of us.” You put on your shoes and hoodie and head outside. There aren't many monsters outside this time of day. Grillby's appears to be closed this morning; seems normal for a pub. You pass by the 'Snowed Inn' and wave at some of the monsters milling about; they wave back with a smile. Stepping into the 'Snowbank Bodega', you're greeted by a door chime and a warm sweet scent in the air. There is a plump rabbit monster in a purple sleeveless shirt behind the counter who gives you a surprised smile.

“Well, this a pleasant surprise,” she says cheerily. “What brings you to my humble shop?”
“Your cinnamon bunnies were highly recommended to me by Papyrus, so I'd like to get three,” you say with a smile.

“Comin' right up, hun,” she says as she picks up a cardboard box and opens the display case full of baked treats. You look around the shop and it's quite an array of items. Some of them are human-made that might have been taken from the garbage dump and cleaned and repaired. Other items look like they were made of raw materials either from human objects or from carved wood or stone. Some of the items are clothes made for monsters out of salvaged textiles.

“You have a really interesting shop here. Do you make some of these yourself?” You ask referring to the clothes.

“Mostly,” she says as she closes the box. “Most monsters can't wear normal human clothes, so a lot of us know how to sew and make new things out of it.”

“That's really cool. Reminds of me of people who take old clothes and make quilts out of them.” You're pretty sure your mom has made a few.

“That sounds lovely.” Rosie says sweetly. She hands you the box and you hand her the coins Papyrus gave you. “Exact change! Wonderful! Enjoy your sweets, hun.”

“Thank you,” say as you step out.

You're about to head back to the skele-house when you stumble a bit and realize one of your shoelaces has come undone. So, you set down the box on the ground and crouch down to tie it. A few seconds later, the box moves on it's own. Or rather a thin vine of sorts has wrapped around it and starts dragging it away. “Hey!” You mumble as you instinctively follow your purchase. Was a monster child playing a prank on you? You follow the dragged box past the sign welcoming travellers to Snowdin until you can see that suspension bridge at the edge of town. You come upon the pastry box left right on the edge of the cliff. You're about ten feet from the box and you stop and stare at it for a several seconds. It was being dragged by a vine. Didn't Sans have nightmares about vines and some strange plant monster? You suddenly get an uncomfortable chill as you realise something isn't right and you have odd sensation of danger.

You're about to back up and leave when something grabs your ankle and yanks it out from under you, causing you to fall over hard onto your back. You're stunned and coughing from the pain in your back and head when more thorny vines quickly wrap around your body. They rip your clothes and scrape into your skin as they secure you to the ground. You try to yell out, but as soon as you open your mouth another vine coils around your face and between your jaws. You try bite it, but it's like biting a tree root. An overwhelming panic comes over you as you're painfully restrained and silenced and you struggle as hard as your can against the vines holding you down. But it's no use; the vines are just too strong. You're looking around to see what is doing this to you and a strange yellow flower on the end of elongated stem appears in front of you. The flower has an eerily innocent-looking face as it studies you curiously.

“So you're the human everyone's yammering on about,” it says in a high-pitched childlike voice. “You actually went through the trouble of bringing that smiling trashbag back.” Is he talking about Sans? The face then contorts into a demonic sneer. “What did you do? What did he do? He ruined my fun! Ever since he did that stupid experiment, I haven't been able to Load or Reset. Even if the Barrier is coming down, at least I get to ruin something for him.”

You feel another vine start to coil around your throat. Oh fuck, it's going to kill you! Suddenly, you
hear a loud high-pitched whine and a blinding flash of light makes you shut your eyes. When you open your eyes, you can see steam rising from some melted snow and the singed flower is now glaring at something out of your view. You then see several white bones fly past your vision and attempt to pierce the flower, but it dodges the attack and retreats into the ground. You then hear hurried footsteps as Sans's face fills your sight. He has a frantic expression as he pulls at the root in your mouth and manages to loosen it enough to pull off and over your head. “Sans,” you say weakly in reaction to seeing him.

“shh,” he hushes you as he puts one hand under your neck and an another on your shoulder and suddenly you're indoors; free of the vines restraining you. The shock of what had just happened finally hits and you start shaking violently and sobbing. You're laying on the floor in front of the couch and Sans is now holding you tightly around your ribs. “papyrus!” he calls to his brother.

Papyrus appears from the kitchen, clearly concerned at what just transpired. “WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE LADY HUMAN?!”

“She was attacked,” Sans says weakly. Sans is also shaking and you can tell he is just barely suppressing rage. You start to calm down slightly as your concerns turn to him.

“WHO WOULD ATTACK SUCH A KIND PERSON? EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW THAT HUMAN HUNTING IS OVER NOW. WHAT--” His voice is cut short as something catches his attention. He bends down to pick up a severed vine that was still wrapped around your ankle. He studies it for a moment and his brow furrows in confusion and sadness. He then puts the vine in a pocket and crouches down next you. He takes a glove off and extends his long thin phalanges to rest on your shoulder. You feel a calming warmth exude from his fingers that spreads through your body and the immediate sting from your injuries fades and your bruises stop throbbing. Papyrus twitches and he looks tired. “I'm Sorry, Lady Human,” he says softly. “Monster Healing Magic Is Not As Strong For A Human As It Is For A Monster.”

The pain hasn't gone away entirely, but it is significantly reduced. “Thank you, Papyrus. I feel much better.”

He smiles sadly and stands up. “THERE IS BREAKFAST SPAGHETTI READY. I HIGHLY SUGGEST YOU EAT. YOU MAY DO SO HERE IN THE SITTING ROOM.” He leaves for the kitchen to prepare some plates.

Sans helps you lay down on the couch and he kneels on the floor next you so he can get a better look at your condition. “I know his food doesn't taste that great, but it will help heal you,” he says quietly.

You nod softly as he continues to study your face. It was almost as if... he wasn't entirely sure you were real. “You've seen it before, haven't you? In your nightmares.”

Sans stares at you before nodding slowly. “what did it say to you?” He whispers.

“He said you ruined his fun. That ever since you did that experiment he stopped being able to 'Load' or 'Reset' and he was angry so he was going to kill me to punish you.”

Sans's brow furrows in confusion and he looks away as he processes what you said. Then his face tightens into anger and his fingers flex into fists. You can hear his breathing turn to hissing as he holds back his fury. You realise what he does at the same time. Whatever that flower creature was, it was responsible for the time loops Sans had been suffering through for who knows how long and that he feared that he was in yet another nightmare. Why Sans is aware of the loops while no one else is might have something to do with the Core accident. “he said he couldn't do it anymore?” He
asks in a low voice.

“That's what he said. I guess that experiment destroyed whatever allowed him to do that.” Sans closes his eyes and breaths a sigh. He's still angry, but he also seems a bit relieved. “How did you know to come find me? I wasn't gone every long.”

Sans sighs. “i could feel it.” He takes your hand and places it on his sternum. “our souls are attuned enough that i can feel extreme emotions from you if you're close by. i felt your fear.” You rub your fingers over his chest for a moment before your hand comes up to the side of his face. You can see just how scared he was when he realized you were in danger. “don't wander too far away alone, okay?” He asks softly.

“Okay,” you reply, nodding. “Can you take me to my car after we eat so I can get some new clothes?”

“sure,” he says with a soft smile and he leans in and give you a gentle nuzzle just as Papyrus returns with plates of spaghetti balanced on his arms.
Asgore prepares to break the Barrier

After eating and showering, Sans takes you back to your car still parked where you left it. Sans waits outside as you sit in the car and carefully change your clothes and check on your cat. Even after eating Papyrus's spaghetti, you're still a bit sore and tired. The flower creature must have done more damage than you realized or it's a side effect of touching Sans's Soul. It was a rather emotionally exhausting experience and must still be affecting you on the inside.

You refresh your cat's food and water and clean up the litter box before crawling back out of the minivan and closing the hatch. Sans is waiting for you when you find him, but his attention is drawn to the darkened hallway leading to another door. You can just barely hear voices echoing from the other side. “What's down there?” You ask.

“the throne room. sounds like asgore's talkin' to someone.” He nods his head in the direction of the voices. “i suppose now's as good a time as any to meet our king.”

You follow him down the hall and you can make out the unfamiliar voices a bit more clearly and it sounds like one of them is female. Sans stops at the edge of the door and peers inside carefully. Being slightly taller than Sans, you just stand behind him and look inside as well. You see a large room with flowers covering the floor and rays of light peeking through cracks in the ceiling. You can see the back of what you assume is a throne and two large figures standing in the middle of the room. One of them is obviously King Asgore. You recognise him from Sans's memories and he resembles the illustrations you'd seen in the Monster folklore you read about. The other figure appears to be a much more feminine version of Asgore. She has smaller horns and softer features, but still no less regal. Is this the Queen?

“You intend to release the Souls after you've used them I assume?” The female Goat Monster asks Asgore sternly.

“Yes,” Asgore responds softly. He seems to be bowed down in an almost submissive demeanour. “I wish it never came to this. They deserved better than to be used in this manner. I thank you for coming, Toriel. I may lose myself in my grief and shame if I were alone.”

The female monster, known as Toriel, sighs heavily. Obviously she isn't happy with Asgore's situation. She looks away and her eyes fall on the door that you and Sans stood in. “Oh!” She exclaims as Asgore follows her gaze.

“You intend to release the Souls after you've used them I assume?” The female Goat Monster asks Asgore sternly.

“Yes,” Asgore responds softly. He seems to be bowed down in an almost submissive demeanour. “I wish it never came to this. They deserved better than to be used in this manner. I thank you for coming, Toriel. I may lose myself in my grief and shame if I were alone.”

The female monster, known as Toriel, sighs heavily. Obviously she isn't happy with Asgore's situation. She looks away and her eyes fall on the door that you and Sans stood in. “Oh!” She exclaims as Asgore follows her gaze.

“Ahh,” Asgore says smiling. “Toriel, this is Sans the Skeleton. He is the one who delivered the final Soul. And this, I assume is Yn. She delivered Sans home. Please, come in.”

You and Sans step into the room and you stand next to Sans, although still slightly behind him. Toriel stares at Sans for a moment before a surprised smile crosses her face. “So, you're the one I've been talking to through the door! It's so nice to meet you.”

You can't see Sans's face, but he starts shifting his weight on his feet nervously. “thought i
recognised your voice. feeling's mutual.

She approaches you and extends a large furry paw towards you. You let her take your hand and she encloses it fully in her paws and he looks you over. “Asgore has told me you travelled very far to return Sans to Mt. Ebott. He must be very special to you to perform such a grand gesture.”

Toriel’s regal and feminine presence has you stunned for several seconds. You instinctively stand up straighter despite your back hurting. You look down at Sans who isn't looking directly at you, but has a slight blue tint on his cheekbones. “He is very special,” you say softly. “I made a very big change in my life, but I think it was very worth it. Not just to be with him, but to help him free his people. He risked his life to get to the surface, so obviously it was important to him.”

Toriel frowns and gives Asgore an irritated side-long glance; Asgore looks away guiltily. She looks back at you and her expression turns to concern. “You seem a bit warm, my child. Are you ill?”

Huh, so the heat isn't coming from Toriel, but from you. “Uhh, I guess I do feel a bit feverish and I am a bit sore. I thought it was from...” You glance at Sans and he has a very uncomfortable expression just you're speaking. “…a fall I had earlier this morning. Maybe I picked up a bug in Waterfall. Feels like the early stages of a cold or something.”

“Hmm,” Toriel mutters solemnly as she looks down. “I don't believe healing magic can help much with human illness... We've.. tried in the past and failed.”

You remember Sans telling you of the human child the king and queen had adopted. They got sick and later passed away. You just nod slowly and pat the paws still holding your hand. “It's okay,” you say softly. “I'm usually pretty good at fighting stuff like this.” Toriel smiles sadly and reluctantly lets go of your hand.

“I'm sorry,” Asgore says suddenly. He has a similar expression of grief as she pulled a large cellular phone from within his robes. “I must contact Doctor Alphys and Mettaton. I must make an announcement that I will destroy the Barrier within the hour. If you'll excuse me.” He turns away to make said phonecall as Toriel returns to stand next to Asgore.

When you turn you attention back to Sans, he doesn't look happy. His eyelights have shrunk to pinpricks and his grin is pulled into a tight frown. “you're sick?” His voice is very low and quiet and you can see guilt in his browbones.

“I'm sure it's nothing serious, Sans,” you say softly. “I have medicine in the car. I just hope it doesn't get too bad if I'll be talking to authorities.” He looks at you intently for several seconds before reluctantly nodding. “That being said, I might as well see what I have for that.”

You head back to your car and open the hatch back up. Your cat, having been cooped up in the car for a few days now, decides he's had enough and bolts out of the hatch. He's too fast for Sans to catch as he runs into the throne room, but you don't really worry about it very much. It's not like he can get far. You dig out the makeshift first-aid kit you made of medicines, band-aids, and feminine products and find your trusty bottle of aspirin... you should probably get some anti-nausient while you're at it just in case.

After exiting the car, you and Sans head back for the throne room to look for your wayward feline. Stepping through the door, you see two new occupants: a short and plump yellow lizard-like monster in a white lab coat whom you recognise from Sans's memories and a rectangular robot with multicoloured lights on it's front-face balanced on a single wheel. You recognise this individual as Mettaton who is apparently a prolific entertainer. The lizard monster, you believe is named Alphys, is holding your cat and fawning over him. The cat looks annoyed, but doesn't seem
to be too upset. Asgore and Toriel are still there and the king seems to be looking over some papers that must have his announcement written on. No one seems to have noticed you or Sans yet and neither of you makes a move to change that. After watching and listening for a moment, you come to the conclusion that Mettaton has a camera built into him or something and will be broadcasting the speech to the Underground.

After a moment, King Asgore indicates he's ready to begin and Mettaton responds with “Sending notifications now.” Your phone suddenly beeps; so does Sans's. You look at the screen and it's a mass notification stating there will be a public announcement from the king momentarily and any device capable of receiving video will be displaying the broadcast. After a moment he sits on the throne and focuses on the papers in his paws. Mettaton holds up his gloved hand and says in a strangely musical voice: “Going live in three.. two.. one..”

Asgore straightens in his seat and addresses the robot in front of him. “Citizens of the Underground. Thank you for your patience. Many of you may already be aware that a final Soul has been acquired and subsequently delivered to me by a Snowdin resident known as Sans the Skeleton. He risked his life to do what I was too cowardly to do myself and for that I am forever grateful. It is time for me to truly perform my duty as King and use the Souls to destroy the Barrier. Once this task is done, I implore you to remain calm. It will take some time to negotiate our place among the humans and must be done as peacefully as possible. Thus I do not want the sudden emergence of our people to frighten the humans who have forgotten we exist. I will be seeking council from the human who ferried Sans to the Underground. Her advice will be invaluable.” You feel your face get warmer than it already is. You really hope you can live up to what the king seems to think of you. “I will strive to keep you all informed of our progress. Again, I must emphasize: please do not rush to leave. If we are to reintegrate, it must be done carefully. Your patience will be greatly appreciated. I now ask for your forgiveness as I perform the distasteful action of absorbing the human Souls. I can only hope they forgive me as well. Thank you for your time.”

Asgore bows his head, indicating that he had finished speaking. Several of the lights on Mettaton's front face change colour or go out. “Regal as always, your Highness~” The robot warbles.

It's at this point, Alphys notices you and Sans in the door. “O-oh!” She exclaims. She toddles over towards you and Sans as you also step a bit further into the room. “Y-you're really her! You're th-the one who brought Sans and the f-final Soul to the Underground. You s-saved us.”

You look away shyly. “It isn't done yet. Like your king said, even after the Barrier comes down, there's still a lot to do. I'll do my best to help out.”

“W-we really a-appreciate that. From what I've 'r-researched', humans are s-scared of what they d-don't understand. Usually t-to the point of v-violence.” Alphys looks a bit sad. “B-but I hope there are m-more humans like you. You d-didn't know what Sans was and y-you took care of him a-anyway. You weren't s-scared of him.”

You give Sans a sweet smile. “I'd like to think most humans are more curious than hostile. We just have to be careful.”

Alphys nods in agreement as she pets the cat absentmindedly. Suddenly you hear a loud clanging echoing closer and closer from the door opposite of the one you came in. Then a familiar armoured figure bursts through the door. Undyne, minus her helmet, is carrying a flailing Papyrus over her shoulder. When she sets him down with a smirk, he wobbles a bit before assuming his proud stance. “THANK YOU, UNDYNE, BUT I'M SURE I COULD HAVE MADE IT HERE ON MY OWN.”
“Yeah, but I’m faster, so I brought you along,” she punches Papyrus in shoulder rather roughly.

“NYEH! IT’S JUST AS WELL. THE HUMANS WILL NEED A FRIENDLY FACE WHEN WE MEET THEM!” At this he notices Toriel. “HELLO, LADY ASGORE! I AM THE GREAT PAPYRUS.”

Toriel smiles with amusement. “It is wonderful to meet you, Papyrus. You may call me Toriel.”

Undyne is looking at Toriel with suspicion. “Wait, aren’t you the Queen?”

Toriel looks down, slightly. “I was,” she says sadly. “A very long time ago.”

King Asgore clears his throat as he tries to defuse the tension in the air. He starts walking towards the door leading to the Barrier. “Thank you for coming, Undyne. It is time.”

*Oh it’s really happening now.* “Um, your Highness?” You say meekly. He turns to look at you. “Try not to wreck my car.”

He smiles softly. “I will be careful.” He steps through the door with Toriel following behind.
Chapter Summary

The Barrier Comes Down

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Asgore liked to think he is a good king, but it is hard for a good man to be king. Terrible decisions must be made. You can't please everyone and at least some people will hate you no matter what you do. Now, Asgore must face the consequences of his decisions; he must face the very Souls that had to be taken to free his people.

He keeps the vessels containing the Souls in a sealed chamber beneath the floor near the Barrier. When he activates the mechanism to expose them, Toriel audibly whimpers in grief upon the sight. At least six young people had passed through her home. She tried in vain to convince them to not traverse the Underground, but they all either sneaked out when she wasn't looking, fought their way past her or simply talked their way out. None of them made it past Asgore. Some of them died from the elements, some were hunted down by the Royal Guard and some were killed by Asgore himself. Toriel, admittedly can see the fractures in Asgore's Soul from it straining under the LV it was never made to accommodate. Asgore is a Boss Monster, but he was never meant to be a killer.

Asgore bows his head as he bends down to pick all the containers up into his arms. He draws in a deep breath. “Forgive me,” he whispers before crushing the glass containers and pulling the Souls into his body.

So much Pain. So much Anger and Fear and Confusion! So much Power! What do I do with all this power? I don't even remember. “Let me go! I didn't mean it!” “I just wanted to see if the legends were true!” “Where am I? Lady Toriel?” Right. Freedom. I must free my people. “Why did you have to hurt me?” I'm sorry. “This isn't what I was expecting. What happened to the handsome skeleton man?” You deserve better than this. Forgive me. “I thought Monsters were good.” I will prove that we are. You will be at peace.

“Will you let us go if we help you?” You would help me? After what I did? "We're dead, aren't we? It's already too late for us." I will set you free. I promise. Slowly, the Souls' energies calm and reluctantly submit to Asgore's will. Asgore, somehow, is able to direct his attention to the Barrier. His thoughts are confusing and disjointed; the memories of the Souls within making him dizzy. He is only able to to settle on a single thought. Destroy. He extends his hands and focuses his empowered fire magic on the shimmering surface. The smell of ozone fills the chamber as the magic forming the Barrier is burned away by the blaze. Asgore can feel the Souls within him painfully churning and straining as he draws magic from them. He can feel their exhaustion and he struggles keep his focus as the power threatens to consume him.

Uncertain if it has taken minutes or hours, Asgore can feel the Barrier becoming unstable. Tremors start vibrating throughout the chamber. With one final expulsion of fire, a tear forms in the surface of the Barrier. Like a giant balloon being popped in ultra-slow-motion, the tear rips over the entire
Underground.

A deafening crash like thunder causes large amounts of dust and debris to fall from the cavern ceiling. Further into the Underground, stalactites crash into the forest and smaller chunks of rock damage a few buildings upon impact. A rush of air blows through the throne room as the air pressure equalizes. With the Barrier gone, Asgore steps forward. He feels exhausted, yet the power of the Souls drives him forward. So much power. The humans. Should I still destroy them and allow my people to roam freely? They killed my children. They must die! Toriel must have sensed that Asgore is beginning lose himself. “Asgore!” She calls him sternly. Asgore turns around; his blazing eyes focus on the soft-featured Boss Monster. Toriel. My wife. My love. Yes, peace. Asgore smiles and turns back around and keeps walking out of the cavern.

The sight of the clear morning sky brings Asgore back to himself. This is all he ever wanted for his people. There must be place for us here. Somehow. He draws in a deep breath and with his exhale, he releases his hold on the human Souls within him. For a moment they hover in front of him, simply floating in the Surface air.

Unable to wait any longer, you and Sans follow Toriel out of the cavern and onto the plateau. You can see a slight haze of dust that was likely caused by the tremor of the Barrier breaking. You both catch a glimpse of the Souls as they slowly float away. This is the first time you'd seen any human Souls that weren't your own since Sans kept the one he had collected out of your sight. The sight of the Souls before you is captivating and you can see why Sans was so distraught after he had returned from collecting one. It's unfathomable how something so small could hold so much power.

The paler of the two cyan Souls pauses in place for a moment as Sans watches them and you hear the softest of whimpers before it follows the others and disappears. Asgore sighs deeply as he stares up into the sky. She sun hasn’t quite crested the peak of the mountain and the plateau is still in a bit of shade. Nonetheless, Toriel smiles as she takes in the bright blue sky. “It's so beautiful. It has been so long,” she says with a bittersweet tone.

“I'm sorry it took so long,” Asgore says sadly. “I was too much of a coward to do what needed to be done. Can you forgive me?”

Toriel considers this for a few moment. Her face is hard with disappointment, but then it softens to understanding. “I am not saying 'no', but I will say 'not yet'.” Asgore gives her a sad smile before being distracted by clanging footsteps.

Undyne jogs out of the cavern to join the four of you, with Papyrus, Alphys (having returned your cat to your car) and Mettaton on her heels. “Woah!!” She exclaims as she takes in the sky and forest below. “This is awesome! It's so warm and bright! And is that water down there??”

“It's s-so much p-prettyer than in my a-anime!” Alphys says giddily. You swear you see stars in her eyes. You glance at Mettaton and see a familiar pattern of light on his display and assume he is broadcasting the scene to the Underground.

“You haven't even seen the sun, yet,” you says smiling at their enthusiasm. “Too early in the day, but it will come over the mountain in a couple of hours.”

“YOU MEAN I WILL FINALLY BE ABLE TO MEET THE SUN?” Papyrus says excitedly as he Looks up towards the top of the mountain. “WOWEE!” Sans is just silently watching his brother while he reaches to take your hand. You squeeze it lovingly as you all take in the Surface sky and air.
“Is that a city down there?” Toriel asks, squinting at the buildings just barely visible on the horizon on the coast.

“Yes,” you answer. “That's the town of Ebott. We passed through it on the way here. The story of the Human-Monster War is mythology to them, but some people believe it really happened; at least according to a book I bought. Guess they'll be rewriting their history books, soon.”

Suddenly, everyone's attention is drawn to the sky as you hear a very distinctive sound. “What's that?” Undyne asks cautiously.

“A helicopter,” you reply as you spot it appearing from the the other side of the mountain. “It's probably investigating the effects of the Barrier breaking.” You squint as you try to read the letters on the side. “‘Police’,” you say finally. “Won't be long now. There will be people coming up here to find out what's going on. Technically, we're trespassing because the authorities barred it from the public after after people kept going missing or getting hurt up here.” Asgore looks guilty at this statement; Undyne looks slightly less-so. Toriel looks angry and Papyrus looks sad. “For now, we have to talk to them on their terms. I'll try to give them a general explanation of why we're up here, but one of you will have to explain the plight of the Monsters.”

Asgore and Toriel nod. “Understood,” Asgore says calmly.

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High above the mountainside, the pilots of the police helicopter are studying the scene below. “This the worst place for a costume party,” comments one of them as he controls the high-powered camera he has trained on the plateau. “How did they even get up there? Did the rangers find the vehicle?”

“Not I know of,” the other says. “I want to say it's in that cave, but I can't see how they would got it up there. That plateau wasn't there a few days ago and don't see any equipment that could do that. The rangers know where to walk to get up there. Shouldn't take too long. At least they aren't trying to hide. Almost like they're expecting to be caught.”

Several minutes later, back on the plateau, your attention is drawn to the terrain leading up to the cave. You can see people carefully making their way through the brush and rocks. Their uniforms do indeed look like that of park rangers. You inform your companions of the rangers approaching and beseech them to remain as calm as possible. You go to stand at the edge of the plateau so you're the first person they see when they reach it.

“Ma'am, you're going to have to come with us. This is private property,” the higher ranking ranger informs you.

You nod calmly even though you're incredibly nervous. “I'm aware of that. But I have a very good reason to be up here. You should probably come up here and see for yourself.” You step back towards the monsters waiting near the cave entrance and the rangers follow you and stare perplexed at what they assume are extremely detailed costumes. “Are you familiar with the supposed myth of the War of Humans and Monsters?”
Yes the Shopkeep called the police.
Quarantine

Chapter Summary

When reality hits, it hits hard.

The next hour is spent speaking to slack-jawed park rangers and police officers. A few medical personnel were escorted to the plateau as well. The police helicopter had been patrolling the skies to keep unwanted intrusions such as news helicopters investigating the tremor away from the area.

After identifying yourself as a Canadian citizen, you introduced the authorities to the 'Monsters' watching anxiously from behind you. It took a while to convince them that the Monsters were not people in elaborate costumes and that Papyrus was not some sort of marionette, but were, in fact, energy-based creatures that have been essentially prisoners of war under the mountain for generations. You did not mention the fact it took the use of seven human Souls for Asgore to break the Barrier. You managed to spin a tale that they needed a willing, living human on the inside to use 'human magic' because it was human magic that put it there. That humans are stronger than Monsters and only a properly instructed human could bring it down. You elaborated that you had come to Ebott to explore the supposed myth surrounding the mountain. You were prepared to accept the risk of injuring yourself and even pay the fine if you were caught. When you found out the myth was true, you decided to help them. You insisted that the process didn't harm you.

They did ask about the people that went missing over the years. Asgore extrapolated from your cover story that they did not survive the elements of the Underground and even if they had, they were too young to deal with Barrier. When they asked how you survived so easily, you state that only Sans was able to properly guide you and that he wasn't around when the previous humans came through.

Asgore emphasizes to Sheriff Riley Jackson, who had arrived along with the medics, that his people mean the humans no harm and that they only wish for a peaceful co-existence. You also state that the Monsters cannot make the transition alone. The nuances of the legality of personhood and residency are unfamiliar to Monster culture. They are, however aware that humans may not be willing to accept them as quickly as they would like. It would be dangerous to just make their presence known to the general public without proper preparations and protection from aggressors.

Sheriff Jackson is still reeling from the realization that the creatures before him were not human. Eventually Sans sees an almost child-like glee come across his face and he looks up in awe at Asgore as he eagerly shakes his hand. He informs you that he doesn't have the authority to deal with the emergence of a new race. Technically and legally the Monsters do not exist and thus are not people, let alone citizens. The local police force is not strong enough or equipped to deal with what, at the moment, would be considered immigration. However, he makes the executive decision that the area needs to be guarded and that he would do his best to make the Monster race feel welcome. Sans had been scrutinizing him for a while and seems to believe he is genuine.

Jackson had stepped away to begin making several phonecalls requesting for support to keep this section of the mountainside under protection and contacting whatever authorities he can to aid him giving an unknown civilization tentative status as citizens. Mt. Ebott is on American soil, after all. It isn't long before the sound of helicopters is nearly constant. Most of them are police helicopters
patrolling the airspace, but some of them have a military appearance. They occasionally airdrop various crates in locations of the mountainside that you can't quite see.

Throughout these interactions, you can tell that some of the medical officers have been watching you. The sun had crested the mountain by now and you were all in direct sunlight. It's becoming increasingly difficult to hide the fact that you are not feeling well at all. They seem to suspect that while you were the only human to survive in the Underground, you didn't come out unscathed.

With no shade to be found, you're really starting to feel the heat of the California sun, now. The painkillers you took earlier seem to not be working anymore as your head starts to throb and your body starts to hurt to the point you start looking for something to sit on. You spot a boulder near the edge of the plateau and move to sit down on it. Sans follows closely and you lean your head against his chest. He shields you from the sun as he rubs your back with one hand and the side of your face with the other. Sans isn't a monster adept at using green magic, but what he can do is take green magic from your Soul and redirect it back into your body to soothe your aching muscles. You remember Sans's hands were supposed to be warm, but against your overheated skin, they're cold. You're also really thirsty.

Some of the police officers and medics have been leaving the plateau and later returning looking rather anxious. You see a few more medical personnel arrive on the plateau carrying what looks like a large portable medical supply station. You wonder if something is going on at the base of the mountain since there isn't much room on the plateau to set anything up. Sans seems to have better hearing than you and he tells you that they ran into some military personnel at the chainlink fence that surrounds the mountain and that they were instructed to return to the plateau with the provided medical supplies. It seems that Jackson had mentioned in one of his phonecalls that you appear to have fallen ill. The result is that the area is being quarantined due to no one knowing what you are sick with.

You cough at an itch in your throat as you come to the realization that you don't know what it is either or where you caught it. You see two of the medics who brought the supply crate are removing and donning various articles of protective medical clothing such as papery suits, face-masks and gloves. After suiting up, the two medics finally approach you directly. They look nervously at Sans and he leans back slightly so they can interact with you, but he doesn't leave you. They introduce themselves as nurses Adjit and Choi and ask permission from you to give you a basic physical examination. You tell them you are a Canadian citizen and that you don't have American health insurance and they actually tell you that the military has taken over the operation and has you covered for the time being. You snicker a bit and ask how the military personnel were convinced that this is more than just some weirdos messing around on the mountain. They say that they'd looked at body-cam footage of some of the police officers and it seemed convincing enough to keep the area contained for further investigation, but it was the fact you may potentially have an unidentified infectious sickness contracted underground that the place is on lockdown.

You consent to them taking various vital statistics such as your temperature, pulse and blood pressure and hydration. They look at your eyes, your throat and your ears and finally they use a stethoscope to listen to your breathing which even you notice has become difficult.

“When did you start feeling symptoms?” Nurse Adjit asks.

Right after a flower beat the snot out of me. “Early this morning. It was just some soreness and fatigue even after I woke up.”
“That fast?” She says surprised. “You have a fever of 103 and I can hear a buildup of fluid in your chest cavity. You have the very acute symptoms of influenza.”

“The flu?” You say in shock. “That's it? I shouldn't have a problem with that. Never had before. I have a pretty strong immune system.”

“That may be so for the more common strains, but this shouldn't have developed this quickly. While it's a good sign that your body is reacting and fighting it, the fact it's this advanced after just a few hours of the initial symptoms indicates this particular strain is extremely aggressive. It could easily get worse than this.”

You have to cough rather painfully before you can respond and you feel Sans tense significantly. “What do I do?” You wheeze.

Nurse Choi was on the phone up until now. “Our colleagues have an isolation tent set up further down the mountain. You'll have to go through a decontamination process before going inside. We'll be able to monitor and treat you there.”

You sigh heavily when you realize you have to leave Sans and the other Monsters. You attempt to stand up, but your stomach doesn't follow you. Your head spins and your gut lurches and you collapse on the ground before promptly vomiting at the nurses' feet. Your whole body seizes as Papyrus's spaghetti is violently expelled. Sans kneels down and wraps his arms around you as you dry heave until you can't support yourself anymore.

Now, you just feel like you're dying. Your head is throbbing so badly, your whole body is shaking with it. Sans helps you sit back on the boulder as you catch a glimpse of the occupants of the plateau now looking at you. Now that everyone is very aware and you are very sick, the tension in the air is very obvious. The expressions of horror on Toriel's and Asgore's faces don't make you feel any better. You look up at Sans's face and it breaks your heart: he looks devastated. His breathing his sped up in panic as you get the impression that he feels how you felt when he told you that he was dying and how helpless you felt.

“We have to go,” Nurse Adjit says urgently. “You're going to get more dehydrated at this rate and this heat isn't going make things easier.”

Sans twitches and tightens his grip on you. You feel an odd vibration emanate from Sans's chest. It felt like purring, but no. Sans is growling. As much as you appreciate him wanting to protect you, now is not the time or place for aggression. “Sans,” you say weakly and he looks down at you. Damn, you hate that sad, lost look in his eyes. “I have to go with them. I don't know how bad this is going to get. A common sickness shouldn't get this bad this quickly. I need medical attention.”

Sans takes a deep breath and very reluctantly nods. He helps you stand up and you pull him into a tight hug. He returns the hug and you can feel him trembling as he forces himself to let go of you. You stroke his skull as you hand him your purse for safekeeping before turning towards the medics and slowly follow them off the plateau.
As you trudge down the path that has now been marked by bright police tape, you see what the cargo helicopters had been delivering off of the plateau. Several large platforms had been installed on the mountainside in order to create flat spaces for various purposes. One of them had a large generator placed upon it. Others had large beige tents possibly to be used as barracks and supply depots. Along the way, they ask you who you had physical contact with so they can accurately monitor for spread of the infection. You say that Sans is the only one who was close to you as you had the foresight to not shake hands with Jackson. Still they will need to keep an eye on every human in the area.

You have to stop a few times due to the pain and nausea becoming too much to bear, but eventually the nurses lead you to another platform that holds a large white pod-like building with plastic compartments pulled out to form small isolated rooms for various purposes. When you arrive at what appears to be an entrance, Nurse Choi activates an intercom at the door. “We have a patient for decontamination.”

Another female voice answers. “Understood. We're ready.”

Choi opens the door to the first chamber. “Alright, once you're inside, you'll have to strip down and put your clothes in the plastic bag in the corner. There's a shower against the wall where you'll be sprayed down with antiseptic. Then you'll dress yourself in the medical clothes provided. Then you'll go through into the isolation room and Dr. Rhease will instruct you from there.”

You nod nervously and go inside the structure. At least it's air-conditioned in here. You follow the instructions given to you and strip off your sweaty slacks and t-shirt. You can see movement beyond the diffused plastic curtains that surround the room, so you assume it is the other doctor Choi mentioned.

After the stinging hot shower, you dry off and dress in the pyjama-like medical scrubs and slippers. A voice from the other side of the curtain asks if you're ready to continue and you say yes. You hear a hiss like an airlock opening and the curtain slides open on its own. Looking in, you see a short plastic corridor that leads to another room that contains a cot, a vitals monitoring system, IV stands and various other tools and equipment. A woman dressed in protective medical garb is waiting for you near the monitoring system. It's like something out of those disease suspense-thriller films. You half-expected her to refer to you as Patient Zero.
She directs you to lie down on the cot and proceeds to clean a spot on your arm and insert an IV containing a standard saline solution due to your evident dehydration. After that, she takes a swab of your mouth to be used in a culture test to identify what strain of flu you've been infected with. The discomfort of your sickness is starting to numb you to the procedures. Right now your thoughts are on Sans and the Monsters. *Will they be okay?*

***

Back on the plateau, a large crate is being airdropped near the cavern. As a result of the quarantine, official representatives are not able to interact with the monsters other than via electronic communication. Word of the Monsters' arrival had finally made it congress and their existence has been accepted as a non-hoax and personhood may be given provided that updates are continuously relayed to them. Sheriff Jackson and his subordinates have volunteered to take on the task of identifying each monster to determine the size of the population as a stepping stone to giving them a status as 'people'. The crate contains a laptop, a wi-fi hotspot, a camera and a multi-use printer. It also contains a large canopy to place over the plateau and a tent to keep the equipment clean.

The identification process is improvised at best. Jackson and his makeshift team have decided that monsters who choose not to leave the Underground at this time due to their weather-sensitive physiology such as IceCaps and Pyropes won't be pursued for ID unless they interact with the outside world from within the Underground. Those who wish to claim personhood on the Surface would submit to having their photograph taken and be issued an ID card of sorts that contained basic information such as their name, subspecies, appearance and optional information such as their occupation and birthplace. Ages were a bit more complicated, however. Because different subspecies of monster can have vastly different lifespans, it is common for monsters to stop keeping track of their own age once they reached adulthood. Asgore, Toriel and Gerson are over a thousand years old. Thus many birthdates were approximations based on Gerson's hobby of collecting calendars.

Also, some monsters all share the same name that is often that of their subspecies. Loox for example are all named Loox Eyewalker, however among monsters they are all unique and identified by their 'energy signature' that monsters use as part of their communication; similar to how animals use scents. Plus, they all look different. They have the same body shape, but their skin and eye-colour combinations are unique to each individual. Similarly, Froggits have a unique pattern of spots and splotches on their backs. Some individuals have their own names to to identify themselves by, but many do not. As a result, Jackson opts to give them unofficial nicknames based on the Military Phonetic Alphabet.

Due to the limited space on the mountainside, Jackson could only have a handful of individual Monsters on the plateau at once and had settled on a queue system with at most twenty monsters in the queue at a time. Monsters waiting to get into line and see the surface would have wait patiently in the throne room. Alphys and Mettaton send out a PSA that those willing to forgo the line may send her photographs directly along with the required ID information and she would deliver the information herself to Jackson when he able to take it. Mettaton had also connected to the local news media to keep track of how much the general public knew about what was happening on the mountain. So far, many theories ranging from a crime having taken place to an alien landing. Strangely, the latter was more accurate, but no knowledge of the Monsters has gotten out yet. *Such a shame~*
At first, the process is chaotic. Guards and other Royal Agents are tasked with keeping the general populace from suddenly rushing the throne room; both from the Capitol and the rest of the Underground. A number-calling system is put in place at various locations and each Monster would be called in turn to join the queue. Everyone is instructed that they may remain outside, but they must remain within the quarantine area. Any rowdiness or disrespect to the humans in the area would result in them being escorted back inside the cavern, so they have a lot of incentive to behave.

Naturally, Asgore and Toriel Dreemurr are first in line and are given special markings on their cards identifying them as royalty. The monsters who were initially present on the plateau were allowed next. Alphys, being the Royal Scientist follows in turn. Undyne, Captain of the Royal Guard is next. Mettaton barely resisted posing dramatically for the camera. Papyrus, being newly christened as the Royal Mascot takes his turn, but Sans... oh Sans.

Sans has been standing at the edge of the plateau ever since the nurses took you away. He had been staring in a nearly trance-like state in the direction of the isolation tent that currently housed you even though he couldn't physically see it from here, and concentrating on the Link that told him you were still alive. Papyrus approaches him cautiously with his hands wringing nervously. “Brother, You Should Take Your Turn To Have Your Identification Photo Taken, Or You Might Miss Your Chance For Some Time.”

Sans doesn't answer for a moment, but eventually he draws in a deep breath and exhales slowly. He seems to come back to reality, but only slightly. “okay,” he says quietly as he turns to head toward to the tent that the others had just returned from.

Jackson sits behind his makeshift desk as he prepares another template. The tent is sparse. Other than the desk, there is a printer/laminator machine that creates the ID cards, there is the camera and opposite that is a white backdrop and a height indicator. Sans enters and stands on the indicated spot on the floor and looks up at the automated camera. “How are you holding up?” He asks quietly.

Sans looks down. “My patellas and spine seem to be doing trick,” he says flatly. Jackson looks up and grimaces and Sans looks a bit guilty. Jackson has been a trooper; not just as police officer, but he's taken an incredible responsibility in being the face of first-contact for many monsters to come. He's earned Sans's respect and doesn't deserve his snark.

“You really care about her, don't you?” He says softly. Sans sighs heavily and closes his eyes and just nods. “They'll take care of her. I'll put in a good word for you and try and get you in to see her.”

Sans looks up with hopeful eyes. “thank you,” he mumbles.

“But for now, we need to take care of this,” he says pointing to his monitor. Sans nods again and manages to plaster on a forced smile just as the flash goes off. “Name?”

“sans.”

“Subspecies?”

“skeleton.”

“Occupation? Optional.”

“sentry.”
“Birthplace? Optional."

“... capitol."

“Known age?”

Sans shrugs. “late twenties?”

Jackson nods with each answer and enters additional identifying information such as his height and general appearance. Once that is complete, the card printer starts up and a moment later produces a basic laminated card with Sans's portrait along with his identifying information. It also has a small holographic icon indicating it was issued by the County Police. It isn't much, but at least it's official to some extent. Jackson picks it up and hands it Sans. He looks at it briefly before putting it in his pocket. “Don't lose that,” Jackson says candidly.

Before Sans leaves, he turns back to Jackson. “why did you want to help us so much?”

Jackson pauses while while smiling slightly. “It might sound selfish, but... I'm a huge sci-fi and fantasy nerd. When I was a kid I loved the tropes of aliens or inter-dimensional beings coming to Earth and making contact with humans for the first time. Now, here I am with the opportunity to make my fantasies come true and helping an entire race of non-human people reintegrate with the human world. Your king said a majority of your kind had never met a human or seen the sky. It's special to me.”

Sans takes in what he'd said and smiles. “you've got a good soul, jackson. i'm rootin' for ya.” He leaves the tent and returns to his spot at the edge of the plateau.

Chapter End Notes

Any guesses for Jackson's Soul colour?
Chapter Summary

Your illness starts to take its toll while Monsters begin emerging from the Underground.

Chapter Notes

If you guessed Integrity for Jackson, you're right!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

When Nurses Choi and Adjit return to the plateau, a few officers and rangers are setting up floodlights around the area to prepare for the evening. They inform Jackson of your status and move to pass the message along to Asgore, Toriel and Sans. They’re carrying a large cooler with a biohazard symbol on it and they approach King Asgore who has been greeting the Monsters who have begun to queue up for their ID process. “We need to ask for your aid in diagnosing YN,” Nurse Adjit says imploringly.

“What do you need?” Asgore asks cautiously.

“We need samples from the Underground so we can find out where the infection came from.”

Sans, having over heard the conversation came over to speak. “probably came from waterfall. snowdin's too cold for it. i read a bit about flu and cold viruses and it wouldn't survive there. waterfall, though, seems like the perfect place for something like that to sustain itself.” He scans the plateau for a familiar fish woman helping to keep the line in order. “hey, undyne!” Undyne looks up and Sans waves her over. “wanna help figure out what made yn sick? you can get down there faster than me.” ‘cause i don't wanna teleport away from here.

Undyne nods. “Whaddya need?”

Nurse Choi hands her the cooler. “We need water, soil and plantlife samples.”

“she visited gerson, too. he's probably still in his study. he'd know what she touched there.” Sans knows Gerson may have a poor long-term memory, but he keeps track of his collection flawlessly. Undyne nods and speeds off towards the cavern.

Undyne never thought she could respect humans. She had killed two humans who had come through the Underground many years ago. Undyne, may not look it, but she's at least in her 40's. It's not that she wanted to kill them, but she never saw them as equals. One thing Undyne does respect, however is passion and dedication to the greater good. You earned her respect by giving your all to free Monsters of your own volition and now you might even end up giving your life for the cause. That wasn't right and Undyne felt so frustrated when she discovered you got sick, so
when she's given the chance to help, how could she refuse?

Science was never Undyne's thing, but she's spent enough time around Alphys to know that being thorough is paramount. So she collects everything she could think of: water, dirt, grass, mushrooms, typha, even echo flowers and places each item in the plastic containers within the cooler. She then visits Gerson who had started to pack up his collection, but his books are still on the shelves. Gerson was unaware that you had gotten sick until she asks for whatever you had touched in his collection. He hands over the journal you had looked at and she places it in a plastic bag.

Undyne is gone for less than an hour and when she returns to the plateau, the nurses are interviewing the humans helping out with the ID process and introducing the emerging Monsters to Surface life. So far, it seems no one else has contracted your illness. Undyne hands the cooler to Nurse Choi and she thanks Undyne for her help before heading back to the infirmary.

Back in the medical bay, your condition hasn't improved. Your fever has gone up and you're having more difficulty breathing. Dr. Rhease had placed a ventilation mask with medicated mist on your face to keep the inflammation in your lungs down. She's been watching your condition very carefully as she frequently asks you questions about what you're feeling so she can pinpoint what strain of influenza you've contracted and what medication she should give you. A majority of your symptoms are that of severe flu, but some seem to be unrelated such as pain in your mouth and eyes.

A few hours later, you're having trouble staying conscious and become increasingly disoriented. With how hard it is to breathe, you can only manage about one word at time. “Sa- Sans... Please... I need him.” Your pleading doesn't fall on deaf ears. Rhease had been asking Choi and Adjit to keep monitoring the conditions of the other humans on the mountainside and none had become ill other than you. Not even those who had directly touched some of the monsters, so it was unlikely the illness came from them directly. Rhease had not met 'Sans' personally, yet, but not having him around seems to be distressing you significantly; and a stressed body doesn't recover from illness easily. Not to mention, she had been contacted by Jackson requesting Sans be allowed to see you. His despondency seems to be contagious and many of the monsters he's been speaking to are worried for both him and you. Worry breeds agitation. Agitation in an unfamiliar high-stress environment surrounded by military personnel? That's a bad time waiting to happen.

***

Just as the sun is beginning to set over the water, Sheriff Jackson is instructing one of his subordinates on the use of the ID software so the process can continue through the night. The subordinate had been 'ordered' to take a nap so he could take Jackson's place. Jackson wanted to continue, but the monsters he was interviewing noticed he'd been dozing off at the desk. Some even snickered, saying he reminded them of Sans dozing off at his sentry stations. Speaking of Sans, just before Jackson called it a night, he received a text message from Dr. Rhease that Sans would be allowed to visit the medical bay provided he went through the same decontamination process that comes standard with any visitors.

Jackson doesn't have far to go to find Sans. He's still standing on the edge of the plateau like a statue. He is noticeably thinner than Jackson remembers. His clothes are hanging loosely on his
skeletal frame and there is some clear discolouration under his partially closed eyesockets.

“Hey, buddy?” Jackson says softly.

Sans twitches and comes to his senses. He looks up at the Sheriff with somewhat unfocused eyelights. “heya,” he says gruffly.

Jackson's heart breaks a bit at his expression. Sans may not be human, but he knows that look. He's seen it many times on the faces of people as their loved ones are taken away in an ambulance. “I've been informed that you're allowed to go the infirmary and see YN. I don't know if you'll be able to get close to her, but you'll be in the same location.”

Sans's expression lights up at being told this. “i can go there now?”

Jackson nods as he gestures to the path leading off of the plateau. “I'm about to call it a night before I pass out, but I'll walk you there.

On the way there, Sans notices some of the monsters who have completed their identification are gathering in small groups in clear spaces of the mountainside. Sans smiles softly at the thought they will finally be allowed to see the stars for the first time. Arriving at the infirmary, Jackson presses the intercom button. “Hey, Rhease. I have Sans here. Can I let him in?”

Rhease's voice responds. “Yes, I'll guide him through the decontamination process.”

“Gotcha.” Jackson opens the door to the first chamber of the pod-like building. “She'll take it from here. Good luck, bud.”

Sans nods and heads inside. Once he steps inside the white room surrounded by plastic, he has a weird flashback to Alphys's laboratory. Rhease's somewhat muffled voice comes from behind one of the curtains. “Hello. Sans, is it? Thank you for coming.”

“thanks for lettin' me come,” he says nervously as he looks around the room. “what do i need to do here?”

“You'll need to strip and leave your clothes on the plastic bag and step into the shower to be sprayed down with antiseptic. Then you dress in the provided clothes.”

-strip? “uhhh...”

“I'm not going to watch you,” she says quickly. “The process is automated.”

“You're not going to destroy my clothes, are you?” He says clutching at the star-chart t-shirt you bought him.

“No,” she says reassuringly. “They're going to be washed.”

“okay...” he says finally. He discreetly places your purse in a personal pocket dimension before carefully stripping off his clothes and dropping them into the provided plastic bag. After stepping his bare-bones self into the shower space, the automated shower sprays him down with hot water. After that, Sans shudders his bones to shake the water off before grabbing a towel and drying off. He dresses in the provided scrubs and slips on the slippers and then as he's approaching the curtain, it opens and he can see down the plastic corridor. He can't quite see you through the diffused curtains, but he can still sense you're here. Dr. Rhease pulls open a curtain to the side and guides him into an observation area. From there he can finally see you on the other side of a clear plastic barrier. His Soul sinks into his proverbial gut when he sees you laying still on the medical cot. He
can hear the vitals monitoring equipment beeping with your elevated heart rate and you seem to be breathing a lot faster than you should. There is a fan next to you and some sort of cold pack on your forehead to try and keep your fever from dangerously overheating you.

Sans looks up pleadingly at Dr. Rhease. “can't i go over to her?”

Dr. Rhease grimaces sadly. “I can't let you. Not yet. I'm already pushing regulations letting you come in here when you aren't medical personnel.”

Sans nods in understanding and turns back to watch you. For a brief moment you open your eyes and focus on him. Sans gives you a small wave and you smile weakly before closing your eyes again. The EKG slows down slightly to Sans's relief. at least i can see her now.

***

Near the plateau, the surfaced Monsters had just watched the sun set over the Pacific Ocean. Some of them are still in tears at the sight. Slowly, over next half hour or so, the stars begin to appear one by one. Asgore and Toriel smile as small cheers of joy rise from the gathered groups. “It's beautiful, isn't it?” He says softly.

“Yes,” Toriel sighs. “It is... bittersweet. But we are here now.” She is silent for several moments. “I will not say it was 'worth it', but it is what is it. It is in the past and will not forget the past, but perhaps I am willing to forgive it.” Asgore smiles softly as he holds out a hand to Toriel. She takes it and give it a gentle squeeze before letting go and returning her gaze to the stars.

Chapter End Notes

* Sans is a shy skellie.
* Toriel hasn't completely forgiven Asgore, but at least she's willing to communicate with him.
Chapter Summary

You die... sort of.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It's been hours and Sans still refuses to move. He maintains his stalwart vigil as you slip in and out of consciousness. Your condition seems to be getting worse and Dr. Rhease is doing her best to administer medications to reduce your fever and keep the inflammation inside your chest down. He wants to be closer to you; much closer. He knows he could easily just shortcut past the plastic barrier separating him from you, but he won't. He doesn't dare risk breaking the rules set by the medical personnel. He should consider himself lucky they let him come this close. He'd nearly lost himself when they took you away. Something primal stirred within him at the thought of having his Mate taken from him. But, now you might be taken from him either way.

Both you and the medics said it was a viral infection. Something called 'influenza'. He should have known better. He's a scientist for Stars sake. He should have known you could get sick there. The cold of Snowdin should have been the least of his worries. He brought you to Waterfall where microbes would be running rampant. At least he didn't have you go in the water itself. Who knows what kind of amoebas you would have picked up. You might have known better, too if you weren't already so love-sick with him. He made you sick, and now you might die because of him. It's only a matter of time before he felt that sickeningly familiar chill of death shudder though his bones.

A male nurse named Paul had been in the room with Sans as he monitors the viral culture samples and analyzing equipment. He pulls Sans out of his self-imposed pit of despair as he passes by the plastic barrier. He stops and stands next to Sans and looks in at you and Dr. Rhease as she tends to you. “You don't get sick the same way humans do, do you?” Sans actually jumps slightly at suddenly being spoken to out of the blue.

He gives the nurse a side-long glance. “we're not organic. infections aren't really a thing for us.” He sighs heavily. “it never crossed my mind. i was so focused on her, i was blind to the idea of the underground being so unsanitary it could cause this.” He gestures towards your current predicament. “i love her so much. can't believe i let this happen. i'm such an idiot.” He covers his face with his hands and barely suppresses a sob.

Paul is silent, apparently trying to think of something to say. “You didn't mean for it to happen, right? It was an accident,” he says finally. “Everyone makes mistakes. It doesn't make you human, but you're a person, nonetheless.”

Sans hardly has a moment to appreciate the words before he feels a sharp cold pain in his chest, like he'd been stabbed with an icicle. He can just barely whisper your name before his knees give out from the pain and he starts gasping for breath. The nurse is about to approach him when he is distracted by the alarms coming from the EKG attached to you. You've gone into cardiac arrest.
“YN. Wake up.”

You wake up. Or do you? What even is ‘awake’? Where am I? I can't see or feel anything.

“This is the Void. The world between worlds,” Says the voice.

Or is it a voice? How do I hear without ears? Where are my ears?

“I apologize for the confusion. I’m afraid there is not much I can do about it.”

Why am I here?

“Currently, your physical body is unable to contain your Soul, so for now you are here.”

I... died? You should be panicking, but you can't even feel your heart beating.

“Technically, yes. But your human doctors have come a long way over the years. You might actually survive.”

I have to! I have to go back to Sans! I can't leave him!

“Yes, with the connection to your Soul being severed, it's caused him quite a bit of pain.”

Who are you?

“Do you not recognize me? Oh, you cannot see me. My apologies.”

Wait, I know your voice. You're... his father. The scientist.

“Yes,” the voice seems sullen. “It's a shame I could not be there to raise him and Papyrus, but he did well for himself and did right by his brother. I am proud of him. I only wish I could show him. Sadly, I am trapped here in limbo. Unable to move on due to circumstances of my ‘death’.”

What happened to you?

“The Core was originally created using pocket dimensions to store excess energy. When I dropped that buffer, it destabilized the pocket dimensions and formed cracks, if you will, in the barrier between the Void and physical plane. I, along with my apprentices, fell into those cracks and we ended up here removed from your timeline. I can see through the cracks, but only under extremely rare circumstances could anyone see me. But for the most part, I have been forgotten. Sans remembers me, because part of him remains in the void. He remembers the time loops created by a flower infused with Determination because time has little meaning in the Void.”

A flower? That flower? The one that attacked me?

“He has enough Determination to manipulate the fissures created by the Core accident. The fissures were collapsed when Sans created a new one on the Surface. That is why he cannot
access them anymore. Pity. He was not always a flower, he was once a Prince.”

A prince? He was the child of Asgore and Toriel? The voice doesn't answer for several seconds.

“I'm afraid we don't have much time. You will be returning to your reality soon.”

There's no way to bring you back?

“I do not believe so, however my son is brilliant. The possibilities are endless; provided you return to him. Monsters become rather attached to those they fall for. It doesn't surprise me he would fall so deeply for a human considering his ancestry.”

What do you mean?

“Every monster has mundane origins. Some creatures are born with receptors for magic absorption. Over many millennia and many generations, they evolved to be purely magical sapient beings. The first Skeletons in particular were once that of humans. Living humans have too much Determination to evolve into magical beings, but their remains after the flesh has left? Perfectly reasonable.”

Is that why they can sense when a human is dying?

“That and skeletons are very sensitive and fragile creatures. Papyrus is the exception to the rule. He has Asgore to thank for that. His paternal instincts allowed those he aided in raising to grow up stronger than usual. Undyne is another example. Sans is more fragile than usual due to his unfortunate circumstances. He needs you more than either of you know.”

And I need him. I don't have words to describe why, but I would be so empty without him. I just can't be sans Sans.

You hear a soft chuckle. “You are indeed perfect for each other. You are very special. You did what I could not. You saved them.”

I have to tell him you're still alive.

“I'm afraid you will likely not remember being here. Your Soul might, but you will not be conscious of it. Perhaps you will see me in your dreams. Good luck my dear.” Then there is nothing.

...

And then there is is pain. A lot of it. Your head and chest are killing you. Your whole body is in agony. Your heart feels like it's going break out of your ribcage and your head is throbbing so bad, it feels like it will explode. You can almost hear voices around you but they’re muffled and distorted. Your vision is blurred as you try to look around. You can see people around you trying to talk to you and ask you questions. You look to the side and you can just barely see Sans beyond a plastic barrier on his knees with his his arms limp in front of him as he looks at you with empty eyesockets. Has the Reaper been following me all this time?

That's your last thought before you pass out.
Papyrus is worried. He's worried about his brother. He's worried about you. He's worried about his flower friend. Now that the Barrier is down and with him being so small and mischievous, he could be anywhere. He's surprised when the flower with a face found him shortly after stepping away from the compound.

“FLOWEY!” He exclaims upon seeing the small creature's yellow petals. “I WAS WORRIED YOU'D GOTTEN LOST. ARE YOU ENJOYING THE SURFACE? I HEARD PLANTS NEED SUNLIGHT TO BE HEALTHY.”

Flowey didn't really answer other than a quiet “Yeah...” He didn't want to admit that he didn't even leave the Underground until he heard the helicopters since he didn't recognize the sound. He could have left the quarantine and the mountain and cause all sorts of mischief. He could have gone anywhere and done anything he wanted. The problem was he didn't know what he wanted. Not anymore. After discreetly leaving the cavern and seeing the sky and feeling the warmth of the sun, he didn't move for very long time. It scratched at an old memory; one he'd tried to put out of his mind. The memory is not a happy one. The day he lost everything he ever cared about and saw just how terrible humans could be. Seeing humans on the plateau now and how they actually cared about the well-being of the Monsters conflicted with what he was so sure of. It forced him to think that maybe they were different now. Different. Something new. That was really all he was trying to get; and now he doesn't know what to do.

“Flowey,” Papyrus said surprisingly quiet. “Did You Attack YN?”

YN. Right. Flowey didn't know what to make of you. You were new, but Flowey was still in his idle wanton destruction phase. After Sans disappeared, the Underground changed. He lost his ability to Reset and believed he would be trapped just like everyone else with no recourse. With an inability to feel empathy, he couldn't feel friendship no matter how kind Papyrus was to him. When you showed up, he realized his game was about to be taken away and he panicked. When he found out you got sick, he almost felt bad. He actually wished he could. You had done what he couldn't. “It was an accident,” he said quietly. It was a lie, but really he didn't plan on hurting you. He was just annoyed that you were the talk of the Underground and that... Sans was happy. Flowey was... jealous.

Papyrus smiles. “I'M SURE IT WAS, MY FRIEND,” he says genuinely. “WHEN YN FEELS BETTER YOU CAN TALK TO HER. YOU'LL FEEL BETTER AFTER YOU BECOME FRIENDS WITH HER, TOO.”

Friends. Yeah...

Chapter End Notes

Dadster hasn't anyone to talk to in a long time, so he wanted to say as much as he could. Also, Souls go the Void for a very brief moment upon death before returning to Reality.
Recovery

Chapter Summary

You're finally feeling better.

Chapter Notes

Time to bring the Sickness arc to an end.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Slowly, very slowly the world comes back into focus. For a few seconds you're not sure where you are, but the steady beeping of the EKG behind you reminds you; you're in the infirmary. You're vaguely aware that you're on your back and Sans is at your side. It seems Dr. Rhease took pity on Sans after you had nearly died. It became very apparent that you and he have some sort of metaphysical symbiotic relationship and felt it would be beneficial for both of you to allow him into the treatment room so he could touch you. Your body feels like it hasn't moved in days and your chest hurts when you breathe too deeply. You try to lift your head, but you're so weak, you're lucky you got your eyes open. You look around slowly until you see Sans. He's hunched over the edge of the medical bed with one hand holding yours which is resting on your stomach and the other hand on your head. His skull is bent down and resting on the bed.

After a few minutes of consciousness, you see Dr. Rhease approach you still wearing full medical garb. Seeing you're awake, she looked relieved. She presumably looks at the vitals display behind you for moment before picking up some paperwork on the desk and pulling the mask off. “How are you feeling?” She asks softly.

You're slightly more aware of how you feel. You feel sticky with sweat, but your senses are also oddly dulled. “Feel like shit,” you manage to croak out weakly. “What happened to me?”

“You developed a viral infection. It appeared to be an ancient form of Influenza. You were complaining of severe generalized body pain and had a dangerously high fever. You were also having difficulty breathing and it was severe enough that your heart stopped for a few seconds, but we were able to give you some adrenaline and perform CPR and bring you back. We gave you some painkillers and treated the infection as well as we could with anti-inflammations and fluids, but we honestly weren't sure they would work because of how unfamiliar the strain of flu is. With your permission when you're feeling better, we'd like to take a blood sample and see what antibodies you developed.”

“Feels like those antibodies were hard-earned,” you mutter as you try in vain to readjust you position. You instead just settle for carefully releasing your hand from Sans's so you can rest it on his skull. You can't tell if he is awake, but you get the feeling he's just as exhausted as you.

“The fever you had indicates your body fought very hard against the infection, which is a good sign. It would have been worse if you hadn't reacted at all and the infection ran free. We tracked it's origin to a book that... Undyne, was it? She brought up some samples from Underground. We did a
culture and discovered it was a very old strain, but it has a very short half-life. The environment down there must have kept it alive somehow, but as soon as it came up here it couldn't survive.” She pauses for a moment to look at the paperwork in her hand. “There was also something in your blood that was a bit more recognizable. Ranunculus poisoning.” You tilt your head at the unfamiliar term. “More commonly known as buttercups. We think it hindered your ability to fight off the infection. Did you eat any flowers while you were down there?”

You stiffen at the realization. You feel Sans twitch in his sleep. Shit, that damn frickin' flower poisoned me! “No...” You say slowly as your mind scrambles to come up with something. “There are a lot of buttercups in King Asgore's throne room, though. Maybe I inhaled some pollen.”

Rhease nods. “Possibly. You seem alright now, so your body's cleared itself of toxins, but you'll be fatigued for a while.”

You nod as well. “Figured as much. Did anyone else get sick?”

“No,” she said shaking her head. “The area is still quarantined however, as we couldn't take the chance.”

“What's been happening while I was sick? Have there been conflicts?”

“Not really,” she said softly. “King Asgore has been fairly forthcoming about the intentions of his subjects and they're currently negotiating a personhood status. Everyone is mostly worried about you. A majority of the Monsters are remaining underground for time being.” She looks curiously at the skeleton currently passed out next to you. “Your friend hasn't left you at all. I was reluctant to let him inside with you because we couldn’t confirm it wasn't him that made you sick, but your vitals stabilized when he came close to you. He's very special to you, isn't he?”

You gently rub Sans's skull. He shifts slightly, but still no indication that he's awake. “Yes, he is,” you say wistfully. “They all are. They're all people. They're just... different. Even among themselves, they're different, but they're all special.” Your Soul aches when you realize just how... precious the Monsters are to you. Sans showed you how vulnerable they are and if they were to disappear from the world, it would be an incalculable loss.

A couple of hours of rest later, you're strong enough to sit up on the medical cot with Sans's help. The strong painkillers still in your system have you feeling a bit numb and will take a while to wear off. Sans lets you lean on him as you steady yourself before pressing his frontal bone against your forehead and smiling with relief. You reach up and stroke the side of his face. Dr. Rhease, who was signing a few papers nearby noticed this behaviour and quirks her head to one side. “You're... more than just friends. Aren't you?”

Suddenly, remembering you aren't alone, you both look over at her looking slightly guilty. “Yeah,” you say finally. “We're... pretty close.” You see a few metaphorical gears turn in her head and a few different expressions cross her face; ranging from confusion, to shock, to disturbed and eventually to understanding and even curiosity.

“I advise you to keep your interactions professional when in the presence of other humans,” she says softly. “They might not see your relationship the same way you do.”

You nod solemnly. “Yeah, I figured at much.”
You're allowed to leave the medical bay after you and Sans share a shower in the decontamination chamber. Your clothes had been washed and you get changed back into them. You're left on your own to make your way back to plateau with just a couple of your fingers intertwined. You notice the mountainside is much more populated than you remember. There hadn't been any new humans in due to the quarantine still in effect, but there are many monsters frolicking about in the bushes and rocks, just enjoying the Surface air. Some of the more burly monsters have taken it upon themselves to do some landscaping and create more flat safe spaces for items just as tents and cooking stations to be installed. Others have marked various spots that have loose ground and should be avoided. Most of them stop and wave at you as you pass by; clearly happy to see you've recovered.

A familiar yellow lizard child runs up to you and proudly shows you a laminated card that had been pinned to his shirt. Turns out his name is 'Kidd' and you think it's awesome that his subspecies is listed as 'dragon'. He certainly didn't look like a dragon, but he is just a child after all.

You both know you need some proper rest, but you're not sure where. Just as you're meandering around the compound contemplating napping in the back of your car, two Dog monsters wearing hooded black cloaks approach you. You recognize them from Grillby's as the mated pair of Dog sentries of the Canine Unit.

“Mates need their own tent,” the male, known as Dogamy states authoritatively.

“A tent is set up for you. Come with us,” the female, Dogaressa, exclaims as they scamper off. You and Sans look at each other and follow them to an area where several tents and huts of various material are set up on flat dirt platforms. They lead you to a modestly-sized military tent and inside is a table, some chairs, a porta-potty station and twin-sized folding cot. You barely get the chance to thank them before they scamper off again.

You sit down on the cot with a groan. You're still sore and tired, but as far as you know you're in recovery. Sans sits down next to you and flops down backwards. He grabs at the back of your shirt to try to tug you down next to him. You lay down properly on the cot and he crawls up next to you and nuzzles into you with his head on your shoulder and one arm wrapped around you.

“You okay?” You ask softly.

“yeah,” he says, clearly exhausted. “just bone-tired.”

“You seem like you haven't eaten, like, at all. Did you cut yourself off?” You put a hand over your Soul to see if you can feel a connection.

Sans nods with a slight grimace. “i didn't wanna drain anything from you while you were sick. you needed all your energy. and i just didn't feel like eating.”

“We should get something together then,” you say as you try to get up. Instead Sans just holds you tighter and curls into you a bit.

“can we just.. stay like this for while?” Sans seems to be trembling slightly.

You understand now. Sans needs the reassurance that you're okay and just be with you for a while. “Yeah,” you say softly. “Yeah, let's just relax for bit.” You hold him gently and stroke his skull, but he's still trembling.

“i might have done something terrible if you died,” he says very quietly. “i might've... i think i would've...” He looks up at with nearly non-existent eyelights. “i wouldn't have been able to let
“You go,” he whispers before burying his face into your chest and weakly sobbing. All the stress, anguish and exhaustion just pours out of him.

You hold him tightly as she shudders with each breath. It takes you a moment to realize what he meant. He would have absorbed your Soul if you hadn't survived. He would have become a pariah among his people; just to keep you with him. “Oh, Sans...” you whisper as you pull him onto you a bit more so you can embrace him more closely. He holds you tightly like you were going vanish from his arms. He loves you... so much that he'd rather die than lose you. You sigh heavily as you close your eyes and stroke his skull until his sobbing turns to deep breaths and he calms down enough for both of you have a power nap.

Chapter End Notes

Originally, I had not intended for Flowey to have anything to do with Reader's illness, but I changed my mind due to 'popular demand.' :-p
You and a Sans do a walkabout and see how life on the mountainside is progressing.

After a couple of hours, you wake up feeling slightly more refreshed. Sans wakes up with you, but he still looks tired. He still hasn't allowed himself to be 'fed' by your Soul's magic because of how drained of energy you are, but you know neither of you are going to get better if you don't eat. So, you manage to convince him to take you to where Grillby has set up a temporary eatery for the monsters who have stayed outside after getting their identification.

There is another monster there that you don't recognize: A mauve-coloured humanoid spider monster that Sans introduces to you Muffet. He tells you that normally she has a pastry shop in Hotland, but for the time being she is sharing a space with Grillby along with her tiny spider helpers. She was quite pleased when Toriel took it upon herself to transport the spiders who had been trapped in the Ruins of Old Home due to the cold of Snowdin being dangerous to them.

You get yourself a spider eclair and Sans gets a burger and you both sit on a bench brought up from Underground. Sans leans against you and you each wrap one around the other while holding your food in the other hand.

“Hey Sans,” you say with a sweet smile.

“hmm?” He answers with a full mouth.

“What did the skeleton say when he walked into a bar?”

“What?” He asks with a curious smile.

“Ow,” you say flatly. Sans just snickers and hugs you tighter as you sit and watch the monsters and humans interacting as equals.

After your refreshments, you head over to your car that is still inside the cavern only to find Alphys there. It seems she had been looking after your cat while you were out of commission and you thank her profusely. You also make a mental note to give her a thank you gift when you get the chance.

Sans leads you up to the plateau and to the canopy that housed the tent that had been used to issue many Monster Identification Cards at this point. You carefully step inside just as a magenta-skinned Loox is exiting and see Sheriff Jackson and an assisting park ranger hard at work keeping the physical records of the Monster population organized.

“Hey!” He says cheerfully as he sees you. “You look better.”
You move to the side as a Froggit hops onto a stool in front of the camera. “Yeah, I'm still little tired, but that's to be expected.”

“So it was the flu after all? They found out where you caught it?” The camera goes off, the Froggit turns around to display its unique spotting pattern and camera goes off again.

“A book in Gerson's collection. Probably the same illness that killed the author. Poor guy. The unique environment in the Underground kept it dormant, but alive for about a hundred years or so. The doctors are studying my blood right now to see how my antibodies changed as a result, but it will take a while since they only have basic equipment right now. I'm not sure if they'll try to make a vaccine or anything out of it. Who knows if it transferred to other objects or monsters over the years. In any event, it should be pretty obvious the underground is generally dangerous to humans.”

“Yikes, good thing no one's gone down there yet, but I know of a few of us who are pretty curious.” Jackson clicks a few times on the mouse. “Name?”

The Froggit answers. “(ribbit) Froggit.”

“Any nickname?” The Frog monster shakes it's head. “Okay, For the time being, you'll be identified as Froggit Delta-Romeo.”

“(ribbit) Sweet.”

“Occupation?”

“(ribbit) Gardener.”

“Birthplace?”

“(Ribbit ribbit) Old Home.”

“Age?”

The Froggit shrugs. “(ribbit) Adult.”


After the Froggit hops off with it's ID, Jackson asks a ranger to hold the line for a few minutes as he leans back and stretches. “I think we're almost done. Alphys and Mettaton have been helping to keep track of how many are still waiting and how many aren't in a hurry. Also, if you're feeling better and no one else has gotten sick, I have a feeling the quarantine will be lifted soon. The area will still be guarded, but people with more authority than me will start coming here. The president already knows what's happening, but he's going to be sending his representatives to talk to you and the King.”

You get a slightly uncomfortable feeling in your stomach. “That's kind of what I'm worried about. The more people find out about what's happening here, the more people will have a problem with it. Especially once the general public finds out. It's like this is the new Area 51 and the government's going to officially confirm that Aliens have landed. It's going to take a lot of time and communication for humans to see the Monsters as people let alone citizens. We've certainly seen what could happen from pop culture.” Then a weird smirk comes across your face. “You'll also get people on the other side of the spectrum who will possibly be aggressively supportive of them and
might cause a ruckus if things don't go well.”

Jackson chuckles quietly. “I think I’d be counting myself in the latter category. This has been incredible meeting so many different Monsters. They really are just people. Just living their lives and wanting their freedom like anyone else.”

Sans smiles at this. “jackson's been really awesome. i don't think he's stopped smiling since he started.”

“Please,” he says kindly. “Call me Riley. I'm really proud of the other people that came up here. Even though they were stuck here because of the quarantine, they really stepped up.”

“I can see that,” you say. “The monsters who have surfaced seem really happy and are getting along with them.”

“Most of them,” Jackson muses. “Some of them weren't so keen and have been staying in the barracks tents if they feel uncomfortable around the monsters, but they haven't been complaining.”

You nod sullenly. “Like I said, not everyone's going to be happy.”

“Yeah,” Jackson sighs. “But, we'll do our best. Anyway, I think once we're done the in-person issuing, Alphys will be giving me the information of Monsters who aren't in a hurry to get out, but still want their ID's.”

You both nod and bid Jackson farewell as you step out of the tent and the line continues onward.

As you continue to walk around the compound observing how the place has transformed as Monsters continue to populate the mountainside. After a while, you perk up and say. “Shit, I should really call my parents. You still have my purse?”

Sans snaps his his fingers. “yeah, i do.” You see a small tear in reality appear in front of you and your purse just falls out and plops into your hands. Almost immediately, you hear your phone start buzzing with notifications of text messages and missed calls. Some of them came from your friends. Most of them are from your mom. As you read them from oldest to newest your heart sinks they go from curiosity to concern and then panic and sadness. Apparently, although what's happening on the mountain is still vague, news of something strange had made it across the border. Your mom fears something has happened to you and has been contacting anyone she could to find out what. She called the border control, but she could only get the basic information that you had passed through alone and confirmed that you were headed for Ebott. She called the Ebott information centre, but you didn't visit them. You did visit the tourist gift shop and she called there, too. After describing you, the shopkeeper told your mom that he had seen you (again, alone) and that you showed an interest in the mountain's mythology. He was worried that you planned on travelling to the mountain itself and had contacted the authorities since that is restricted property. Eventually, your mom's texts become despondent as she believes you had gotten lost and hurt there.

Nervously, you press the 'call' button and wait for it connect. It rings once, then someone picks up. “Y-YN?” Came the weak voice. She's been crying.

“Hey, mom,” you say softly.

“YN! Oh my god! Are you okay? Where are you?!” You're reminded of the first phone call you heard between Sans and Papyrus.
“I'm okay, mom,” you say reassuringly. “I'm not hurt or lost. I did get sick for a while and couldn't call, but I'm okay now.”

“Are you in Ebott? I can hear helicopters.”

“Yeah, I'm... I'm actually on the mountain. I know I'm not supposed to be, but I had a very good reason for coming here.” You look around quickly and lower your voice. Sans can still hear you though. “Look, a lot is happening right now and it's extremely confidential. Did you look at the website for the town of Ebott?”

“Yes, I did when I was looking for businesses to call. I read about the mythology you said you were curious about.”

“Yeah...” You hesitate. “I found out about a month ago that the myth is real. There really was a civilization of monsters under the mountain. The, uh, 'friend' I said I had with me is actually one of them. He came to the Surface as a result of an experiment and I volunteered to bring him back so we could free them. Now the place is under heavy guard and we're working on making them part of society.”

Silence. You look over at Sans. His eyesockets are huge and he has an even more huge smile on his face. Before you can say anything, he throws his skull back and starts laughing hysterically.

“What?” You ask, bewildered.

Sans settles just enough to speak as he looks around to make sure no humans are listening, “i'm trying to picture how that would sound to someone who has no idea what's going on!” He wipes a tear from his eye. “oh my god, your poor mother! worried sick about you and you just tell her you just freed an entire species of people from under a mountain.” He chuckles quietly while you go back to your phone call.

“That's what going on over there?!” She exclaims. "Mythical beings are emerging from the ground? Oh your father is here. You're on speaker. That's incredible. So your.. 'friend'.. isn't.. human?”

“Yeah, that was him laughing.” You look at Sans with a questioning look but ask your mom. “Would you... like a picture?”

“Yes! I would love a picture of you.”

“Alright, but you have to promise me you'll keep it private. I know there isn't much context to give, but this needs to stay under wraps, okay?”

“Okay, we promise.” You minimize the call and bring up the photo app. You set it to capture a selfie of you and Sans and after making sure the image is satisfactory, you send it to your parents' phone. “Oh my goodness...” She says softly. “This is real?”

“Yes. It isn't a mask or photoshop or a filter or anything. His name is Sans. He's a real non-human person who resembles a skeleton.” You would like to tell your mom that you and Sans are 'dating', but you figure what you're already telling her would be enough to take in already. “All the monsters look different. There are different subspecies, but they're so varied. Some of them look like rabbits or frogs or bipedal goats. Some are completely unfamiliar. There's even fire elementals. It's incredible.”

“Wow,” your dad says, still absorbing your initial statement. “What's happening right now? Are they going to talk to the president or...”
“Soon. The place is quarantined right now because... who know what else came up with the monsters? But it will probably come down soon and officials will be here. We originally met park rangers and police and military medics came up later. They've been helping to identify everyone so we can get them personhood and then citizenship.”

“How long do you think you'll be there?” You're dad asks. Yeah, they want to know when you're coming back to Canada.

“I'm not sure, really. I came here under the guise of being a tourist who's going to be here for a couple of months. I'm hoping the monsters will be able to apply for passports by then, because I'd like to bring Sans back with me legally. I can probably extend my stay if I need to; maybe as a diplomat or something.”

“I see. I hope it goes well. What about your job? Your apartment?”

“I left it all behind. I loaded up a minivan with everything I own and came down here with no real intention of going back to my old life. This is everything to me, now.”

“Wow. That's amazing,” your mom says in awe. “I just... we want you know that if anything happens... If and when you come back and need somewhere to live, you can come here and stay with us as long as you need. Whether you're alone or not.”

You smile softly. “I appreciate that. It's possible I'll need somewhere quiet to feel secure if and when I can bring Sans home with me, because we're pretty close. Like, really close. But right now, my priority is making sure his people are safe and happy.”

“I'm proud of you, YN. If you can keep us informed, that would be great. We'll keep your secret.”

“Thank you. I'll do my best, but I don't want to spill to much right now before this becomes public knowledge. I should probably go now before people get suspicious.”

“O-okay. We love you, YN. Be safe, okay?”

“I will. Love you, too.” You end the call with a bittersweet sigh. “Well, they seem to like you so far.”

Sans snickers. “good to know.”

Your attention is suddenly drawn to some kind of buzzing alarm coming from further down the mountain and you see a cloud of dust rising from the basic dirt road leading up to the plateau. “Welp, looks like the quarantine's down.”

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter.. I'm not really sure how to approach. It will involve political discussions and I'm very naive when it comes to real-life politics. So, I can't see myself writing such dialogue without it either being boring or unrealistic. That being said, would y'all be okay with a general summary what is discussed in these meetings? I really want to kick-start on the next major arc during which Sans is present in one of these meetings and Reader is not; and as a result she.. wanders off.
When you and Sans arrive back at the plateau where the dirt road ends, you're greeted with the scene of Jackson talking to four new people in business attire; although they seem rather distracted by the various monsters watching them curiously from the sidelines. There are three men; two of whom are a bit older and one middle-aged woman. The younger man is on a cell phone, apparently relaying in shock what he is seeing to someone one the other end. If these are the presidential representatives Jackson was talking about, then he is probably talking to the president.

You also notice Asgore and Toriel approaching the plateau as well. They seem to be walking with purpose and were likely informed of the arrival of political figures. The man on the phone looks at you briefly before his attention is drawn to Toriel and Asgore. The representatives all look very nervous upon seeing such large non-human bipedal creatures that they just realized they are meant to engage in diplomacy with.

Sans seems to be studying the new arrivals carefully. He concentrates a bit more on the older men, but so far does not seem agitated. However, you suspect he will be watching them over the course of the negotiations. You can hear the conversation from where you're standing and at the moment the humans are simply trying to understand what exactly the Monsters are. Jackson had been relaying over the phone what was going on over that last couple of days. That the Monsters were in fact creatures that local mythology had been based around. But having them right in front of them is an entirely different experience. After some initial interactions with the Monsters to make sure they are actually real, they seem to accept that they are sentient, energy-based, non-human lifeforms.

Once the representatives agree to negotiating a tentative citizenship, the rangers lead them along with Toriel, Asgore, Undyne, and Sans (who referred to himself at the bullshit detector) to a large military tent. You are also asked to join by Asgore as a 'translator' of sorts so you can help the monsters understand the various human nuances and customs that will likely come up. There are also a few guards stationed around the tent to keep the negotiations private. Once seated, the woman, known as Jenkins sets up a conference call microphone with President Freeman and vice-President Fairbanks.

One of the first things to come up is some clarifications on what the Underground is, what the Barrier was and how they got out. Asgore begins by giving a rundown on the history of how humans and monsters interacted. He says that both humans and monsters have Souls that are made
of magic. Human magic is stronger than Monster magic, but modern humans no longer know how to use it. Many centuries ago, many humans were adept at magic use and for a long time the two races were peaceful. However, as more humans from other countries began colonizing the land and converting the indigenous humans. They became suspicious of the monsters and as tensions rose, eventually the humans declared war. Monsters could not fight off the magic-wielding humans and surrendered. As result, they were imprisoned within the massive cavern under the mountain. Over the centuries, they rebuilt their civilization. Over time, humans would occasionally come through the barrier; some were peaceful, some were not. Those who were peaceful were left alone, since monsters were still wary of humans. They did not survive the elements. If they were violent, the monsters defended themselves. Technology also evolved and they began studying the Barrier and discovered they needed human Magic to destroy it from the inside.

At this point of the explanation, Asgore diverges from the truth of collecting human Souls. He made the decision that this part of Monster history is best kept buried. He tells the story that humans who fell into the Underground in the last century either didn't survive the elements before being found or were violent and thus were unsuitable to deal with the Barrier. You were the unique case because Sans had several unique abilities, including being able to see your true intentions and to properly guide you to a specific location within the Underground. As a result of him protecting you and you demonstrating true kindness, you and he developed a bond that allowed your magic to be awakened. Asgore says that over the centuries, the Barrier weakened enough that the power of a single human was enough to destroy it. He stated that you aided him in breaking the Barrier, but as a result your magic was expended and likely would not be reawakened. Your friendship with Sans is unique and it is uncertain if anything like that could happen again. Asgore says this to deter the idea of exploiting monsters to awaken their own human magic.

After processing this information, they seemed to accept the story. Much to your surprise, they continued on to negotiating what the monsters want from human civilization. Asgore's requests are simple: the right to reside on the surface in peace. The concept of swearing allegiance to the president if the monsters wish to be considered American citizens is strange to the Monsters, but you speak up to clarify, that doesn't mean that Asgore will stop being a king. It means that the monsters swear to not commit treason towards their country of residence and will obey their laws. You bring up the idea of designating the mountainside as Monster territory. The mountain is off-limits to the public anyway and you're sure the monsters would be willing compensate the local government in exchange for use of the land. They would still obey American laws, but until they're allowed to own property and businesses and reside among humans, they would have their own community with their own government; similar to First Nations Reservations.

You also wanted to be certain that citizenship would extend them the right to be protected by local law enforcement as any citizen would. You suspect some humans may not take kindly to having monsters in their midst and may attack them. You brought up the fact that racism among humans is still alive and well and that people of non-Caucasian races are still regularly targeted for discrimination in North America. You knew Jackson would gladly protect them with his life, but eventually monsters will likely move to other cities. The president agreed that racism is still a problem that congress is working to quell, but it won't be a simple solution due to the very nature of humankind. Nonetheless he agreed that as citizens, they would be afforded those rights and would be allowed to defend themselves within reason. VP Fairbanks brought up the need for expediency for monster citizenship so they would have these protections in place when their existence is made public.

You also bring up the the idea that some monsters may want to emigrate to other countries; mainly Canada. So, you expect you will be contacting the Prime Minister at some point.

Additional topics covered include how the monsters intend to interact with humans and and how
they intend to be productive members of society. Asgore states that many of his people are highly educated and would be happy to share their knowledge in exchange for acceptance. Sans quietly mentions that he likes the idea of working for NASA. The president says it's possible their education may not be valid among the American educational system, however he says he will look into getting the most qualified monsters grants to enrol in accelerated courses in a suitable university. In exchange for such accommodations, it is suggested that Monsters be willing to educate humans on the nature of magic and possibly allowing human scientists to study monster volunteers in order to get an idea of monster physiology. The concept of a Soul and magic as being 'real' will certainly make waves in more than one field of study.

The meeting lasts a couple of hours and you collectively make notes on topics to cover at subsequent meetings such as long-term plans of monster integration and equality. They also intend to contact the Canadian Prime Minister on your behalf and explain the situation. You hope the fact you are a Canadian citizen will give you a bit of sway in convincing him to allow legal immigration into your country.

Once the representatives leave the compound to return to whatever accommodation they had in the town, Sans tells you he needs to be Asgore's consultant and relay everything he read from them while they were negotiating. It isn't required for you to be there as it's nothing worrying; simply a general assessment. You feel the need to stretch your legs anyway and wouldn't mind going for a walk.

You head out of the tent and go exploring to see how far the monsters have colonized the mountainside. Eventually you reach the edge of the expanded compound and start pushing your way through some shrubs to see the unterraformed mountain scape. You're standing in the relative quiet for a while when something yellow enters your peripheral vision. You look down and your blood freezes.

It's that flower!

The look of terror in your eyes must have been obvious, but much to your surprise the flower yells, “Wait! I'm not gonna hurt you!” The voice sounds annoyed, but not taunting or angry. “Just calm down! I don't need your bony bodyguard getting in the way.”

Instead of screaming, you manage exhale slowly and calm yourself slightly. “What do you want?” you ask in a low cautious voice.

Flowey pauses before answering. “I wanna apologize. At least I think that's what I'm supposed to do. I don't feel bad for what I did to you, but I feel like I'm supposed to say I'm sorry or something. Don't see the point, though. Not like I need your forgiveness or anything.”

“What about the other stuff you did?” You ask in a restrained voice. “The time loops?” Flowey looks surprised for a moment, then sneers at you.

“You touched his Soul, eh? That's how you know.” Flowey looks slightly disgusted; possibly at the idea of you being in a relationship with Sans.

“You were pretty cruel to him and everyone else in the Underground,”

“What was I supposed to do?” He snapped. “I was bored! Bored out my mind! I was trapped down there like everyone else. Everyone else at least had each other and could be happy with what they have. But I don't have anything. I don't even have a Soul! I can't feel anything so even after I made everyone like me, I couldn't enjoy it. I couldn't make myself care about anyone." His little brow furrows like he's remembering something upsetting. "When I found out I could manipulate time, I decided to see what else I could do down there. What else I could make people do. I could do what I wanted and just do it over if it didn't work out. It was never enough. Every time I Reset, the
people meant less and less to me. They just became toys and when I got bored with them, I decided to break them. Literally and figuratively, just so I could see what would happen.”

Flowey looks away silently, apparently upset that he had just spilled his guts. You listened to everything he had said and some of his behaviours reminds you of some creepy documentaries you had watched in the past about sociopaths, including sociopathic children. Frankly, idle children without any empathy are some of the scariest things you've ever heard of. No wonder they're a popular topic for horror films. Slowly you sit down on a rock that's behind you so you can see him a bit better.

“But then I found out your annoying bonehead could remember the stuff I did. He'd attack me most of the time, or just give me the stink eye because he didn't know if what I did was actually real. Now he does. He hates me and I don't even even feel bad about it... but I know I should. Now that I'm out here, I don't know what I'm supposed to do. I can't Reset anymore and even if I could. I don't know if I'd want to.”

You think about what Flowey is saying whilst being silent. From Sans's memories, you know Flowey has a history of manipulation. You wonder if he's trying to manipulate you now, but Flowey's words are awkward and uncontrolled. It's like he never really 'talked' to anyone before instead of just using them and he's trying to have a conversation now and failing miserably. His lack of eye-contact and obvious poor social skills tell you he isn't actually trying to manipulate you. Right now he just sounds like a petulant child who's desperate to have someone listen to him rather than entertain him.

“You're lonely,” you say finally. “It's good that you're actually aware of why you act the way you do. I'll admit I'm curious about where you came from and why you exist without a Soul. Maybe you don't know? Or you don't want anyone to know?” You're trying not to be condescending since you're not sure just how volatile Flowey could be even if you're trying to help.

Flowey looks annoyed at your attempt at being sympathetic, but somehow seems to appreciate the thought. “I was... created.” He grimaces. ”I was supposed to be something, but I developed sentience and didn't want to be that thing. But without a Soul, I can't see a future for myself. Now that everyone is free and I could do what I want, I still don't know what I'm supposed to be. I'm still trapped; in my own body.”

Shit, that really sucks. You try to imagine how frustrating it would be to not be able to reciprocate kindness. It's difficult because kindness is all you know how to give and usually it's the people you try to give it to who aren't interested. Would he be able to appreciate kindness... if he had Kindness? You tap absentmindedly at your breastbone. “I wonder...” you mumble.

Chapter End Notes

Ugh, I bet that last scene sounds really rushed. I just want to get this next arc underway.
You make an offer to Flowey and Sans isn't happy.

Oh, you thought things were going to get better?

Flowey is looking at you with utter confusion. “What are you going on about?”

“I'm trying to think of something to help you,” you say pensively.


“I'm sure there's a lot of things that weren't supposed to happen. What you did wasn't supposed to happen. Even though technically it didn't happen, you remember it, Sans remembers it and now I remember it; sort of.” The thought of what you saw in Sans's memories still twists your gut. “I can let go of you attacking me, but it isn't my place to forgive you for what you did to Sans. I'm just wondering if you would apologize and actually mean it if you had some semblance of a Soul.”

Flowey squints at you. “What are you suggesting?”

You tap on your breastbone. “I hear that a normal Monster Soul isn't as strong as a human Soul, so what would you do with just a tiny piece of a human Soul? Would you be able to use it?”

Flowey's confused expression turns disturbed. “What are you...? Are going to break your Soul or something?”

“Is it possible to just break off a small piece?” You ask curiously. “I'd find out, but I don't know how to pull my own Soul out.” Apparently, the suggestion of exposing your Soul to Flowey is cause for embarrassment, but he seems to get that it isn't as big of a deal for you since it's still unfamiliar to you.

“I can-” he starts nervously. “I can pull it out if that's what you're trying to do. I don't get why you want to, though. It's dangerous to do that in front of me. You don't know what I'm capable of.” You can tell he's trying to intimidate you.

“Why haven't you already?” You arch an eyebrow at him. “Would Sans be able to tell if you grabbed my Soul?” He doesn't answer, but you figure that would be the case. Sans might be able to track him down and do god knows what. You already caught a glimpse of what Sans could do to defend you. “Well, go on then. Let's see what I can do.”

Flowey hesitates while studying you; trying to figure why you're being so nice to him. He just
couldn't understand. He isn't sure if it's hope he's feeling, but maybe can give this a try? He extends a small vine towards you and you twitch instinctively at the memory of him initially attacking you, but you hold still. He taps the vine on your breastbone and you feel a tugging that you expected, but it isn't warm like when Sans did it. The bright green heart appears in front of you and suddenly feel much more exposed than you had anticipated. You look past it and see Flowey staring entranced and you catch a glimpse of a covetous expression, but he seems to be holding himself in check.

Carefully, you reach up to it trace your fingertip along the contours of the glowing beacon that is your Soul. Oof, that's tender. It feels like you're poking yourself on the inside of your own ribcage. It doesn't hurt, though. It's more like a response; almost like your own Soul is talking to you. Is this really the right thing to do? It's in your nature to give of yourself, but you've been taken advantage of a few times in the past because of it. But, you're still you. You still give yourself away regardless of who the recipient is, because it's who you are. Your fatal flaw. You're reckless. You'll give parts of your essence away until you have nothing left, because part of you believes you aren't even worth having possession of yourself and feel a compulsion to give yourself away. Human Souls have traits that sound nice on paper; integrity, justice, kindness, etc. But each one has it's dark side. Each one can be corrupted and manipulated. “you are very special” ... What was that? Was that my Soul talking to me? What a strange voice, but it's familiar? But where..? You suddenly feel a strong sense of calm that pulls you from the dark pit you had wandered into. You get a slight urging sensation, like it's encouraging you to do what you were intending. It isn't bad to be giving of yourself. If the recipient of your kindness doesn't appreciate you, that's their loss. You just need to keep trying. You have a place in the universe however small and sharing yourself a little bit at a time will make a change, even if you don't see it. This time you'll see it. This time it feels right.

*snap* Ow...

Your eyes refocus on the Soul in front of you. There is now a small chip out of the edge of your Soul and there is a tiny sliver of green about the size of a grain of long-grain rice held between you thumb and forefinger. Wow, you actually broke piece off.

“Huh,” you say curiously as you stare at the little shard. Flowey hasn't moved, but looks to be in complete shock. With slightly trembling fingers, you hold out the sliver of green towards the dumbfounded flowery creature. “I assume you know what to do with this.”

Flowey stares at the tiny shard. His expression turns surprisingly soft as he extends a thin tendril towards it and wraps it around the sliver. He takes it and holds it close to his face before looking back at you. He's at a loss for words at the fact you just handed over part of you essence and seemingly trusts him to do whatever with it. He looks like he's about to speak, but remains silent before retreating into the ground and he disappears. You gently nudge your slightly chipped Soul back into your chest before standing back up and wobbling slightly. Slowly you make your way back to the compound.

You're arriving back at your shared tent when you see Sans jogging over to you. “hey, are you okay?” He asks with barely hidden nervousness. “i felt a spike of fear from you.” You almost try to lie and say you tripped on the edge of the mountain, but you knew he'd be able to see through you. With that thought, you see his eyelights narrow in at your chest. “what happened here?” He says gesturing to your sternum.

“Oh,” you say calmly. Which is weird, because you knew Sans would be upset. “I ran into Flowey outside the camp.”

His eyelights all but vanish. “he did this to you?!” He hisses, trying to keep his voice down.
"No, I did it myself." Why am I so calm? You ask yourself. Did you really damage yourself to the point that you can't react to Sans being so upset? Are you in shock or something? “I gave him a piece.”

His eyelights go out completely and the look of utter betrayal isn't lost on you. “why would you do that?!” He wails. He looks around suddenly and sees a few people looking over at them with concern. He takes your arm and pulls you into the tent. “after what he did to me and my brother and everyone in the underground? you saw for yourself what he's done!”

“I didn't think he deserved it! Even he knows what he did was wrong, he's just incapable of feeling remorse or empathy. I wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt and give him a chance to have something that resembles a Soul.”

“but it's your soul! your essence! you deliberately damaged it to give it to that psychopath?” Sans is so distraught, he can feel himself approaching a panic attack.

You're not much less upset. You're not sure how to clearly explain why you felt it was the right thing to do. All you can do is try to get past the issue, even though you know it won't end well. “You're right, Sans!” You say an aggressive tone. “It is my Soul and I'll do with it as a please.”

“that's just what you do, isn't it?” He says with a hard edge to his voice. “giving away your soul to people who don't deserve it!” As soon as the words passed his teeth, he froze. why did i say that? He wasn't sure what was colder: the icy glare you gave him or the icy pain in his chest.

“Yeah,” you say quietly. “I guess you're right...” For a moment, you're reminded of your ex, whom you've tried to forget. He had a bad habit of trying to control you due to you being such a timid person when you were younger. It wasn't until he tired of you and cheated on you that you were finally free of him, but it took a long time for you to develop any form of self-worth. You can understand that Sans would be upset that you would supposedly hurt yourself in favour of whom he perceives as a villain, but you thought you knew what you were doing. Maybe you were conned into giving away part of yourself to someone who would just use you. Par for the course. But right now, couldn't have Sans berating you for making a personal decision without his input. You're not used to standing up for yourself to a lover, because didn't have to when you were alone. A month ago you were alone. It's not like anything would change much. “You know what, Sans?” you say coldly with a slight waver. For some reason your body feels numb, but you're shaking anyway. “You're free now. You don't need me anymore.”

Instantly, any anger in Sans's expression vanishes and is replaced with horror. He tries to respond, but the words die in his metaphorical throat. His Soul feels like it had been dunked in ice water, but you don't acknowledge his reaction. He can't move as you turn away; the ice in his chest holds him in place, but he doesn't miss the burning tears in your eyes.

You need to get away. Away from Sans and everyone. You need to get off the mountain even if you have to run. You manage to snatch your purse before bolting out of the tent. The humans and monsters nearby must have heard your quarrel and are looking at you warily. Sans tries to follow you, but loses momentum just as he exits the tent. You're already headed for the other side of the compound and down the dirt path to the gate. The quarantine is down so theoretically you can leave. You're human after all, so you won't freak anyone out. Sans is left alone under the gaze of several curious people as they clue in that something bad has just happened. The only reason you didn't hear him cry out in agony as you left, is Sans has gotten very good at hiding his pain.

Chapter End Notes
For some clarification, yes Reader's Soul is in shock from being physically damaged. This resulted in some erratic emotional response.
When You're Gone

Chapter Summary

You and Sans seek advice from friends old and new.

Chapter Notes

Jackson gets a bit more screen time in this chapter. I intentionally left his appearance vague for the story, but if you're curious, I personally picture him as late 20's/ early 30's, athletic build, clean-shaven, racially ambiguous with darker skin.

It takes several minutes to get to what you assume is the gate that regulates who enters and exits the mountainside. It's well into the evening by now and the area is lit by temporary flood lamps. You see now the metal and concrete barricades that had been installed over the last few days and there are a few armed military personnel milling about a large military tent near the sliding gate. The guards watch you with interest as you approach. You haven't seen any of them before, but you assume they have seen you on the police footage that warranted their arrival. They don't stop you as you enter the tent and approach someone official looking.

“Can I go through the gate?” Your voice is surprisingly hoarse. The tightness in your throat strains your words.

The guard at the simple desk gives you an odd look. “You on foot?” You nod realizing if you leave, you'll be walking since your car is still sequestered in the cavern entrance. “Can I see some ID? I just need to keep track of who's coming and going.” You pull your passport out of your purse and hand it over. As he goes over to a desktop computer you hear a voice behind you.

“YN?” You turn around. It's Jackson; in plainclothes. Your tear-stained and angry expression must have been evident as he grimaces when he sees you. “You're leaving?”

You sigh roughly. “I just need a break from the mountain. I was hoping to go into town for some fast food or something, but I don't have a ride.”

He ponders for a moment as the gatekeeper hands you back your passport. “I can give you ride if you want if you don't mind riding in an unmarked police car. I'm off duty so I could use a break, too.”

You nod at the prospect. “Yeah, I'd appreciate that.”

He leads you out of the tent and towards an unassuming black car that was parked near the side of the tent. He opens the passenger door and lets you get in before getting in the driver side. From inside, it is definitely a police car complete with radio, barred back seat and lights on the dash. Jackson picks up the receiver and activates the radio. “Sheriff Riley Jackson; Unmarked cruiser 126 heading into Ebott with female civilian passenger.”
The radio hisses with a response. “Ten-four.” The gate opens as the car approaches and you pass several other guards whom you assume are stationed to keep the general public and reporters away from the gate. They seem to be doing a good job as you don't see any other civilians along the way.

The ride to Ebott is silent other than a local radio station playing. The further you go, the more your anger wanes and is replaced with a heaviness you can't describe; like part of you is being pulled back the way you came. You try to ignore it for now. You still love Sans, but you just need some time, right? You had an argument. Couples do that all the time. You'll both be fine... right?

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Normally, Grillby's food made Sans feel better, but not tonight. Sans barely managed to get half of a burger down before he realized he couldn't even taste it. His chest still hurt. Wasn't the pain supposed to go away after a while? Links were meant to be temporary, so it shouldn't still hurt after it had been severed, right? It's not like you went through the full bonding process. But, the longer he tries to endure it, the worse it gets. He feels like he's dying, but his HP hasn't diminished. what have you done to me?

“Sans?” A soft and familiar feminine voice catches his attention and he looks up to who has just walked up to the chair next him. Toriel. His friend from the other side of the Door. She looks Sans over with sympathy before sitting down on the chair.

“it hurts,” is all he could mutter. “why does it still hurt?”

Toriel looks away for a moment before sighing softly. “I'm not going to ask what your argument was about, but it must have been important to her. If she reacted so strongly to a disagreement, she must have wanted you see her point of view.”

Sans's breath shudders. “i can't sense her anymore. either she's out of range or the link is broken. the pain shouldn't be this bad.” He presses his palm against his chest.

“You love her, do you not?” It seems like such a simple question.

“of course i do,” he says sadly. “but the pain is physical. like i’m injured, or something.”

“Your Soul is in pain,” she says simply. “And one of first things we learn in school is that we are our Soul.” Sans shakes his head. “You would feel pain if something were to happen to Papyrus, would you not?” Sans twitches. He had seen Papyrus hurt so many times during the time loops, he had learned to suppress that pain. His chest clenches even more at the realization that he actually felt a bit of apathy towards his own brother; which made him even more angry at the thought of you giving part of your Soul to the one who made him feel this way.

Toriel tentatively reaches forward. “May I?” Sans pauses and then nods. Toriel gently taps the centre of Sans's chest. She doesn't pull his Soul forward, but he does feel a calming warmth. She Checks him. She then gives him a soft smile. “Your Link is not broken. It is strained, but it is still there. You are not only feeling your own pain, but you are also feeling hers.”

“but she's out of my range,” he protests weakly. “we didn't even bond.”

Toriel shakes her head. “It does not matter. Bonding is gradual and distance does not matter at this stage. I felt the same when I separated myself from Asgore.”
“how long did it take for the pain to go away?”

She looks at him sadly. “It never did.”

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Arriving into town, Riley suggests rather than some run-of-the-mill fast food, he suggests a popular pub that he and his fellow officers frequent. The business is for sale due to the ageing proprietor and the town’s dwindling population. Once you each settle in with a non-alcoholic drink and basket of fries, Jackson finally decides to break the silence.

“I’m gonna go out on a limb and assume something went down between you and Sans?”

You sigh heavily since you figured he would ask eventually. “We had a... disagreement.”

“Was it really that bad? How long have you known him again? A few days?”

You shake your head sullenly. “That’s just a cover story,” you say quietly. “I’ve known him for a month.” Riley’s eyes widen. “I came up with the cover story, because I didn't want to give the president any ideas about the kind of technology the monsters have at their disposal. A lot of it was dedicated to trying to break the Barrier from the inside.” You look around to make sure no one else is listening before locking eyes with Riley. “You see, Sans can teleport, but he can only go somewhere he's familiar with. Since he wasn't familiar with the Surface, he obviously couldn't teleport past the Barrier. However, he got the idea that if he had enough raw power in him, he could remain the Void; or wherever he goes when he's between teleportations, and navigate to a weak point that might lead to the Surface and he could get help there.” Riley looks enthralled, but remains quiet. “But the experiment almost killed him. I found him half-dead in River City where I live. I took care of him until he was healthy enough and I was able to leave the city and bring him here. We became very close friends during that time.”

Riley looks at you carefully. “More than friends,” he mutters.

You chuckle humorlessly. “Was it that obvious?”

“Judging by how protective of you he is and how upset you are after an argument, you're very emotionally invested in him.” You nod sadly as another pang of sadness clenches at your chest. “I can't tell you what to do. I don't have a whole lot of experience in the field since I was always more dedicated to my job, but really all I can suggest is that you both talk to and listen to each other.”

“Sans didn't have any experience,” you say wistfully. “I don't think he really thought about what he was saying until after he said it. Probably didn't realize... how much it hurt.” Your throat chokes up at this. “And I didn't realize how much I probably hurt him by leaving.” Tears start streaming down your face as you bow your head and cover your face. “Especially after I almost died in front of him! And then I go and abandon him! God, he must be a wreck.” Riley is looking at you with sympathy. Being a police officer isn’t just about protecting the general populace from crime, but also to give a helping hand to individuals who are hurting.

“What do you want to do?” He says with a light encouraging tone.

“I have to go back,” you say with a whimper as the heaviness in your Soul becomes unbearable.
He smiles softly. “Then let's go.”

***

When Sans returns to the tent he was meant to share with you, he still feels far too stressed to think straight. The sounds of people milling about outside, along with the constant sound of patrolling helicopters and drones prevent him from clearing his mind. So, he leaves. He shortcuts back into the Underground; back to his room in Snowdin. Silence. No Papyrus. No neighbours. The only sound is the gently flowing river and his own breathing.

He draws in a deep breath and exhales slowly in an attempt to calm the painful turmoil in his Soul. He needs to think. Half the time he'd been dozing at his sentry station in days past, that's usually what he'd been doing. He thinks about you. He tries to ignore the pain in his chest as he tries to think about why you did what you did. How did you even expose your Soul without a monster's help? Did Flowey do that for you? If he did, why didn't he grab your whole Soul then? *I probably would have felt that.* Why did he give you time to break off a piece? Is he planning on manipulating it and coercing you into giving him more a little at a time? You said you wanted to give him a chance. To do what? *why didn't i listen?* Why does he even deserve a chance after what he did? *why did i deserve a chance?* The thought invaded his mind unprompted. Sans didn't do anything to earn what you did for him. You did it out of your own free will. Your Soul just did what came natural to it. *“It's in my nature. It's just what I do.”* Was it really *that* important to you? Did you have so much faith in him, that you'd damage yourself to give him a chance... to redeem himself?

Sans clears his mind again. He tries to sense if that sliver of your Soul is still within range of him... *ping* There it is. It's faint, but it's there. Sans takes a couple of shortcuts until he traces it's location: New Home. Carefully and quietly, Sans steps through the door of Asgore's house. His eyelights dart about as he keeps a watch for vines or yellow petals. Eventually, his eyes settle on a partially open door. It had been a while since he'd been in this house, but he remembers what this room is; or used to be. It was a child's bedroom. He can sense that there's someone in there. More than just a shard of a human Soul. Cautiously, he nudges the door open and peers inside.
Some new discoveries are made.

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Sans had seen photographs of Prince Asriel Dreamurr, but he had died long before Sans was born; and yet, there he is. Sitting on one of the beds with a photo album in his lap is a small goat monster child. He is even wearing the green and yellow stripes Sans had seen in the pictures of him and his human sibling. The child looks up and seems surprised at Sans's appearance, but also seems like he was expecting him. “h-how..?” Sans barely found his voice as he stood stock-still in the doorway. The child, Asriel, looks away nervously before putting the photo album down and putting his paw to his chest. Carefully, he pulls a little glowing inverted heart from his small chest. Even from where he stood, Sans can see the Soul clearly. Embedded in the centre of the inverted heart is a tiny sliver of green. The sliver of Soul that you said you had given Flowey.

“It's okay, Sans,” came the child's soft voice. “You can ask.”

**that voice.** Sans had heard that voice so many times. The cold, Soulless taunting and laughter as he played with Sans's friends and family like they were game pieces on a board. It's the same voice, but... not. Was Flowey... Asriel... all along? Sans's mind is racing. Asriel died on Asgore's flowerbed. His Dust spread across the flowers so his essence was in the flowers. How did the flower become sentient? How did something dead come back to life? His mind freezes. The amalgamates. Alphys. Yeah, he's going to have to have a chat.

**did she know?** Asriel looks up as Sans realizes he'd asked that out loud.

“I didn't tell her who I was,” he says quietly as he looks into the Soul in his paw. “Her Soul knew. She wasn't conscious of it, but she trusted her Soul.” That confuses Sans greatly. How did your Soul know something you weren't conscious of? He would have seen it if someone else connected with you on a Soul-level. It would have had to have happened after you got sick when he had restricted his connection to your Soul. Did it happen when you almost died and the connection was temporarily severed? Where did your Soul go where he couldn't see it? **who spoke to your soul?** Sans's hands start clawing at the sides of his skull. He can feel his breathing speed up as he starts to feel sick. He didn't even notice Asriel had moved until he feels him pulling on his arm. Sans is dizzy and had almost fallen backwards. “You need to talk to her, Sans,” Asriel says imploringly. “She's hurting, and so are you. I'm sorry for everything I did to you, Sans. I really am, I swear. I'll explain what happened to me later, but this needs to be fixed.”

Sans takes a deep breath to try to calm down. After a moment, he focuses back on Asriel. His strange Soul had returned to his chest and Sans stares intently at the sliver that he can still see and at the Soul surrounding it. It's still a Monster Soul, but it's so strange. He can't see any corruption or deceit. It's like it's a brand new Soul. All he can really see is part of you within a monster's body.

Not unlike himself. If it really is Asriel, the king and queen will want to know. “do you want me to take you to the surface? to see your mom and dad?”
Asriel’s breath hitches, before nodding hesitantly. He holds onto Sans's arm as he shortcuts to the entrance of the cavern next to your car. He was close enough, that he could send out a magical 'radar ping' to make sure no one was there. He puts a phalanx to his teeth in a 'hush' motion and motions for Asriel to stay put. He nods nervously as Sans quickly makes his way to the large tent that housed King Asgore. Upon being invited in, the king is sitting at the large desk with some papers while Toriel is sat in another large chair reading some other paperwork. Sans figures it is some records of the negotiations from that morning. They both look up and smile softly, seemingly expecting him to either say something about the negotiations or about you.

Sans nervously scratches the back of his skull. “um, could you two come with me? i found someone in the underground and i think you should meet them. they're really shy and could use some coaxing and i think you'd be the best for the job.”

Toriel and Asgore look at each other curiously and look back at Sans and nod. Sans leads them to the cavern entrance up to the back of the mini-van. He can sense Asriel is nearby; just hiding behind the front of the vehicle. “you can come out now,” he calls softly.

Cautiously, the small goat monster child peers out from behind the vehicle and gazes up at Toriel and Asgore. For several seconds they stare at each other disbelieving until Toriel drops to her knees. “Asriel?” She whispers. Finally Asriel's expression breaks and he runs into his mother's arms. She picks him up as Asgore embraces both of them.

“My son!” He cries as he nuzzles into the top of the boy's head. He manages to look over at Sans who is rubbing his palm into his sternum. “How? Where did you find him?”

Sans hesitates to answer, so Asriel speaks up. “I was lost. I was lost for a long time. YN helped me come back and Sans gave me the courage to come see you. I was scared of how you might react to seeing me after being gone for so long.”

Toriel just hugs him tighter and nuzzles into him “I would have dreams... that you would come home. I would always be so sad when I would wake up. Please tell me I am not dreaming.” Asriel tugs on his mother's ears resulting in a little yelp. He smiles playfully and returns the nuzzle. As they start to walk out of the cavern, Asgore looks over at Sans again. “Thank you,” he says quietly. “I'm sure YN will return. I would like to thank her in person when I get the chance.” Sans nods as he slowly leaves the cavern as well. His smile is bittersweet. The sliver of your Soul within Asriel is connected to him just as yours is. Asriel's joy was so extreme, he could feel it himself; which conflicted with the heaviness that came with your absence.
When you return to the compound with Jackson trailing behind you, you notice quite a bit of light-hearted energy in the air in spite of the longing in your Soul. You see a large gathering of Monsters on the plateau and they seem to be encircling the king and queen, but you can't really see what's going on.

"Hey, Punk!" You hear a familiar fishy snarl. Undyne runs up to you from out of nowhere. She's out of armour and wearing a black jacket. "Where have you been?" She demands. You're so flustered, you point awkwardly in the general direction of the gate with your mouth slightly agape. She waves off your gesture. "Y'know what? I don't care. And I don't care what you and Sans were fighting about, but you don't just run off like that when you hit a bump. You stick with your partner and talk it out. I just barely got to thinking that humans could be trusted, I really don't wanna have to go back to thinking they suck! You don't do that that to your Mate! Especially someone like Sans."

Someone fragile like Sans. Your gut sinks in shame. You're barely aware that Undyne said all of this in front of Jackson, apparently not caring if he knew about your relationship or not. "Where is he?" You ask quietly.

“He’s over there somewhere,” she says, jerking her head towards the crowd. “Apparently, the Prince came back or something and Sans brought him up from wherever he was. I dunno how all that happened, I’m just trying to keep the peace.” The Prince? How? You nod and jog over to the gathering; leaving Jackson and Undyne to stare at each other awkwardly.

You see Papyrus before you see Sans. Sans doesn't notice you until you're running towards him and Papyrus steps aside so you can get to him. You stop short about a foot in front of him as you stare at each other for a moment. Sans is staring at you as if he's not sure if you are real. You don't
move because you're not sure if he's happy to see you until his expression breaks and he lurches forward and wraps his arms around you tightly. You in turn pull him into the embrace and nuzzle into the side of his skull. “I'm sorry!” You whimper. The tears flow freely as you feel a deep burning in your Soul. “I'm so sorry. I never should have left you.”

Sans is shaking as he leans into you as if to press his chest hard into yours. “i shouldn't have shouted at you,” he says hoarsely. “i should've trusted you.”

“I know it didn't make any sense. I didn't know know how to explain it. It was just a feeling. I'm sorry I wasn't more patient.”

“it's okay,” he says softly as he nuzzles into your cheek. “just- don't run off like that again, okay? monsters aren't really adapted to that kind of separation.”

You stroke the back of his skull as you kiss his temple. “I won't leave you in anger again. I promise. I love you, Sans. For what's it's worth, I still want to marry you.”

Sans's breath huffs in a hoarse chuckle. “feeling's mutual.” He hugs you a bit tighter. “i just want to understand. how did you know?”

_Know what? You gave a piece of your your Soul to Flowey and suddenly the Prince came back from the dead. “I don't know what's going on,” you whine. “I don't have words to explain it; it's like trying to remember a dream. Maybe... it's about time you touched my Soul.”_ Sans looks up at you in surprise. “You said you wanted to, but I think you were just scared to. But I trust you. You just have to be careful, right? So it doesn't hurt you?”

Sans nods and looks over at the Royal family. You look over as well and see finally see Toriel and Asgore holding what appears to be a child version of themselves. The child catches your eye from across the crowd and smiles at you. You're a bit too confused to really react, but he seems to understand. They seem sufficiently occupied as he leads you away from the area. “we should go somewhere private. i'll take you to my snowdin house.” Just as you're out of sight of any other humans, Sans shortcuts you to his room in Snowdin.

You sit down on the mattress and lean your back against the wall and have Sans sit crossways on your lap and lean against the adjacent wall. You wrap your arms around his ribs and he puts his right arm around the back of your neck. He reaches forward with his left hand and rubs his palm against your sternum. “you sure you're okay with this?”

You nod gently. “I want you to,” you whisper. “If I'm going to commit to you, I think it's only fair since you shared your Soul with me.”

He tilts his head to nuzzle you gently before giving your breastbone a few more strokes. You sigh softly when you feel the warm and welcome pulse of energy from his fingers. Your Soul comes forth without resistance and illuminates the both of you. Sans winces as he gets a good look at the chip out of the edge that you had given to 'Flowey' earlier that day. There is a small hairline fracture extending from the chip that Sans recognizes as regret. Not that you regret giving away a part of your Soul, but that you regret what followed. You regret becoming angry with Sans and leaving him instead of taking the time to understand why he was so upset. Sans let his own anger get the better of him and he said some things he shouldn't have and he hopes you can forgive him.

Gently, _very gently_, he caresses the edge of your glowing green Soul as if he were playing with fire. You can feel his body twitching as he carefully tests how much he can touch before it gets to
be too intense. You close your eyes as his caressing feels like it's washing over your whole body. After a moment, he draws in a deep breath before closing his own eyes and making full contact with your Soul. He allows the magic within to flow into him as his own magic intermingles with it; allowing him to see into your essence.

Sans had already seen quite a bit of you when you first created the Soul Link. You opened your Soul to his and he read you like a book. He saw that your life was full of both happy and sad moments. Your dad had a hot temper early in your life, but became much calmer as you grew together. Your mom is kind and supported you when you set your mind to something. School was difficult. Sans is disheartened at how common bullying is and you were lonely. You struggled with depression as an adult, but you keep going and carry on. You had trouble connecting with people when it came to relationships. One in particular made Sans's Soul ache. you deserve so much better. why did you choose me?

Sans carefully navigates to your recent memories. What happened to your Soul the moment your Soul nearly gave up? where did you go? ...Darkness. The Void? What- “My son is brilliant. The possibilities are endless.” ...dad? Sans had almost forgotten what his father's voice sounds like.

“Sans remembers me, because part of him remains in the Void.” He's alive. You can't really tell what Sans is seeing in your Soul, but you can feel his breathing become uneven. Whatever he's seeing must be very emotional for him. The conversation between you and the voice in the Void lasted only a blink of an eye on the material plane, but he concentrates as hard as he can. Up until this moment, Sans was convinced his father was dead, but there he is: trapped in the Void. “He was not always a flower, he was once a Prince.” that's how you knew. You weren't conscious of it, but your Soul guided you, because he told you. You can feel Sans starting to shudder with each breath, so you hold him a bit tighter. Sans continues to study whatever he can get from your Soul.

“He did well for himself and did right by his brother. I am proud of him.” At this point, you can feel and hear Sans start to weep quietly. Your heart breaks as you try to imagine what Sans is seeing that is so intense. “He needs you more than either of you know.” Sans lets go of your Soul with sob. Your Soul then slips back into your chest on its own. You loosen your grip on him so you can lean back and look at his face. There are tears streaming down his face as he looks up at you with wonder.

“What did you see?” You whisper.

Sans has to take a few breaths before he can answer. “my dad's alive,” he says quietly. “he's in the void, your soul went to the void when you almost died and he told you that flowey was asriel. so you were following what your soul was telling you, even when you didn't know why.”

“Oh...” You squeak. “Well, it's nice to know he's alive.”

“i knew there was more to it,” he says adamantly. “part of me wouldn't let me believe he was really gone. guess now i know why. every time i do a shortcut, i go into the void for a microsecond. i just wasn't conscious of his presence there.” He sighs heavily. “someday... someday i'll get him out.”

He leans into you and it becomes quite obvious that he's exhausted. You carefully manoeuvre yourselves so you're laying down on the mattress and you pull the blanket over you both. Sans instinctively snuggles into your chest and you hold him tightly and just forget the world for a while.
Not my best Asriel drawing. I'll probably change it when I do a better one.
You're awakened suddenly by a phone ringing. You groan that you don't want to let go of Sans who is still clinging to you, but you kind of need to move. It isn't your phone ringing, but Sans's and he seems to have a similar thought as his grip tightens on you momentarily before letting go and digging his phone out of his discarded jacket's pocket.

“hello?” he drawls as he rolls onto his back. You can just barely hear Asgore's voice on the other end. He's saying something about needing you and Sans to return to the compound as they have more guests who want to attend today's negotiations. “and you want me to make sure they're cool?”

“If you would, please. Jackson is still here and they seem to be... at odds over whether the mountain is in his jurisdiction. He's speaking to the mayor on the phone now.”

Sans rubs his boney fingers over his face and yawns. “alright, i'll be there in sec.” He ends the call and drops the phone back on his jacket. He rolls over back to you and hugs you tightly. “i don't wanna get up.”

You rub his back as you nuzzle the top of his head. “Me either, but we have work to do. Seems Asgore really trusts your judgement since he wants you there even though you aren't a political figure.”

“capital 'j',” he mumbles. “it's one of my special talents. i can tell when someone's lying or if they have bad intentions.”

“So, you're like a living lie-detector,” you say, impressed.

“mm-hm,” he says softly as he nuzzles into again. “you've never lied to me. that makes me happy.”

“So, you really can tell when someone's a good person?”

“yep,” he chirps. “i'm learning a lot now that i've been meeting more humans. sometimes i have to look really hard depending on the life they've lived. hard life usually makes someone hide their soul.” You sigh and nuzzle him again.
It takes a few minutes before Sans wakes up enough to make a shortcut. You decide you'll get a shower later and for now, just do your basic hygiene. You both appear in your shared tent on the surface and shamelessly exit at the same time. You make your way to the plateau where Asgore, Toriel, Undyne and a uniformed Jackson are in conversation with the four presidential representatives along with two other men in military uniforms; one older and somewhat formal-looking and another somewhat younger and looking more like a bodyguard. The bodyguard keeps an eye on both of you as you approach.

Jackson looks annoyed at the new arrivals, but Asgore smiles when he sees you. “Ah, Sans. YN. Thank you for joining us. This is Sgt. Warrens. He says he has... orders from the President? To personally monitor the military operation that is guarding Mt Ebott.”

The Sergeant steps towards you seemingly to extend a hand towards you. You're about to lean in to reciprocate, but Sans steps to the side to stand in front of you. You instinctively think this is rude, but Sans himself told you it takes a while for him to trust people. That and he had just told you that when he gets a bad vibe from someone, it means something's up. Coupled with his instinct to protect you, you're given pause. Sans keeps his hands in his hoodie pockets as he seems to study the people in front of him.

Slightly unnerved, the Sergeant puts his own hands behind his back. “I'm here to keep the peace among the locals if and when you go public with your presence. And I'm to observe the goings on here to make sure nothing goes awry during the negotiations.”

“That's nice,” Sans says passively. “Went fine yesterday. Jackson's doing a good enough job. You sure that's the only reason you're here?”

Warrens looks uncomfortable, but he turns his attention to you. “I'm also here to keep an eye on you. Rumour has it that you've become rather close to these... people.” He gives Sans a side-glance. “I want to make sure you aren't being kept here against your will.”

Your face scrunches up in confusion, but you suppose it does make sense in morbid way. Still, you can see why Sans has some reservations. “I'm not,” you say adamantly. “In fact I was in town just last night. I'm here because I want to be. And yes, I have become close to them. They're very important to me and I intend to be there for them as they earn the right to live in peace and freedom.”

He contemplates your words with scepticism. He eventually nods, but doesn't seem to be so sure. “Shall we?” He says referring to beginning the conference as he marches in the direction of the large tent. You can't see Sans's face, but you can tell he's keeping a close eyesocket on him. Jackson visibly gives Warrens the stink-eye.

The morning's meeting goes smoothly enough. The only new attendee in the tent is Sgt. Warrens while the bodyguard waits outside. This time the Prime Minister of Canada is on the conference phone and the Vice President is absent. PM Beaumont is a stern and determined woman of French-Canadian decent. She is curious, but cautious regarding the Monster's origins. The mythology of Ebott is largely unknown in Canada and it took some explaining that these events are not a hoax, nor are they aliens invading the planet. They are merely a race of non-human people looking for a place on the Surface to live in peace. Your request is that Canada be willing open their borders to monsters who may wish to immigrate there rather than remain in the United States; particularly some of the cold-adapted monsters like bunnies, Snowdrakes and IceCaps. PM Beaumont is willing to put the matter to Parliament, however she states that if the Monsters wish be treated as equals, she will do as such. Meaning they will need to apply for citizenship as immigrants just as
everyone else does. She can understand the president giving them American citizenship due to Mt. Ebott being on American soil, but she cannot do the same without it being unfair to those already in the process. She is, however, willing to expedite work and student visa's along with educational grants. You almost ask if Sans would be granted a green-card if you married him, but then you realize most of the people here don't know that you've known Sans for more than a few days. For now, you'll have to wait for the Monsters to be granted American citizenship and then they'll have to apply for passports.

President Freeman says that it will take a few days to run the process through Congress. With this, both Beaumont and Freeman say that it is likely the Monsters will not stay a secret as more people know about them, so they will need to be prepared for a reaction from both countries. In the meantime, Sgt. Warrens will help bolster security around the compound.

Once the meeting has ended, the humans (save for you), depart from the compound under the watchful eyes of Jackson and a few members of the Royal Guard. You and Sans wander to your car so you check on your slightly beleaguered cat and to get a change of clothes. As soon as you're finished and leave the back of the vehicle, you notice Sans is talking to Asriel. They look at you and Asriel nervously asks “Can we go see Alphys? Sans says she's in the lab. I need to talk to her and I want you guys to come with me.”

“Do your parents know where you're going?” He is a child after all. If he's been missing for the last 50 or so years, they'd probably want to keep an eye on him.

“I told them I was going to hang out with your guys, I just didn't say where.” He looks to the side slightly guiltily.

You look at Sans and he shrugs. “Alright then, kiddo” he says dubiously. He holds out his hands for you and Asriel to take them and with a slight lurch, you appear in a large white laboratory. It's rather cluttered with a random assortment of mechanical equipment, dirty dishes and anime memorabilia. Alphys pops up from behind a stack of cardboard boxes she appears to filling with her possessions.

“O-oh! Hello!” She says, surprised to see you.

“Hi, Alphys,” Asriel says softly. “I don't think we... properly met yet.”

“N-no,” she mumbles. “I s-suppose I'm curious about h-how you came b-back. I mean y-you've been gone...”

Asriel wrings his hands nervously. “Well, that's why I wanted to see you. You actually helped bring me back.”

Alphys looks shocked. You are confused and Sans just sighs as if he already knew. “Wha-at? H-how?”

“I don't think you knew it at the time, though. You were trying to make something. Something that could absorb both human and Monster Souls. You used a flower.”

Alphys has her hands up to her snout as she listens. “H-how d-did you know?” She squeaks with increasing dread.

“Well,” Asriel hesitates. “I... was that flower,” Alphys's eyes nearly bulge out of her head. “You used the seeds from my dad's garden right? The one that I... died on?”
Alphys nods while the rest of her body shakes. “The Determination.” She says in horror. “I-I injected DT into one of the s-seeds and it grew into a comp-p-letely different f-flower. It was only m-meant to be semi-sentient. Oh, Asriel!” She weeps. “I am s-so s-sorry! I-I didn't know!” She covers her face as tears stream from behind her hands. “I c-condemned you to a Soulless l-life!”

Asriel runs up to her and hugs her. “It's okay, Alphys. I'm not that flower anymore, but without you I might never have come back at all. You were trying to help us, weren't you? It's okay if it doesn't always go the way you want it to.” Asriel's eyes drift over to a door that appears to be labelled as a bathroom, but you suspect that might not be what it is. Alphys looks even more guilty, but she appears to be at least absorbing her emotions. Sans seems relieved that Asriel didn't try to explain that the DT allowed him to manipulate time. “But I need your help,” he says softly.

“W-what can I do? I c-can't do a-anything right,” she whimpers.

Asriel puts his paw against his chest and carefully tugs out his newly-formed Soul. For the first time, you see what became of the tiny shard you last saw wrapped up in a thin vine. Now it is embedded inside the Soul of a Monster that should be dead. “I don't really know what I am,” he says in a very small voice. “YN gave me a piece of her Soul. When I absorbed it, I started to feel a bit more like me. It gave me just enough Determination to change my form one last time. I almost forgot what I looked like, so I had to look at old pictures. I'm not really sure how, but a Monster Soul formed around the shard on its own. It feels like it's my Soul, but I still feel... empty. I have my emotions and memories like I'm supposed to, but I don't feel complete.”

Sans sighs heavily. “it's because it isn't your old soul. this one is brand new. your flower body was made of your essence, but your soul was gone.” Sans continues to study the exposed Soul in front of him. “but i don't get how yn's soul made a monster soul.”

You get an idea. “Maybe it's because my Soul is intimately familiar with how a Monster Soul is meant be like.” Sans looks up at you with a slight sparkle in his eyes. “The piece I gave you must have used it as a template and then...” You gesture awkwardly since you're not sure how to finish that thought.

Alphys seems to know where you were going with it. “The Determination in the Soul shard a-and in your body m-merged them together; forming a n-new kind of Monster Soul. It's a-almost like a hybrid. That's amazing!”

Asriel stares at the Soul floating in front of him. “That is pretty cool,” he says in subdued fascination. “But I'm still not sure what's going to happen now. Am I going to age? Am I even a Boss Monster anymore? This Soul isn't connected to my parents like my old one was.”

Sans suddenly looks up again and stares at you. “What is it?” You ask in reaction to this.

“i just remembered something. something my dad said to you. papyrus and undyne. asgore helped raise them and as a result they're stronger than they would be otherwise, because of his natural paternal instincts. they absorbed some of his residual boss monster magic just by being around him so much.” He smiles at Asriel. “i think you'll be just fine. as long as you're conscious of the fact that you're just a kid, i think your soul will figure out what it's supposed to do if you spend enough time with your parents.” Asriel smiles at Sans's confidence in him. “i also think you're still connected to yn. she's got a strong soul, too.” He looks back at you. “so you're kinda like a... what do you call it? godparent?”

You blush slightly at the compliment. “Not sure that's the right term. Maybe 'Soulparent'? I mean I'm not your mom, so I suppose I'm more of a surrogate?”
“I think that works,” Asriel says smiling. “Thank you. All of you; for helping bring me back.”

Chapter End Notes

Yeah, Sans doesn't like Warrens, but he's not completely sure what to make of him. Neither am I really. Gonna try not to force his character development, though.
Tattoo

Chapter Summary

You and Sans relax for while, but the Royal Family has something in store for Sans.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It's been a few days since you've really been able to relax for a few hours. After returning to the surface with Asriel and Alphys in tow, you and Sans decide to rifle through the boxes in your car for items that would come in handy during your stay on Mt. Ebott. You go through your collection of DVD's and make the decision to give the complete box sets of your two favourite anime's to Alphys as a gift for looking after your cat while you were distracted or incapacitated. She's quite speechless, but thanks you profusely and hurries off to find Undyne to show them off. In the back of your mind, part of you is thanking her for sending Sans to you.

You, Sans and Asriel spend the rest of the day wandering around the compound to converse with the variety of Monsters who have settled in on the Surface. Now that quarantine is down, you expected many of the initial humans who had arrived on the mountain when you first emerged would have left and not come back. Instead, many of them seem quite content to stay whenever they don't have a task in town to take care of. Some of them informed you that everyone who has been made (officially) aware of the Monster presence, has been sworn to secrecy. Admittedly, they may or may not have let it slip to their loved ones that their work is confidential, but very engaging. In the meantime, you see some of them playing cards or bringing spare items from home to contribute to creating a home for the Monsters such as books, games and gently used clothes. Even a shy ghost monster was tempted out of hiding by some music.

The robot known as Mettaton seems to have quite the following among the Monsters and is frequently seen entertaining small groups of them; including Papyrus and a few curious humans. Alphys relayed to you that he'd noticed an increase in mentions of Ebott in human social media, so it wouldn't be long before their presence will need to be made official. You get the image in your head of the President and Asgore appearing on international news to sign a peace treaty of sorts. You're very curious about how knowledge of the monsters is being processed in congress and parliament, but even that has been kept confidential from you. Papyrus doesn't neglect his duties as Royal Mascot and has been regaling soldiers and officers of candid tales of the Underground. Fortunately, he never reveals that the monsters had been collecting Souls. At most, he simply says they needed a human with a powerful Soul to break the Barrier. Upon returning Asriel to his parents, they ask you and Sans to meet them in the Judgement Hall later that evening.

There has been talk of building a trolley system to transport monsters and cargo to and from the Underground. Alphys is on board since she is still working on projects in her lab, but wants to spend time on the surface, too. She's been buckling down on finishing something for Mettaton that she hopes will be complete within a few days. After you told Sans that Jackson now knows he can teleport, you and Sans have been very discreetly (with permission from Asgore) giving Jackson glimpses of a few safe spots in the Underground. You take him to Snowdin and he marvels at the forest and the little village that is still somewhat populated by monsters who need a colder environment to stay healthy and California is much too hot. Instead of teleporting, you take the
riverboat commanded by an individual referred to as the Riverperson. Their answers to your attempts at conversation are polite but cryptic and seem to hint at things that aren't really common knowledge. Arriving in Waterfall, Jackson falls in love with the scenery just as you did. Sans also takes you to a spot near the castle where you can see the Capitol City from afar. The 'city' consists of large buildings built from wood from the forests and bricks carved from the cavern walls. Most of them look like apartment buildings, but you can see some individual residences and a vast pool where you assume water monsters live. This is where Sans lived before he lived in Snowdin; before the CORE accident. In the near future, you hope you and Sans can give tours like this for the other people who stuck around by their own volition to help the Monsters feel welcome.

You do notice a few new soldiers milling around the compound that you don't recognize. Jackson tells you they are from Warrens' division. They wouldn't tell anyone exactly why they were there and not near the gate, but Jackson theorizes they are tasked with observing the behaviour and interactions of the Monsters. He also suspects they might have a problem with the idea of you being in a romantic relationship with a monster. You try not to let that bother you.

As the sun begins to set over the water, you finally get to see it for yourself alongside the other Monsters who either only recently emerged from the Underground or just wanted to see it again. Sans disappears for a few minutes, but reappears with a telescope that is almost as big as he is. It appears it had been taken apart and reassembled haphazardly to replace a lens which was probably why it was thrown away in the first place. Sans sets up the telescope in a prime location, but the stars haven't appeared yet, so he sends a quick text to Asgore that he's taking you to the Judgement Hall; somewhere you haven't been yet.

When you come out of Sans's shortcut, you find your yourself in an incredibly beautiful large room. The floor is tiled with golden-coloured sandstone. The walls are lined with ornate stained glass and marble pillars. You think during the day, light would be coming through the windows, but right now the room is lit with seemingly magical fire torches. You finally notice that Asgore, Toriel, Asriel, Papyrus, and Gerson are standing at the far end of the corridor. You look at Sans and he seems to not have any idea what's going on, which is an unusual look on him.

As you both approach, the five of them smile at you and Sans. Papyrus looks ecstatic. Asgore speaks up first. “Sans the Skeleton. Thank you for coming. Toriel and I have been discussing a ceremony that has been many centuries in the waiting. As you know, an ancient prophesy states that ‘an Angel... The One who has seen the Surface, will return and the Underground will go empty.’ By all accounts.. you have fulfilled that prophesy.”

You had no idea of this Prophesy and judging by how Sans seems a bit unsure how to react, it probably wasn't his intention fulfil any prophesy; he just wanted to free his people. Toriel addresses him next. “We decided many years ago that the one who fulfills the prophesy would be bestowed with the title of 'The Angel'. Sans, will you accept this title?”

Sans is at a loss for words. He looks down as he tries to think of something. “do i have to... do stuff?”

Toriel smiles and chuckles softly. “No. It is merely a title. You may do with it as you please. Whether you shout it from the rooftops or keep it to yourself is entirely up to you. Only those present here and now will know of it at this time. The ceremony is simple. You will be marked with Delta Rune to identify you as the Angel.”

“marked? like a tattoo?” Sans looks at himself briefly, probably wondering where he even could be marked.

Toriel nods. “Indeed. It may.. sting a bit, since I will be using fire magic. But it will only be for a
Sans thinks for a moment. He looks at you for your thoughts. To you, Sans is one of the most humble people you know, but you think he deserves to be recognized for what he did even when he didn't really want to. “I think you should,” you say tentatively. Papyrus is practically vibrating with his nodding. You have a feeling he isn't speaking because his voice would likely echo like crazy in this room.

“Go on, boy, “ Gerson chortles. “You deserve it!”

Sans thinks for a bit longer. He draws in a deep breath and exhales slowly. “okay,” he says cautiously. “where should i get it?” It's a rhetorical question, but you have an idea.

“How about your shoulder blade?”

“ya think so?” He says with a quirked grin.

“I think it would look cool.” Sans grins sheepishly. He tentatively starts removing his hoodie and turns around with his back to Toriel. She kneels behind him as he hands his hoodie to you and nervously pulls his shirt off over his head and exposing his boney back.

“How about your shoulder blade?”

“Are you ready?” She says softly as she reaches a large paw towards his back.

Sans squeezes the bundle of his shirt in front of him. “yeah,” he says with a nervous tremble. Toriel's paw is bigger than Sans's shoulder blade. He tenses in anticipation before he winces and grunts suddenly. It only lasts for a few seconds before you see a green glow from Toriel's paw and Sans relaxes.

After a moment, Toriel stands up. “It is done,” she says with a smile. Sans twists his neck in vain to look behind him, instead he turns around to let you look at it.

“Oh wow,” you say in fascination at the winged burn mark on his back. “It looks like a henna tattoo.”

“a what?”

“Oh, it this special plant paste that temporarily stains skin brown. It's commonly used for traditional body decoration.” You pull out your phone and take a picture of the brand on his shoulder blade and then hand your phone to him so he can see it.

“oh, sh- wow,” he corrects himself. “that is pretty cool.”

Papyrus finally speaks, but manages to keep his voice subdued. “I'm So Proud Of You, Brother! I Promise I Won't Tell The Whole World About It.”

“This mark is unique,” Asgore says. “Any monster you choose to show it to will know that you hold that title. So it is up to you to decide who you tell.”

“Well, i'm not really the type to go bare bones everywhere, so i should be fine.” Sans gives you a smirk as he puts his shirt back on. He winces a bit as the mark is still a bit tender. “thank you,” he says says quietly. “i'll try and do the title, uh, justice.”

Asriel looks at you slightly sad. “I kinda wish we could do something like that for YN,” he says to his parents. “Sans brought us the final Soul, but she brought Sans to us.”
“Ohh...” You say as you feel a flush in your cheeks. “You don't have to do anything for me.”

“Nonsense, little lady!” Gerson drawls. “I have no idea what, but we should do somethin' for ye.”

Toriel looks like she has an idea but only gives up a sly look. “Perhaps not right now. But in the future, I'm sure there is something we can do for both of you. Besides, I believe the stars are out by now. I imagine you wish to see them.”

You part ways for the night and Sans shortcuts you back to your tent on the surface. He leans into you for a hug and you're careful not to press too hard on his shoulder blade. You take turns looking through the telescope on a flattened part of the mountainside the monsters had been creating just for looking at the sky. Eventually, though, you just sit on the ground with your back against a boulder and Sans's back against your chest as he sits in front of you; occasionally tilting his head up for a nuzzle.

Chapter End Notes

So, it's generally theorized that Asriel (canonically) is meant to be the Angel of the prophesy, but circumstances are certainly different this time around. I think Asriel would be content to give up the title in exchange for a normal life.
You sleep in the following morning since there were no meetings that day as the American and Canadian governments decide what to do. You and Sans have no plans, so you decide to volunteer to help Toriel teach basic classes of general human history to some of the monsters who are curious, but didn't have much access to the information they wanted. A thousand years is a long time and only scraps of information ever made it to the Underground. Some of the humans who might as well be considered volunteers have been bringing educational books from off the mountain. If the monsters were young (or generally more innocent like Papyrus), the lessons were fairly basic which consisted of world geography, science and culture. If the monsters were older and seasoned, you covered technological advances, common human cultural nuances and even some of the more gritty parts of human history which included wars and other political turmoil.

Sans sat among the monsters learning regardless of their age. He seems enraptured to see you engaging with the monsters and teaching them about as much as you can. He was happy to lend you back the laptop you had given him in order to help answer any questions the monsters may have. The class is really more of an open discussion and the monsters would volunteer tidbits of their own history. Shortly after being sealed behind the Barrier, the monsters explored the cavern until they settled in what is now called Old Home or more commonly, the Ruins. Years later, the population began to recover it's numbers and started to spread back out into the rest of the cavern. Some settled in what is now Snowdin. Others preferred Waterfall. Eventually, when they started to colonize Hotland, new subspecies of Monster began to manifest. The magic exuded by the nomadic monsters gave rise to fire-based creatures such as Pyropes and Vulkins. It also awakened long-dormant elementals who aligned themselves with the monsters and lived among them. Enough monster magic intermingled with elemental magic that their descendants were considered full-fledged Monsters, but still referred to themselves as Elementals to honour their heritage. You suspect that Grillby is one of these descendants and could possibly be hundreds of years old.

It's well into the afternoon as you and Sans continue to wander the compound. You start to notice a few more of Warren's soldiers are milling about and you become increasingly aware that they've been watching you and Sans. You suspect it's become very obvious over time that you're in a romantic relationship. Sans, however is becoming very uncomfortable and seems to be trying to
shield you any chance he gets.

When you get near the plateau, you spot Jackson and Warrens himself along with his bodyguard. They seem to be having an argument. Undyne is standing nearby and is visibly discouraging Papyrus from intervening.

“Your presence here is making everyone uncomfortable. Why can't you just stay near the gate to protect these people instead of taking up space like some kind of... occupation?” Jackson stopped himself before he made an unneeded reference to old Germany.

“I need to make sure there aren't problems forming from the inside,” Warrens says with authority. “We don't know anything about these 'monsters'. They're unpredictable.” He gives Undyne a side-eye. “And your people are getting far too involved.”

“My team has been keeping the peace just fine.” Jackson responds, referring to his police subordinates and forest rangers. He also included the original military personnel who appeared prior to Warrens and thus is not part of his division, but Warrens outranks their commander. “and we're involved because we want to learn about them the old fashioned way: by learning from and with them. Your people may call themselves 'peacekeepers', but you're not needed here at this time.”

“That is not for you to decide,” Warrens says, while stepping into Jackson's space. “Jurisdiction or not, if you interfere, I will have you removed.”

Jackson stiffens but holds his ground. “I'll defend this mountain by myself if I have to,” he says through gritted teeth. “Even if it's against you.”

Warrens suddenly tries to grab Jackson's arm in an attempt to apprehend him. Jackson reaches for his belt; you aren't sure if he's reaching for a taser or a firearm. Apparently neither is Warrens's bodyguard as he raises his own firearm. “Keep your hands where I can see them!” He yells with his rifle pointed at Jackson.

It seems this altercation has distracted you and Sans enough that two soldiers have snuck up behind you unnoticed. One soldier grabs you and attempts to pull your arms behind you and push you down to pin you. The other soldier tries to grab Sans and fails as he dodges him. Sans spins around and activates his Blue magic on the soldier that tried to grab him and throws him several feet away. This startles the soldier holding you enough that you're able to headbutt him backwards in the nose, causing him to let go of you and proceed to also get thrown by Sans's magic. The magic use must have startled the bodyguard; who pulled the trigger on his firearm.

The shot that rang out got the attention of the entire compound. You can't hear anything other than a dull ringing for a few seconds, but you then see the result. Jackson is laying on the ground writhing in pain while clutching his stomach. Papyrus is right next to him and seems to be trying help. Warrens is also on the ground with Undyne on top of him. She is holding a glowing blue spear against his throat. You look behind you briefly and the two soldiers who are not under Warrens's command had dropped their weapons; making it clear they want no part of the confrontation.
The bodyguard is just whimpering as Sans keeps his hand extended while he decides what he should do. “Sans,” you say softly. You can tell the guy really doesn't want to fight. You can't see Sans's face, but you see his shoulders slump before he releases his hold and drops the man with a thump. The bodyguard scrambles to his feet and backs up; leaving his weapon behind. Sans picks up the rifle with magic and flings it out of sight into the shrubs.

At this time, Asgore and Toriel appear in a hurry. Toriel, upon seeing Jackson wounded rushes over to him to help Papyrus with healing. Asgore goes up to Sans. “What happened here?” He asks with urgency.

“we have a problem,” sans grumbles. “warrens is becoming intrusive and had his soldiers attack jackson, me and yn.

Asgore looks very upset as he surveys the scene. Then he looks rather sad. “The humans here are not my subjects, thus I can't punish the soldiers for attacking them. That is up to the human authorities. However, if one under his command attacked you, Sans, one of my subjects, then I must make a ruling, lest this conflict be escalated.” He walks over to where Undyne is holding Warrens in place and he motions for her to get off of him. “You must submit to a Tribunal. If you do not, this could end very badly. I told you that my people want peace. If you intend to interfere with our negotiations with your president, then we will have you removed. If you attack my people, we will defend ourselves. Do you understand?”

Warrens stands up slowly. His jaw is clenched and he looks like he's trying very hard to not be intimidated by Asgore's size and authority. He looks around to see that his subordinates can't help him with the other monsters nearby preparing to defend those who have no place in the conflict. Instead, he just stands still and silent, apparently waiting to see what Asgore is going to do. You're about to ask Sans what he means by a Tribunal, when Asgore turns to him. “Sans, if you will.”

Sans rubs his hand over his face and groans. “i hate workin' on my day off.” He turns to you with a haggard expression. “i have to go for a bit. 'm sorry.”

You stare at him for a moment. That's what he meant by 'capital J'. Sans is a Judge! You must not have seen it in his memories because it happens so seldom. “Are you going to be okay?” You ask softly since you have no idea what's about to happen.

He smiles that you're so concerned. “i'll be fine. it's stressful, but i'll manage.”

Warrens is looking very confused, but before he has a chance to react, Sans is suddenly in front of him and the second he grabs his arm, they both vanish; much to the dismay and shock of most of the nearby humans.

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Warrens certainly was not expecting to be yanked through the void and he stumbles on the sandstone floor of the Judgement Hall. As he takes in his surroundings, Sans stands in the middle of the floor with his hands in his hoodie pockets and and a calm expression on his face.

“What is this place?” Warrens demands. His professional military demeanour is beginning to wane.

“the judgement hall,” Sans says calmly. “it's where i work.”
“Your king said something about a Tribunal. Aren't there supposed to be other people here? Don't I get a jury?”

Sans points at himself with his thumb. “Right here.”

“Judge and Jury? I suppose you think of yourself as the Executioner, too?” Warrens is nervously looking around. The Hall is long and he realizes that he would not get very far before he'd be caught after having witnessed how quickly Sans moves and his telekinetic abilities; who knows what else he can do.

“If it's necessary,” he says with a shrug. “Never had to before. But I've never had to do this with a human before. Let alone one with as high an LV as you.”

“What are you talking about?” Warrens looks at Sans with confusion.

Sans draws in a deep breath and his expression turns very serious. “This is the Judgement Hall. Here, you will be Judged.” Warrens is frozen in place as Sans speaks without his usual drawl. “You will be Judged for every EXP you've earned. EXP is an acronym. It stands for Execution Points. When you kill someone, you earn EXP. When you have enough, your LoVe increases. LV is also an acronym that stands for Level of Violence which is a way to measure your capacity to harm others. The more LV you have, the less guilt you have. The easier it is for you to hurt others. You have LV, Warrens. That means you've killed people. I get that you're a soldier and sometimes you have to kill when you're in a war. But you have more EXP than you should for your LV. That means you have guilt. You regret it.”

Warrens grits his teeth and clenches his hands. “Of course I regret it! You think when I enlisted twenty years ago I thought I'd be some sort of hero? Maybe. I wanted to serve my country and bring peace to rest of the world. It took a few years for me to realize not everyone wants peace and they'll do whatever it takes to keep fighting their own war. They'll use anything and anyone to keep the peacekeepers out. Even those who don't want to fight and get caught in the crossfire.” Sans is silent as he listens. Warrens's emotional barriers begin to crumble and for the first time, he's able to see his Soul clearly. “Shortly after I was promoted I was given my own squad to command. They were my responsibility to protect; they were just kids. Not even old enough to drink.

“We were sent to this little village in the middle of nowhere to stop an occupation by a terrorist gang. At first we could only observe while we figured who were the hostiles and who were the civilians. They must have seen us because we saw someone walking towards us. I was watching through my scope and saw it was a child. Barely a teenager. The kid was wearing this bulky jacket that was way to thick for that climate. Then I realized he had a vest of fucking explosives strapped to him. He was crying and had already pissed himself. He was being sent by the terrorists to blow us up. If the kid refused, they would have killed him and probably his family if he had any left. I ordered my men to shoot him because I knew if I didn't we'd all be dead. They refused. So I had to do it. I shot a child to protect my squad who were barely out of childhood themselves.”

Sans breathes deeply as Warrens takes a moment. He's shaking and has his hands on the sides of his head. “Do you think you did the right thing?” Sans asks quietly.

Warrens shakes his head. “No,” he says gruffly. “There is no 'right' in war. I did what was necessary. We still had to clear out the village, but my men were punished for disobeying orders. Was I punished? No. I was commended.” He says the word with disgust. “Afterwards, I requested to be sent back to America. I had to finish my tour first. My only saving grace was I didn't have to kill anymore kids.”
Sans looks down and closes his eyes for a moment. *this is the world we're coming into?* He still has to ask. “so why are you here? in ebott. why do you need to keep such a close eye on us?”

Warrens also closes his eyes for a moment and a look of shame crosses his face. “Because I don't trust anyone. I don't know *anything* about you. You may say you want peace, but your definition of peace might be different than anyone else's. For all I know 'peace' to you means 'kill all humans'.”

Sans looks away. “maybe it did at one point. our entire species have been prisoners of war for a thousand years. of course there's going to be resentment. but asgore meant what he said. we want peace. we don't want a war with you, but if you want a war, we'll give you one. we're not as strong as humans, but we'd rather die than be imprisoned again because of your prejudice.”

Warrens just looks defeated. “I don't want another war either. I was afraid the humans who have immersed themselves among you were being indoctrinated. Led into a false sense of security only to be used against us. And that... girl who's always hanging around you. What is she to you?”

Sans hesitates. “not that it's any of your business... i love her. i intend to marry her.” Warrens's face goes slack. “i don't know when. i don't know how long it will take for her government to decide it's legal. apparently that's a thing human governments like to regulate.”

Warrens just shakes his head. “I don't even know what to think anymore. This is all so new to me and I will admit it scares me. You're talking to me in plain English, but you're so... different. It's messing with my head.”

“at least you're willing to admit it,” Sans replies plainly. “but there is still part of my culture i need to carry out. i still have to do my job and decide what's going to happen to you now.”

Chapter End Notes

Warrens had to kill a civilian that was being forced to transport an active explosive device to where he and his subordinates were camped. He regrets what he had to do. His untreated PTSD manifested as paranoia and xenophobia.
It's been almost twenty minutes. You have no idea what Sans is doing, Papyrus keeps telling you Sans wouldn't hurt anyone if he didn't have to. Jackson is being tended to by nurses Adjit and Choi with Toriel and Papyrus helping where possible. The damage is quite bad after being shot close range by a high-powered military grade firearm; the bullet went straight through him. The nurses are amazed that not only has the combined healing magic of Toriel and Papyrus stopped the bleeding, but it has done several days worth of healing in a few minutes. According to Nurse Choi, the bullet likely pierced his kidney and will still need proper medical attention.

The three soldiers under Warrens's command that had been involved in the altercation have been sat down and guarded. The 'bodyguard', whose name turns out to be Jacobs, is virtually catatonic. You didn't really notice at first, but he's actually quite young; probably barely twenty-two years old. He isn't even a bodyguard as you had assumed. He's still in basic training under Warrens's supervision and he thought he'd advance his career by showing that he's willing to protect his commanding officer. This was the first time he'd pointed a gun at anyone let alone fired it at someone.

Your phone pings. It's a text from Sans. 'hows it look up ther? headin back up.'

You text back. 'People are tense, but you can come back. Jackson's okay.'

A second later, Sans and Warrens appear in the same spot they disappeared from. Warrens looks rather world-weary, but otherwise unharmed. Sans lets go of him and wanders over to you. He looks tired, but not terribly upset. He stands next to you and turns back to Warrens. “well?” He says with his hands in his pockets.

Warrens acknowledges him and turns to his subordinates who are still sitting on the ground. He speaks calmly and with authority. “We have been banished from Mt. Ebott. We are to leave immediately.” He turns to Jackson, who has been bandaged and is sitting with Toriel's help. “I am to be detained until my own commanding officer can retrieve me for disciplinary action for assaulting an officer of the law and for instigating the altercation that resulted in said officer's injuries.” He says a bit more quietly. “If you are not able to arrest me at this time due to your injury, I will submit to a deputy.”

Jackson seems a bit stunned that Warrens is so willing to surrender himself. He gives Sans a glance, but Sans gives away no hints. He looks at Toriel and quietly asks her to help him stand. Reluctantly, she does and he slowly, but deliberately walks toward Warrens, “That won't be necessary. Michael Warrens. You are under arrest for assault of an officer. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in the court of law.” Jackson proceeds to handcuff Warrens with his hands in front of him and read Warrens his Miranda Rights. Afterwards, Jackson asks one of his own officers to escort Warrens and his men to the gate at the base of the mountain where they would be picked up by Jackson's deputy to be taken to the local
police station. From there they would be picked up by Military Police.

Once the soldiers are escorted away, Jackson is taken to the medical bay so Dr. Rhease can tend to him. With that, everyone on the plateau is able to go their separate ways. You keep giving Sans inquisitive glances, but he seems reluctant to tell you what happened down below until you're in your shared tent. He flops down face-first onto the cot and you sit down next to him and start rubbing his back. He breathes a deep sigh and seems to relax until he rolls to his side and looks up at you and sets his hand on your thigh. He just looks so thankful that you're there.

“You okay?” You ask softly.

He nods slowly. “yeah. i just don't like having to do that. i'd rather not get into other people's business, but sometimes it's my job. i'm sorry i didn't tell you about it.”

“Are you... contracted to do that job or something?” If he doesn't like it, why doesn't he leave?

Sans sighs. “not really... but i'm the only one whose judgement asgore trusts enough to do it by myself without error. i demonstrated it by accident when i judged him when i was younger. turns out i know him better than he knows himself. so i filled the role of judge to greet young monsters meeting the king for the first time. if their soul is pure, they go through. if there's darkness, they get turned away and offered counselling before being allowed to return. it pays well, though. that's why i keep doing it. to keep a roof over my and my brother's heads.”

You keep rubbing Sans's side. “I hope you don't have to keep doing that when you start to make a life for yourselves.”

Sans shakes his head. “i doubt it. as a political figure i'd imagine he'd have to come up with a different system. everyone kinda wants to live their own lives.” You nod in agreement, but Sans can see you're very curious about happened to Warrens while he was Underground. He chuckles weakly. “don't worry, we just talked. warrens isn't a bad guy. he's just really troubled. i can tell jackson isn't going to run him into the ground. i just told him he needs to leave. if he stays and keeps making people uncomfortable, somethin's gonna snap. or someone. and everyone's going to have a bad time.”

“Well, as long as you're okay,” you say softly, even if you're not sure what to make of the situation. You decide to change the subject. “Anyway, I'm starving. Are you hungry?”

Sans shrugs. “i'm never hungry when you're close by.” Wow. Sans never stops surprising you at just how easy it is to melt your heart.

You stroke his skull and kiss his temple. “How about you just rest for a little while and I'll go get us something munch on.” Sans smiles and looks like he's already falling asleep.

You head over to what is slowly becoming a food court with Grillby, Muffet, and even Toriel helping out when she can. You're not really surprised to see Papyrus in an apron there, but there is a female park ranger with him wearing an apron over her uniform. They're standing over a pot of boiling water on a hotplate. Curious, you walk over.

“What do you have there, Papyrus?” You ask as you approach the station. There is also a pot of spaghetti sauce on the table nearby.

“THE LADY RANGER IS TEACHING ME THE HUMAN TECHNIQUE OF PASTA COOKING. HER LITTLE ONE LOVES PUZZLES AND SO WE TRADED SKILLS JUST AS I
The noodles boiling in the pot look just as they should. Not burnt. You see the remnants of chopped vegetables and a few spice bottles on the table. “Is the sauce fresh, too?”

“It is,” Ranger Simmons says with a big smile. “Papyrus is an excellent student.” Papyrus looks quite proud of himself. You decide to wait the few minutes until it’s finished. While you're waiting, you overhear one of the police officers on the phone at nearby table.

“He's still there?” He says, seemingly annoyed. “Jackson's still in the infirmary and Greene is dealing Warrens.... Look if he's still there in a hour, I'll call Greene to come get him.” He hangs up.

“Trouble at the front gate?” You ask casually, not really expecting him to divulge what’s going on.

He groans tiredly. “Guy's a bit of a local celebrity. He's been researching the mythology around the mountain for years and now he's almost desperate to know what's going on up here. We've had to detain him for trespassing before and now it feels almost wrong to turn him away this time. Since he was right all along.”

You remember the book you bought at the gift shop. “Robert Pennington?”

“You know him?” He looks surprised.

“I bought his book when I first arrived into town. The shop owner seems to think he's a bit kooky.”

“He's a little eccentric, but he's actually a really nice guy. Just very passionate.”

You decide to let Sans know about this when you get back to the tent. After a few more minutes, Papyrus happily serves up his fresh spaghetti in two brightly-coloured plastic bowls with lids that Simmons must have brought from home.

When you get back to the tent, Sans is laying on his back with his arms splayed to the sides with his eyes closed. You know what Sans looks like when he's actually asleep and you're sure that he is not. He's just pretending. He's still pretending when you sit down and pry the lid off one of the bowls and prepare a forkfull of spaghetti. You hold the fork in front of his nose and with one sniff one of his eyes lolls open, then the other eye opens and focuses on the fork in front of him. He opens his mouth and you feed the pasta to him with a snicker.

After swallowing he looks quite pleased. “is that what i think it is?”

“Papyrus's cooking,” you confirm with a smile. “One of the rangers taught him in exchange for some puzzle ideas to bring back to her kid. She complimented him on being such a good student.”

Sans sits up and you hand him the bowl while you pick up your own. “might not always be obvious, but paps is actually really smart. he loves learning. he just likes learning different things than me. i think he'd do really well for himself up here if given the opportunity.”

“Oh I don't doubt that one bit. He's bursting with energy and enthusiasm. I just hope we can guide in the right direction so he doesn't get taken advantage of.” Sans nods in agreement. “Oh, by the way. You still have that book I got from the gift shop? The one about Ebott's mythology?”

“yeah,” he holds up his hand and the book suddenly appears in his grasp.
“Well, apparently the author has been hanging around the front gate. I think the activity up here has convinced him there's something Monster-related going on. I heard he isn't dangerous or anything, just extremely curious and passionate. I kinda wish I could let him in and show him his research wasn't wasted.”

Sans looks thoughtful. “you could ask a few people for permission to let him in. i could go to the gate and have a look at him from out of sight and see for myself if he's cool.”

“Hmm.” You like that idea.

After you finish eating, Sans disappears to head for the gate. He says he can shortcut to a spot where neither the guards, nor anyone on the other side of the gate can see him. You visit Asgore and Toriel to state your case. You even show them the cover of the book with the illustration that looks very much like Asgore himself. They actually seem curious to know what information he's uncovered and how much of Monster history actually remained outside the Barrier.

You visit Jackson in the infirmary and you're glad to see he is well on his way to recovery thanks to Toriel giving him a handful of monster candy to speed up his healing. He seems a bit frustrated that Pennington is becoming a nuisance, but you appeal that if he is allowed to enter, he likely will not be a problem anymore. His apparent reverence for the monsters of myth in his writing makes you sure he would gladly immerse himself in their culture. Jackson is reluctant, but concedes provided he is supervised; assuming he is allowed past the gate. He makes a phonecall to the gate supervisor that you had requested Pennington be allowed in. Just then you get message from Sans saying 'he's cool'. After waiting on the phone for a response, the gatekeeper says he's been allowed to open the gate. So Jackson makes another call to one of the officers to head to gate and prepare to escort him in. You thank him and quickly head for the gate yourself.
How to Greet a New Pal

Chapter Summary

Robert Pennington is allowed to enter the Mt Ebott encampment.

Chapter Notes

Time for some light-hearted fluff.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When you get to the gate, you see the officer, named Phillips, you met in the food court already there speaking to the gatekeeper. You wait just on the inside as the gate opens and he steps out and walks down the dirt road. It's well into the evening and it's starting to get a bit dark in the wooded area of the mountain. You can just barely see a slightly dishevelled man pacing back and forth across the road. He seems to shrink backwards when officer Phillips approaches him, but the officer holds up his hands in a placating manner. They talk for a moment and then the man stands up straight with his hands folded in front of his face. Then the officer turns and motions for the man to walk with him. As they get closer you can make out the man's features a bit more clearly. He's older; probably in his fifties. Fairly thin with unkempt beard and hair, but not dirty. His eyes behind his round glasses are wide and bright as he listens to the officer tell him that he might have to make some revisions to his book.

Stepping through the gate, he gives you an odd look; probably because you aren't wearing a uniform. “Mr. Pennington, I presume?” You say brightly. “I heard you're a researcher of sorts. I'm new in town. Been here not even a whole week, yet. I read your book, though. My name's YN, by the way.” You hold out your hand and he shakes it carefully, while still trying to decide what to do with that information.

“Robert,” he says cautiously.

As you continue walking up the dirt path, Pennington is looking around curiously at the various military installations set up around the mountainside and you assume that you would see surfaced monsters soon. Suddenly, Pennington stops short and is frozen in place. Oh, it's Sans. He's leaning against a tree with his hands in his pockets with a calm and curious expression as he watches you walking up the path. Pennington is just staring, obviously trying to figure out if he's looking at a costume or something else.

“Oh, Mr Pennington. This is Sans... and that's not a costume.” He looks up at you for clarification. “Your research wasn't in vain. There really was a war here a thousand years ago. Up until a few days ago, there really was a civilization of non-human people trapped under this mountain. They are recently surfaced and Sans is one of them.”

Pennington's eyes nearly boggle out of their sockets as he stares into Sans's. “You're real...” He mumbles with fascination. “You're really real!”
You can tell he's holding himself back from getting uncomfortably close to Sans which you really admire. He sees Sans as a sentient person rather than just some creature to be ogled. Sans takes a casual step forward and holds out his left hand. “don't you wanna make a new pal?” Pennington barely hesitates and gladly takes Sans's hand only to hear a loud and drawn out 'pthhptt' noise. Pennington's face freezes in confusion and looks down to see Sans reveal a palm buzzer that mimics a whoopie cushion sound. Sans is now laughing. “i've been waiting to use that for ages!”

Pennington is still staring at Sans's hand; not the palm buzzer. “Incredible,” he mutters. “You're a skeleton! Or rather a monster that resembles a skeleton. Are there more like you? I've found inscriptions and illustrations that suggest monsters appear in many different forms.”

Sans seems slightly perturbed that Pennington disregarded his prank, but he can let it go due to him being distracted by Sans's very existence. He just shrugs and puts his hand back in his pocket. “just my brother, papyrus. i think you'd like him. he likes to talk.”

“I'd love to meet him,” Pennington says with an eager smile. “I like to listen.”

Sans winks at you and turns to walk back up the hill to the centre of the compound. You, officer Phillips and Pennington follow him. You didn't notice as first, but Pennington is carrying a satchel of sorts on his back. It didn't look heavy enough to be laptop or anything metal. Maybe it's a notebook? Along the way, Pennington tells a little about his own history. His parents are from Great Britain and immigrated to America after WW2. That would explain his odd accent. When he asks who you are specifically, you're not sure what context he's looking for. “she helped free us,” Sans says quickly. At that, Pennington gives you an approving smile.

As you get closer to the main compound, you start to see other monsters walking about like normal and Pennington is barely walking straight as he tries to take in as much of his surrounding as possible and acknowledges every monster however small. His smile is almost manic and you start to worry slightly that the excitement would overwhelm him. Instead of going to plateau, Sans leads you to the conference tent that the meetings had been taking place in. Toriel and Asgore are standing in front. Pennington almost automatically wanders up to them with a look of wonder on his face. “My Lord!” He exclaims. “You're much taller than I imagined.” He looks further up. “Of course! You're the King!” He looks over at Toriel. “And you must be...”

She smiles. “You may call me Toriel.”

Pennington nods eagerly. “What a lovely name.”

“And you may call me Agore,” Asgore says while extending a large paw. Pennington happily takes it with both his hands. “YN thought it would be a good idea to invite you here. I am very curious to know where you found the subject matter to put in your book and how you developed your theories. Perhaps we may... set the records straight, as it were.”

Pennington smiles excitedly. “I would be honoured to listen to anything you have to say.”

Toriel briefly looks up at the sky. “It is well into the evening, so we will not keep you for terribly long. I believe we can find you accommodations if you wish to stay.”

Phillips pipes up. “I'm sure I can find something. I'm supposed to keep an eye on you, but I think you'll be okay for a few minutes. I'll be back.” He heads off in a brisk pace while you, Sans, Toriel, Asgore and Pennington step into the conference tent.

Upon sitting down, Penning sets his satchel on the table and pulls out... a sketchbook; an aged and well-worn thick book that he'd probably been carrying for many years. He holds it for a moment as
if he was holding a newborn infant. “I’ve had this for a very long time. I never let it out of my sight. It contains all my research notes, theories and diagrams regarding what I’ve uncovered and attributed to ancient monster history. Most of it never made to the publication and I imagine much of it is inaccurate. I want to share it with you.” He hands it to Asgore very carefully. Just as carefully, Asgore takes it and sets it down on the table in front of him.

For the next hour, the five of you pour over the contents of Pennington's manuscript/scrapbook. The book is filled to the brim with notes, drawings, rubbings, photographs and even small flat artefacts like textiles and parchments. Asgore and Toriel take turns either confirming, debunking or correcting each item. Some ruins Pennington had found and believed were made by monsters were actually human-built, but they were from the same time period. He tells them about a tome he had uncovered and taken photographs of that seemed to be birth records that were in fact the names of young monsters meeting Asgore himself for the first time as a form of population record. The writing is in Asgore's own hand. A few more diagrams and notes are from Pennington's trip to Europe where he believes the first Monsters originated alongside early modern humans. Because monsters turn to dust upon death, there are no remains, only their artefacts; many of which were attributed to humans of that time. Pennington, however, believed the differences in style of the artefacts in the same place meant they must have been made by different peoples. Asgore makes a mental note to introduce him to Gerson in the near future.

Pennington does bring up what Toriel and Asgore hoped he would not, but knew it was inevitable: the incident that took place in town fifty years ago. Asgore chooses his words carefully and states that it was a terrible misunderstanding. They explain that they had been caring for a human child that had fallen into the Underground and some time later the child became sick and passed away. Their son, Asriel had ‘borrowed their magic’ in order to cross the Barrier and return the child's body to the humans. But Ebott's residents were frightened and attacked what they perceived as a demon. They told him that their son had died, but was somehow recently resurrected by a magic that even they do not yet understand. Pennington says he is sorry that human fear and cruelty still persists and hopes that their transition into the modern world is not met with violence.

At one point, Phillips returns with a box of monster pastries from both Muffet and Rosie, the bunny from the Snowdin shop. Pennington is fascinated by the spider tradition of adding spider dust to the batter. Towards the end of the book, an illustration catches Sans's eyelights. It's a drawing of a skeleton wearing what appears to be traditional ceremonial robes. The skeleton looks very human unlike himself and Sans remembers part of his father's conversation with you. Skeleton monsters came from humans. A transcription written next to the drawing recounts some stories of animated skeletons that early humans saw as the walking dead; partially giving rise to the grim reaper myth. Turns out it was only half-true. The skeletons were alive and had their own monster Souls completely independent of their previous lives. Over time, they evolved along with monsters borne of animals. They grew together and all became fully magic and treated each other as equals. Papyrus has a theory that humans evolved from skeletons; just the opposite was true.

As the evening turns to night, you notice Pennington is starting to show signs of over-tiredness. The excitement of meeting the subjects of his life's work must have drained what little energy he had left after standing outside the front gate for who knows how long. It isn't long before he practically passes out in mid-sentence. Phillips had been standing guard outside the tent with Undyne when your entourage exits. Toriel is carrying Pennington in her arms as he is fast sleep with his glasses skewed to one side and snoring loudly. Sans is carrying his satchel and book. Undyne makes an amused comment that he reminds her of Alphys when she falls asleep watching an anime for the hundredth time. Asgore stays behind with Undyne while Phillips directs you, Sans and Toriel to a small tent near the barracks. Toriel tucks him into bed in the cot as you put his satchel with his book under his pillow.
You and Sans watch the stars for a little while before heading to bed yourselves for some private intimacy.

Chapter End Notes

Mr Pennington is somewhat inspired by Dr. Wallace Wrightwood, the Bigfoot enthusiast from Harry and the Hendersons.
"SANS! IT'S TIME TO GET UP!" Sans opens his eyes slowly. He's alone... in a bedroom that is far too familiar. It's his bedroom in Snowdin... and he's alone. *why am I so cold?* He tries to call out for you. *what.. what was your name? why can't I remember it?* His voice dies on his tongue. *was it even real? it had to be real, but why am I here? did... did time reset? how? flowey...? no, something went wrong, this isn't right! Yn? that was your name right?* The glimpse of green light just outside of his peripheral vision that vanishes when he tries to look at it must mean something. *why does my chest hurt? Yn!* "SANS?" Sans jolts awake and sits up rigid in the cot. Papyrus is calling him from outside the tent, but Sans was calling for you in his sleep. When he opens his eyes, they're wide and frightened and his breathing is shuddered and gasping. "be right there, paps." His calm voice does not match his terrified expression. It's like he'd learned to keep his voice calm even when he's panicked. "Sans?" When he finally looks at you, his breath exhales in relief. "Are you okay? Did you have a bad dream?"

He looks away for a moment, unsure of how to answer. After a while, he nods slowly. You reach over to him half-expecting him to pull away wanting to deal with it himself, but instead he falls into your arms and wraps his boney arms tightly around you. You lay back down holding him tightly against you. He's shaking and trying hard to not start sobbing into your chest. You feel a familiar slight burning in your Soul as he presses himself against you. You realize he does that himself on purpose. He's allowing more of your Soul's magic to flow into him as a form of self-assurance that you're right there. You can only imagine what might have upset him so much. Your best guess is that he forgot where he was and must have dreamed about the time loops again and that everything that's happened in the last month was suddenly ripped away from him; including you.

You continue to hold him and stroke his skull, but his shaking doesn't subside. "why do you put up with me?" He says with a shuddering voice. That came out of nowhere.
"What?" you whisper in exasperation.

"I'm a mess," he whimpers. "You've given so much and I have nothing to offer you in return. Just my miserable self."

Your heart breaks when you realize his resilient emotional barriers are weakened from his nightmare and his insecurities have gotten the better of him. He believes that his past experiences and constant fear of loss makes him undesirable and that you're just 'tolerating' him. "Sans," you say softly. "Look at me, please." Reluctantly, he pulls back just enough to let you press your forehead against his. His eyelights are so small, they're just pinpricks. His face is so distraught that you feel like you could shatter him with a single word. "You've given me more than you can imagine. You gave me a whole new life. Papyrus, Undyne, Alphys... They're all my friends now; and soon to be part of my family just like you. You've given me so many new and wonderful people to love and I feel so fulfilled and happy that you're all such a big part of my life. It's okay if your past still bothers you. It was terrible and sad, but we're all here to help you deal with it; if you're willing to let us help you." You gently kiss his forehead and nuzzle his nasal ridge. "I love you, Sans. You're a wonderful person and I love you so very much and I'm so happy you're here with me."

Sans stares into your eyes. His eyelights aren't quite as restricted anymore and just looks like he's fully surrendered to whatever fate the universe has in store for him. He just goes back to burying his face into your chest and inhales a very deep breath and exhales it slowly to calm himself. "I love you," he says weakly. You have a feeling you'll be called into another meeting later that morning, but for now, you need to be here for Sans until he's calmed himself enough to get out of bed.

An extra ten minutes seemed to be enough to let Sans wake up properly and put his nightmare behind him. You weren't wrong. You do have a conference call that morning with only two of the presidential representatives this time. With Pennington up and about ready to spend another day among the monsters, you decide to leave him in the company of your friends Papyrus, Alphys and Undyne. With Asgore's permission, they take him on a tour of the Underground, similar to the one you gave Jackson.

Normally, decisions made within congress can take a very long time, but an entirely new non-human race of people seeking freedom among human citizens after being imprisoned under a mountain for a millennium counted as an emergency. There are still several rights and privileges normally attributed to humans that will need further discussion, such as property and business ownership, marriage rights, medical access, travel accommodations and educational equivalence. In the meantime however, the president has decided to go forward with making the monster population public knowledge. He will need time to organize an emergency press conference within a couple of days, announcing that monsters have been granted autonomy. Full citizenship will continue to be discussed, so for the time being they are granted immigrant status. The ID cards issued by the police will be regarded as legal identification until American ID and SIN numbers could be assigned to those who intend to live on or interact with the Surface. Mount Ebott will be designated as a sovereign state under Asgore's rule, provided the monsters obey American law as any resident must; meaning the mountain is within the jurisdiction of Ebott's police force if there is a need to investigate any wrongdoing that a monster may cause outside of the mountain's borders.

President Freeman also intends to send additional military security to the borders until a more permanent and practical form of security is instated. He was recently informed of the altercation with Warrens and apologizes for the misunderstanding and he assumes the military police will be contacting Jackson soon regarding court proceedings.
The new military security is expected to arrive later that evening for instructions and introductions. Asgore insists that Sans be present at the orientation so he can 'screen' each personnel and allocate who would be allowed into the compound itself and who would be better suited to remain at the border. You know Asgore is making this part of Sans's 'job' to decide who is compatible to interact with the monsters without being a threat to them based on their behavior and expressions upon meeting a monster first hand.

Once the press conference is live, you intend to ask Alphys and Mettaton to help monitor the news and social media to gauge the reactions of the general population. If reactions are favourable, or at least neutral, the monsters would be allowed to leave the mountain and visit the town itself with military or police escort. Finally, Undyne would be able to visit the ocean up close and Papyrus has been making it very clear he wants to meet more humans and share all the wonders of Monsterkind. You can only hope he’s careful.

After the meeting, you and Sans go to what the resident humans have officially started calling the Food Court. Both monsters and humans (on their time off) have been contributing to feeding the increasing population within the compound. Vegetoids have been helping the humans by infusing their food with green magic so monsters can eat it and get all the nutrition they need from it, while enjoying a much greater variety food they didn’t have available in the Underground.

As you’re looking for a place to sit, you see Pennington, Undyne, and Papyrus at a table. Undyne sees you and eagerly waves you over. You and Sans head over and sit down with them. Pennington barely notices you as he’s writing intently in a new notebook. His old one is open next to him and he appears to be partially transcribing what he already has written and also writing new content based on what new information he’s learned. Apparently Alphys has something in the lab to take care of, so she stayed behind at the conclusion of the tour. From what Undyne understands, Alphys has been organizing plans to go forward with the trolley system as well as bringing power from the Core up to the plateau. Both Alphys and Sans are cautiously optimistic that one day they’ll have access to fully functional electronics and technology that they could use to make the Core more efficient and work on their own projects to help monsters and humans alike.

You suspect Pennington is, for the moment in his own world, so you ask Papyrus how the tour went. “IT WENT WONDERFULLY! THE GREAT PAPYRUS IS AN EXCELLENT TOUR GUIDE. MISTER PENNINGTON IS VERY CURIOUS ABOUT MONSTER CULTURE, SO I BROUGHT HIM TO THE BEST PLACE FOR KNOWLEDGE: THE LIBRARY IN SNOWDIN!”

“I had to beg the proprietor to let me peruse what they had,” Pennington mumbles as he keeps writing. “They were in the process of packing their books, but I just had to have them! I read as much as I could before they ushered me out. The concept of actual real magic is something I really want to explore.”

“We would have taken him to see Gerson’s collection, but we didn’t want to risk him getting sick,” Undyne says with a side-glance. “Besides, he’d already packed up a lot of his stuff.”

“I’m sure you’ll have more books at your disposal soon enough,” you say with a kind smile. “If not, I’m sure there are monsters who would be happy to know you’re so dedicated to preserving their history and educating the public about their culture. From what I’ve seen, a lot of monsters like to talk about their lives.”

Pennington looks up with a bright smile. “I’ve noticed. And it’s wonderful. They’re all so unique and special. It’s more incredible than I could have imagined.” Papyrus smiles just as brightly and...
looks rather proud. You give Sans a look of adoration that says 'he took the words right out of my mouth.'

“Oh, I thought you guys should know, the president is planning to go forward with starting the process of getting monsters full rights. So, theoretically you’d be seen as citizens in the eyes of the law. It will take some getting used to from the general public, though. Once he has his press conference, you’d be allowed to leave the mountain, but you’d need a police or military escort. I’ve no doubt you’re fully capable of defending yourself, but it’s really just keep the peace.” Undyne grumbles but quietly agrees. Her hot temper could get her into trouble if a human decided to confront her without some sort of mediation. “Also, there are more military personnel coming here later today. Sans is going to keep an eye socket on them until he knows who’s okay to be around monsters.”

Undyne nods again. “Sound like a good idea.”

Later on, you and Sans are on your way to the infirmary to check in with Jackson. “Hey, Sans?”

“hm?”

“You seemed pretty happy to trust Pennington right away. What did you see when you looked at him?”

Sans chuckles with a smile. “his soul is like yours. he wears it on his sleeve and it’s bright as heck. nice shade of violet to boot. represents perseverance. he probably would have given up on his dream long ago if it wasn’t.”

“Sounds like a good guy.” Sans nods in agreement.
Orientation Day

Chapter Summary

Some fresh new faces arrive on mt. Ebott.

Arriving at the infirmary, you press the intercom button. “Hello? Dr. Rhease?”

A few seconds pass and you hear Dr. Rhease’s voice respond. “YN? Is that you?”

“Hello, is Sheriff Jackson able to have visitors?”

“Um, he’s getting his bandages changed. Can you wait a few minutes?”

“Yeah, we’ll wait.”

You let go of the button and after a few minutes, the door of the medical bay opens. Dr. Rhease is standing in the door and invites you inside. You bypass the sterilization process and you’re able to walk right into the room where Jackson is sitting on the cot and reading something on his phone. He smiles when he sees you and Sans.

“Hey, how’s it going?” He says cheerfully, although you can tell he’s getting a bit anxious being stuck in the infirmary.

“Not bad, actually,” you reply. “Was going to ask you the same thing.”

He sighs tiredly. “I’m hoping to get out of here soon. I’ve never been shot before, but I know it wouldn’t normally heal this fast thanks to Toriel’s help, so I shouldn’t really complain. I think monsters than can heal like that would do really well working in the medical field.”

“here’s to hoping they can get into school for that,” Sans quips. “either that or get into… what’s it called… homeopathy? seems to be really popular among humans.”

You suppress a giggle, but you change the subject. “We thought you’d like to know, we’re getting more security for the border. President Freeman is having an emergency press conference in a day or so to announce the Monsters’s existence to America and anyone else watching. Also, I think you’ll be getting a call soon? You might be have to go to court or something for Warrens.”

Jackson groans and rubs gently at his bandaged gut. “You know, if circumstances were different I’d be pretty eager to get it dealt with. But, I really don’t want to have to leave Ebott. Dr. Rhease says I’m well on my way to a full recovery without lasting effects; not even in my kidney, so I won’t be out of commission for much longer; and it was an accident. If they do call, I don’t know, I’ll probably just want to make sure that kid gets some counseling or something.”

“it was a mess all around,” Sans quietly. “i might have reacted a bit more aggressively than i needed to. as for warrens; he needs help, too. he dealt with some rough stuff when he was on tour and it made him more paranoid than usual. but it’s your call in the end. i already did my part.”

Jackson nods in understanding. “I’ll take that into consideration.”
You bid Jackson farewell and slowly make your way to the front gate to watch for the arriving security. On your way there, you notice several other monsters passing you and heading in the same direction. Some look like wizards hovering above the ground. Some are large and lumbering with reptilian faces on their torsos; when you get a closer look you realize the faces aren’t real, but rather an enchantment on the armour meant for intimidation. Sans identified them as Madjick and Knight-Knight; self-proclaimed mercenaries. As you get closer to the gate, you see more monsters gathered there along with some of the familiar soldiers from the compound. You recognize some of the Dog monsters from Grillby’s along with some monsters that resemble Froggits, Loox and Whimsums, but they are wearing armour and seem more prepared for combat. There are also two large royal guards in dark metal armour similar to Undyne’s that look like they usually work as a pair. You assume that Asgore had assigned them all to temporarily take instruction alongside the human soldiers.

When you finally arrive and join up with the group at a muster point a short distance from the gate itself, you can see and hear whom you recognize as the commanding officer of the original platoon of soldiers and medics that first arrived at the mountain; Lieutenant Sanford. He looks a bit nervous talking to a group of monsters; some of whom are much larger in stature than himself. From what you gather, he’s instructing those present that they will be grouped up with the new soldiers as part of an integration process so they understand what it is they are protecting. Sans will be observing the groups as they interact and make mental notes on their progress. The new soldiers are fresh out of basic training and shouldn’t be hardened by war at this point. they shouldn’t have exp. You, unfortunately will have to stay out of the way while Sans is working, but he’d come see you on his breaks which he intends to take full advantage of.

It’s about half an hour of questions and answers and general clarifications of what is expected of everyone, before you hear a familiar buzzing signaling the opening of the gate. A large passenger transport vehicle pulls into the gate and parks on the road in view of the group of human and monster soldiers. Sans gives you a slightly sad look and you get the hint that it’s time for you to leave. Your insatiable curiosity doesn’t let you get very far, though. You walk a good distance away from the muster point, but you stand just out of sight so you can at least watch, but not really hear.

The doors of the vehicle open and a group of about twenty young Privates, both men and women, exit in formation. They are unarmed and look quite nervous even if trying to hide it. The commanding officer that came with them orders them to stand at attention then he turns to Lt. Sanford and salutes him. Two more soldiers exit and pull a large dark green crate out of the back of the vehicle and quickly carry it to what you know is a supply depot, so you assume it contains supplies for the new arrivals. They then return and get into the vehicle and it backs out of the muster point and out the gate. You can just barely make out Sanford relaying basic instructions on what is about to happen. You watch as Sanford reads two names off of a clipboard and two new soldiers step forward, then he reads a third name and an unarmed soldier from the compound steps up to join them. Then Sanford and everyone else look at Sans. He points at a ‘Final Froggit’ and it hops up to join the small group. The Privates try desperately not to stare as Sanford gives the group an instruction and the four of them head off to start a patrol of sorts. Sanford reads two more names and the process repeats. You have a feeling Sans chooses the accompanying monster very carefully. He studies the Privates to get a read of their temperament and assigns a compatible monster soldier, whether it is a Whimsalot or Greater Dog. The two guards in dark armour seem disappointed to be split up, but they fist-bump each other when one is sent to join a group.

As Sans sends Doggo along with the last group to patrol the border of the compound, he stretches and gives a casual salute to Lt. Sanford. Sans then looks in your direction since of course he knew
you were there the whole time. He strolls up to you and leans his body into yours and gives you a smirk. “That went smoothly,” you say as the both of you walk towards the encampment.

“impressionable youth usually don’t have many expectations,” he says with a chuckle. “most of them are pretty cool, but some of them might need a bit of straightening out. i sent the bigger guys with them.”

“So, what are you going to do now? Do you follow them around and see who gets along and who doesn’t?”

Sans shrugs. “pretty much. i think being a skeleton might actually make things really interesting. might be amusing to see who i can creep out the most.”

You give Sans a weird look. “You sure that’s how you want them to see you?”

His expression turns a bit more serious. “they already do. i could see it when i was down there. the other monsters didn’t bother them as much as i did. probably because i look the most human out them all. i think you guys call it the uncanny valley?” He shrugs again. “so, what better way to get someone to show their true colours than to make them face their fears?” He taps the side of his eye socket. You’re a bit uncomfortable with the thought of Sans intentionally frightening people that are meant to protect his fellow monsters, but you can sort of see why he’d do that. Humans are scared of what they don’t understand and by scaring someone, Sans can see who is going to react with violence and who will react with genuine curiosity and actually make an effort to understand.

For the rest of the day, Sans would appear out of nowhere around the patrolling groups. Sometimes he’d be sitting in a tree just watching them pass or he’s be leaning against part of the barricade messing with his phone and casually engage them in conversation when they came near. For the most part, the Privates were simply bewildered by monsters in general and only mildly unnerved by Sans the living skeleton. Some of them were visibly uncomfortable, but Sans chalked most of that up to them still absorbing the concept of non-human people actually being real or simply a language barrier. Some of the Dogs only spoke very basic English. Sans’s jokes and puns usually eased the tension and he took note that whoever picked these kids out for this job knew what they were doing. Even the so-called ‘tough guys’ eased up when they realized there was no reason to hide their true feelings; he had Lesser Dog to thank for that. It became very apparent that some of them joined the military whilst dealing with their own personal issues like a less-than-happy life at home. It wasn’t something Sans liked to think about, but you told him yourself that some humans aren’t really that great at getting along with each other; even among their own family.

At the end of the day after the new arrivals are sent to the barracks for the night, you come upon Sans in the Food Court scribbling something on a clipboard. “How was your day?” You ask as you sit down.

“not bad,” he says with a smile. “i think they’re a pretty good bunch.”

“Really? They didn’t look like bananas.”

Sans gives you a side-glance and smirks. “nice one.”

“So what are you doing here?” You point at the clipboard.

“it’s a thing for sanford. some of them might need a bit more attention so i’m writing down who
should stay near the perimeter for a bit more observation. the rest of them should be able to come into the compound while under supervision.”

“Nice to know they’re making progress. I’m really hoping this transition into public knowledge goes smoothly. I know it won’t, but it’s nice to hope.” Sans looks at you in earnest. You’ve been trying to hide it, but you know Sans can see through you. You’re scared. It’s been getting to you more lately that you can’t help but worry that things will go terribly wrong. That some terrorist or hate group will storm the mountain and try to wreak havoc on everyone despite the military presence. Sans leans into you and wraps an arm around you.

“it will be okay, yn,” he says softly. “you gave me hope that things can get better. we’re already free and whatever happens now is part of keeping that freedom. the monsters are ready to defend themselves if they have to. and to be fair… i may not look it, but i can hold my own pretty well in a fight if i have to.”

You sigh heavily as you nuzzle the side of his face. “I hope you don’t have to.”

It’s a bit cloudy that night, so you turn in early and snuggle together until you fall asleep. You can only hope you don’t have any nightmares that night.
Press Conference

Chapter Summary

The President tells the world about the Monsters.

The next morning, Papyrus wakes you both up to start the day. Fortunately, no nightmares this time. Sans quickly shortcuts you both to his house in Snowdin so you can both use the shower there rather than the one provided by the military. After which, you head for the Food Court in search of breakfast. When you get there, you see a lineup of the new recruits leading up to a kiosk on the edge of the Court. At the kiosk are two people, one is the lady who taught Papyrus proper pasta procedure, the other is an orange-furred cat monster. Both are working efficiently preparing and serving a breakfast fit for a platoon of soldiers. It looks like the cat monster doesn't really enjoy his work, but nonetheless he is good at it; you hope he finds something he enjoys in his future.

Over breakfast, you bring up the news on your phone and see an announcement that the President's press conference is scheduled for that afternoon. You also hear from some of the local soldiers that the recruits aren't just being trained to protect the mountain, but the town of Ebott, too. They anticipate that reporters, paparazzi, tourists and other potential dangers could infiltrate the town, putting the residents at risk; not just the monsters. As you're casually eating, you're somewhat surprised to see Jackson up and about in uniform, although he still has a bit of a hobble in his step as his body is still recovering. He's talking on his phone and seems to be a bit agitated, but not really upset. After a while he hangs up and spots you and Sans at your table before heading over and sitting down with you.

“How are you doing?” You ask casually.

“Good,” he says calmly. “Still a bit sore, but I really can't complain. Considering what the alternative could have been.”

You nod in agreement. “Did you see that President Freeman has his press conference this afternoon?”

“Yes, I was talking to the mayor just now. He knows what's up and he wants to have a meeting at Town Hall after the conference. The town's residents have been getting restless since they know something's going on up here, but no one will tell them what it is and they aren't allowed up here to find out. Things could get a bit weird once the news breaks out. He wants me to come and give a bit more insight on what the Monsters are like since I've been up here personally.”

“huh,” Sans says thoughtfully. “so you're gonna be our ambassador? i think you're alright for the job.”

Jackson groans and rubs his hands over his face. “I'm a cop! I'm not a politician!” He sighs heavily. “But if that's what it takes to help you guys, then that's what I'll do.” He gives you a thoughtful look. “I think we have something in common. You intertwined your life with these people and made it your own personal purpose to do whatever you can to help them. I didn't have to stay here after the quarantine went down, but... I fell in love with them. I couldn't just leave them. They need all the help they can get and I'll gladly make that part of my life.”
You stare at him for several seconds as he pretty much said everything you were thinking. “You're a good guy, Jackson,” you say, finally. “I think the monsters are incredibly lucky to have someone like you on their side.” Jackson looks away sheepishly. Sans has this look on his face like he wants to adopt Jackson as his son.

After contemplating existence for a few more minutes, Jackson stands up. “Well, I should probably head into town. I need to check in with my deputy and staff, too. I'll catch up with you guys later.”

“See ya,” you say cheerfully. “The world will be a different place when you get back.” He gives you a nervous wave before turning to leave.

You spend the rest of the morning walking around the compound talking to people about the upcoming press conference and checking the news on your phone for updates. You eventually come upon a group of monsters, including Papyrus, gathering around someone you don't recognize; they appear to be some sort of androgynous android decked out in pink, silver and black components and a head of wispy black hair. As you get closer though, you do recognize the voice. “Gather 'round, my lovelies, as we prepare for a very special broadcast. The president of this country is about to announce our presence to the world~” Holy crap, it's Mettaton. You suddenly realize that you never saw Mettaton without Alphys nearby. Is this what she was building for him?

You spot Alphys and a few monster workers building a makeshift news set with a large flat-screen television. There are a few camera drones hovering around seemingly without a controller. You get closer with the intent to greet Papyrus when Mettaton catches your eye and winks at you. You feel your face heat up and it becomes very apparent why he's so popular. He had enough charisma to charm the entire Underground even when he was just a rectangle without even a face. Now he actually looks like a superstar. You feel eyes on you and see that Sans is looking at you funny. “What??” You whine. He just starts laughing at you as your face turns beet red.

Once Alphys has the TV powered and connected to a national news network, the broadcast displays the large presidential conference room filled with reporters and security. At one o'clock on the dot, President Freeman steps behind the podium laden with microphones and addresses the cameras and the people present.

“Thank you all for coming. I understand many of you are concerned about recent events regarding Ebott, California as per social media and theories of what is transpiring there. Today I am going address those concerns. First, I am going to present you with a history lesson. As fantastical as it may sound, I assure you it is true; it is not a hoax. Approximately one thousand years ago, a race of non-human people populated a large portion of the Southwest of what is now America...” Already you can hear sounds of confusion from the conference attendees. “These people referred to themselves as Monsters. They co-existed with the indigenous humans until European immigrants sowed seeds of distrust which resulted in a war that decimated the monster population. The remainder of the population was forced into imprisonment within a massive cavern below Mount Ebott and knowledge of them was struck from the record books...” The sounds of confusion becomes louder and the security personnel is trying to keep the people calm.

“They have been trapped there ever since for generations; working to keep their civilization alive. However, recently the mechanism keeping them sealed beneath the mountain was destroyed; releasing them from their imprisonment. The Ebott police force were among the first to encounter them when investigating the aftermath and have determined they are peaceful. I have been
communicating with their leader and he has expressed a desire to allow the monsters live in peace on the surface.” The reporters start shouting their disbelief and questioning the integrity of their president, who needs to speak louder in turn to be heard. “He is aware that humans may have difficulty adjusting to their presence, but he has assured me that they have no desire for conflict and he will keep his people separate from the human population until they believe it is safe for them to interact with the local population. Until then, the mountain will be heavily guarded by a specialized branch of our military. I make this request of you now, my fellow humans. Please don't be afraid. I will remain in contact with their leader and keep him informed of our progress regarding their integration. A vast majority of them were born on American soil, thus they are technically American citizens and I would hope that we would treat them as such in time. I will allow a few questions fielded by Press Secretary Delaney, but I will be making further public statements at a later date. Thank you for your time.”

With that, President Freeman is escorted out of the room by his security personnel. A slightly flustered dark-haired woman takes his place at the podium and attempts to calm the tumultuous crowd of reporters. Eventually, one by one, a reporter asks a question and Delaney answers to the best of her ability. Some of them ask how they are so sure the monsters are not a hoax and she states that the ongoing body-cam footage of the police officers is irrefutable. One asks how the monsters were sealed underground and to your surprise she doesn't mention magic but rather states it was a physical construct that threatened to collapse the cavern if the monsters tried to destroy it. When asked how it was removed, she states that a human needed to dismantle it from the outside.

You get a feeling that this is the 'official' story. Delaney was likely present during your conference calls, but did not speak and Freeman's administration created the story, because the mention of magic would further complicate an already volatile situation. Delaney also makes it clear that Freeman doesn't intend to 'bow down' to the whims of the monster population, only that he intends to encourage American citizens to, at the very least, 'leave them alone'.

Once the broadcast ends and switches over to the network's news anchors recapping the events, Mettaton dramatically waves his arms. “Isn't that wonderful? It won't be long before the story of monsters is told to the whole world. It will be my perfect debut to humans~”

You cringe slightly as the crowd of monsters clamber for autographs or something. You step away and look up recent breaking news to see how various news networks are reacting to the press conference. You also shoot a quick text to Jackson just out of curiosity. 'how are things looking down there?'

You don't really expect him to respond very quickly since he's probably helping getting the place organized, so it's at least five minutes before he does. 'meetings's starting.' Referring to the Town Hall meeting.

“Dang,” you say quietly. “Kinda wish I could be there to back him up.”

Sans ponders for a moment. “you could... i saw town hall while we were down there so i could get us there if you want in.”

You give him a nervous look. “You'll be careful to not be seen right? Not until you're sure they'd be okay?”

“it'll be fine,” he winks at you and holds out his hand...
You take a trip into town to hear what Ebott thinks of their new neighbors.

The best place Sans could shortcut to where he was sure he wouldn't be seen arriving is a alleyway about a block away from Town Hall. He winks at you and vanishes to look for a place where can see the meeting himself from a hidden place. You step out onto the sidewalk hoping no one notices you appearing out of nowhere, but area seems pretty devoid of people. You can see, however, a few people milling about in front of what you recognize as Town Hall of Ebott.

The remaining townsfolk enter the building as you trail behind and find the room the meeting is taking place, which is just a big room with many chairs set up in rows with a stage and a makeshift podium. The room is full of people, mostly adults, but there are a few children and teenagers with their parents. It's noisy and some people are looking around agitated as if to see if there are monsters among them already. You quietly sit in the very back of the room as you spot a frazzled Jackson in an undamaged uniform and an older bearded man you assume is the mayor. Whitman, you think his name was. You get a silent text from Sans saying he couldn't find a suitable place to watch from without being seen other than the air vent, so you set up a live video feed and discretely point the camera towards the stage so Sans can watch from the roof. Jackson is scanning the room and you see his eyes pause on you, but he doesn't otherwise acknowledge you.

Whitman steps up onto the stage and gestures for the crowd to settle down so he can speak. “Thank you for being here. I understand you might be a little agitated about the president's announcement and I think you all deserve to have yourselves heard. The myth of the War of Humans and Monsters has been relatively prevalent among our town's culture and I personally think it's pretty amazing that it isn't a myth. It'd be like confirming Roswell's aliens or the Lock Ness Monster; hell, maybe Nessie is real. I haven't been up there myself, but Sheriff Jackson has been spending a lot of time among them and…” He turn to Jackson himself. “You seem fine albeit a bit stressed, but I don't think the monsters have been the cause.”

Jackson shakes his head. “No, I'm just trying to figure all this out. My world's expanded quite a bit and I'm trying to come up with the best way to proceed. The Monsters... well, they're really pretty great. They're really just like people, but different too. They're very happy to be out of that cavern and they just want to live in peace on the outside. I'd like to have them leave the mountain at some point and visit the town or the coast and even be part of the community in time... My biggest concern, though is..” He turns to the townsfolk in the room. “That you'd be scared of them. They're scared, too.”

One of the younger attending residents raises his hand. “What's with the military guys patrolling the town? Is there going to be a curfew or something?”

Jackson shakes his head again. “No, they're there because we're anticipating an influx of media coverage and possibly protesters and I know saying 'it's for your protection' sometimes means something insidious, but it really is to keep the peace. It isn't to control or change how you live your lives, it's to preserve it. Also, if the Monsters of Mt. Ebott are allowed to visit the town proper, they'll be escorted by soldiers.”
A woman raises her hand. “How many are there? Are they going to try to look for work here? There's not a whole lot to go around. That's why the town is shrinking.”

Jackson smiles slightly. “From what I've seen there's at least a couple thousand of them, but not all of them are coming to the surface. Still, I think it could actually be good for the town. A lot of them are really smart and-or already own businesses. I've no doubt they'd look into getting whatever licenses they need to own a business here. I already know of one who'd probably be content to take over the pub. They'd probably need educators to teach them practical life skills on living among humans. They even have their own power plant and I'd like to think they'd create more jobs there than take them up here.”

“There are millions of them?” One of the older men speaks up with a grumble.

Jackson gives him a weird look then points at the badge on his uniform. “Humans are dangerous. Would you ask that question if were were talking about humans?” The guy doesn't really answer, but there are a few murmurs among the residents. Jackson sighs heavily. “They're... different. They can defend themselves if they're attacked. What I want is for that to not happen. I'd like us to be a good example of what humanity has to offer. Even if you're indifferent to their presence, it's better than outright hostility. I think they deserve better.”

“What about that incident fifty years ago?” The same guy queries.

Jackson hesitates. “I'm not at liberty to get into that other than say it was a misunderstanding.”

There's a wave a confused mumbles through the room, but the mayor speaks up quickly. “I imagine they'd be the ones to clear that up; if we as a community are willing to communicate with them peacefully. Can we do that?” There is a pause and some sounds of affirmation and a bit of clapping, but you can tell there are mixed feelings.

After a few more concerns are addressed by Jackson's advocacy, the town residents prepare to leave the Town Hall. You stand up quickly, so you can be one of the first ones out. Once outside, you go to lean against a tree for shade as you start texting Sans when someone you recognize wanders over to you as the rest of the crowd exits the Hall. “You look familiar,” he says curiously. It's the proprietor of the souvenir shop you visited when you first arrived.

You try to play dumb. “Oh yeah, you run the shop I got those taffys from. What was your name?”

“Marty,” he says, still with a suspicious look. “Bit of a coincidence, don't you think? New face shows up in a small town and shows a lot of interest in the mountain? Next thing we know the the place is swarming with cops and military and now there's... monsters coming out of the ground? Press Secretary said a human broke down whatever's been keeping them there...” You narrow your eyes at him. Strangely, you don't get a malicious vibe from him; he seems just as curious as anyone. Before you're able to think of something to say, he turns around as Jackson and the mayor coming out of the Hall attempting to field questions from several other townpeople. “Hey Jackson!” He calls out to him to get his attention. “When's the last time you saw Pennington?”

Jackson opens his mouth awkwardly, but someone else speaks. “he's fine!” Everyone turns to see Sans suddenly sitting on the retainer wall attached to the Hall in full view of the entire crowd. “he's up there.” He points in the general direction of the mountain. “havin' the time of his life.” Everyone is silent for a moment before he smirks and leans forward from his seated position. “whatsa matter? you all look like you've seen a ghost. a little chilled to the bone? a bit rattled? tibia-nest, i was wasn't sure what to make of the lot of you. didn't think i had the guts to come and face you. but i figured if i were a little humerus, you'd figure out i was just ribbin' ya. so i don't have to skull-k around anymore.”
For several seconds, the confused crowd is very quiet, until you hear an odd squeak coming from Jackson as he has his mouth covered and trying very hard to stay professional. After a moment, mayor Whitman steps forward and approaches Sans cautiously. From his body language, you can tell he's glancing behind Sans and searching around him for any indication that he's an animatronic or a puppet of some sort. Sans, just as cautiously, holds out his skeletal hand and Whitman grasps it and studies it and then studies Sans to see if he's a guy in a costume. He eventually concludes that Sans is simply too lifelike and non-human to be anything other than one of the Monsters they were discussing a few minutes ago. He shakes Sans's hand in earnest and says, “Welcome to the Town of Ebott. You can call me Whitman. I'm the mayor here.”

Sans relaxes a bit. “sans the skeleton. just your friendly neighbourhood skelly-man.”

You see Whitman briefly glance in your general direction. “Jackson showed me a photo of you and some of the other residents of the mountain.” Oh, he recognizes you. “Are more of you planning on visiting the town?”

Sans shrugs. “i dunno.” Then he hops off the retainer wall, stands up straight and addresses the crowd again. “is it safe for us?”

You hear a few quiet 'yeah's, but the skeptical older gentleman from before speaks up. “Maybe, but some of us want to know what happened here fifty years ago. I was just a kid, but I heard about some horned thing carrying a dead kid coming here.”

Sans sighs heavily, like he really wasn't looking forward to talking about it. “it happened before i was born, but... a kid fell into the underground and survived. they became friends with the prince and they lived there for a couple of years. but eventually they became really sick and we don't have human medicine down there. they didn't make it and... the prince... absorbed a bit of their residual life essence which monsters really aren't supposed to do, but that was his best friend he just lost. it made him temporarily strong enough get past the barrier because he wanted to bring the kid's body back to the town. but the residents at the time attacked him, so i assume he decided he didn't want to leave the kid's body in such a violent place, so he went back. he died from his injuries, though. the underground was a pretty unhappy place after that.” The town residents generally look rather upset at Sans's story. The man who asked the question looked down and nodded. Sans holds his hands out in an exaggerated shrug. “there, now you know. after that happened, a few humans came to the mountain on purpose. some didn't survive because of the harsh environment; some of them provoked the monsters down there with violence and they defended themselves.”

Whitman looks a bit sullen, but tried to ease the tension. “Well, I hope.. your time here in the town is a bit more welcoming. I understand your people would have an escort when they visit. Did you have one?” You think Whitman already knows the answer as Sans wanders over towards you. The townspeople are now giving you very curious looks.

He looks up at you with a somewhat hopeful expression. “i think it will be alright. they might be willing to throw us a bone.” He then turns back to residents. “we'll be back to-morrow.” This time you hear a few snickers from them. “hey, sheriff shiny-spine! you heading back up the mountain?”

Jackson looks rather relieved that the day went as well as it did. “Yeah... I'll give you a ride.”

He actually only drives just outside the city limits and drops you off so Sans can shortcut you the rest of the way while Jackson goes home for the first night in a while. Tomorrow will be a big day.
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