Under the Veil
by poplasia

Summary

Sans has gotten himself stuck in the void between worlds in a successful attempt to stop the resets of his timeline. He's not sure how long he's been chillin' alone there, but eventually a chance at escape stumbles his way in from the Veil of Death. His name?—Sirius Black.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Here he was again. Standing in the forever-damned golden hallway, just waiting for the kiddo to show up. Waiting, knowing that he was going to die.

It certainly wasn't the first time.

Hell, it wasn't even under the hundreds at this point.

He turned to the huge windows, admiring the scene with a certain bitter dejection. It really was a beautiful day outside, just as he always claimed. The warm light seemed unfairly bright. So unfairly bright, when he knew what could happen, what would happen—what already had.

After all, the world was going to end.

It certainly wasn't the first time.

The skeleton shook off the familiar pessimistic thoughts. This time… this time would be different. This time he had an idea. A plan that could fix it all, end the damn loop. Sans tugged his jacket closer around himself, warding off a nonexistent chill. Soon. They'd be here soon. He'd gotten pretty good at telling these things.

Sure enough, there's the kiddo's footsteps now. He took a deep (if unnecessary) breath.

It didn't help.

And then… there they were.

Frisk—no, not Frisk, that thing isn't, wasn't, won't ever be Frisk—stopped several paces away. As usual. Their sins, their killing intent, their murderous SOUL filled the very air around the child. Sans could feel it—the strange other that he knew to be Chara—straining towards him, shoving Frisk aside and stealing their control. It was painful seeing them like this, both of them so distorted from who they were. The king and queen's adopted child drained of everything they had been in life, left as nothing but a remorseless villain puppeteering the kiddo Sans loved like family. He had been forced to watch those changes happen, reset after reset. It didn't matter how many times.

He was tired of this.

oh stars, so tired of it all.

"heya. i guess we should get this over with, huh."

The golden light seemed to dim, dark shadows cloaking the hall. Sans was grinning, but there was no joy in the expression. Chara took a step forward and smiled their own not-smile, knife held in a relaxed but eager grip. They took another step. He allowed himself another glance out the window, closing his eyes and only half paying attention to the… thing's approach.

"it's a beautiful day outside."

Chara's foot came down with perhaps a hair too much force: they knew what was coming.
"birds are singing, flowers are blooming…"

The footsteps began to speed up.

"on days like these,"

But more so this day. Now that he had a chance at fixing it. He had planned to stay on script, keep the kiddo from looking too close, but he couldn't help it. Slivers of icy light began coiling in the air around him, pooling at his fingertips.

"kids like you…"

His words were the same, but he could tell that gathering his power was making the other uneasy. That was something new—different, dangerous. He opened his eyes and glared at them, left eye ignited in flickering blue with a foreboding chime.

"Should be burning in hell."

He grasped Chara's SOUL, lifting their body into the air before mercilessly slamming it into the tiled floor. They managed to dodge the bones that materialized after, only to be immediately dragged into the next sequence. More bones on all sides, caging the psycho in as he hurled them down the length of the hallway. Then Gaster Blasters, in front of them, above, below… but of course they managed to dodge enough to remain alive. Sans watched their expression carefully, coldly pleased to see the suspicion he'd inadvertently caused wiped out by the familiarity of this attack pattern.

good.

He gave his spiel about strongest attacks and let Chara take a swing at him. It didn't touch him, of course. A few quick mental calculations told him exactly where the strike would fall and he had plenty of time to step aside. He always loved the look of consternation they got when it happened—it didn't matter how many times they missed, they were always a bit put out by it.

"i'm not gonna' just stand there, you know."

It wasn't exactly what he'd said before, but close enough. There were enough small variations timeline-to-timeline that it shouldn't really matter. They survived for a while longer this time: wisely ignoring his offer of forgiveness but still dying in the onslaught of rapidly shifting attack types. He couldn't ease up, but he needed them to get farther, to get to the last attack. It was the only time his plan had the slightest chance of working. But for now their body died, the SOUL shattered… and then he was standing a few minutes in the past, again waiting and admiring the beautifully lit hall.

And again he heard those tell-tale footsteps, closed his eyes (managed not to get all glow-y this time), gave his lines, and launched into the attack.

They got closer, but weren't quite quick enough when surrounded by blasters. They shattered.

The fight began again.

And again.

And again.

Sometimes Sans had to wonder if even they couldn't remember everything—couldn't recall enough
of all the other time's they'd fought him to gain an immediate advantage. Maybe some of it blurred
together; he could say from experience that all the repetition and lifetimes worth of extra memories
tended to overlap. It's not like he could easily keep track, having lost count somewhere in the mid-
hundreds. He was reasonably sure Chara remembered more than Frisk, but sometimes… well, he
wondered. He certainly wasn't just gonna walk up and straight-up admit to knowing timelines.
Hints were as far as he went on that front.

He absentmindedly dodged another slash, sending out a barrage of bones that the thing began
frantically dodging. Summoned blasters began firing pure magical energy in their direction. They
spun out of the way, landing just where he knew they would.

It was now or never.

His eye flashed as he caught their SOUL and flung them through the air, slamming their body into
the floor, ceiling, walls, columns. As his onslaught slowed, he CHECKED Chara's HP, relieved to
see it sitting firmly at 1. Same as his own.

this has to work.

He let the thing's body drift back to the ground, releasing his hold on the SOUL. Chara's face lit up
with demonic glee, expecting the end to come as easily now as it always had. Sans's lines came
effortlessly, burned into his memory as they were, and then he waited. They had always been an
impatient sort, so when they tried to get a stab in early he just caught them and pushed them back.
He let his shoulders droop slightly, trying not to let fatigue catch up to him while simultaneously
pretending it did.

This would be the tricky part. His plan depended on it.

He just needed to die… but not die.

Be killed… but not killed.

And, on top of it all, he had to die-not-die at the exact same moment they did.

He spread his senses—magical and otherwise—and let his eye sockets slide shut.

A few SOUL-beats passed.

They began slowly making their way forward, careful step after careful step. He forced himself to
stay relaxed.

They raised their knife high and Sans could all but see their murderous smile.

The knife came down in a red arc.

He dodged the first strike easily, almost literally in his sleep. "heh, didja really think you would be
able—"

Sans blocked their second strike with a small blaster, having it bite down on their wrist until the
knife clattered to the floor. He kicked it aside.

"not this time, Chara." They tensed when he spoke their name, not expecting it. "i have a better
idea."

His eye lit with magic as he grabbed their SOUL, simultaneously calling out his own. Even caught
is the grip of his magic, Chara's SOUL—or Frisk's, technically—was vibrantly colored: a splotchy mess of harsh blood and hearth-warm red. His own was silvery gray, uniquely opalescent as blue and gold lights danced under its surface. The two hearts beat softly in the air between them, and he was somewhat gratified to see real fear glimmering in the thing's red eyes.

"Wha—?"

"time to QUIT, kiddo."

Sans dispelled the blaster biting their arm but they remained frozen in place, barely able to move. They squirmed, trying desperately to lash out at him. He let his own SOUL drift down to settle on the floor as he summoned another blaster directly overhead, aimed down at both of them.

Chara chuckled their dark, distorted laugh, the fear he had glimpsed earlier seemingly forgotten. "Oh, I didn't know you were so eager to die. That'll hit us both, Sansy."

Sans smiled back and they winced as he wrenched their SOUL unwillingly to the ground. "uhh, that's kinda' the point."

Confusion flickered in their red eyes.

Magical energy built up in the Gaster Blaster's maw, light sparking through its closed teeth. He hoped to the stars there would be enough power to sustain the blast after their bodies were destroyed, enough to obliterate the SOULs as well. No matter: it was time to put theory to the test.

"welp. see ya on the other side."

Confusion became an instant of shock and disbelief—wiped out by a swath of crackling blue-white energy.

Everything went black as, at the same time, both SOULs shattered.

Then, Chara laughed.

And laughed and laughed and laughed as the void echoed.

For a moment they had been… they had been scared. Scared of Sansy!

How thrilling!

And— and— and! He knew them! Chara! Their name!

He called them by name.

Oh, they had always suspected that Sans could remember. Suspected that he was at least somewhat aware of the timelines resetting. But this? This was beyond their wildest hopes.

Sans knew—not guessed, but actually knew—what happens to everything when they finally beat him. They never did get to see him die, never saw him finally collapse into a pile of beautiful dust. He must have watched at least once. Watched until the end.

And then, he remembered.
Somehow, he had *always* remembered. Come reset or total obliteration.

How *thrilling*!

Just think how much more *fun* it would be, after all. Tormenting someone who would *remember*.

It sent eager shivers down their spine.

The void yawned around them, empty and vast and pitch-black. With another echoing chuckle, Chara summoned their determination. It lit up the air around them before condensing into two glowing orange options: RESET or CONTINUE. As if they even need to think twice.

They reached for CONTINUE.

They stopped.

They… stopped?

Then Chara noticed the faint tinge of blue on their skin. When they glanced down, their SOUL was gripped in a familiar light. Their breath caught.

"*let's see if i can make a difference now*, kiddo.*"

He wrenched them away from the pair of floating icons, spinning them roughly around so that he could see their SOUL. All it took was a glance to confirm his second hopeful theory. Here, deep in the black void between timelines, it was clear that Chara's SOUL was not entirely their own. The warm red light leaking out through the staining cracks of the other's influence was everything Chara had lost: compassion, joy, mercy, friendship. It was shining weakly but with determination. Frisk was in there, somewhere.

Sans could get them back, and through them, hopefully… *everything* could be fixed.

The power surging from his SOUL lit his eye with a glow fiercer and more driven than Chara had ever seen before. They managed to break his hold with a determined shove, but they were shaken. Badly shaken. Red eyes met lone burning blue—Chara's grip on their knife became painfully white-knuckled as they tried to stop shaking.

“H-hah-a…” It was an uneasy laugh, more for their own benefit than anything else. “A d-difference? As i-if. What are you gonna' do, try to keep me from CONTINUING or RESETTING f-for the rest of eternity?”

Sans said nothing, but the intelligent glint in his eye sent another shudder of apprehension down their spine. He sent a wave of bones in their direction, trying to catch them off guard again.

“That won't solve anything, *Sans.*” They spat out his name with vindictive pleasure. “Fighting forever? Like a lazybones like you could even keep it up for an hour.”

"*you have a point. with ulna this work, i'm already feeling pretty bone tired.*” He shrugged, winking his unlit eye in that way that never failed to infuriate them. His puns were rewarded with an annoyed hiss and a slightly more reckless lunge. The knife-tip missed his ribcage by a hair, snagging and cutting off a piece of his jacket's zipper before he teleported out of the way.

He didn't teleport far.

In fact, he flickered back into existence directly to Chara's left, slipping inside their guard.
Reaching with both his magic and his hand, Sans slammed his boney palm into the stained SOUL. Frisk was blasted away, skidding to a stop just a few feet away from the floating icons. Wisps of color, red and blue, drifted briefly in the area around the small human before silently disintegrating. They pushed themselves upright, disoriented and confused.

Chara was caught, trapped as nothing more than a wraith of twisting red lights centered around the shattered remnants of their own SOUL. For a moment they just stared: stared at Sans, at his magic wrapped around every shard of their SOUL, the void, at the icons that seemed to taunt them, and at the human child who stared back with wonder and the slightest flicker of rebellious hope.

“S-sans?” Frisk held up one hand then the other, fascinated and disbelieving, unshed tears shimmering in the corners of their eyes. They were stuttering worse than Alphys on a bad day. “A-are y-you real? I-is this… r-r-real?”

"yeah, kiddo. don't worry, i'm here."

“I… I-I…” Frisk tried not to cry, tried to take a shuddering breath, tried to calm themselves down, but they couldn't stop. They wiped at their eyes in a futile attempt to push the tears away, but they kept coming. The sound of Sans's voice was just… just so… caring. So concerned for them and they didn't deserve it, didn't deserve forgiveness, not after what they let happen. "I-I'm s-so s-s-sorry, Sans."

Chara sneered, parroting Frisk's words under their breath in a high mocking tone before harshly shouting, “As if he'd ever forgive you!”

The skeleton tightened his magical grip and Chara's ghostly outline flickered, glitching under the strain. "i think tha—" he grunted as they began struggling against his hold, "—that's up to me, Chara."

The child stood up, still slightly unsteady but eyes glinting with determination. “After everything, I-I didn't think I would ever even h-have a chance. I don't deserve it, but I'll d-do anything to try to.”

Sans grinned, a bit more genuine than he'd been able to manage for quite some time. That's the most he'd ever heard Frisk say all at once. And wow—just hearing Frisk's voice free of eerie, foreboding overtones was more of a relief than he had expected. They could still be saved, even if Chara was too far gone. Frisk could still be the same kid that he'd watched over and welcomed into his family all those resets ago, who he'd taken to seeing as another younger sibling.

"anything?"

Frisk nodded, resolute.

"reset."

That was apparently one of the few things neither broken nor whole human had expected. Chara froze as Frisk glanced between the icon and Sans, not sure they'd heard correctly.

"throw me a bone, kid, trust me on this one. i'll keep the psycho parasite here so you'll be the only one going back."

“The only one…? But—”

He knew. For this to work he'd have to stay behind. "hey, somebody's gotta' keep an eye on this
thing… i guess an eye-socket from a nobody like me will have to do.” Nothing like bad jokes to try to lighten a depressing situation. It always worked. Most of the time. Sometimes.

Frisk made an odd sound, like a sort of hiccupping laugh stuck in a whimper. “Sans…”

"trust me.”

A single nod, and then Frisk just stared at Sans for a few seconds, memorizing everything about him that they could. They reached a shaky hand toward RESET. Chara redoubled their escape efforts, red eyes wide and frantic.

"uh, hey. before you go,” Frisk paused with their hand flat on the now-yellow icon, and Sans could see fresh tears in their eyes. "do you think you could maybe, you know… tell paps—”

The kid stopped him with a small smile. “Sure… but I'll get you back.” They were determined to. "I promise.”

Chara screeched for them to stop as they thrashed about as much as possible, desperate and angry and scared.

Frisk's hand slid off RESET and they vanished.

Sans summoned a blaster.

The pair of icons remained for a heartbeat before he completely obliterated them in a blast of magic, sending a shockwave thuddering through the very essence of the void. Ripples of shadows and contrast swept past him, somehow a movement of everything and nothing all at once. Maybe it should be frightening to be standing at the center of such a maelstrom of power, at the mercy of the void, but somehow Sans felt unconcerned. After all, it had a different target.

Chara was ripped away. The shard remnants of their SOUL were utterly destroyed, and they died with an expression of shock in their eyes. No more fear. No more hate. Some part of them looked almost relieved.

And then everything fell still.

Sans was alone.

He fell to his knees, exhausted. It was over. Finally.

His eye sockets slid shut.

"good luck, kiddo.”

=X=X=X=

It wasn't really what Sirius had expected.

Death, that is.

There had been a moment of shock, fear, regret… and then everything went black. He had heard Harry desperately calling for him as he fell, pulled into the void. A cool wash of magic flowed over
his senses, soothing him, even as he felt his soul distantly shatter.

Now he was just floating in a vast nothingness. You know: *dead.*

Woo, yay.

He didn't know how long he let himself drift—and he seriously doubted that it really mattered—until he eventually realized that he could actually move. Sirius couldn't see the ground he was now standing on because, as previously observed, *literally everything was black.* Turns out the infinite expanse of abysmal emptiness that comes after death wasn't a particularly scenic place. Fascinating. It didn't look like exploring his new surroundings would be very interesting, but there wasn't really anything else to do.

It was another indeterminate amount of time before he actually found something.

Or rather, something found him.

"how did you get here?"

The voice was unexpected, low and threatening and coming from directly behind. He wanted to whirl around wand drawn, but found himself unable to move at all. “I… uhm… died? Is that not usually how people end up in the afterlife?”

Whoever had that voice gave a surprised laugh and remarked, "i think there'd be more people here if this was the afterlife."

“You make a good point, mysterious-voice-who-has-me-hostage-somehow. So where am I?"

"i'd call it 'purr-gatory', but i'm not kitten around when i say that's not completely true.”

Sirius was beginning to question his sanity. “Wait, were those puns?"

"not to be catty, but i thought they were obvious."

“Merlin's pants, they were!” Now it was his turn to laugh, and it felt so *good* to laugh again after who knows how long he had spent wandering alone in silence. It took him a moment to come up with a suitable response. “Laughter really is the best medicine, 'cause I'm *feline* better already!”

Whoever it was chuckled again and, without missing a beat, replied, "too bad good jokes are pretty much im-*paw*-sible to find here in the void."

The power that was keeping him immobile loosened slightly as whoever-it-was relaxed a bit. His feet regained contact with the void ground and he decided it was high time to introduce himself. "I'm Sirius."

"nice to meet 'cha and all, but you don't really seem like the *serious* sort."

Sirius blinked, grinned, then found himself laughing again. "Got it in one, whoever-you-are."

"the name's sans. sans the skeleton."

Chapter End Notes
Disclaimer: I do not own *Harry Potter* or *Undertale*.

And so it begins!
I'll try to update this fanfiction on the first of every month. In the mean time, feel free to write comments with what you think so far, questions, or ideas (or pointing out mistakes, that'd be helpful)!

This is will also be posted on FanFiction, so if you use both Ao3 and ff.net (like me) and see it there that's still me!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Sans and Sirius have a bit of a heart-to-heart, and the wizard has a crazy idea that just might work.

To be perfectly honest, Sirius was more than a little surprised. He spun around so fast he ended up tripping over his own feet and landing on his bum. From his new position on the void's pseudo-ground, he found himself staring eye-to-eye-socket with the grinning face of a friendly-looking skeleton. An apparently very short friendly-looking skeleton. In a blue muggle hoodie. And black shorts. Shorts with a white stripe down the front of each leg. And pink slippers.

Pink slippers?!

Sirius was perfectly aware that he was gaping at his new acquaintance like a particularly astonished fish, but really there wasn't anything he could do about it. One of the skeleton's boney brows rose fractionally and his smile grew a little wider. He questioned how a skull could be so expressive before realizing that the better question was how a skeleton could be alive to express anything in the first place. The white lights in the skeleton's eye sockets gave a distinctly sassy eye roll as the wizard took another minute in an attempt to collect himself.

"gee, man. didn't mean to rattle you so badly." Sans stuffed one hand in a pocket and, pointing to Sirius's chest with the other, advised, "don't forget to breathe."

Sirius took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. "Okay, calm down. I mean, I did just die so what's so weird about meeting a living skeleton? Does that mean you're Death?"

"i'm sans, as previously stated. who knows though, i might be death in some alternate universe." He chuckled to himself at some joke Sirius didn't understand.

The pair stared at each other for a moment, both thinking indecipherable thoughts, before Sirius finally regained enough sense to recall, "You didn't answer my question. Where is this?"

"oh right. welcome, sirius, to the void between timelines."

He considered that answer and gave the infinitely black, empty space a considering glance. "Not a very cheery place, is it?"

Sans nodded. "yeah. usually it's pretty boring too, but now you've shown up so… who knows."

"Don't get visitors often?"

"i haven't seen anyone else since i followed a murderous wraith and a child to get in. hopefully they can't come back."

There was definitely a story there, but Sirius elected to ignore it for the moment. "So I'm guessing
"you can't just die to end up here."

"so far as i know."

"Then," Sirius frowned, "how'd I get here?"

The skeleton plopped himself down, crossing his legs and propping his skull up on one hand. "i dunno. you must've not 'just died'."

"But I did! I was fighting—" Sans tensed, but Sirius paid him no mind, "—in the DoM, Bellatrix got a lucky shot in and pow! I'm dead."

When Sans spoke again, his still-calm voice had taken on a dangerous quality that immediately pulled Sirius from his musings. The white eye-lights were gone and a foreboding faint blue glow drifted around his left eye socket as he asked, "'Fighting'? Who were you fighting and why?"

Sirius tried not shudder as a sudden cold swept down on him. "Voldemort and his Death Eater goons." When Sans gave him a blank, decidedly not-amused look, he clarified: "A crazy power-hungry wizard who cheated death for a second chance at taking over the world and killing off all muggles and—"

Sans signaled him to stop, looking a bit more at ease than just a second earlier. "this vuldy-whatsit sounds like bad news."

He blinked at Sans in astonishment, then collapsed in nearly-crazed giggles. "Merlin's beard! You're giving me emotional whiplash, Sans! On that note… You can be really terrifying, did you know that?"

"why, did you feel a chill in your bones?"

"Most decidedly. You really got under my skin!"

They shared a laugh and any remaining tension between them relaxed. "so… what's this 'DoM' place? it seems pretty important. you could say that…"

"Are you actually—"

"…it's probably a DoM-inant point of interest."

Sirius laughed again, shrugging in a helpless way. He was quickly realizing that puns were something of a speciality of the short skeleton. "It stands for 'Department of Mysteries'."

"how mysterious."

"Wizards have peculiar naming sense. Anyway, we were fighting in the room with… with the Veil…" he drifted off, jaw dropping as he made the connection. "I died as I fell through the Veil. That's why I'm here!" At Sans's confused expression, Sirius tried to explain. "The Veil of Death! It connects the land of the living with the land of the dead! I must have ended up in this limbo place since I died as I fell through."

Sans closed his eye sockets—Sirius wondered how that even worked before mentally writing it off as magic skeleton logic—and gave the theory some consideration before nodding slowly. "that unveils quite a bit… but then that reminds me…"

"What?"
The skeleton gave a distinct what-even-is-this gesture and simply asked, "wizards?"

There was a another moment where they just stared at each other. "We have much to discuss."

It was a very informative few some-amounts-of-time for Sans as Sirius filled him in on the basics of magical society and current events. He covered anything from wizarding law to Quidditch, jumping from subject to subject as his audience of one asked questions. Concepts like wands and incantations fascinated the short skeleton, so naturally Sirius had to spend ages explaining what little he knew about them. Humans approached magic in an entirely different way compared to monsters, but mostly Sans was surprised that this other world had enough magical humans to form an entire community.

"a society of magical humans. weird."

"And you're a living skeleton," Sirius deadpanned.

"last i checked, yes."

"…And that's normal where you're from."

Sans nodded. "normal enough. there's lotsa types of monsters, but i never really saw any other skeletons in the underground except my…" his voice abruptly went soft, "…my bro."

Sirius leaned forward, eager for more info on Sans, and prompted, "'The Underground'?"

His interest was rewarded with an eye roll and a brief explanation. "ages ago there was this war between humans and monsters. the humans won and they sealed us underground."

"Just like that?"

"yep."

"Huh." Guessing that he wasn't going to get much more out of that topic, Sirius switched to the other point that had caught his interest. "So you have a brother?"

For a while he thought he might not get an answer, until finally: "papyrus." Sans sighed, shoulders drooping and his expression changing into a painful mixture of exhaustion and wistfulness. "stars, i hope he's okay without me. and frisk—" He cut himself off.

"Who's—?"

"welp, not that this isn't fun," Sans blatantly interrupted, "but i'm bone tired from all this excitement. i'm gonna' take a nap." He rolled over onto his chest, pillowing his skull on his arms, and fell asleep in record time.

Sirius was half tempted to wake the skeleton back up, but he had the sneaking suspicion that that wouldn't be appreciated, especially since they barely knew each other. With a sigh, he decided he'd just have to get revenge for the rude cut-off at some later date. Maybe after a nap. And especially after getting to know Sans well enough that his prank wouldn't land himself in deep trouble.

Of course, getting to know Sans proved to be surprisingly difficult. It took careful observation and attention over the course of several more conversations for Sirius to uncover even a little bit about the past of his skeletal companion. Add to that the fact that most of what was learned had more to do with the people around Sans than Sans himself and it became pretty clear that he's one cagey skeleton. Sirius complained as much, but Sans just grinned his hard-to-read grin and remarked that
it's natural for a skeleton to be *rib cage-y*. Thus Sirius amended his conclusion: Sans is extremely cagey and highly skilled at brushing off concern through puns and jokes.

Really, the only thing Sans seemed to honestly enjoy talking about was his brother. And even then he was prone to lapsing into unexplained silences or random topic changes. Sirius had learned, however, that 'The Great Papyrus' loved puzzles, was more than a little bit obsessed with spaghetti, and in training to be a guard.

And that was something else he had learned: Sans and his brother both worked as sentries. Yes, the lazy skeleton who seemed to spend most of his time sleeping actually had a job—several, apparently. It took quite some finagling to get that info out of him, and quite a bit more to learn that sentries were supposed to keep watch for any humans that might show up in the Underground.

That subject had been particularly difficult to get him to talk about, but Sirius was nothing if not bullheadedly stubborn. They had been sitting together chatting about Snowdin, the town where Sans had lived, when the wizard broached the topic with all the conversational grace of a sledgehammer.

"Did you ever find any humans?" Sirius blurted out, deciding that blunt and to the point was the best way to go. He'd never been one for subtlety anyway, too much of a Gryffindor for that.

"i… yeah. one fell down every few decades or so." Sans paused, thinking back. "but there was a weirdly long gap before… no wait. that was…" He drifted off abruptly and his eye sockets briefly went dark. It passed so quickly that if Sirius hadn't gotten better at reading the skeleton he would have thought he was seeing things.

"There was a weird gap? What happened?"

Sans shook his head. "technically there… ah… there wasn't actually a gap."

In all the time-not-time that Sirius had known him, it was rare for Sans to have such a lost, tired expression. He usually got that look when 'Frisk', whoever that was, inadvertently cropped up in their conversation. The wizard did not like seeing his new friend so despondent and he decided it was high time he do something about it. "Explain."

"i don't really—"

"Explain." The skeleton gave him a petulant look, but Sirius just stared back adamantly. "You listened to me ramble about Azkaban and my problems. Whatever this is, it really bothers you. Explain."

Sans shifted uneasily and couldn't look Sirius in the eye. "i'm fine, really." His smile didn't ring true as he joked, "gee, you really remind me of paps sometimes. a bit more *sirius* though."

"Don't deflect, answer the question."

"just don't worry about it. it's in the past." Sirius said nothing but he raised an eyebrow in a distinct we-both-know-that's-bullshit gesture and Sans huffed, "how long are ya gonna look at me like that?"

He couldn't help but smile a bit, but he didn't let up. "As long as I need to."

The stare-off lasted for a good long while before Sans sighed. "fine. but i'm warning you… it's a long story."
"We have nothing but time, Sans. Get talking."

"...there was a flower."

It wasn't how the wizard had expected the tale to begin, but he didn't remark on it.

"flowey had this... skill... that let him reset the timeline. pull everything back, undo everything, do different things. i was the only one who remembered and nobody else ever even noticed. he... reset a lot. did a lot of... stuff. technically only the last of those resets actually happened but sometimes i forget that. it... feels like longer."

Sirius was stunned. More than just stunned, but he couldn't come up with a better word. Something like resets—completely wiping out and rewriting events and possibly changing everything—was impossible, even with magic. Just trying to think of the repercussions of living through something like that left the wizard reeling. When the skeleton fell quiet, Sirius prompted, "So the reset-thing stopped eventually?"

Sans's expression became unreadable. "yeah, the flower stopped resetting."

Sirius immediately caught on to the skeleton's ploy. "The flower stopped. So were there still resets?" Another long silence. "Well?"

"...yes. look, can we just—"

"No. You need to get this off your chest and by Merlin you're damn-well goi—"

"they died. everyone in the underground. more times than i care to count."

That struck the wizard silent and for a moment he couldn't get himself to do anything but stare. Eventually he hesitantly reached out a hand in an attempt to do something, anything to help his friend—but what could he do? Sirius knew all too well the pain of losing those closest to him; his years in Azkaban had played that nightmare over and over in his memories enough that he doubted he'd ever stop hurting. Those memories were horrible enough by themselves. Actually living through that night again... that would be hell. Sans was staring into space, sockets empty and even darker than the surrounding void. Letting his hand drop, Sirius choose instead to scooch around so that they were sitting back-to-back.

The skeleton wasn't crying, but he could feel him shaking slightly. When Sans began speaking again, it was like he couldn't stop himself: didn't want to stop himself.

The flower-murder-freak-thing, apparently named Flowey, had, over the course of who-knows how many resets, managed to kill pretty much everyone in the Undergound several times in various ways. Some resets it would only be a single monster killed, or just a couple. Others would see him getting close to killing everyone in one go. He tried to kill Sans a few times, quickly learning that messing with the short skeleton was pretty much a guaranteed death. Sirius wanted to know more about that, but restrained himself when he saw that Sans was more in the past than the present at the moment. Plus, even though Sans was finally telling him some of his history, he was still being frustratingly vague and Sirius didn't want to risk him closing up again.

Eventually, and Sans wasn't sure how, the flower lost his power over the timeline. Unfortunately that wasn't even close to being the end.

If anything, that was just the beginning.

Sans told Sirius about Frisk: the last fallen human. The last SOUL the monsters would need to
break the barrier and escape belonged to an adorable little child only slightly shorter than Sans himself. Yet despite the antagonism they faced, this child had gone through the entire Underground without killing anyone, making friends all along the way, with Sans following and helping unobtrusively where he could. Even when Frisk faced the king, they still chose mercy in the end. After that there was... something that the skeleton didn't seem keen on explaining. Too hard to sum up, he claimed. Suffice to say there was a fight of some sort that ended with the barrier shattered.

Freedom. It was more than he had ever dreamed.

"that got old fast," Sans bitterly observed. "what's the point if it just resets in the end? what's a few days on the surface if nobody else even remembers?"

Frisk had moved into an apartment with a monster who had basically become an adoptive parent, someone named Toriel, and pretty much all of their closest monster friends got set up in the same building. Sans saw the kiddo everyday and, after watching them throughout their journey, he basically took them under his metaphorical wing as another younger sibling. Everything was beginning to look up at long last, even if no one else knew just how long it really was.

And then it all just... reset.

He hadn't even known that could still happen. Only a few months after escaping he just woke up back in Snowdin—no explanation whatsoever.

It wasn't until he saw the kiddo again that he realized it was them. They had caused the reset, though something in their eyes told him it wasn't necessarily Frisk who had done it. And Sirius got the impression that the 'something' wasn't just part of the expression.

Frisk worked toward the same happy ending so many times, following events like some kind of script, but it would always reset within a year of reaching the surface. Every time.

"after i realized that, getting to the surface didn't really appeal anymore." His expression abruptly darkened and he cursed, "shi—stars! even now i still follow script sometimes."

Sans went really quiet after that. When Sirius glanced at him over his shoulder, he saw that Sans was gripping his head in his hands. There was some kind of eerie blue light flickering near his left eye socket, and the skeleton didn't speak until it had completely faded.

"it didn't last—the repetitive looping of the same story. but i mean, at least that was peaceful. not like after..." he took a steadying breath that didn't seem to help all that much. "when the kiddo accidentally hurt one of the monsters they met... that's when that other started to—" Sans cut himself off, too angry or too sad or too everything to stay put and keep going with the story. He vanished.

Sirius got no warning that Sans was too antsy to remain seated. The skeleton's departure was so abrupt that Sirius was actually sent sprawling backwards, hitting his head on the existent-yet-not-existent floor of the void. Sans reappeared from his sudden teleport just a short distance away, mid-stride and already walking back to where they had been sitting together.

"eh... sorry, sirius. didn't mean to pop out on ya like that, i just... i don't think..."

Sirius waved a dismissive hand from his new position on the floor. "No, I understand. Sometimes it takes a while to be abl—WOAH WAIT BACK UP." He tried to scramble to his feet but failed the first few attempts, flailing around on the sorta-ground until he put his limbs to rights again. The
look he sent Sans was pure and blatant shock. "You can TELEPORT?!"

"uhm," Sans quirked a brow at the subject change and simply answered, "yeah?"

For a moment, it seemed like Sirius didn't know what to do with that information. His mouth opened and closed a few times, trying to figure out what to say in response but coming up with a resounding zero. Before he had discovered that he wasn't completely alone in the black void, Sirius had attempted to cast a variety of spells in an effort to entertain himself. None of them worked. Now he whipped out his wand again, holding it with purpose, and spun sharply on his heel.

Nothing happened—well, except perhaps confusing Sans, who, after a moment's thought, commented, "nice of you to put a good spin on things."

Sirius harrumphed, ignoring the pun. "Well, there goes that idea. I can't Apparate."

"am i supposed to know what that is or…?"

"Apparating," Sirius explained, tucking his wand away again, "is a form of magical transportation where you disappear from one place and reappear at another."

"neato. do you always do that spin thing?"

"Not always, but it helps. And that's beside the point because," the wizard pointed to Sans with significantly more energy than the motion really needed, "you can teleport. Why are you even still here?"

Sans shrugged and, with a nonchalance that didn't quite ring true, answered, "i'm still here because leaving would force my universe back into a timeline-reset-loop, obviously."

"Am I going to need to harass you into explaining further?" When Sans didn't meet his eyes, Sirius crossed his arms and gave him the same stare he had used earlier. "Well?"

While clearly reluctant, Sans still relented. "fine, fine, no need to get your pants in a twist. i mentioned how i got here, right?"

Sirius thought back to the first conversation he had had with the skeleton and nodded. "Something about following a kid and a murderer or something."

"close enough. i'm not going to go into much detail, but the murderer was possessing the kiddo." At Sirius's questioning look, Sans frowned slightly and preemptively answered, "yes, i'm talking about frisk. the murderer, Chara," he spat out the name, "was forcing them to reset. i followed them here, trapped the murderer, sent the kiddo back, and made it so nobody could reset."

After another moment reviewing what he knew, Sirius ventured, "Destination, determination, and deliberation: those are the three base steps for Apparition. After you destroyed whatever made resets possible, that must have changed something else as well, right?"

Sans nodded. "in your terms, i messed with the destination. everywhere, or everywhen, i can teleport to would be when resets were possible."

"Hmm…” Sirius hummed to himself, still thinking. "But you technically could teleport out of here, right?"

"as far as i know, yeah."
He began pacing restlessly, only looking over at Sans occasionally. "Can you teleport with other people?"

"Sure." Sans cocked his head to the side, as if doing so could help him figure out what the suddenly-excited wizard was getting at. "Look, we can't get out of here that way. It's not worth it."

That did nothing to derail Sirius's train of thought. "This could work…" he mumbled to himself before turning to Sans with a huge grin. "This could actually work!"

Sans rolled his eyes (or eye-lights, as it were) and asked, "What 'could work'?"

"What if you don't teleport back?"

"What?"

"What if I provide the destination instead?"

"Allow me to rephrase: what?"

"You provide the means but I provide the destination: we teleport to my world."

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

I hope you like this update. If you spot a mistake, go ahead and tell me and I'll fix it as soon as I can. Thank you to everyone who has read it so far! Please leave a comment with what you think of the story so far.

In other news, I just moved to Munich from Denver so a lot has changed (and so there might be more mistakes, I didn't have time to check closely). I'm just glad I could get my internet figured out in time to post!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
**Chapter Summary**

Things don't go quite as planned, but maybe it'll all work out.

**Chapter Notes**

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Sans was speechless and, if he was quite honest with himself, more than a little out of his depth. After all, he had never attempted a teleport he wasn't guiding—it was a ludicrous idea to begin with. Why would he even consider—?

And yet…

And yet if such a thing was possible, well: it'd be awesome. One can only take so much infinite blackness, after all. Plus Sirius certainly seemed to think this weird side-along schtick could be done, for some reason. Sans—after recovering his voice, though he still sounded somewhere between hope and shock—just had to ask, “how would that even work?”

“Well, it's like you'd be the motorbike and—” The skeleton cut him off with a distinct you're-not-helping look, so Sirius had to think of a more direct way to explain it. “I guess… you cast the spell and provide the power while I steer.”

Sans sighed, a tad annoyed. “you're driving me up the wall, man. i'm asking how that's done.”

“Oh.”

“…well?”

“Sorry, I was just thinking. With Apparating, the caster basically tries to Apparate with no destination in mind and so the spell follows the direction of the… other, uhm… would 'passenger' be accurate?”

The last bit was said mostly to himself, but Sans had heard enough to get the general idea. That general idea, when applied to his own method of teleportation… actually seemed possible. Sirius had stopped his incessant pacing in favor of explaining his plan, but the restless energy had certainly not dissipated yet. Now he was basically vibrating in place, eagerly awaiting a verdict. Sans himself was feeling uncharacteristically giddy given this new option, long-faded hope rising anew under his sternum. He tried to quash it, to approach the situation with scientific detachment so as not to be crushed if it all crumbled to pieces around his skull.

when, he told himself firmly, when it all crumbles to pieces.

But it was impossible now to beat back his treacherous hope. Not with the idea shining so clear and tempting and possible in his mind.

“i can't believe i'm letting myself do this,” Sans grumbled to himself, but it was a halfhearted grumble at best. After reviewing and theorizing for a few more seconds, he had to finally acknowledge that: “…it could work.”
“Ha-HA! Yes!” Sirius laughed, celebrating his breakthrough with a fist pump and a stupid little dance.

“you might want to save the celebrations for aft—”

“Don't be such a spoilsport, Sans.” Sirius tried to frown at the short skeleton, but the effect was somewhat lost since his eyes were still lit up with excitement. The fake frown was predictably replaced by a wide smile as he joked, “You do have a funny bone, right?”

That remark prompted a rather interesting grin from Sans and he immediately recalled who he had just punned. If Sirius had learned one thing about Sans during the course of their friendship (and he liked to think he had learned more than just one thing), it was that the skeleton and puns went hand-in-hand.

“i like to think i'm pretty humerus, but tibia-nest i might be losing my touch. At least you're around to—” Sans popped off his left hand with his right and held it out to the now-astonished wizard, “—lend me a hand.”

Sirius stared gobsmacked at the temporarily detached limb, briefly recalling his earlier observation regarding the skeleton and puns: hand-in-hand indeed. He reached out but aborted his plan to poke it when the fingers wiggled at him. “Okay, I know you're a skeleton, but that's a bit creepy.”

Sans put his hand back on its respective limb, making a soft click-pop sound. With a grin and feigned offense, he whined, “how hurtful! you're tearing me apart!”

“Seems to me that's what you were doing,” the wizard replied, rolling his eyes. “And regardless, we're getting off topic. We can do this right? You said it could work.”

Becoming significantly more serious—no pun intended, but sentiment still appreciated—Sans nodded. “theoretically, but i want to test it before trying to shortcut outta' here.”

Sirius shrugged off his brown jacket and dropped it at their feet before grabbing Sans's boney shoulder in response. “Fine by me. The jacket will be a reference point and I'll focus on somewhere else here in the void.”

“good luck with that.”

Sans drew up his magic, queueing it as if he was going to make a shortcut but keeping his mind meticulously blank. He directed the flow of his magic through Sirius's hand, his arm, and his SOUL. Interestingly enough, Sirius's large, dense, and heart-shaped collection of magic was mostly orange with a distinctly vibrant purple border: bravery and perseverance, then. It was somewhat difficult to blend his own blue-gold magic with another two-toned SOUL, but he managed it. The shortcut took hold and the pair of them vanished.

They reappeared somewhere else in the void, presumably. It was impossible to tell, at least until they spotted the crumpled jacket several meters away.

“huh.” The skeleton shook himself, noticing a few fading wisps in a variety of colors curling around them. He didn't usually cause colors like that when teleporting: they must be Sirius's fault. “so… you can let go now, sirius.”

Sirius didn't let go.

“…sirius?”
“No. Come on, Sans! Let’s make our great escape!” Sirius shook the small skeleton in a way that vaguely reminded him of an overzealous Papyrus. “No time like the present, as they say!”

“eh, they say a lotta’ things.”

The remark was waved off by the hand not still holding Sans's shoulder so tightly that it would have hurt if he had flesh. “Acknowledged, but I'm afraid the point still stands, Rattles.”

“alri—” Sans cut himself off and looked at the human-whose-sanity-was-questionable with a question tangentially related to his sanity. “…did you just call me 'rattles'? no wait, better yet: did i just answer to 'rattles'?”

“That would be yes on both counts.”

“stars, i'm becoming as crazy as you.”

Sirius somehow managed to sketch out a grand bow without releasing his hold on Sans's humerus, probably only able to because the skeleton was so much shorter. “Thank you, Rattles. Are you ready to take the jump back to reality?”

“no time like the present', indeed,” he huffed to himself. “just stay focused or we might end up in your world's dark ages or something.”

“Right, sir!”

“that mock salute really doesn't inspire confidence.” The wizard just kept grinning like a loon so Sans had no choice but to sigh and repeat, “just stay—”

“Focused, I know,” Sirius finished. “You did say that literally five seconds ago. And don't worry: I will. There are people I care about and I do not plan on leaving them behind because my attention span was lacking.”

Sans's response was to gather his magic again, readying another shortcut: that shut Sirius up pretty quickly. Making a jump out of the infinite void would probably take more juice than a jump within it, and certainly more than one from home to Grillby's or simi—he cut off that train of thought. No point risking it. As his magic curled through Sirius's SOUL, Sans felt the shortcut's far end abruptly disappear beyond his awareness. He held it for a moment, noticing with slight unease that, though (or perhaps because) he didn't know where the end was, his magic flickered and pulsed and couldn't quite settle completely. After a particularly significant jolt, the decision was taken out of his hands.

Sirius's SOUL lurched and Sans got a glimpse through the shortcut as something—something that felt like Sirius himself, for some reason—tugged from the other end.

They vanished, leaving behind only swirling colors and an old brown jacket that both swiftly faded into nothingness.

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Sans winked back into existence alone.
Well, 'alone' in that Sirius was no longer clinging to his arm and was instead sprawled limply a short distance away. To be honest, he wasn't very alone at all. He was standing on the side of a lake with three apparently catatonic humans—Sirius and two people he didn't recognize (for obvious reasons)—and a swarm of creepy flying demon-things. Said demon-things were, thankfully, being held off by some sort of white glowing stag-thing standing on the far shore.

So that's nice.

The stag-thing cantered out onto the water, brightening with each step until it was difficult to look at. Ripples of white light played across the lake's surface, but the demon-things only shifted slightly: moving away from the three collapsed humans but still pretty keen on staying. Sans didn't like the way they were clustering closer to him and he certainly didn't like the sudden cold, heavy feeling dragging at his SOUL.

It was just… so cold.

He staggered as memories of red-red-red and an ache deep in his chest swept him away from the lakeside. A snowstorm, a red scarf, and then he was standing again in that cursed golden hallway, listening for footsteps and waiting for the inevitable. *Useless.* Voices and screaming and echoing insane laughter. He lived the same days again and again and it hurt because couldn't tell if they were looping memories or the looping timeline. Did it even matter?—nothing matters. Then everything fell to the black loneliness of the void only to be jerked back to endless repeating genocide to his brother's voice, weak and dying but still so trusting. There was snow and dust and blood at his feet, on his hands, and…

Suddenly the lake was back, dark and freezing but still an infinite improvement. Another wave of white filled his vision, knocking back some of the demon-things that had been drifting closer. The light didn't look particularly threatening—stars, it felt *comforting* when it washed over him—but whatever it was scattered the demon-things into the sky and out of sight.

Still unsteady from the forced flashbacks, Sans took a few wavering steps toward Sirius and sat down next to him with a soft thud. He looked way paler than Sans remembered. Other than that, though, he and the other humans—a boy with unruly black hair and a girl with brown curls—seemed fine. After a moment's further vigilance, the stag-thing went back across the lake before dispersing into misty threads of quickly fading light, leaving everything in darkness and Sans with a moment to himself.

“welp, i'd say this wasn't quite where sirius was hoping to end up,” Sans said, thinking aloud as he stared up at the cloudy night sky. “if he was aiming to reappear in the middle of a group of evil flying cloak-demons then… i'll, uhm…” he rolled his eyes, glancing back to his unconscious friend and finished lamely, “i'll re-e-eally question that decision.”

If he had to guess, he'd say (fairly certainly, so it's not much of a guess) that Sirius's desired destination had been overwritten by whatever had pulled from the other end of the shortcut. Still, seeing as the wizard was found passed out on arrival—not to mention the fact that he was wearing different clothes and overall just *looked* slightly different—Sans figured that Sirius was somehow to blame. The whatever-it-was *had* felt like Sirius himself, after all, so it's possible that they had ended up it the semi-recent past with current-past-Sirius's SOUL being the whatever-it-was. Or maybe Sirius just messed up and Sans imagined the odd pull. Either way, Sirius was to blame.

Sans was about to try and wake Sirius up—he was thinking a liberal dose of lake water might work nicely—when he felt a freezing shiver race down his spine. His response was to simply pull his hood up, huddling down for warmth. It took a moment to notice that it was the exact same sensation of penetrating cold that he had felt before succumbing to nightmarish recollections,
though less pronounced at the moment, thank the stars. He immediately switched to high alert, crouched and scanning the sky for the cause: returning demon-things, presumably.

And… There! Dark, shifting shapes began to take form over the tree tops.

Another shiver raced along his bones and he grimaced at the approaching shadowy figures. Flickers of red and gold and the sounds of distant voices began to echo in his skull as the cold grew more intense. It was easy to draw the connection: the demon-things obviously caused more than just dropping temperatures. And Sans had no intention of letting them drag up his memories again.

He pushed himself back to his feet, dusting himself off before nonchalantly stuffing his hands in his pockets. Most of the demon-things—but not all, he noticed with slight annoyance—were coming from one direction. That just meant he'd need to use slightly more force than he first thought. Sans glared at them and a sharp chime rang out over the lake as his left eye socket filled with pure magic, its flickering blue and gold the only light visible. There was a whoosh of displaced air as, with just a thought, he summoned four Gaster Blasters.

Really, he couldn't resist: “do you wanna have a bad time?”

The demon-things continued to drift closer, so either they didn't understand the threat he posed or they didn't care. Sans shrugged: it didn't really matter at this point. His weapons charged in an instant, cascades of sparks escaping from between sharp teeth.

He didn't hesitate.

The sound rumbled through the air, deep and powerful.

The darkness was shattered by overwhelming white.

The blast shook the nearby trees and pushed waves of water away from the shore.

…it was pretty safe to say there wouldn't be much left of the demon-things. Well, not much beyond whatever the magical equivalent is for a smear and maybe a few tattered scraps of black cloak.

Sans blinked twice, clearing his vision with a pulse of magic, and whistled under his non-existent breath. “that… might have been overkill.”

There was a thud and a pained moan from behind him. He spun around, one charged blaster appearing over his shoulder, just in case. Something at the edge of the forest stumbled out onto the shore, likely blinded and disoriented by Sans's earlier attack, followed by something floating crookedly in the air. It was another human. Well, a human and what seemed to be a flying gurney. Sans could barely make out the shape of someone on the gurney and marveled at the number of randomly unconscious people there were in the immediate vicinity. The not knocked-out human—a man, he noticed—wore billowing black robes that made his bumbling about vaguely reminiscent of a drunk, overgrown bat.

He was about to offer assistance when he recalled Sirius's first reaction to meeting him. Adding to that what little he had been told about this world and Sans could guess its thoughts on skeletons (though he certainly wasn't some brain-dead zombie). Perhaps it might be best to make himself scarce.

A quick scan of potential hiding spots and one shortcut later, Sans was safely out of the way. Mostly. Balancing somewhat precariously on a high tree branch—and using more than a little magic to keep himself there—wasn't very comfortable or safe, but at least he could discretely watch the goings on.
The human was now standing very still, rubbing furiously at his eyes with his free hand while the other flicked the stick it held to the ground. When the floating gurney lowered itself, following the gesture, Sans belatedly realized that the stick must be a wand. It was obvious, really, and he chided himself for not making the connection sooner. A few long, hard blinks later and the human—Sans decided to refer to him as ‘Nose’ until further notice, after his most prominent facial feature—was suspiciously eyeing the shoreline, even turning to scan the trees.

Sans hunkered down and did his best to mute his presence.

It was a tense experience to be sure, especially the two times those dark eyes swept past his tree, but eventually Nose turned his attention to the three unconscious people. Sans eased forward, the blaster he still had at the ready poised to strike should the black-robed wizard make any move to harm them.

Thankfully his caution was unnecessary. Nose conjured another three gurneys and carefully levitated the two kids and Sirius onto them, being surprisingly gentle with the boy and girl and markedly less so with Sirius (going so far as to bind and gag him but, since he didn't actually hurt Sirius, Sans decided to see how it panned out). He worked quickly and efficiently, but didn't loosen his wound-up posture. Sans caught him casting several long, unreadable glances at the spot where the skeleton had stood minutes earlier before switching to watching the surrounding forest with noticeable unease.

Once all four—seriously, four unexplained unconscious humans—had been loaded onto stretchers, Nose swished his wand in their direction with a flourishing flick and they all floated into the air. It must be harder for human wizards to fly bodies than gurneys for some reason, since otherwise Sans didn't see the point of conjuring them. Or maybe wizards just didn't think stuff through very much. Whatever. He set aside his musings on wizards and logic (or more to the point their lack thereof) when Nose began making his way back in the direction he had stumbled from. Needless to say, the bat-like wonder was bringing back more than he thought: an additional sneaky skeleton followed in the trees.

After all, that was Sans's friend—not to mention the only person he even knows in this world—being carted off on one of the stretchers. There's no way Sans was gonna lose track of him.

Chapter End Notes

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I must say, that's probably not where they expected to end up. Well, Sans had no idea what to expect so he's just rolling with it at this point, but Sirius is sure to be a little confused when he wakes up. And I suppose you might be a tad confused as well, seeing as our heroes ended up nearly two years earlier than they were aiming for. Answers are on their way, so stay tuned for next month!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Sans's arrival has an unintended side effect on... you know. The universe.

Something changed without warning.

Globally, universally, dimensionally: something changed.

Well, it sounds dramatic when it's put that way but the change wasn't really that big of a deal. Functionally, anyway. It was as if the world's equation had suddenly gained a new variable: all the pieces still operate the same way, there's just something new thrown into the mix. Except of course a changed equation will result in a changed solution.

So deep within the Ministry of Magic, deeper still within the Department of Mysteries, something changed.

Suddenly, inexplicably, seemingly randomly: something changed.

Before the event, an Unspeakable was cataloging prophecies: an altogether boring and pointless job. All she was doing was filling out a parchment with notes that such-and-such prophecy in such-and-such row was, in fact, still looking exactly like it had the last time she checked. It's not like she could read them, obviously: only the Keeper and those mentioned in the darn things could actually pick them up. That meant that most, if not all of the prophecies would never even be known before being fulfilled and falling dark. Not to mention that it was rare enough for any lit prophecy to even go dark. And rarer still for something actually interesting to happen.

"Let's see… row 32, third shelf, fifth prophecy." She pushed her pair of rectangular glasses farther up her nose, staring into the misty white depths of the prophecy with disinterest before scribbling down a few words that, in all likelihood, would never be read. “Present and accounted for.”

It was then that the change occurred.

Silently and without fanfare, the dim white light of the prophecies—every lit prophecy—simply vanished.

For a long minute the Unspeakable just stared at the now-plain glass ball in front of her, blinking slowly and with great confusion. She took off her spectacles, cleaned them on her uniform, put them back on, and peered around herself. She looked down the length of the row, every shelf. She walked to the end of the row and looked down the length of the section she was in. But it seemed to be the same everywhere.

Every prophecy was just… gone.

The fulfilled prophecies still swirled with darkened mists, but every single one that had been lit just seconds before was now nothing more than an excessively large, plain paperweight.
“This…” As she slowly made her way toward the exit, too lost in thought to bother going faster, she continued checking each long row. There were no tell-tale lights on any shelf. To be honest, the Hall of Prophecy was spookily dark without the soft glow from the divinations. “This can not be a good sign.”

But then, that's the thing about the future: it hardly ever seems to go as expected.

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On the other side of the country, Albus Dumbledore was sitting at his desk.

His office was a spacious circular room filled with all manner of strange magics. The enchanted portraits of previous headmasters and headmistresses, currently dozing, covered the walls wherever the walls weren't already covered by bookshelves. Whirling silver baubles of all shapes and sizes filled the air with soft humming noises and the occasional puff of colored smoke. A fat, round one with a slight green tint was slowly rolling in a tight circle on his desk. It knocked into his favorite quill, so he distractedly poked the little thing away and set the quill on a tall stack of paperwork.

Things had become quite a bit more complicated recently.

Complicated and fraying from his tight control.

“Sirius Black,” he murmured, voice soft and tired. Watching the green ball putter around in its circle for a moment, he added, “And of course Harry Potter.”

It had been a mistake. He had known it was a mistake, almost immediately after he had let it happen those twelve years ago. Letting them take an innocent man with only the barest of protests, leaving him to rot simply because it was easier than the alternative… He had hoped he had moved past that. Moved past the all-consuming concept of the 'Greater Good'—that shining, hideous lie from his youth.

Dumbledore had planned to keep them separate, wanting to keep Harry close and dependent but safe: to be able to prepare him for what was to come and what he'd need to be able to do. Of course the boy's frustratingly, admirably Gryffindorish qualities would lead him straight to his godfather. Now the boy would know that Black was innocent and Dumbledore couldn't just let himself repeat the mistakes of his past. He couldn't just hand the man over to the authorities: that would break Harry's heart and, in no small way, break his own as well. Again.

It was a mess.

But it was also an opportunity. Perhaps this was a chance to make up for his mistakes.

In the shadows of his mind, a part of him pushed to leave Black to his fate, a voice argued that Black could and would ruin everything… a voice that sounded so much like someone he had once called 'friend'. He pushed it aside, out, away. And if another part of his crafty mind was already scheming—already twisting this mess to fit into his plans and finding new exploits—that part he left alone. The end result would be the same, regardless of any additional benefits.

Black would be free, saved by Dumbledore's interference if not by his own hands. Providing Harry
with a plan to save not only his godfather but the Hippogriff as well: *that* was well within his skills. It would work nicely.

It was just a matter of waiting for Black to get himself caught, which should happen soon enough. Then he could send his plan into motion. Dumbledore allowed himself a small, sad smile, blue eyes twinkling with a more calculating gleam than he usually let show.

The ball abruptly stopped rolling, the green color draining away until it was the same silver color as the other trinkets.

Dumbledore blinked at it. Much like a certain Unspeakable who had been cataloging prophecies, he took off his half-moon spectacles, cleaned them, perched them back on his nose, and blinked at it again. This little ball had been enchanted to roll around only so that nobody would look at it too closely; the charm that actually mattered was a monitoring spell.

It monitored Harry Potter's prophecy. *The Prophecy.*

It was supposed to glow green when everything was normal, red if somebody removed the prophecy, and yellow for anything else.

*It was certainly not* supposed to just… stop.

He picked up the little ball and drew his wand to give it a slight tap, confirming what he had already guessed: the spell had been cut off. Which shouldn't have been possible, since even destroying the prophecy's orb should have only caused it to change to yellow. Still trying to figure out what could have happened, he placed it back onto his desk and left his office.

The halls of Hogwarts were quiet, soft snoring from the many portraits and the occasional gentle creak from the castle itself accompanying the sound of his soft footfalls. A breeze from outside slid through cracks in the window frames, whistling quietly. Above him a ghost in a shimmering dress silently flew in through the wall.

It was peaceful.

And then it was *white.*

A thrum of magic slammed through Hogwarts, pure white light flooding through any window it could. The portraits jerked awake with sounds of confusion and even Dumbledore staggered in surprise. It was over quickly, whatever it was.

“M-magic…?” the ghost whispered, her form unsteady and even paler than it should be. She was staring out the window with something akin to awe in her gray eyes.

Magical Britain's most renowned and powerful wizard stared with her.

Something… Something had changed this night.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own *Harry Potter* or *Undertale.*

Happy Halloween!
I hope you liked this bonus update! (Note that it's a 'bonus'!) It wasn't really long enough to just post by itself as the month's chapter, so I figured it would make a good treat for Halloween.

Thank you to everyone who has commented! You're all awesome!

CHAPTER EDITED ON NOVEMBER 19, 2016.

I wasn't really pleased with how I portrayed Dumbledore in this section originally, and a comment from a reader motivated me to take a second shot at it. I'm much more pleased with this version, so thanks to Mezmo for inadvertently giving me the push I needed to actually improve it!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Several Questions, Not Many Answers

Chapter Summary

Snape is... well, he's not really sure what he just witnessed.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Severus Snape was not happy. This is no surprise. But he was not mad. He was not angry. He was not raging. He was not seething, brooding, scheming, irritated, or even particularly annoyed.

This would surprise pretty much anyone.

In fact, Severus Snape was some combination of those that somehow added up to worried. Deeply worried.

Not that anyone would be able to tell. He wasn't a spy for nothing, after all.

He stepped over another gnarly tree root that seemed to be growing for the express purpose of trying to trip him up. It was hard to see anything with all the dense branches blocking out any light from the sky, but enough made its way through that he could spot most of the larger threats to his ankles: at least the full moon is good for that much. Normally he'd use a simple 'Lumos' spell and forgo complaints of filtered moonlight, but then normally he wouldn't be preoccupied levitating a stretcher bearing an unconscious, red-headed student.

"Weasleys," Snape scorned under his breath, before pausing and revising: "No... Gryffindors." He brushed away a grabby alder and made sure his cargo hadn't somehow fallen off in the last few seconds. "They're trouble even when asleep. Perhaps even more than usual."

But in the end they were still his students. Students who were now lost somewhere in this forest with a werewolf and a crazy escaped convict. It didn't matter that Sirius Black—he mentally cursed the man—was innocent and thus wrongly imprisoned. He had still been imprisoned: nobody could spend twelve years stuck in Azkaban and still be sane. Insane means dangerous and Harry Potter—Lily's son, for Merlin's sake—was out there in the thick of it. As usual.

Snape heard voices shouting desperately, faint but still clearly distressed, and hurried in their direction. He was close, but not close enough. Not with Granger and Potter (the voices were theirs, naturally) frantically repeating the incantation for the Patronus charm. Dementors were attacking and their defense wasn't enough.

Hermione Granger's voice fell silent.

The other voice, Harry's, grew weaker. Then it faded altogether.

The oft-unhappy professor would have cursed, but he'd rather save his breath.

He caught a glimpse of water through the trees, light filtering through branches and casting an eerie splattering of shadows on twisted roots. An uneasy feeling tugged at him, and while he couldn't hear any more spellcasting—which should, by all means, make him very concerned—Snape knew
he was unsettled for some completely different reason. Something didn't add up. The moonlight in
the lake's clearing outlined a few indistinct figures on the shore, but that feeling gave him pause. A
quick scan of the area told him that it was only himself, his unconscious student, and what
appeared to be the people he was looking for (also unconscious, probably) by the lake: there were
no Dementors nearby, despite the unnatural chill hanging in the air.

So someone had managed to drive them off. Someone other than Potter, as his earlier panicked
shouts certainly didn't indicate success.

Snape stuck to the trees, cautious, and made his way closer. He counted four figures—three lying
on the ground and one just sitting there—which was an immediate cause for alarm. Especially
since he had no clue who the extra was. The light wasn't good enough to see much beyond bare
details and a hint of color, but whoever it was apparently wore muggle clothes: specifically a
muggle hoodie that was some shade of blue. The hood was up, so Snape couldn't see much else
about them. Wanting to free up his wand in case this stranger was dangerous, he carefully began to
lower the gurney bearing Ron Weasley.

The stranger stood up suddenly, crouching and alert, and Snape froze. At first he thought he had
given himself away somehow, but then he felt it: a wave of dread and an icy cold weight clawing
at memories he kept firmly behind mental locked doors.

Dementors, he realized, and I'm stuck here with four unconscious people I need to protect and
some wild card.

Before he could do anything but grimace, an ominous chime rang out and strange gold-blue light
danced around the standing figure. Snape managed to process that the stranger was surprisingly
short—only as tall as some first years—when thoughts of heights and chimes and lights were
wiped out in favor of GREAT-MERLIN-ARE-THOSE-FLOATING-DRAGON-SKULLS-WHY-
AND-HOW!?

Snape is a cunning and intelligent person, someone who has seen a lot of the world and it's
shadows, someone who isn't easily shaken. He is an analytical planner and tactician, and a damn
good wizard when it came down to spell casting. That said, it was embarrassing how completely
his entire thought process ground to a halt.

There had been no incantation. No wand motion. No motion at all, really: the stranger still had
their hands in their pockets!

Wandless?!

When reviewing his memories of the event later with Dumbledore, he would take care to leave out
just how openly shocked and scared he had been at that instant.

He had only just gathered himself again when the stranger spoke. His voice sounded smooth and
perfectly calm, low and apparently relaxed, but Snape hadn't been in Slytherin for nothing. The
voice carried a powerful, threatening undertone that sent fear—real fear—running along the spy
master's nerves, and he only needed to utter a single sentence: “do you wanna have a bad time?”

The floating skulls, each as large and bone-white as an actual dragon's skull would be, loomed
menacingly beside the stranger. It was enough to get him to take an instinctive step back,
regardless of the fact that he wasn't the target, but of course the Dementors continued their single-
mined advance. For a heartbeat Snape wondered what would happen next.

And then, white.
And pain and blindness, he couldn’t see, everything was white. Even with his eyes closed, everything was white!

And the noise, the noise.

His world became nothing but sweeping, roaring sound and light. An onrush of power tore through him, around him, setting his senses on fire, and it was with shocked and disoriented awe that he realized what it was: magic.

Pure, overwhelming magic.

“that… might have been overkill,” the stranger observed with a soft whistle. If Snape had more of his faculties under control he would have offered frank, whole-hearted agreement. Instead he all but fell forward with a groan, only remaining on his feet by sheer dumb luck.

Snape had to focus on staying upright, thoughts of the stranger and the flood of power momentarily replaced as his brain desperately tried to keep the still-white world from spinning. With a flick of his wand he lowered the gurney to the ground, trying to keep the student from being tossed around due to his unsteadiness. He rubbed at his eyes in an attempt to return his vision and, after several long blinks, finally began to see vague shapes and colors again. It was another minute or so before he could see clearly.

The stranger was gone.

It was natural that that was the first thing Snape noticed, since that was the first thing he looked for. The cautious, recently blinded professor examined the shoreline, but whoever it was had clearly left while he was blinded. And, it should be noted, there was absolutely no sign of the swarm of Dementors. The supposedly impossible-to-kill creatures had, so far as he could tell, been completely obliterated. Now he was alone by the lake with the unconscious people he had come to find, no mysterious figure to be seen. He slowly made his way forward, eyes glued to his surroundings even as he shifted his focus to his students and old nemesis.

His students, thank Merlin, seemed largely unharmed and were likely only suffering the after-effects of Dementor exposure. Sirius looked much the same as earlier except for… something. Something was different. He was still gaunt and pale and unhealthy and generally crazy looking, but something in his face was more… peaceful than it should have been. Snape brushed the nagging thought away and quickly set about conjuring three more stretchers.

And if he was a bit more rough with Sirius than his students, well. For all that the criminal wasn't actually guilty of his crime—a suspicion he'd held since that cursed night (he knew what it took to be a double agent and frankly never thought the straight-forward Sirius capable of it)—Snape wasn't just going to forgive the other man for everything else. Besides, he justified to himself as he bound the other man, he had an image to uphold.

Snape cast one last long look at the spot where the stranger had stood before, with a flick of his wand to lift the four gurneys, he finally turned back to the forest. Leaving the relative brightness of the lake-side clearing for the dark woods put the antsy professor even more on edge. He kept thinking he heard something or that he caught sight of an unnatural shadow slipping through the trees, but there was no way to tell if it was all in his head or not.

If there was someone or something following him, they didn't come forward. If it was the stranger, Snape wasn't sure he wanted him to.

It took some time and careful maneuvering to reach the edge of the Forbidden Forest, the trip made
longer due to his frequent pauses to glance over his shoulder, but eventually he stepped out onto the green fields surrounding the castle proper. Hogwarts stood tall and proud, lights twinkling from windows and magic thick in the air. Snape took a deep breath and couldn't help but think back to the white blast that had all but suffocated him with its magical intensity. It had just been so…

He shook himself, refocusing on what he needed to do. Dumbledore no doubt already knew he was back on the grounds, and that meant soon he'd be met with a most un-welcome welcoming committee. Sure enough, he could already hear that idiotic so-called Minister of Magic's voice talking somewhere up ahead. It sounded significantly more unsteady than the last time he had heard it.

“What was… I do say, Dumbledore, what was that?”

“It was remarkable, to be sure.” The headmaster's voice was calm as always, betraying nothing save mild curiosity. “I can't say I've ever seen such a thing before.”

“I would imagine so,” a third voice replied: that would be Minerva, naturally. Wonder and incredulity were clear in her tone, the combination making her distinct Scottish accent quite a bit more prominent than usual.

There was no doubt about what they were discussing. Perhaps he should have been shocked or impressed that the blast had had a tangible impact so far from the lakeside, but some part of Snape—basically all of his conscious and a good deal of his subconscious, to be honest—was still just struggling to convince himself that it had actually happened. It didn't matter at the moment anyway; he had been pushing through his confusion since the event itself, and he wasn't about to stop now.

He had a job to do.

A group of people were clustered around the wide-open great doors of Hogwarts: clearly anyone who would have been sleeping had been roused by the blast. Now that he was looking for it, the spy master spotted silhouettes of figures in many of the lit windows, all turned in the same direction. Even Dumbledore, Fudge, McGonagall, and the two unfamiliar people (Aurors, presumably) standing in the doorway couldn't help but stare at the Forbidden Forest. This had the convenient side effect of placing himself and his unconscious cargo along their line of sight. When none of them did anything as he drew closer, he realized that 'line of sight' wasn't enough to garner their attention.

“Could you stop staring dumbly into space and do something useful for once?” Snape called out, voice all but dripping with disdain. “Say, perhaps, assisting me in bringing three foolhardy students and one insane criminal to where they belong?”

That got their attention.

McGonagall swept down the path the meet him, already drawing her wand and taking command of two of the gurneys. “Severus! I'm glad you're alright. Are my students—?”

“Unconscious but otherwise fine, I assure you.” She raised a questioning eyebrow, wanting more detail about what had happened out there. It didn't escape his notice how her eyes looked between himself, her students, and the dark woods they had just come from. Or, more to the point, the bit of sky directly above the forrest: Minerva was obviously wondering about more than Harry Potter's latest case of recklessness. “Dementors,” he said, answering the far simpler question. “The encounter seems to have only knocked them unconscious, nothing worse.”
The transfiguration professor looked as if she had more questions, but Dumbledore interrupted before she got the chance. “We’d best get them to the Hospital Wing regardless, Minerva.”

“Of course!” She sounded mildly insulted that the headmaster had even felt the need to advise her of something so obvious. Another flick of her wand gave her control of all three students' gurneys and, with a brisk turn, she swept off.

Dumbledore's eyes laughed, twinkling in that infuriating I-know-something-you-don't kind of way that never failed to annoy Snape. Especially in this case when he was absolutely sure that the older wizard and himself were at least equally informed: that is to say, knew nothing. Technically it was Snape who knew more on the topic of the mysterious blast, having seen and heard first-hand the stranger who had cast it (not that knowing it had been a stranger was very helpful).

“It's good to see that you are safe, Severus.” Dumbledore was still softly smiling, but something in the expression sharpened as his attention shifted focus. “After that wave of power filled the sky, I could do nothing but fear for the worst and hope for the best. You saw it, of course.”

“Naturally. I nee—”

Before Snape could finish his statement, Cornelius Fudge, followed by his two Aurors, burst loudly onto the scene. “Don't be ridiculous, Dumbledore! There's no possible way anyone missed it. We'll need to save such talk for later, however, since we have larger issues to deal with now than mysterious light shows.” He gestured to the last gurney, Sirius Black still out cold.

Snape gave a slight nod in response, internally resisting the urge to laugh in the minister's face. Black may be a supposed criminal wanted for killing twelve muggles and a wizard in a spell-caused explosion, but a magical surge capable of sending a shockwave across a large part of the already-magically-saturated forest and through Hogwarts itself seemed like a significant 'issue' that shouldn't be relegated to the same level as unexpected fireworks.

The headmaster's nod was more convincing, though he probably shared some of his potion master's misgivings. “Yes, true: for now we must secure Black. Perhaps locking him in a professor's office will suffice?”

“Probably,” answered one of the Aurors as their companion summoned manacles onto the still-unconscious criminal's wrists, despite the fact that he was already bound and gagged. “We only need to restrain him until the Dementors arrive.”

I doubt that they will. Snape shot Dumbledore a look and pushed the thought to the forefront of his mind, hoping the older man's almost constant low-key use of Legilimency would pick it up. It was the best he could do while keeping his expression the same mask of disdainful disinterest as before, and by the way Dumbledore's eyebrows rose slightly, it seemed the message got through.

“I doubt that they will.” Dumbledore continued, nobody else the wiser to their silent transaction, “I believe there is an empty classroom we could re-purpose to suit our needs. It's only been used for storage lately, since Hogwarts stopped offering Advanced Spell-Crafting several years ago, but the walls are still warded against magic damage; it should serve well.”

Snape relinquished control of the last gurney as Dumbledore gestured for the Aurors to follow him, leading the way back inside. But he lingered for a moment, unable to stop himself from casting one last, searching look toward the shadowy Forbidden Forest.

He didn't notice the pair of glowing white lights staring back.
Sirius woke to an unfamiliar ceiling in an empty room, wrists bound by heavy shackles, and with no idea where he was.

His mind felt like every nerve had been scorched, boiled, and torn to shreds before immediately being patched back together. And he didn't think it had been patched back together terribly well, at that. Memories seemed to start and stop at strange places, a good two years seemed to be completely disjointed, and quite a bit seemed to be nothing but empty blackness. Just a void… of…

“The void!” He sat up suddenly, wildly looking around at the rest of the empty room and taking in the fact that, save for a few boxes and some old tarps, it was, well, an empty room. A gloriously non-void-blackness empty room. Though his hands were bound—he had no clue why—he couldn't resist reaching out to trail his fingers along the rough stone of the walls. It was solid. It was real. He almost wanted to cry right then and there.

Of course, there was still the matter of apparently being imprisoned. His best bet was that they had been caught immediately after appearing, and that he was being held in the Ministry somewhere. Which meant his next cour—

Wait, 'they'? So… 'we'…?

He almost choked when he realized, by what he realized: “Sans!?”

But Sirius was alone. He shouldn't be alone. In fact, he was fairly certain that he couldn't be; there's no way he was the only one who came through. However, since Sans wasn't here trapped with him—a small mercy—then Sans must be somewhere else. And while not being imprisoned with Sirius was by no means a bad thing, it didn't mean that Sans wasn't being held elsewhere: wasn't caught or trapped or kil—trapped.

It was at this point that Sirius's frantic observations of his current prison caught up with his runaway train of thought, and the first thing those observations told him made no sense at all.

He was in a Hogwarts office. Granted it was an empty office clearly being used for spare storage, but he had done enough sneaking around the castle as a student to recognize it for what it was. What he really wanted to know was why he was at Hogwarts in the first place. And how he had gotten here. The last thing Sirius could remember was Sans preparing to teleport them out of the void—and he knew that was the memory that happened most recently, despite the jumbled mess his brain was currently—but they should have arrived together at the Ministry of Magic in the room with the Veil. That's where he had been aiming, after all.

So.

“What is going on here?”

“oh good. you have no idea either.”

Sirius will forever deny the spluttered sound of shock he made at that moment.
Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Here we see that Snape doesn't really know what's going on. Dumbledore's pretty confused as well. The minister likes to pretend, but let's be honest: he's clueless. Plus Sirius has just woken up to find himself imprisoned, not sure how he got there. And well, I mean Sans is literally in a whole new world, so...

We haven't seen much of Sans lately, have we? Next month, guys. Next month. Good stuff.
Anyway, about his super overkill blast: that was a bit of an accident. There's a lot of magic in the air, he's perhaps a little unsteady due to dimensional travel and Dementor-induced flashbacks, and he hasn't napped in, like, half an hour: dude's gotta adjust.

And so we return to our regularly scheduled updates on the first of each month. I hope you all had a great Halloween! If you have questions, remarks, or critiques, please leave a comment.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Finally, some answers. Kinda. For some people, at least.

Sirius regained his ability to speak rather quickly, making use of it by promptly shouting, “SANS!”

“that's my name, don't wear it out.” The skeleton looked around himself curiously, white eye-lights lazily glancing over the dusty boxes. He stuffed his hands deep into his hoodie's pockets and rocked back on his feet, posture perfectly relaxed. “not what i expected. a bit **bare bones**, honestly.”

It was such a normal thing, Sans making puns, that Sirius couldn't do anything but smile and laugh. Smile and laugh and be happy that Sans was safe—not caught (or worse) but standing right there and just, well… making puns. In tired but relieved agreement, he nodded. “You can say that again.”

“i could, but that'd be redundant.” He waved a dismissive hand. “anyway, on the topic of expectations… i'm guessing **this** isn't quite what you planned.”

“What clued you in? The fact that I literally voiced my confusion aloud just a few seconds ago?”

“actually, i picked up on it because of the swarm of flying demon-cloak-things.”

Silence. Sirius stared at the short skeleton, mouth slightly agape.

“i mean, i'd **hope** you hadn't actually wanted to bring us to a gathering of evil sentient rags,” Sans continued, seeing that his wizard companion was clearly at a loss. “that'd be kinda rude, ya know.”

Sirius puzzled out what he had been told, mumbling, “What…? 'Flying demon-cloak-things'? 'Evil sentient rags'…?” And then he realized: “You mean to tell me there were Dementors?!”

“sure, if that's what those were called.”

“But then you—” He didn't bother finishing his thought, choosing instead to check his friend over, clearly concerned. “...Sans, are you alright?”

Sans rubbed the back of his skull with one hand, not sure how to respond. He was fine, magically speaking: he hadn't used much of his reserves when he attacked the whatchamacallits. Although, to be honest, now that he wasn't focused on trailing the wizard in black, he did feel a bit… off. So, though Sirius didn't know it, he quickly CHECKED himself.

Tendrils of magic were drawn up and directed to pass through his bones, invisible and all but undetectable to anyone else. They faded away with a thought, only leaving behind traces for Sans to, well, check. Mentally quantifying his observations, everything seemed to be perfectly normal at first: 1 HP, 1 ATK, 1 DEF, his normal (frankly obscenely large) quantity of magic… and yet. The
best way he could describe it was that his SOUL almost felt heavy.

Annoyed that his CHECK hadn't helped, Sans turned back to Sirius. For a long moment he simply considered him, clearly debating something to himself. “look, i…” Sans sighed, coming to some kind of conclusion, “i trust you, so… i won't ask you to promise me anything. just…” He couldn't find the right words, but his expression was enough. Sirius knew it was important, whatever it was.

“I don't really understand, but I promise. I trust you.”

The short skeleton didn't bother clarifying. Or at least, he didn't bother clarifying with words. Drawing in an unnecessary breath, Sans did his best to rally himself: he might not like it, but he knew something was off and he wanted it fixed. So, lightly tapping at the space directly above his sternum with one boney finger, he called out his SOUL. The upside-down heart shimmered into view, blue and gold lights dancing vibrantly across its silvery surface. Or at least, most of its surface.

He heard Sirius gasp, though he wasn't sure if it was because of his summoning or what it revealed. A noxious magical residue—dull, opaque, and the color of nightmares. It oozed, festering, even as it slowly sent out oily streaks to tighten its hold on him. Sans couldn't help but draw unsettling parallels to another SOUL, stained and possessed, and he suppressed a shudder. At least that meant he knew what to do. He gently poked his SOUL, blue magic flashing at his fingertip, and sparked an incongruently violent reaction as the gunk was ripped away and torn to rapidly-vanishing shreds. The uncomfortable weight he had been feeling disappeared. After a few more seconds checking it over, he finally let the inverted heart fade safely back into his chest.

“…why are you staring at me?”

“Definitely not because you just randomly pulled a glowing heart out of your chest. It couldn't possibly be because of that,” Sirius deadpanned, before quickly dropping his sarcastic tone in exchange for a curious one. “What was that?”

Sans pulled himself onto one of the boxes, short legs left dangling a few feet off the ground. “my SOUL.”

“Your soul?”

“no, my SOUL,” Sans repeated, as if correcting the pronunciation. Sirius couldn't really hear much of a difference. “though i suppose it's basically the same thing.”

“So monsters can pull their souls right out of their chests?”

The skeleton shrugged, choosing not to correct the minute pronunciation differences a second time. “yeah, sure. i could pull out yours, too, if you're interested.”

Sirius certainly looked interested, but naturally he was also more than a little uneasy about the idea. After all, the Dementor's Kiss isn't something he'd ever subject himself to willingly… though of course this method seemed completely different. But just to check: “And you're sure I won't end up a soulless husk?”

“that SOUL-dn't happen.” Sirius harrumphed, the sound somewhere between a suppressed chuckle and a doubtful grumble. Sans clarified, adding, “gee, man, have some faith. it's not like i take the SOUL from you. i just… tug it out a bit.”

“Does it hurt?”
Sans raised a brow, eye-lights brightening with surprise. “wow. you're actually kinda interested aren't ya?”

“No!” he was quick to correct. “Not if it hurts!”

“chillax, sirius; no need to get frosty with me. it doesn't hurt at all, just feels a bit squeeze-y.”

“I'm not being 'frosty' with you, I'm… oh. That was just for the pun, wasn't it?” Sirius didn't even need to see Sans's grinning face to know the answer. He sighed, but found his unease swiftly fading; after all, this was Sans. His friend. “Yes, I admit I am interested. Would you—”

Sans's expression abruptly changed and, without any further warning, he silently vanished.

“—mind… Oh for the love of…” Sirius grumbled, crossing his arms with an eye roll before glancing around. He spotted Sans fairly quickly, since the short skeleton had only teleported to the other side of the room. “Tell me when you're going to do that, or at least don't interup—”

“shh.”

“Did you just—”

There was a sudden sharp rap at the window, cutting him off. Then another.

“AM I NOT ALLOWED TO FINISH A SENTENCE OR SOMETHING?!”

Sans gave a slight smirk but said nothing, simply nodding toward the room's sole narrow window. It seemed like Sirius wanted to gripe some more, but he stopped himself when Sans sobered, his attitude sharpening with startling intensity and focusing on the window. A second later there was a flash of light from outside. Curious, Sirius walked over and peered out.

And promptly saw what might very well have been the last thing he expected to see.

“H-Harry?!” As well as Hermione and a certain Hippogriff—and really, Buckbeak should have been the most surprising bit—but at the moment Sirius only had eyes for his godson. “What are you doing here?”

“Trying to get you out, obviously!” Harry's voice was muffled by the glass, but still audible. “The window's charmed, though, and we can't get it open! If the Dementors—” He stopped himself, clearly distressed.

Sirius shared a quick glance with Sans who, though noticeably more relaxed than before, was still standing to the side of the window and staying out of sight. “Ah, I… Well, I'm pretty sure I already have a way out…”

“Really? How?”

“Nevermind that! How'd you know I was here? How'd you even get here so fast?”

“Professor Dumbledore. We've been waiting for Macnair to be sent to get the Dementors so that you could escape with Buckbeak, but now we can't even get you out! And he'll be backanyminuteand—”

Hermione, though she looked decidedly uncomfortable with being airborne, managed to put a comforting hand on his shoulder. “Breathe, Harry. You're not making sense.”

He paused, taking her advice with a few long gulps of air. Sirius took the chance to do… absolutely
nothing: his train of thought had been well and truly derailed. Slumping against the window frame—too distracted to keep himself standing upright—Sirius seemed to mumble quietly to himself. At least that's what it looked like to Harry, who couldn't see that his godfather wasn't alone at the moment.

“Did he say… Macnair…? I thought he… Sans, he… At the Ministry,” Sirius whispered over his shoulder to the eavesdropping skeleton. “I could have sworn he was there. He should have been caught. Imprisoned!”

Of course Sans, who had more experience with what was actually going on, quickly pieced together at least some of what had happened. “we must be early,” he hissed back, pitching his voice so it wouldn't be heard through the glass. “close but not quite where you wanted.”

Understandably, Sirius needed a moment to process what that meant. “So… what am I supposed to do now?”

dunno. escape, i guess.”

“Sirius! Focus!” Harry's voice pulled Sirius away from his hushed conversation. “We need to get you out of there!”

“What's your way?” Hermione suddenly asked.

Still in the process of sorting through what had happened, Sirius stared blankly back at her. “My way?”

She looked annoyed at having to explain. “To escape! You said that you 'already have a way out’.”

“I…” He turned again to look at Sans, wondering just what exactly to tell her. The truth was obviously a no-go: both because 1) he couldn't imagine anything going well if Sans was found out, and 2) the basic fact that 'escape by teleporting skeleton' would sound outrageous to anyone not in the know.

But before he could decide on what to say, said teleporting skeleton decided to throw Sirius's reasoning out the window and answer personally. “i'll take care of that.”

Sirius was glad that, for once, it wasn't him being thrown for a loop. Which isn't to say he wasn't surprised, but Harry and Hermione were both completely speechless, eyes glued to the window frame Sans was still hiding behind. When they could find the words, both had the same question: “Who's there?”

“eh, i'm nobody,” Sans nonchalantly provided, startling a snort from Sirius.

“He's a friend. Trust me, he can get me out of here.” It might have taken him a minute or so, but Sirius was finally getting a handle on the situation. Loosing—or gaining, depending on how it's interpreted—almost two whole years is guaranteed to be disorienting. All things considered, Sirius thought he was handling it pretty well.

Harry relaxed slightly, but only slightly. “What about Buckbeak? He can't stay here.”

“I know.” Of course he did, now that he knew when he was. The first time around Sirius had been locked up in a different office where Hermione had been able to unlock and open the window. A bit of a glaring hole in the security system, now that he thought about it. “Land on top of the Astronomy Tower, alright?”
"What?"

"I'll meet you there and fly away with Buckbeak."

Sans poked him on the shoulder, careful to stay out of sight, and quietly asked, "can you really escape just by flying off? i'd think somebody'd notice."

Sirius shrugged. "It worked the first time."

"seriously?"

"You've already used that pun, Rattles."

"and i'll use it again," the skeleton was quick to shoot back. "with a name like yours it's basically a guarantee."

Before Sirius could reply, Harry spoke up again. "What are you talking about?" He tried to peer further into the office, hoping to catch a glimpse of whoever was in there with his godfather. "What's rattling? Is someone trying to get in?"

"No, no. He just had a question, that's all."

"Are you going to tell us who 'he' is?" Hermione asked, tone suspicious but not untrusting (in Sirius, at least). "uh, no."

Sirius cut in before anyone could say anything else: effectively cutting off any further questions. "Can you get me there?"

"to the astronomy tower? if i knew which one, then sure."

"It's the tallest one at Hogwarts," Harry answered.

Sans hadn't really explored the castle all that much, having basically just monitored Sirius from afar before shortcutting directly to him. He had, however, gotten a pretty good look at the outside. "i think i know which one you're talkin' about, so i can get you to the roof."

"Alright then." Sirius directed his attention back at the kids outside. "I'll meet you there, Harry. Go!"

"Go? But you're—"

"I promise i'll be there waiting by the time you arrive."

"But how?" Hermione demanded.

"magic, duh."

Sans tugged Sirius away from the window, out of sight, and onto the roof of the Astronomy Tower. A dangerously strong wind whipped around them, brisk and insistent. As soon as the change of scenery registered, Sirius sat himself down and quickly scooted back from the edge of the roof. The skeleton, however, took a step toward it. He stared up at the sky, having been too distracted by various things since arrival to really notice or appreciate it. And now that he was looking at it, seeing the full moon shining brightly from behind parting clouds, amidst scattered stars, he couldn't help but compare. His eyes dimmed slightly. This night sky stretched far over his head,
new and unfamiliar. So unlike…

“Merlin's balls! Care to give me some warning next time!?”

“nah,” Sans casually replied, pulling away from his depressing thoughts with practiced ease as he fixed a grin onto his face. “the kids'll be here soon, so what's the plan-et now?”

The wizard escapee crossed his arms, thinking. “Right. The plan.”

Sans blinked. “you don't have a plan do you.”

“What! No, I do, it's—” His eyes widened with realization. “I don't need a plan!”

“sirius. sirius that sounds like a bad idea.”

“Playing it by ear worked well enough the first time.”

“i mean apparently,” Sans said. With a sigh he placed two fingers on the bit of his skull between his eye sockets—if he had a nose he'd have be pinching the bridge of it. But then he just grinned, stuffing his hands back into his pockets with a shrug. “eh, whatever.”

And then he vanished again.

Sirius threw his hands up in a gesture of long-suffering annoyance. “I literally just said not to do that.”

He was left alone with his grumbles for all of maybe three seconds before Buckbeak soared over the edge of the roof. A rush of wind accompanied their landing, along with significant noise as the shingles cracked under the Hippogriff's weight.

“Harry!” Sirius, unable to help himself, called out, “What took you so long?”

“I can't believe it,” Hermione breathed, staring in disbelief.

Harry slid off of Buckbeak, helped his shocked friend off, then turned his full attention to his godfather. “You're here! I have no idea how… but you're here!”

“Yes, and a magician never reveals his tricks.” If Sans were the one delivering that line he would've been winking in the frustrating-yet-somehow-endearing way he had perfected. But since it was Sirius it was a confident-bordering-on-cocky smirk instead.

Hermione was less than pleased. She mumbled something under her breath that may or may not have been something along the lines of: “It wasn't your trick. You were just the assistant who vanished.”

It was a comeback Sans—who was listening in through an incomplete shortcut—could appreciate. He was currently on the other side of the school grounds, sitting criss-cross just out of range of a strangely murderous tree. The violent plant provided excellent cover against any potential snoopers, so Sans was allowed to focus on keeping his shortcut's energy connected to the tower roof for spying purposes. That connection was basically the reason he had never been caught teleporting all over the place: it served as a security camera, letting Sans know if anyone would be around when he popped in. After things in the Underground had started to… worsen, he'd cleverly re-purposed the helpful trick for keeping an eye on things.

“Sirius, you'd better go, quick,” Harry rushed, apparently pushing his surprise and whatever else he
must have been thinking to the side in favor of the larger problem. “They’ll reach that office any moment, they’ll find out you’re gone.”

It was an accurate point. Plus, if Sirius was remembering things correctly, Harry and Hermione were under their own rather strict, somewhat literal time constraint. He turned to Buckbeak and bowed: thankfully he didn't have to wait long to get the powerful beast's permission to ride. But he paused once he had settled on the Hippogriff's back. “Harry, I—”

“GO!” Both young wizards-in-training all but yelled, shooing him away with urgency.

“And try to stay out of sight!” Harry added anxiously.

“Harry, you're every inch your father's son…” Sirius proclaimed, smiling down at his godson. “But I must say… you’re as good at nagging as your mum!”

The boy couldn't seem to gather himself enough to respond, his expressive green eyes betraying just how much that teasing sentence meant to him. Buckbeak spread his wings and, with a powerful stroke, took to the sky.

His godfather still had a lot he wanted to say, but he couldn't possibly fit it all in right that instant. “I'd say 'write me', but I doubt that'd work well! I'll stay in contact, though!” Sirius's voice was growing faint as he flew farther away. “Don't worry!”

Harry kept watching until he couldn't see any trace of the escapee, but Hermione spent that time trying to figure out how to get inside without accidentally killing herself. “Come on, we need to get back befo—”

It was then that Sans went ahead and cut off the connection. He had a crazy wizard to follow. Again.

(At least he was conscious this time.)

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It took the better part of the rest of the night for Sirius to find a secluded enough place to land without being too worried that the Ministry would leap out at him from the bushes. It was nestled in a small valley and suited his needs perfectly: a decently sized clearing—large enough for a Hippogriff and a person or two, at least—surrounded by trees and a thick, presumably non-magical forest. Sirius thought it would provide good cover. Buckbeak seemed pretty relaxed, having curled up to get some well deserved rest, so he took that as a good sign. Well, he had traveled pretty far, hopefully far enough to stay hidden but not so far that he accidentally abandoned his skeletal friend. At this point he could only hope that Sans would be able to find him…

He glanced around himself suspiciously.

Sans didn't pop in out of nowhere.

The trees around the edge of the clearing rustled as a soft breeze passed through. Buckbeak quietly huffed as he settled into his chosen patch of grass and dirt. Sirius continued to scan the area.

“Little bugger's probably just waiting for me to relax so he can spook me again,” he mumbled to
himself, perfectly sane. No, seriously. “Well, not this time, Rattles! I'm on to your ga—”

“What are you even…?”

“—MMEE! HA!” Sirius spun around, triumphant. “I knew it!”

“UH, congrats.” Sans didn't seem particularly impressed: closer to 'vaguely confused' than anything else.

The confusion was probably because Sirius had just turned his back on him. This was because, contrary to the wizard's expectations, Sans hadn't teleported in behind him. The skeleton had actually been walking over from where he had appeared at the far edge of the clearing, not wanting to risk startling the Hippogriff and having to deal with anything that would entail. Sirius turned back around. “You win this round.”

Sans's confusion vanished with a sneaky grin that was a pretty good indicator that he had known what his friend was on about the whole time. Known and probably planned around, to be honest.

“Glad you got that out of the way. Where to now?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, what'd ya do the first time?”

Sirius shrugged. “Fled the country.”

“Really.” Sans sighed. “I can guess why you wouldn't wanna do that again. Any other ideas?”

“Give me a break, Rattles, it's not like I could just…” He paused as a thought struck. “Wait, I do have a house.”

“You sure? You don't sound really sure.”

Sirius nodded. “I'm pretty sure it's empty right now.”

“And you didn't go there the first time… why?”

He paused for a moment, trying to find the right words. “I... don't really like the place. That and it would be really hard to secure it without a wand all by myself.” His eyes suddenly widened and he slapped his forehead. “Merlin's balls— I still don't have a wand.”

“Then where is your wand? It couldn't just wand-er off.”

It was unclear if Sirius caught the pun and ignored it or simply didn't notice it at all. “Confiscated by the Ministry when I was first imprisoned. I'm lucky they didn't just snap it.”

“So we just need to go get it?”

“You can't just waltz into the Minis... oh, 'shortcuts'. Right.”

So Sirius had a plan, kind of. First, infiltrate the Ministry of Magic. Second, somehow find his wand there. He hadn't figured out how, exactly, but he would leave that to the infiltrator: Sans, of course. Third, get out and get to Grimmauld Place. Once there, secure it. A Fidelius should do nicely, now that he won't be hiding alone. Forth... well, he'll worry about that after he gets there.

Yeah... he wasn't looking forward to step three.
Disclaimer: I do not own *Harry Potter* or *Undertale*.

So first, a quick note since I'm not sure what sorts of alerts this site sends out. If you weren't aware, I edited chapter 4 about two weeks ago (as of posting this chapter). You should check up on that if you haven't.

Ah, the less-great escape from Hogwarts imprisonment. Because let's be honest, escaping the infinite void between worlds is a bit more impressive. Anyway, let's take a glimpse into Harry and Hermione's minds after things settle down: "Who the crap was that? Where was he a few hours ago?! How'd he... what? I... What?" They will want answers. But will they ever get them?

Well I mean probably. Later.

Thank you to everyone who has commented! It's a great motivator: knowing people care. Can't let myself let all you guys down, now can I?

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
‘Heart' Surgery

Chapter Summary

It's not like it's rocket surgery or anything.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“so... let me get this straight,” Sans began, expression perfectly neutral, “you want me to infiltrate your magical government's main headquarters, get past all the security, to somehow find your wand. with no plan beyond 'just do it'.”

Sirius nodded.

Sans slowly closed his eye sockets, brought his hands in front of his face as if he were praying, and sighed dramatically.

Sirius resisted the urge to fidget. (No, that's a lie. He fidgeted a lot.)

Then: “well, i mean sure. why not. no big.” The skeleton was all grins again, swinging his arms back down to his sides with a flourish and rocking back on his heels. His pink slippers made little flop sounds on the grass.

“Wait, are you serious?” That got a rather funny response from Sans: a loud cough and a small two-handed wave, as if cueing something. Sirius caught on fairly quickly. “No, I didn't— I know, I'm Sirius, but are you? 'Serious'?”

“i gotcha', yeah.”

“...I thought convincing you would be far more work.”

Sans just shrugged, yawning. “you know how i feel about work.”

“True enough.” He wasn't about to look this gift horse in the mouth, choosing instead to continue with his explanation. “Alright. Tomorrow we teleport into London: somewhere close to the Ministry but not so close that I'd be recognized by some witch or wizard heading in to work. After that we get in and somehow find my wand. Any ideas?”

Some cricket in the meadow had the best comedic timing, apparently, giving a few prominent chirps to accent the complete silence that followed his question.

Eventually Sans said, “ya know… i might be able to recognize your wand by your magic. i can recognize people at a distance by their SOULs, so why not.”

“That's... convenient.” Sirius distractedly rubbed at his chest. “Do you need to check my soul to be able to find it more easily?”

The skeleton considered correcting the only-sorta-incorrect pronunciation of those two words, before deciding it wasn't really worth it. “i routed through your SOUL when i made the shortcut
outa' the void, but since things went a tad pear-shaped on re-entry, so to speak, that might be for the best.”

“And you're sure it won't hurt?”

“yes, i'm just looking. we've been over this right?”

“Excuse me for being cautious with my immortal soul, Rattles. It's only the intrinsic culmination of my entire being, necessary for my continued existence.” The once-and-returned prankster was really laying on the snark.

“well… i—” Sans wiped away an imaginary tear, trumping Sirius's sass with false dramatics. “if you really d-don't trust me…”

Of course he had done absolutely nothing about his skull-wide grin, spoiling the image. Sirius tried to give him a friendly whack on the head but missed, laughing in his rambunctious way. “I trust you, you absolute git! But, uhm, let's deal with that tomorrow: it's getting late.”

Yawning hugely, Sans teasingly retorted, “gee sirius, if that's the excuse you're rolling with, alright then. besides, when it's an option, sleep isn't something i care to refuse.” He plopped himself down on the grass right where he stood, conveniently (and purposefully) slipping underneath Sirius's second smack attempt.

Denied his petty revenge for the quip, Sirius had to make do with a long-suffering eye roll as he trudged over to a nearby tree. It should make a decent enough place to sleep: it wasn't that cold, and there were probably only a few hours until dawn. Not to mention that the cold wouldn't even be an issue once he shifted into Padfoot. “Good night, then.”

No response. Sans had already fallen asleep.

Figures.

Sirius circled his chosen sleep-spot a few times, stomping down the grass and kicking aside any large rocks found in the area, only letting himself slump down and curl up once he was satisfied with his prep. Then, with the ease of long practice, he pushed familiar magic down his limbs, sliding it through his flesh and bones and changing them as it passed. It only took seconds for Sirius the human to be replaced by the large, shaggy hound Padfoot (though hilariously still wearing his shirt and trousers, having been too tired to include his overclothes in the transformation).

So, with Buckbeak's occasional huffed snore and Sans's rare but long-since-become-familiar rattles, Sirius drifted to sleep.

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The next day dawned brisk, bright, and far too early for Sans's tastes.

Laying on his back, he watched as the sky slowly began to brighten: black shifting to blue-gray. Mist was creeping through the forest, lit in soft colors that muted the surroundings. It layered the air in the small clearing and beyond, thick and encompassing yet delicate in a strangely fragile way. Cold morning dew glistened on the grass around him, twinkling gently in diffused sunlight.
Moisture seeped into the fabric of his clothes, slippers included, and he could feel a few trickles of water tracing lines down his bones before reaching the ground. Some drops rolled off his brow and into his eye sockets.

He blinked in discomfort and sat up.

It wasn't the void.

Well geeze, obviously… It felt odd to actually acknowledge that fact. After the timeless, unchanging black, it felt odd to watch the world around him change slowly, strange and wonderful to watch as color began to fill his surroundings. The air was brisk and distinctly alive: a barely noticeable breeze slipping through the grass.

A huffed, sleepy sounding oh-boy-I'm-gonna-catch-the-ball bark—he had gotten pretty good at interpreting doggish over the years and non-years he'd spent in Snowdin—drew Sans's attention to a dog curled up at the base of a tree.

It was wearing clothes.

Not that dogs wearing clothes was a new concept: that was old hat.

Grinning to himself in appreciation of the almost-accidental pun, Sans continued to regard the strangely familiar canine. A brief glance around the clearing revealed that it was only himself, the feathered creature (monster?) who had carried Sirius, and the dog. Sirius himself wasn't there.

The dog was wearing his clothes.

So unless some random dog had stolen Sirius's clothes and put them on… well, from what he had heard about this world that was unlikely. Curious, Sans ran a basic CHECK on the dog, brushing his magic up against the dog's SOUL and pulling back vague but familiar impressions of orange and purple. Thus the question became: Sirius is a dog now? Which admittedly wasn't much of a question, but given the distinct lack of answers he figured it summed it all up quite nicely.

"you better not gnaw on me when i wake you up, fuzz-butt."

With that remark snarked at his oblivious friend, Sans figured he should actually get up. He pushed himself to his feet, taking a moment to smack as much damp soil and grass off of his clothes as he could. Less straight-up dirty but still wet, the skeleton mosied over to the sleeping dog. He hoped he didn't actually need to worry about his friend trying to take a bite out of him but, since he really didn't want to risk it, Sans grabbed a conveniently sized stick and poked the sleeping hound with it.

Sirius growled groggily, then just rolled belly-up.

"wakey wakey, sirius." He prodded the dog again. "if i'm gonna need to be up, i can't just let sleeping dogs lie, man."

That earned him a bark—more of a 'boof' sound, really—but at least Sirius flipped himself back over, regarding Sans with one droopy, still-asleep eye. The eye slid shut. Then, after a significant pause, flashed back open again. Sirius leapt to his feet (or paws), tripping on his sleeves and pants in the process, and began barking at nothing in particular.

The dog was way too sleep muddled to really understand. Sans assumed that, had the barks been in plain english, it would still have been hard to make sense of him.

He also assumed that Sirius had honestly forgotten—or perhaps didn't notice—that he was
currently a dog. That was based on his brief expression of doggy confusion, followed by belated realization, a disgruntled growl, and a long stretch. The stretch shifted into a seamless transformation from dog to human, but the image was ruined when Sirius promptly face-planted onto the moist morning grass. He had already looked extremely rumpled, and when he flopped himself onto his back it was clear that he now had additional dirt smears.

Lovely.

“Merlin, Sans, did you really need to stab me awake?” he grumbled.

The skeleton shrugged. “hey, you were a dog and i am literally made of bones. i wasn't about to risk it.”

It seemed like Sirius was going to retort, mouth already open with words on his tongue, before he reconsidered. “Fine, point taken.”

“anyway… you… were a dog.”

“Of course! Some of us have skin, you know, and I didn't relish the idea of a long freezing night without blankets.”

“that answers nothing.” Sans rolled his eye-lights. “should i just assume 'wizards' and leave it at that?”

He looked mildly affronted, but his tone was full of humor when he replied, “Not all wizards can do that, Rattles, so at least give me some credit! I just happen to be a very skilled Animagus.”

“wizards' it is, then.”

“Fine,” Sirius conceded, still a bit miffed but deciding to move the topic along. “Besides that, we have schemes to scheme. And you still need to do your freaky floaty heart magic thing on me, too.”

“hmm… yeah.”

At that glowing and confidence-inspiring response, Sans pointed one boney finger at his friend and quickly flicked it back toward himself. To Sirius, the quiet meadow suddenly dimmed, and while it was still clearly visible it felt somehow… distanced. An interesting tingly feeling ran down Sirius's spine, branching out and racing along every nerve but leaving his chest numb. In front of him appeared...

Well, it was a heart.

It was just… overlapped by another one. A slightly larger one, a bit off-center and a bit more vibrant.

Both were smeared with the same nasty black residue that had clung on to Sans's. The guck all but filled up the space between the hearts, even splattering out on the outermost layer.

It made Sirius feel like he needed to take, oh, say fifty showers. And twenty baths, just to be sure.

“ooh, ew. that's—”

“ECH!” The disgusted wizard made to claw the nastiness away, but his hand was caught in a soft blue-bordering-on-cyan outline and stopped in place.

“not a good idea, ex-fuzz-butt,” Sans reprimanded. “let me deal with it. 'intrinsic culmination of
“your entire being’, remember?”

Sirius was suitably spooked and, though he still wanted to grab the filthy heart and wring it out like a soaked towel, he lowered his hand with a nod. Instead he examined the hearts with morbid fascination. “So that's what twelve years of Dementor exposure looks like,” he said drily. “I'm guessing there's two because of dimension-time-travel nonsense.”

“probably.”

Another gesture from Sans drifted the SOUL amalgamation closer to him, hovering it above plain grass instead of Sirius's chest. Almost lazily, he set the hearts to spinning and studied how the black mass shifted. There was a long pause as he looked it over.

“ok, bad news and good news. good news is i can get rid of the stuff.”

“I'm guessing the bad news has to do with that.”

The skeleton shrugged. “the bad news may or may not be bad… it might hurt.”

“That doesn't sound too bad…” Sirius narrowed his eyes, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

“well…”

Ah. There is was.

“so by 'might' i mean 'nearly guaranteed' and by 'hurt' i mean 'SOUL-rendingly painful'. temporary, of course. and there is a slight chance you won't even feel anything. like a 0.001% chance, optimistically speaking.”

Sirius was obviously not pleased by this.

Drops of the inky residue leaked and fell, usually disintegrating into nothingness before hitting the ground. A few hit the grass, sucking out its color and shriveling the plant to ash. Staring at the dripping stain, his expression hardened.

“Get me a stick.”

“you kinda lost me there,” Sans said, cocking his head in a mixture of confusion and interest. Still, he flicked his wrist and snapped off a tree branch about as thick as a finger and as long as his forearm.

Sirius brushed off the comment and gave the stick an experimental bite.

“…uh, you don't look like a dog anymore.”

The wizard rolled his eyes and quipped, “It's so I won't bite my own tongue off, smart arse,” before shoving the stick back in to his mouth with a grimace. He steeled himself, and then nodded his permission to Sans.

Sans took a deep breath—lungs or no, it helped—and began delicately waving his fingers as if conducting a silent orchestra. Thin strands of cyan stretched from each fingertip, crossed the short distance, and painlessly pierced through the larger heart. Now with access to the dark mass, he began to darken the ends of his threads into a rich blue color to coat it with, careful to keep the layer of magic as thin as he could. When it accidentally brushed against the outer SOUL, Sirius winced violently with a sharp hiss.
It would be painful, then.

The skeleton directed his blue magic with all the finesse he had gained over years and years and reset after reset of practice, carefully wrapping up every speck of the residue. He regarded his work with a keen eye (so to speak).

At length, Sans asked, “remember that pain just now?”

“Un-hun,” grunted Sirius with a twitch.

“would you prefer that pain drawn out for quite a while, or pain a magnitude or so greater all at once?”

Silence.

Sirius's eyes were wide as he gnawed on his stick, thinking about this choice between two evils. Neither seemed particularly less evil, but... at least one would end fast. “Schekond,” he managed to spit out.

With a grimace, Sans nodded.

“ok.”

He turned his boney hand, palm open to the ground, and shoved down.

The stain was ripped from the double heart. It was torn and scattered and vanished.

There might have been screaming. Sirius couldn't tell. He couldn't hear anything but burning pain and starbursts of screeching white noise. Wood, he tasted. Wood and copper—blood. He had blood. It burned in his veins. It burned outside of his veins, somewhere floating above him, beating. Freezing fire stabbed him from those burning distant veins. Was he—?

He was.

He wasn't.

He burned. Froze.

Woke up. Numb.

“Oh,” he said, but his voice came out as a gravely croak.

Sans looked like he was a split second away from doing something, hands jittery in that way that clearly means he didn't know what to do with them. After seeing Sirius's bleary, half-open eyes looking at him, however, he quickly stilled himself. “right, the stick was a good idea.”

“Thi-nk?” His voice was snarky, despite the fact that he had to force the word out through his aching throat and past the stick. He wrenched his jaw open, teeth pulling from deep bite-marks with jolting pain, and spat the abused branch to the side. It had cut his gums, he noticed. A few swallows and deep breaths had him feeling much more in order.

They sat in silence for a while. Sirius took the chance to cautiously wriggle his fingers, pleasantly surprised to find not even the barest trace of pain. It seems the only things that still hurt were his teeth and his throat.

“How... long?”
“well, about a second's worth of obvious agony, then maybe two minutes still as the grave. scared
me to death.”

“As a… skeleton,” Sirius managed between breaths, “aren't you… already… dead?”

“do i look dead to you?”

Sirius gave him a blank look.

Sans looked down at himself, shrugged, and decided to change the subject. “your SOUL lined
itself up once the goop was gone. that's probably a good thing.”

Another minute of companionable silence and the recumbent wizard decided it was high time to sit
up. “Merlin… It better.”

“plus i got a great read on your magic signature.”

“Great.” He pushed himself to his feet, standing a bit unsteadily. “Now we can… get to London…
and I can get some… breakfast.”

“priorities, man.”

“Breakfast is… always top priority. I know a place.” He paused, thinking, and added, “I'm pretty
sure I have enough… money to get you something, too. You'll like it.”

Sirius gestured for Sans to come closer. The skeleton grabbed his wrist, catching on fast: since he
didn't know how to get to London, Sirius would need play guide again.

Then again, he really couldn't let that chance pass him by. “but sirius…”

That cheeky wink, Sirius thought. He could guess where this was headed.

“i don't think i'll have the stomach for it.”

Even though he was expecting it, he couldn't help but chuckle. A peculiar tingling sensation swept
up his arm from where Sans held his wrist, the odd feeling he had begun to associate with his
friend's teleportation magic, and quickly focused on a rarely used Apparition point near the café he
wanted to visit.

He did, however, spare enough of a thought to say simply: “Food, Rattles. Food. When was the last
time I ate?”

Sans just grinned.

They vanished between blinks, leaving the clearing empty save for the half-awake Hippogriff now
staring at the spot where they had stood with interest and slight confusion.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Happy New Year!
You know, Sans and Sirius *do* get along rather well. I wonder if that has anything to do with Sirius being able to turn into a dog. ’Cause I mean everyone knows about dogs and bones, amiright?
You can change the dog into a wizard, but you can't take the dog out of the wizard.
…That didn't make much sense, did it.

Thanks to everyone who has left a comment!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Sirius eagerly pulled a poorly disguised Sans by the elbow, all but dragging him along behind him. The man was too impatient to even let the skeleton check over his slight wardrobe change. Sans was still wearing his hoodie and shorts—hood pulled low over his face and hands stuffed deep in his pockets—so the only difference was his socks. More to the point: he had socks now. The wizard had lent him his knee socks: even if Sirius had pants to lend instead of his prison uniform, they would look ridiculously large on the small skeleton. So yes, Sans got his socks. Tugging them as far up as they could go had the socks covering all of his lower leg and half of his femur.

Sans knew being short had its advantages. This wasn't one he had considered.

As for Sirius, he had gone with a surprisingly effective garden-supplies make-over. Meaning he had soaked his hair in a convenient sprinkler, slicked it down, and tied it back with a strip of cloth he had tucked away for some reason. Patting and shaking any obvious dirt from his clothes cleaned them up remarkably well, and even the tell-tale prison stripes were hard to notice when he buttoned up his long jacket all the way. Standing up straight and slapping a winning smile on his face had him looking completely different.

Still, the pair of them probably looked ridiculous.

"you think this place'll even let us in, lookin' like this?"

"Oh, sure. They take all sorts," Sirius chimed back, his reassurance doing pretty much the exact opposite.

"oh, good," said Sans, distinctly sarcastic. He had to trot to keep up with the human's longer strides, but he was sick of his elbow being used as a leash. "sounds real enticing."

An abrupt stop had the short skeleton tripping over his feet for a second, but he recovered quickly. Sirius was pointing across the street with a distinct 'ta-da' gesture and a pleased smile. "There it is! Just like I remember it."

The café didn't look very large from the outside, just a small door framed by two windows trimmed neatly in sky-blue paint. In front of each window stood a faded purple table with a few chairs, though at the moment nobody was sitting there. Various fliers and posters were hung up behind the glass. As they crossed the street, Sans became aware of a warm sugar smell; there, peeking out from behind the signage in the windows, were all sorts of baked goods on display.

A small bell chimed when Sirius pushed the door open. The wizard took a deep, satisfied breath—sniff, more like—and remarked, "You know, I literally have no idea when the last time I ate was."

"before, during, or after this time travel nonsense?"
"All of the above," he answered. "Though I suppose it doesn't matter now that I'm only minutes away from fresh bread and breakfast."

Despite his eager rush to get food, Sirius did spend a few minutes perusing the selections and figuring out what he could or couldn't afford with his meager sum of muggle money. He eventually settled on a simple breakfast of tea with a blueberry muffin and some fruits, even convincing Sans to choose a plain muffin for himself. While he didn't quite understand how a skeleton was able to eat, he did know that they could and, as such, probably should. There was a small seating area in the back, so they claimed a table in the corner and sat down.

Sirius wasted no time scarfing down a few strawberries, followed by taking a huge bite of his muffin. "Flavor, how I missed you." He wasn't drooling, but it was borderline. "If only I had enough to buy some sausage. Or steak."

Ah, there it goes. Sans passed him a napkin, careful to keep his boney hand mostly hidden in his jacket sleeve.

"Thanks, Rattles."

"no big," he replied with a shrug, nibbling on his food. "so how're we doing this? you just point me in the right direction or are you tagging along the whole way through?"

"I'm coming with you."

"sure that's a good idea?"

"No," was the immediate answer, followed by, "but I'm going all the same."

Clearly this was what Sans had expected, since he didn't even bother arguing further. "okay. just drive me close enough to find it and i know a couple shortcuts we can take."

"What are you…" Sirius began, confused for a moment. Then he realized what Sans was playing at: not saying anything straight-out just in case they were overheard. "Assuming the roads are still open, right?"

"i don't see why they wouldn't be."

The wizard couldn't help but chuckle. "True. They were open by the school, after all."

"really?" Inferring that Hogwarts apparently had magic set up to prevent such travel, Sans was a bit surprised. "there's usually obstructions or something, then? i didn't even notice."

Sirius, who had been shoving more fruit into his face with reckless abandon, almost choked on a laugh. "You didn't even—Merlin, the school has some of the strongest wards in the world and you just didn't notice." A few more hacking laugh-coughs and he sheepishly corrected, "And by 'strong wards' I meant 'terrible traffic'. Naturally."

"naturally," Sans repeated, grin as snarky as ever even when shadowed by his hood.

Having both finished his muffin and eaten all the fruits, Sirius shut his eyes and sat back in his chair with a happy sigh. "Never before has such a simple breakfast tasted so good. Phew… we can set out after I'm done digesting."

"whenever. just don't go food-coma on me, 'k?"
The wizard pretended to fall asleep, fake snore and all, but had one eye cracked open and a goofy
smile on his face. He went to relax again, but then he noticed that Sans had barely touched his own
muffin. Rather than waste time wondering how Sans could eat food in the first place—having
asked about it before and received absolutely unhelpful responses, as to be expected—Sirius
instead said, "Are you not going to... oh wait, let me guess. 'You can't stomach it', right?"

With a shrug, Sans replied, "that was my gut response, honestly. what can i say, you just know me
too well. do you want the rest of this?" He gestured to his muffin, basically untouched, and got a
eager nod in response.

"Do I!" Sirius snatched up the pastry, but paused before gobbling it up. A touch concerned, he tore
it in two and passed half back. "Eat the food, Sans."

"not 'rattles' this time?" At his friend's insistent expression, Sans sighed. "fine, fine, i got it."

After making sure the skeleton ate his half of the muffin, Sirius finished his portion and stood up.
"Right. Time to get down to business."

"right."

It was a quick trip back to the Apparition point, uneventful if you didn't count Sirius's occasional
quiet, eager, and just-this-side-of-maniacal chuckles, and once safely within its concealing wards
the first thing Sans did was yank off the socks and chuck them back at Sirius. The wizard's attempt
at catching them failed and they hit his chest with a disappointing paff sound.

"those were a pain to deal with. thanks an' all, but next time we need to sneak out in public let's be
a bit better prepared."

Sirius stuffed the socks into one of his coat pockets with a shrug. "I thought it was clever."

"then please, you walk around in socks several sizes too large and then imagine doing that but also
you have no skin and it's vital to keep them from slipping down."

"Ooh..."

"yeah. clever, not really fun."

There was a pause as Sirius thought to himself, and then he decided: "We're going to need to get
you some pants. At least until I work out a seamless glamour for you."

"a what?" Sans asked, interested.

"A glamour, but that's Future-Sirius's problem." He smirked and grabbed Sans's shoulder,
destination selected, and a shiver of foreign magic raced through his limb. "Current-Sirius has a
ministry to invade!"

The skeleton rocked back on his feet, shooting his friend a grin of his own. "i think the word you're
looking for is 'infiltrate'. you're not takin' us straight to center stage, are ya? that'd be a show
stopper."

"For who?"

Sans's grin became a touch sharper. "depends how it plays out, don'tcha think?"

And silently, without flash or fanfare, Sans let the shortcut complete and the pair vanished.
Magic saturated the air.

To a degree, at least. There was certainly more magical energy drifting around here than at the café, though not as much as he had felt at the school the night before. Compared to the Underground, however… Sans wasn't overly impressed. He spread his senses, following to the higher concentrations of energy down past his feet, through the building they were standing on, and into the ground.

"rooftop, huh?"

"All the better to lurk from, Rattles."

Indeed, Sirius had led them to the rooftop of an old office building. Had they appeared a meter to the left they would have been stranded mid-air four stories above unforgiving ground. Sans peered over the edge, even as he kept scanning the area. It was a boring, empty street lined by off-white buildings, the occasional piece of stray garbage, and a few posters. Plus a single, glaringly red telephone booth right at the halfway point. Even without the magical bubble it sat in, it really stood out.

Of course he wasn't here to stare at telephone booths, no matter how red, so he again turned his attention to the mass of magic below. It was a confusing jumble of magical signatures: what it lacked in power it apparently made up for in sheer variety. Each witch, wizard, spell, and ward had subtle nuances that were blurring together. Trying to find just one in that mess was like trying to find a needle in a haystack when every straw in the pile had been painted shades of silver.

In other words, for Sans, not that difficult. He'd had plenty of practice detecting SOULs that basically didn't even exist while surrounded by much more potent magical energies, after all.

A few seconds later and he zeroed in on a faintly familiar signature. It had a ting of something distinctly Sirius, but otherwise reminded him a bit of the forested area around Snowdin: magic without direction. Which made sense, he supposed, given that a wand was a tool and wouldn't have any direction till somebody pointed it in one.

"i think i found your magic stick," said Sans, ignoring his friend's huffed complaint about terminology. With a thought he cast out a shortcut, locking on to the signature, and took a sneak-peek at the area on the other end. "they must've chucked it in an old closet or something, since the room doesn't look like it gets all that much use."

"How do you know that?"

"checking through a shortcut, duh."

Sirius may or may not have immediately begun considering the benefits of long-distance scouting when laying traps and pranks. "So then… is the coast clear?"

Sans refocused his attention on the distant storage room and, after a moment's consideration, nodded. "seems so, though…" he paused and double checked, "i think there might be a dormant detection thingamajig somewhere in there."
"A 'thingamajig', Rattles?"

"hey, it's a perfectly cromulent word." It looked like the wizard was going to remark further on his choice of words, so Sans added, "oh, and there's magical doohickey on whatever it's in."

"Well, I've never really been much for planning—"

"i can tell."

He continued on as if Sans hadn't said anything: "—so let's get in there and play by ear."

With a shrug, the short skeleton grabbed his foolhardy friend's elbow. "alright, but i don't have ears."

Their surroundings changed instantly, abruptly flicking from one to the next, and Sirius promptly fell flat on his face. Doing so was a feat in and of itself, given that the storage closet was just barely large enough to pull it off. It was dark and chock full of crooked shelves, dusty crates, and precariously stacked boxes. Sans, not at all bothered by the dark given that he never really had eyes to begin with, found the bin in question: turns out it was a small chest with an arched lid, looking for all the world like a miniature treasure chest. He gave it an experimental shake. It certainly sounded like it was full of sticks, so that's a good sign. Sirius groaned, sat up, and delicately pinched at his nose.

"I was not prepared for that." His voice was distinctly more nasal than usual as he continued nursing his injured schnoz. "Ooh, this stings."

"bee reasonable, sirius. does it really bug you that much?"

That earned a snort and a rapid topic change. "Have you found it yet?"

Sans gave the chest another shake for emphasis and replied, "yep, think so. see the doohickey i mentioned?" He pointed out the rather large engraved blob of silver covering where the latch would be.

"It's dark. I see an indistinct rectangle where I assume your hands are." Mostly blind, Sirius reached forward and slapped his hand into the box with more force than intended, smacking it out of Sans's hands. It hit the ground with a distinctly anticlimactic thud. It was, however, enough to spook his disoriented friend. The skeleton watched a now startled and blind Sirius jerk back into a shelf, setting off an impromptu chain reaction of chaos so hilariously perfect he had to wonder if it was all set up.

When Sirius knocked into the first shelf, it dislodged a box from the top that dropped onto one end of a long wrapped-up something. The wrapped-up something then catapulted a bundle of scrolls over their heads which smashed through some stacked crates on the other side. Of course as the crates fell they pulled down a long wire strung up between the rest of the shelves; he wasn't sure what the wire would have been for if not collapsing all the shelves, which it did tidily. The bottom of the shelves hit any boxes that had been stored on the ground around them, crushing and scattering whatever they had held.

So finally, once the dust settled and Sans (taking pity on his friend) summoned a ball of blue-white magic bright enough to see by, the shelves and crates and boxes were strewn about on the floor in a rough loop. There was way more crap now, though that was probably because it had lost any semblance of order it ha— wait... yes, he counted the shelves again and found that there were definitely more than there had been. Interesting.
"why spawn in another shelf? is it purely to mess with us?" Sans mused, also spotting several new boxes.

It was then he noticed that, well, a lot of things had been added. From just a quick glance, new additions included confetti, a large wheel of cheese, flying origami dragons, more confetti, a wardrobe, several decorated eggs of various sizes, brightly colored streamers, and what sounded like a particularly insistent duck. Plus pretty much everything on one half had been splattered with technicolor paint. Running a quick scan to find the chest with Sirius's wand again—under a fresh pile of snow—he noticed that the detection thingamajig from earlier had been activated. And, apparently, it had something to do with the duck. Weird, but still not a good sign.

Sitting down on the chest, Sans blinked at the now completely spastic closet space. He broadly gestured at it with both arms, expression openly incredulous as he turned to his friend. "what even are wizards, sirius."

Sirius, stuck back on the ground, was distracted by a paper dragon currently attempting to maul his knee. "This looks like something we…" He paused and poked it thoughtfully. "You know what, actually… Did they store my wand in with old Marauder things?! How the did they even get some of this stuff?"

"so this is your fault, then. the marauders were your little school prankster gang right?" He looked around at the chaotic mess in new light, appreciating the prank potential of most of what he saw (though the cheese still confused him). "you've mentioned them before."

"Perpetrators of some of the best wizarding nonsense, yes," Sirius replied, smiling fondly as he thought back to some of his favorite years. "James and I brought our pranks with us when we became Aurors, of course. To be honest, I'm just surprised they ended up in storage and not the rubbish bin."

Before the skeleton could ask anything else or return attention to the still-closed chest, the door burst open, spilling a rather sizable pile of glitter into the hallway. Standing framed in the warmer light from outside was an elderly wizard with fluffy white hair. He wore a well-worn gray suit and a bow tie patterned with planets: an interesting choice that Sans couldn't help but like and Sirius completely missed. They stared at each other, a silent standoff, and it really wasn't clear who was more surprised: finder or findees.

After a moment, a voice down the hall called, "So what was it?"

Sans was a split second from getting them the heck out of dodge.

But then the old man calmly turned away and answered whoever it was with a smooth, bold-faced lie. "Nothing. One of the higher shelves broke and spilled a slew of marbles."

"Oh Merlin, seriously?"

(Sans couldn't help but snort.)

"Yes. It looks like they triggered quite a few other old spells when they fell." He crossed his arms and regarded the escaped convict and skeleton curiously, though his voice retained the vaguely disgruntled tone he had adopted for his fib. "It might take me a while to tidy up."

"Well, nothing for it, I suppose," the voice said, and the subject was dropped.

They continued to stare at each other. Then the old man stepped inside the closet, letting the door click shut behind him. Sirius wasn't doing much besides looking confused and, in fact, couldn't
figure out how to react. Since everyone but him seemed content to just size each other up, Sans took it upon himself to figure out what was going on.

"who're you?"

The older wizard ignored him for a moment in favor of finding a decently large crate to sit on. He carefully lowered himself onto it, one wrinkled hand pressing on his aching lower back as he settled himself. A relaxed smile creased laugh lines around his eyes and he lightly quipped, "It is polite to introduce yourself before asking another's name, is it not? Mine happens to be Mark Perkins."

"i'm sans." He had tossed a mental coin and decided to see how it all plays out. "sans the skeleton."

"A pleasure to meet you then, Sans. I can't say I've met a skeleton before; Inferi tend not to be much for speaking, obviously."

"…'inferi'?"

"Re-animated corpses," Perkins supplied with a dismissive shrug, "but clearly you're not some mindless zombie. And we're getting off topic regardless."

"Alright, I'm pretty darn confused right now. Are you confused?" Sirius addressed Sans, seemingly having finally regained his ability to speak. "I'm a supposed criminal wanted for murder and treachery, and you're literally nothing but bones… And he's just going to sit there?"

Perkins sat back slightly, amused. "Indeed I shall. You don't work in the government for over seventy years and not figure out how bloody backwards it all is: especially if you survived two Wizarding and World Wars."

"But—"

"I'm an old man, Sirius Black," he cut in, voice soft but determined. "I'd like to think I can tell an honest man from a liar."

Sirius looked pretty unconvinced, crossing his arms defensively and shifting around on the floor enough to put himself slightly between Perkins and Sans. He wanted to believe the elderly wizard, but given the circumstances…

"well hey," said Sans with a shrug, "he has a cool bow tie. can't go wrong using that as a basis for trust."

And, I mean, can't really argue with that.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own *Harry Potter* or *Undertale*.

In case you're curious, Perkins is actually in Harry Potter. He works under Arthur Weasley in the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office at the Ministry of Magic. Plus he's the guy who gave the Weasleys their bigger-on-the-inside tent, so I figure he must be a pretty cool guy.
Anyway, despite an unexpected encounter, it seems their visit is going pretty well. Also, bow ties are completely trustworthy trustworthiness indicators. Trust me.

Thanks to everyone who has commented so far! You all are freakin’ awesome. It's a fact.
Don't forget that this fanfiction updates on the first of every month, so no worries!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Nice to Meet You. Again.

Chapter Summary

So they find what they're looking for and, just to be nice, clean up some of the mess they made in the process. Some.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For all the nonsense still going on around them, what with the confetti still drifting about and the quacking duck, the atmosphere in the closet was pretty tense. One of the paper dragons had selected Perkins's head as a perch, but despite the silliness of a miniature origami Norwegian Ridgeback bedding down in the older man's fluffy white hair, Sirius remained intently focused on him as a possible threat.

Sans just shrugged. "Anyway we're here for Sirius's glorified twig. Pretty sure it's in—" he tapped the lid of the chest he was still sitting on for emphasis "—this box here."

The elderly wizard raised one eyebrow at the less-than-flattering name for a wand, but otherwise didn't remark on it. He leaned forward slightly, squinting at what he could see of the chest in question. It did look rather familiar. "Yes, that's probably the right one."

"It's got a magic doohickey," said Sans, attempting to prompt more info.

"A harmless enough charm, if I remember correctly." Perkins drew his wand from his sleeve, a simple 12-inch branch of warm orangish-brown wood. "I should be able to—"

Sirius sprang to his feet, clearly disturbed that a wand had been drawn by a potential enemy when he could not do the same in turn. Bitingly, he hissed an accusing, "What are you doing!?"

Perkins was taken aback by the sudden shift from antsy to pretty much outright hostile and froze in place; he had never known Sirius could be so jumpy. He carefully lowered his wand so that it wasn't pointed at any of them, the gesture calm and placating.

"Sirius," he began, and when the younger man stiffened at his familiar manner, Perkins reluctantly changed it. "Mr. Black, then. I assure you my only intent is to remove the locking charm."

He was still semi-crouched, tense and untrusting, until Sans smacked his shoulder. "No. Bad Sirius."

Sirius stammered a few somewhat unintelligible arguments, none of which got very far before he was cut off.

"No. Bad." Then, with a shrug, Sans reassuringly added, "Besides, I can get us out long before he tries anything, if he even tries anything. I'd like to think I'm pretty good at noticing those things."

As the skeleton stood up, scooching the chest forward with one slippered foot, Perkins kept his wand down so as not to startle Sirius again. Instead, he cocked his head curiously. "On that point, how did you get in without anyone noticing?" He paused briefly. "Except, apparently, that duck."
The persistent duck had, in fact, been quacking up a storm the entire time since appearing in the closet. Now, finally acknowledged by all three people in the room, it gave a distinctly satisfied nod and shut up. Quite the odd detection thingamajig, using a duck.

"trade secret. or, in other words: magic. you guys are wizards, shouldn't you know how this works?"

"You're a bit of a cheat, Rattles," said Sirius, unable to resist a chuckle at Sans's exasperated tone.

Having noticed that the supposedly crazed criminal was acting significantly less crazed, Perkins took a chance and asked, "Ah, Mr. Black… If I may?" He pointed to the locked box with his empty hand.

Sirius hesitated for a long minute, first considering everyone and everything in the room before going quiet and staring off into space. It was true that he was conflicted, not sure if Perkins could be trusted… but then again if the old man really did mean harm, Sirius's objection wouldn't be worth much anyway. Plus it's not as if he had actually done anything aggressive since entering the closet. Finally, he gave a slow nod and took a small step back.

With a slight smile, the elderly wizard swished his wand at the chest with a muttered incantation and a stream of silver light zapped the metallic-looking blob keeping it closed. The seal appeared to glow slightly, squirming and shifting until it reformed into the shape of an unlocked padlock. Sans flipped back the lid, revealing a large variety of duplicate wands: there were some unique ones, but most seemed to have at least one copy.

"Ah, the false wands stash," Sirius recalled, momentarily forgetting his anxiety as he scooted around to reach into the chest. He shuffled through the bundles of some-magical-some-normal sticks, trying to find his own. "Can't believe they tossed real wands, mine included, in with this lot."

Perkins carefully put his own wand away. "I suppose if you must find a place to store old wands you don't want being used, a box full of fakes is rather ideal."

"why did you even have these?"

"They're perfect for hilarious pranks, of course," Sirius said, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. "And they made for a convenient alibi! After all, you couldn't have cast a spell since your wand was clearly right there in plain sight."

After watching his friend paw through the mostly fake wands—pun intended—Sans finally stepped forward and just kicked the chest over, spilling them across the floor. Ignoring Sirius's indignant squawk and Perkins's confused, questioning look, he closed his eye sockets to focus on finding the right stick. A minute later he twitched a finger and his blue magic lifted Sirius's wand out of the jumble.

With the flourish of a performing magician finishing his trick, the skeleton grinned and asked, "is this your wand?"

Sirius snatched it with a noise that might as well have been an excited bark. "Why didn't I just have you do that from the start?" he asked himself, smiling. Then, with a flick of his newly re-acquired wand, he cleaned himself up more than a garden hose could ever hope to.

"spiffy." Sans poked at one of the other real wands with his foot, and then picked it up to examine more closely. It had a magical core made of something from a magical creature—or so he had been
told. As such he had expected its essence to feel more monster-like than the faint hint it actually had. Then again, the feathered creature Sirius had ridden hadn't felt particularly monster-y either, so... whatever. He could feel a shimmer of magic infused with the stick: it somewhat reminded him of a small SOUL, though shaped a bit like a spiraling funnel.

"I suppose you have no need for a wand?" Perkins watched the skeleton turn the stick over in his hands, left eye-light perhaps a shade more blue than the right. He shrugged. "yep. it's pretty neat though."

"Why don't you give it a wave?"

"Yeah, Rattles!" Sirius chimed in, animosity towards to older man completely discarded. "Try it out!"

Sans considered for a moment, looking doubtful—though of what, the two wizards weren't sure. Then, with a shrug that still seemed a bit hesitant, he slipped some of his magic into the wand and swished it through the air. Nothing happened. Nothing new, anyway. The giant, out-of-place wheel of cheese he had been aiming at floated into the air as expected, but the wand might as well have not been there at all. "well that was disappointing."

"What do you—"

The elderly wizard's question was interrupted by a loud crack as a fracture ran down the length of the wand Sans was holding, splitting it in two. An instant later and it violently shattered, falling to pieces with an eerily echoing sound the skeleton was all too familiar with.

"that," Sans began, nonchalantly dusting off his hands, "was more what i expected."

Sirius picked up the largest piece—barely two centimeters long—and considered it for a moment before flicking it aside. "Excuse me, but why would you have expected that?"

Given that both wizards were staring intently at him, clearly wanting an explanation (Perkins had even pulled out a notebook and a pencil to write down anything interesting), Sans couldn't help but answer as best he could. "apparently wands are pseudo-sentient, and destroying SOULs results in them bursting, so... boom." He shrugged. "plus my magic typically only goes through things by destroying them."

"What do you mean by 'destroying souls'?'" Perkins asked, somewhat concerned by the implication. "SOULs'," corrected Sans.

Sirius just rolled his eyes and, when the older wizard turned to him in confusion, chuckled slightly. "Yeah, I don't really hear a difference either. From what I can tell it's basically the same thing."

It looked like he had further questions, but a muffled voice calling from outside drew everyone's attention. "What was that noise? Is everything all right in there?"

"Yes, Arthur," Perkins replied evenly. "Just knocked over another box is all."

"Do you need any help tidying up?"

"No—no, I'm quite alright." He turned and added to Sirius in a whisper, "I expect you'll help, given you're the reason for this mess."
The prankster snorted. "It's Sans's fault, standing around in the dark."

"technically you're the one who made this stuff in the first place, so really it's on you."

"Ganging up on me now, are we?" At the expressions he got in return, Sirius halfheartedly grumbled, "Okay, fine."

As Sirius went about magicking away the triggered pranks and their collateral damage, Perkins returned his attention to Sans. "I'm still curious about this… soul thing, but I suppose our time now is limited. Do you need help getting out of here safely?"

"how do you think we got in?"

"You weren't particularly forthcoming when I asked earlier, but I figured I'd make an offer regardless." The elderly wizard glanced at the door, considering. "Seeing as I didn't notice anyone else so much as look at this closet for several hours, I haven't the faintest how you got in here."

"like i said, it was—"

"—Magic," Sirius finished, earning a disgruntled look in return. By now most of the mess had been fixed up, shoved back into boxes, or vanished altogether. Key word being 'most', since there was quite a bit still strewn about and all of the shelves were still in shambles. "And we shall magic our way out, as well."

"Then do you need somewhere to stay? I'd have to apologize to Arthur, since I promised to lend it to him this summer, but I do have a tent I could give you."

Waving off the suggestion, Sirius explained, "No, I've already got a plan for that."

Perkins smiled, and, tone a bit put out, said, "It really seems like you don't need my help at all right now." Then a moment later, apparently having had some idea, he nodded decisively and pulled out another notebook. "Well, at least I can do one thing. Before you 'magic yourselves away', I ask that you take this."

Both notebooks—the one he had been writing in earlier and the one Sirius was now curiously eyeing—looked to be identical. The covers were made of a plain brown, soft leather and had a thin strap that could be used to wrap it closed. Sans watched over his friend's shoulder (more like his elbow, given his relative height) as he unwound and opened it. To his surprise, the first page had a few tidy scribbles about wands and souls and other such things that he was pretty sure had been written in the other booklet. A tentative scan of the item revealed that it was enchanted, but in a weirdly displaced way: a strange echo-y sort of magic that felt almost like it was in two places at once.

Quickly flipping through the rest of the pages and finding them all blank, Sirius looked back up. "Why are you carrying around both of them?"

"I only bought them today," Perkins said with a shrug. "Though I suppose that worked out nicely in the end."

"some sorta… pair thing?" Sans guessed. "what are they?"

"They're some sort of pair thing, obviously."

"very helpful, wise-guy."
Pulling out his copy and writing something down, Perkins said simply, "See for yourself."

Having felt the magic… reverberate?— something like that, Sans snatched the notebook from Sirius and flipped back to the beginning. There was a new note written at the top of the second page.

"'just in case',' he read aloud, "just in case of what?"

"I'm no Seer, of course, so there's no way I could know. Just… keep me in mind if you get up to more mischief than you can manage."

Sirius abruptly spun his attention back to the older wizard, a peculiar expression on his face. He slowly brought one hand up and held it in front of Perkins's mouth. Then he lowered it. Raised it again. Lowered it. Perkins cocked an eyebrow, clearly wondering what he was trying to do.

"Ah! Mark Perkins!"

The eyebrow inched higher. "Yes, that is my name."

"Yeah, but I know you!" Sirius exclaimed, and he smiled broadly. "You always said stuff like that whenever you caught James and me setting up pranks around the office. I think you worked in the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Department, right? Just down the hall!"

Perkins, glad that Sirius hadn't entirely forgotten him, replied, "Still do, actually."

"and you're only remembering this now?" Sans asked, somewhat incredulous. "how thick's your skull? we've been talking with the guy for at least half an hour."

"In my defense he used to have a beard. And it's been well over fourteen years."

"It's only been twelve years, Mr. Black."

He blinked and, after shooting a conspiratorial look at Sans, amended, "Right, yeah. My mistake. And you can call me Sirius." Awkwardly, he quietly added, "Sorry about the whole forgot-who-you-were thing."

Perkins, while still curious, chose to largely drop that strange slip-up and just smiled. "Regardless, two more years or no, I appreciate that you haven't forgotten me completely. Hopefully you see now why I wasn't too keen on criminalizing you."

"Well." Sirius's tone had an edge to it: more resentful now than he had been the first time around, having actually had time to think over what had happened to him. "That didn't stop a lot of people."

"make a list."

"What?"

"a list. make a list of the ones who matter and make sure to… i dunno, mess with 'em." Sans shrugged. "messing with people helps deal with stuff. especially if those people are the source of that stuff."

"I like the way you think, Rattles."

"it's just the barebones of an idea, but i'm sure you can flesh it out."

Perkins looked torn between slapping the skeleton for his puns or chuckling at them, but in the end
he just sighed. "Of course he can. I'd imagine just introducing them to you would count as 'messing' with them."

Sirius nodded thoughtfully. "True, but then I—"

"hold that thought," Sans cut in, glancing toward the door. "I'd say it's time we make like a heart and beat it."

Just as he finished his sentence, the voice from outside—Sans couldn't recall the name Perkins had used—spoke up again. "This blasted glitter has it in for me I swear!"

Having just cleaned up some of that glitter, Sirius knew that what was strewn about wasn't the usual arts n' crafts variety. Normal glitter is annoying enough to deal with, which obviously meant it was a prime choice for prank enhancements. Honestly, charming the stuff to multiply if left alone (and multiply much faster if someone tries the Banishing Charm for a quick fix) was unavoidable. Adding color changing paint that spreads to whatever it touches… well, that was just common sense.

Just as the door swung open, Sans decided it was high time to leave. He didn't even bother to actually grab Sirius, though he did give a quick nod goodbye to Perkins. The elderly wizard had less than half a second to be confused before both skeleton and convict vanished. He hadn't even blinked; they were simply gone.

"That answers my earlier question… but at the same time raises several more," he murmured to himself, tucking away his half of the paired notebooks and calmly turning to his vibrantly decorated boss. Taking in the colorful spectacle, he observed, "That certainly seems to be the case, Arthur."

Arthur, in turn, was staring at the absolute nonsense in the closet, though much cleaner than it had been, thanks to Sirius's efforts. "Merlin's beard, those must've been impressive marbles to cause this mess. How did this happen?"

"I'm not sure." Perkins looked back at the place where Sirius and Sans had been standing, smiling. "I'm really not sure."

Sirius barely caught a glimpse of Arthur Weasley, covered in colors and sparkling glitter, before being whisked away. The clearing, once he refocused, was much the same as it had been when they left, if a bit brighter and with less fog drifting about.

He wasn't too interested in the scenery, however, as he was more fascinated by the trick his skeletal friend just pulled. "How did you do that?"

"you mean the thing i've already done, what—" Sans paused for a second, recounting, "nine, maybe ten times now?"

"Yes! I mean no! I mean… Merlin's pants, Rattles, I'm just… How did you take me along?" he asked, finally getting his mouth to cooperate. Honestly, Sirius had never taken himself as the stunned-speechless type, but after meeting Sans apparently all bets were off. "Unless I've been numb for the past few minutes you didn't touch me at all."
"i didn't."

The wizard simply stared, waiting for further explanation, and when none was forthcoming he complained, "The question, Sans. Answer the question."

"but i did? it was just another one of my shortcuts." For the record, Sans was actually a bit confused as to what the issue was. Their latest teleportation venture was, to him, the same as all the others. Physical contact never really played a part since it's all in the magic, though it did make it slightly easier to track and follow Sirius's lead. That considered, he went ahead and said so: "oh, and i don't need touch to send you through one, if that was the issue."

"You don't…" Sirius let the thought drift away, sighed, shrugged, and said, "Well, I did say you were a bit of a cheat, didn't I."

The Hippogriff—who had been startled by their sudden reappearance and until this point had been silently watching—snorted as if in agreement. Buckbeak could feel the strange lazy power that drifted about the short skeleton more keenly than any wizard. Any magical creature would. Grinning at both man and beast, Sans sat down on the grass with an 'oh well, too bad' sort of attitude. After a moment Sirius joined him on the ground. Then he abruptly stood back up, slapping his forehead in happy exasperation.

"What am I doing!" he exclaimed, drawing his reclaimed wand with a flourish. A quick wave and a pair of comfortable looking chairs appeared, one of which Sirius plopped himself down on.

"really settling in, aren't ya? weren't we going to go to some creepy old house?"

Bringing up his family home made Sirius scowl slightly. "Right, to Grimmauld Place."

"woah wait." Sans held out a hand, emphasizing his need for a pause. "you're telling me your creepy house is literally a grim old place?!!"

Slowly, Sirius turned to look at his friend. His expression made it clear.

"Merlin's beard."

He had never realized.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

In case you're curious, Perkins's wand is made of beech wood. Beech wands are best suited to tolerant individuals rich in understanding and experience. So, you know, he's just the type to keep an open mind when stumbling on a talking skeleton and an old co-worker/friend/escapee in an old storage room. No big.

Thanks for everyone who has commented! It's hard to believe that this little story I'm writing has picked up so many fans! I mean, as of posting this chapter it has almost 1,500 hits here and over on Fanfiction there's over 18,000 views! I just—WOW! You guys are all awesome!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
In Review

Chapter Summary

So, let's take a look back to the night of the escape from Hogwarts and some of the questions the escapees left behind. Yeah… still not many answers.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Now then," Dumbledore began, walking away from the now locked hospital wing with a sigh. It had taken quite a while to separate himself from the antsy Minister and his flock of Aurors, but now that he had he could finally get the full story. "Do explain what happened, Severus."

There was no response.

He glanced back to find that his companion had stopped in his tracks, a peculiar look on his face. "Severus?"

The man in question refocused, and Dumbledore was surprised to realize the expression had been one of deep… curiosity. Fascination. "I do not believe I can do it justice with words alone."

"Indeed? Then it must have been quite something."

"Professor, trust me when I say this," Snape said, a sharp smirk in his eyes if not on his lips. "That is an understatement."

"Then I shall look forward to viewing it myself."

They resumed their trip toward the headmaster's office, pace leisurely but with a certain edge that made it clear they were not simply wandering about the castle. It was a quiet walk, though heavy with questions and answers left unsaid. Even the gargoyle guardian seemed to pick up on the atmosphere, shifting from one stone claw to the other almost anxiously as they approached and eagerly leaping aside once Dumbledore gave his password. The spiral staircase carried them swiftly up.

Fawkes trilled a soft greeting from his perch and the various magical baubles made small ambient noises as usual, but Snape, for one, was too focused to indulge even slight distractions. Without paying any mind to the occasional small puffs of smoke or the soft snores of sleeping portraits, the gloomy professor went straight to the small cabinet off to the side of the office. Inside was a carved stone pedestal, and on it, resting in its perfectly shaped indent, was a shallow metal bowl. The Pensieve—for that's what the bowl was, of course—held a small amount of a shifting silvery liquid, though sometimes it had an almost smoke-like quality. Faint images, old memories left from previous uses, drifted into view before quickly vanishing into indistinct shapes. Snape drew his wand, setting it at his temple in a well-practiced gesture, and when he pulled it away a long thread of swirling mist trailed after it. He set it into the basin. The memory swirled into focus, the lakeside scene colored shades of gray and built from smoke floating suspended in the liquid.
For a long minute Snape simply stared at the small blurry figure standing on the shore.

Dumbledore watched his professor's unusual behavior, considering, then turned his own attention to the Pensieve. "I assume this individual had something to do with tonight's events?"

"Another understatement, to be sure," Snape sneered, though his eyes remained pinned to the shifting image. "He happens to be the source."

The headmaster's eyes twinkled with curiosity, his mind catching the tint of confusion that colored his professor's tone. "Then shall we have a look, Severus?"

He said nothing more, giving silent permission with a gesture toward the silver bowl. Dumbledore nodded and, after a brief pause to collect himself, he dove into the swirling memory. Snape followed shortly after.

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The figure was short and wore muggle clothes; it was hard to see much else in the darkness.

Not particularly imposing.

Then there was an ominous chime, flickering blue-gold light, and a deep sense of power.

A short phrase. Threatening, but uttered with an absolute calm.

White, a rush of noise.

Magic.

And, when the light faded, the figure was nowhere to be seen.

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Dumbledore leaned back, staring at the silvery liquid in the Pensieve and not sure what to say.

"Well then," Snape said, voice slightly smug. "Perhaps now you see what I meant."

The headmaster nodded slowly, walking over to his chair and settling himself on it. Propping his elbows on the desk before him and pressing his hands together in thought, he closed his eyes. "Indeed."

For several minutes neither of them moved—Snape still by the Pensieve, staring into it, and Dumbledore at his desk—and the silence was thick with things not yet said. One of the assorted baubles quietly puffed a glittering plume of pink smoke. Another gave a soft chime. The one on his desk, silver when it shouldn't be, remained motionless. Dumbledore picked it up.

"Two mysteries in one night," he remarked, turning the small sphere over in his hands. "How curious."
"Professor?" Snape asked, one sharp eyebrow raised in question.

The old wizard sighed heavily. "I am afraid to say that something has happened to the Prophesy."

"Explain." It was not a request.

"This," Dumbledore held up the trinket, "was charmed to monitor its condition. As of a few hours ago, that charm was severed. In fact, it's almost as if…"

He hesitated.

"As if what?"

For a long moment he didn't respond, simply staring into the middle distance. "It's as if… the charm no longer has a target."

Snape froze. His mind blitzed through options, reasons, justifications, scenarios, anything that could explain it in a different way. Thinking that the Prophesy is gone is nothing but preposterous! After all of the damage it caused, what it had taken, that everything it had sent spinning into motion was now—! That Lily had… that her son…

He sat down, unsteady. "The spell is still there?"

Dumbledore solemnly nodded, setting down the small sphere on the desk between them. "So you see, we have a vanished prophesy and, to be frank, a worryingly powerful individual of unknown origin."

"And you think these could be connected?"

The ancient wizard nodded slowly. "For good or ill, something tells me that they are."

"What does that mean?"

Dumbledore let out a long breath, tired and worried. "Severus… I honestly don't know."

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Harry was, to be honest, a bit concerned at how familiar the ceiling of the Hospital Wing had become to him. He lay on one of the many beds, head pillowed on his arms as he stared thoughtfully up at the depressingly familiar stonework. Both of his friends were already asleep, so that left him to his staring.

"Sirius Black," he whispered to himself, wondering at how quickly the name had changed to him. The night had passed him by too quickly, for all that it had happened twice.

Of course, he wasn't the only one feeling swamped by everything. Ron had been bursting with questions once they came back, and while they did their best to answer as many as possible, many of those answers just raised more questions. They talked and wondered and shared their confusion for hours before eventually Hermione had to cut off the conversation—yes, Hermione was the one to stop the theories, that's how tired she was.

Now, Hermione and Ron long since asleep, he just lay there. Staring up at the familiar ceiling.
Tired, yes. That's an understatement, even: he's beyond exhausted. But too much had happened… too much had torn at his heart in the past hours to let his mind rest.

A lot had changed, and honestly he appreciated the chance to finally try and sort it all out in his head.

Most of the evening could be sorted away nicely: questions and worries from the first time through having been answered and resolved during the second. He knew that it had been him standing on the other side of the lake, and his stag Patronus had pushed back the Dementors. He knew that Buckbeak had survived. He knew Sirius was safe.

But there were other things.

A strange shadow he had glimpsed on the other side of the lake before Hermione insisted they move on, for example. The frighteningly powerful blast of white that had all but blinded them after they had left. How Sirius had escaped the makeshift prison cell. Whoever had been in there with him in the first place.

And all of those things seemed to round back on the same person.

The stranger—a man, at least based on the pitch of his voice—remained a mystery. Harry knew that he had somehow magicked Sirius all the way to the top of the Astronomy Tower in an instant with nobody noticing. Thinking back to the lake and the Dementor attack, he wondered if perhaps the strange shadow he had noticed on the opposite shore could have been him as well.

Probably.

And if that odd shadow had been the stranger, had the stranger been the source of the blindingly white light as well? It's not like Harry had any other explanations for that, so might as well blame him.

It was weird how he hadn't been there earlier, at least as far as Harry could tell; there had been no sign of anybody else in the Shrieking Shack. Harry would have thought that, since catching Peter Pettigrew had been the goal, everyone involved would have been there. Plus, the Daily Prophet had never mentioned the possibility of Sirius having an accomplice.

Thus whoever it was remained thoroughly unknown. Hermione had basically summed up everything they knew when she somewhat grumpily pointed out, "He's short." Even that was only a guess, though, based on how Sirius had looked down when speaking to him. The stranger could just as easily have been sitting or crouching.

"At least he's probably on our side," Harry quietly mused. Sure, Hermione had been a bit skeptical at that claim, but really. "Why else would he help?"

Besides, Sirius clearly trusted him. Given everything the man had undoubtedly been through in the past twelve years, that had to be worth something. He rolled over and closed his eyes, shutting out the too-frequently-stared-at ceiling. His brain was still tumbling through thoughts almost faster than he acknowledged them, but slowly it began to calm down. Harry focused on his breathing, making it deep and steady, trying to set aside his anxieties.

For now, at least, he knew Sirius was safe.

"I'll stay in contact, though!" Sirius's voice had grown faint as he flew farther away. "Don't worry!"
"Don't worry," Harry repeated softly to himself, voice muffled by his pillow.

He knew Sirius was safe, and he knew that he had at least one person on his side. It would have to be enough.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Surprise! In what very well may be the most half-baked April Fool's Day prank, here's the chapter one day early! As such, it's not even April Fool's Day yet. You know, maybe it would have been a better prank to post it late, but I'm sure you'll appreciate this more.
So yes, here's the chapter early. Hope you enjoy, and sorry that it's shorter than usual (February was an… interesting month).

Man, our protagonists really get down to business when they get down to business:
die, but not really, escape the void, time-travel on accident, get caught, escape Hogwarts, nap (obviously), infiltrate Ministry, make new old friends, escape… I mean slow down guys!

As a random note, 'Pettigrew' really wants to be corrected to 'pettifogger'. A pettifogger is, apparently, someone who runs a petty, shifty, or unethical law business. That's neat, I guess.

Thanks again for all the comments! I read each and every one of them, and they're all great motivators. And don't worry, all you people clamoring for updates; though there's a month between updates, an update will come.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
The Buck Stops Here

Chapter Summary

And they're off, heading to the incredibly quaint Number 12 Grimmauld Place.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Sirius was staring at the bird-creature. Or perhaps horse-creature. The bird-horse-creature… Regardless, Sirius was staring at them. Sans, who had taken the second of the almost hilariously out-of-place chairs and was now curled up rather comfortably, watched his friend scratch at his head in thought.

"don't strain yourself, man."

"What?"

"i dunno. looked to me like you were planning something," he said. "that's a lot of effort for ya."

The wizard huffed. "Oh ha-ha, Rattles. I'll have you know my carelessness isn't for lack of skill; it's a willful disregard of caution."

"because that's so much better," Sans chuckled.

Joking aside, Sirius was trying to sort something out. Namely what should be done about Buckbeak. The Hippogriff could stay at Grimmauld Place—he relished the idea of once again housing the beast in his late mother's old room—but there were a few problems with that plan. After all, the last time Buckbeak had lived there an entire Order had been available to bring in feed and so on. When it had just been them on the run, both had resorted to scavenging. In short, he didn't know if he could care for himself, Sans, and an entire Hippogriff all on his lonesome.

"Perhaps…” He hesitated, not wanting to finish the thought. "Perhaps it would be best if we set Buckbeak free."

Buckbeak immediately interrupted with a head shake and a snort that clearly meant 'no way'. Leveling a stare at his human companion, the Hippogriff's feathered face expressed as much disagreement as a beak allowed.

"well, that's a no-go."

Sirius sighed and, palming one hand over his scruffy face, confessed, "It's just… I know how bad it was: being cooped up in that place. If I don't want to go, then why would I make anyone else?"

"it seems to me like you don't have much say in the matter," Sans observed, and Buckbeak nodded in agreement. "he's comin' feather or not you want him to."

"But—"

"didn't you say you were good at winging it?"
The wizard made a choked noise that sounded suspiciously like an aborted laugh. "Merlin—Rattles, I am always impressed by the speed you launch those puns."

"oh, but this is just the beak-ing. I have a jay-gantic number of j—"

Sensing that Sans could and would continue should he allow it, Sirius interrupted swiftly. "Joking aside, we really do need to figure this out. I just don't have the means to take care of him."

At that, Buckbeak huffed and rose gracefully to his feet. The creature carefully stepped over to Sirius, looming over him where he sat in his chair. For a moment everything in the clearing fell still. Then, delicately, the Hippogriff bumped his beak into the wizard's forehead. It felt…somewhat like a reprimand.

Sans openly chuckled. "that's the expression of someone who plans on doing the caring for."

"Oh? And how'd you figure that?"

The skeleton was silent for a moment before finally waving it off with a relaxed excuse. "plenty of monsters can't or just don't speak well. you get pretty good at reading people."

Sirius's skepticism was plain on his own face, but he dropped the issue. He could guess easily enough that living repeats of days or weeks—months or years—would lead anyone to pay attention to the slightest details, keeping a lookout for any small change. Instead he leaned into his chair with a half-hearted grumble. "I'll just have to figure something out, won't I."

It was clearly rhetorical, but Buckbeak answered with a low whistle.

"Fantastic."

"lighten up, ex-fuzz-butt." Sans paused and sat up, looking over at his friend thoughtfully. "man, i need a better nickname for you."

"Padfoot," said Sirius, smiling softly in reminiscence. "Or Snuffles. I've gone by both."

"because of the dog thing?"

"Because of the 'dog thing', yes," he confirmed.

The skeleton considered for a moment, closing his eye sockets in thought, then he stuffed his hands in his pockets and leaned back in his chair. "paddy-paws."

"Excuse me?"

"i have selected a suitable nickname: paddy-paws."

Sirius might've tried to smack him if doing so didn't involve getting out of his seat. He settled with a tepid glare—there wasn't much heat in it. "I think I prefer Padfoot."

"that's the thing about nicknames, paddy-paws," said Sans with a shrug, a grin, and his usual sass. "you don't get to choose yours."

The wizard scoffed, vaguely annoyed but also inexplicably pleased to earn a new silly name. "I gave you two perfectly good options."

"but they weren't my 'perfectly good options', were they?"
"They were. They were your options. I just said that, Rattles."

Sans dramatically pointed finger guns into the air, both hands for added effect, though the image was lessened overall by his completely flop-ish posture in the chair. "i make my own options, paddy-paws!"

Pushing himself up and out of his seat, Sirius gave his friend a peeved look which quickly changed to mischievous. He drew his wand with a quick dramatic flourish and, waving it with more unnecessary fanciness, vanished both chairs. Sans, however, stayed in place.

Floating. Eye sockets still shut and just as relaxed as ever.

"Oh come on!" Sirius complained with a laugh. "That's not fair!"

Opening one socket so that he was winking at the prankster, Sans simply grinned more broadly than ever. The soft blue light surrounding him brightened ever so slightly as he stretched mid-air: an action done as much for show as it was for comfort. "cheat, remember?"

"Doesn't mean I can't complain about it!"

"true nuff. so why'd you vanish the comfy chairs? i really chair-ished the chance to relax." Sans released his magic, dropping himself to the ground with a light thud.

Sirius was staring at the Hippogriff again. "We have to get going eventually."

"will this trip be on me, or do you have a different idea?"

"Well," he replied, humor seeping into his tone, "how do you feel about a little flight?"

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Turns out that Sans isn't very keen on flying.

Not flying high, anyway.

So here he was, an uncomfortably long distance from the ground and well out of his comfort zone. This is regardless of the facts that if he did fall he could teleport to safety or, geeze, just fly himself with blue magic. He clutched at the Hippogriff's strange feather-hair, trying both to be gentle and still hold on as tight as possible.

To make things a bit worse for his anxiety, Sirius had cloaked the three of them with a particularly powerful Disillusionment charm of his own design. Like all charms of its type, it caused a sort of almost-invisibility—causing them to take on the appearance of their surroundings. However, his version expanded on that quite literally: the edges extending beyond the target and gradually fading to transparent, making the border between hider and hiding place all the more indistinct. From the ground, with only the overcast sky behind them, any irregular blurring would be completely unnoticeable.

And from Sans position, it gave a disconcertingly uncertain perception of what was keeping him aloft. If it wasn't for his extra sense of the magic clouding around them, he would be more than just a little shaky.
"We're pretty much right above the place," Sirius called over his shoulder, wind snatching at his words. "Could you check for any wizards nearby?"

"eh? uhm, y-yeah sure." Turning his attention down and out, he felt around for any magic that seemed wizard-y. There was a dense collection of spells or wards on one of the buildings—their destination, presumably—and it made it hard to get a clear read on the inside. Sans was pretty sure there were no wizards though, inside or out.

"look's all good. not even many normal people about."

"Fantastic." Something about the way he said it suggested that he wasn't too happy that they didn't have an excuse to just leave, but he plowed on. "Hold on tight."

Landing wasn't fun, but at least it was fast: even if it being fast was part of why it wasn't fun. But no matter. Buckbeak touched down with remarkable grace, keeping his two passengers in mind. It was a gloomy looking street, all gray stone. Some of the buildings even had cracked windows: one of them was missing altogether, replaced by a large sheet of cardboard and some packaging tape. Dead bushes out front of every house and rubbish piles rotting in the gutter completed the overall dreary scene.

Well, that wasn't quite true. Some of the house fronts were decorated as nicely as possible—flowers struggled in tiny gardens and two doors had an almost-new coat of paint. It helped to brighten the place up, but not by much. There was just a darker feeling Sans couldn't shake, something looming over the street. It was quiet, and the clacking of the Hippogriff's claws and hooves against the street cobbles seemed exceptionally loud.

Sirius slid down from the beast's back with ease, much to Sans's passive annoyance; during his attempt he had only managed a painless, magic-assisted fall. Catching his balance again, Sans turned his attention to the row of houses. It was easy to guess which was the one his friend was so dreading. The place was practically a beacon of magic compared to the rest of them, though the magic itself had a bitter, dark edge.

"Also it looked really freakin' creepy."

Pointing at the obvious choice, he somewhat rhetorically asked, "that one, amiright?"

The not-actually-a-criminal-but-definitely-an-escapee nodded. He was giving the gloomy townhouse a careful look, thoughtfully tapping his wand into his palm. However, he was not making any move to go inside.

"so… are we gonna actually go in, or…?"

"Yes, yes, we will. I just need to—" Sirius paused, wand stopped mid-swing and pointing off in some random direction. "Alright, I think I can pull it off."

"no stripping, please."

"Oh, shut it. You know what I mean."

Sans tilted his skull in what could be considered a slight nod and, with a glance to the wand and then the building, said, "i'm assuming you mean a spell of some sort."

The wizard took two and a half steps back, checked his new angle, then took another four back and one step to the left. He gestured for Sans to move in front of him. "Quite right. I've never cast a Fidelius before, but I know the theory and I've seen it done. Hopefully you being a skeleton won't
make any difference."

Gamely moving into position as directed, the skeleton in question stuffed his hands into his pockets and shut his eye sockets, boney brow somehow slightly creased with thought. "fidelius'…" he repeated, as if tasting the word. "that's got something to do with trust, right? latin, i think."

"Probably. It's a defensive spell: hides information away in a single person's soul. If that information is a place, it means nobody can find it unless told by the Secret Keeper."

"i'm guessing that would be me, in this case." At mention of souls and messing with them, Sans had uneasily opened his sockets again. His eye-lights were dim. Nobody knew better just how fragile his SOUL was (save perhaps the kiddo, and maybe—maybe, he never wanted to worry him—his brother), so it was natural that he'd be concerned.

Picking up on his unease, Sirius reassured, "I only bring up the skeleton thing because the charm's description says it's hidden inside a living person. But you are alive, so… not really an issue, is it?"

Apparently, while he did notice the emotion, Sirius hadn't quite got the reasoning correct.

"that's not why—" Sans sighed, "look, i've got a lot of tricks, but my SOUL's not the sturdiest thing around. this isn't gonna accidentally dust me, right?"

"I've never heard of it hurting anyone."

"your choice of emphasis is so comforting." His concern was more knee-jerk reaction than anything else—a deep urge to keep his SOUL to himself, safe and secret and unseen. The spell itself wasn't really all that big of an issue, even if it was damaging; he'd be careful to check any magic before letting it hit. He rested a hand on his sternum, directly over where his SOUL would manifest should he summon it forth.

Sirius stood silent, letting his friend come to a decision.

Another moment's consideration and the skeleton shrugged in acceptance—they really needed the security such a spell could provide, after all. "let's get this done with."

"Alright then."

Broad strokes with his wand sent whorls of multi-colored light spinning outward, not in any particular direction but out. The farther away the magical streaks reached, the more transparent they became before rapidly fading to invisible. As Sirius focused even further and carefully began the incantation—Sans heard his own name come up a few times—the center of the spiraling magic slowly meandered toward the waiting skeleton. And, detecting nothing dangerous in the spell, he let it wash over him.

It felt… remarkably familiar. In fact, it rather reminded him of a CHECK: reaching out through him and seeking for information. The only difference was that when it found what it was looking for, it gently snatched it away.

The curving waves of magic turned, changing direction from outward to inward, and Sans could see the far edge of the fading spiral draw closer. It spun faster and faster the closer it came, until eventually it appeared as if he was standing on a small circle of blurring colors. Then the light began creeping up his bones, and the magic of the spell easily joined with his own SOUL.

A strange feeling, to be sure.
"Consilium custodiet te, et secretum fideliter servaverunt!" Sirius finished with a flourish, and the last thin strings of magic connecting him to the spell snapped. He wavered on his feet and Sans was quick to move to his side.

"woah, paddy-paws. steady there." Short as he was, Sans wasn't able to help much when it came to keeping Sirius fully upright, so he settled with helping him sit down. "how's it feel?"

"Like I just ran a lap around the Quidditch pitch." Rubbing at his chest, Sirius took a deep breath. "Or maybe like I flew around it, except upside down. Fifty times. What was I even doing?"

"casting a fidelius."

Brow creased slightly, he asked, "Where?"

"welp, i guess it worked." Sans looked back at the townhouse in question: still grim and old but now with a new, subtle layer of magic draped over the premises. Then—addressing both Sirius and Buckbeak, just to be sure—he stated, "since you've clearly forgotten, our new secret hideout is at number 12 grimmauld place."

Sirius blinked at him and then stared at the buildings for a long moment, likely seeing some change to it that Sans did not. Sans did, however, feel the magic twitch slightly when he said those words and let them both in on the secret. It was as if a small portion of it had slipped away from him.

After the realization of the location had passed, Sirius nodded firmly. "Right. Let's get inside then. Buckbeak can fly overtop and land in the courtyard."

The Hippogriff did just that, leaping into a short flight and disappearing over the roof. Despite the conviction in his voice, Sirius paused for a moment to gather his determination. It was pretty clear that he was not—in any way, shape, or form—looking forward to his stay in his childhood home. If, of course, a house that looked more suited to a horror story could be referred to as a home at all.

They walked up the front steps together, but Sirius opened the heavy wooden door alone. He tapped the cracking paint with his wand, sending out a pulse of magic keyed to the house, and a series of sounds from the inside clinked as whatever locks there were unlocked themselves.

It was dark inside, as to be expected, but Sans could see the place clearly even before Sirius lit up the tip of his wand.

Cobwebs, dust, and a general creepiness: that was his first impression of the interior. The street had been named well, at least with regards to this house. Though Sans had to wonder who would name a street like that in the first place. He doubted most people wanted to live in a place with a name that brought up images of all things dark, dirty, unsettling, and, well… grim. The colors were all dark and the decorations creepy. There was even what appeared to have once been some creature's leg serving as an umbrella stand, just sitting there in the entry way as if such a thing is completely normal.

A chandelier hanging overhead hinted that it had once been an ornate hallway, but age and neglect had done the place no favors. The wallpaper was peeling and faded, any pattern beyond unrecognizable. Several old paintings were hung up. All of them crookedly, and all of them so encrusted with grime that he couldn't make out what they were even paintings of. Sirius had mentioned that portraits could be enchanted to move in his world, but suffice to say that these particular pieces were not providing any evidence in support.

"Just as horrible as I remember," Sirius remarked, flicking his wand at the row of gas lamps on the wall and lighting them up.
"bit of a fixer-upper, that's for sure."

"We spent ages trying to clean the place up," he recalled, leading the way down the hall. "We never did manage it, but looking at it now we must have made more of a difference than I thought. Oh, thank Merlin she's closed up already."

"what?" Sans asked, though he would hazard a guess that Sirius was talking about the particularly large, moth-eaten curtains hanging ahead of them. There wasn't much else in the hall that could be closed, after all. The curtains were a bit to short to cover a door and he doubted there would be windows on the interior of the building, so it probably covered something hung on the wall: a portrait, probably.

Before Sirius could provide a definite answer, a sound like a sharp snap cut in and he was stopped short by the appearance of a spindly figure even shorter than Sans. The creature had a bulbous nose, bloodshot eyes, large bat-like ears, and wore nothing but a raggedy scrap of cloth that might have once been a pillowcase.

The wizard groaned in annoyance. "I had nearly forgotten about him."

"So he's come back, has he?" The house-elf (Sans was decently sure that was what the species was called) had a low and garbled voice, hard to understand as he murmured to himself. "But he's not wanted here, oh no. No. Kreacher doesn't think this great, noble house needs a useless, useless—"

Suddenly the creature realized Sirius wasn't standing there alone, catching sight of Sans still watching from behind. He stared at the short skeleton, eyes growing impossibly wide and ears folding back.

"uhm, sup?"

"MURDERER!" Kreacher screeched.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Ha-HA!
April Fool's, but for real this time! BAMBOOZLED!
Yes, what a great prank: post a bonus chapter early and pretend everything is done only to then post the actual chapter on schedule just as usual. And, as a bonus, it ends with a cliffhanger! I bet you're feeling real tricked right now. Such a great prank. Plus, as a super bonus, I drew short comic from this chapter! You can find it on my deviantART page (same username).
Link to comic: https://goo.gl/59ptnM
Thanks again to everyone who leaves a comment! You are all fantastic!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
There's some yelling, that's the exciting bit.

“excuse me?” Sans asked, understandably confused.

Sirius, however, ignored the screaming house-elf in favor of something else. He tensed, as if bracing himself for something.

The curtains they were standing near swept aside in a gust of unfelt force and something began shouting obscenities—though not curse words, technically, just generally cruel and horrible—as loudly as possible. Or at least, Sans hoped it was as loud as possible because, even without real ears, the noise was deafening.

“—DARE TO COME—”

The shrieking reached a new crescendo of crazed, proving Sans's hopes wrong. He couldn't see much of what was going on since Sirius had begun struggling to close the curtains and the curtains seemed to be fighting back. It didn't help that the large-eared creature had moved from shouting at Sans to actually flinging magic at him. The attacks were weak, batted aside with barely a thought, but they were distracting. There were maybe three full seconds of unbridled, noisy chaos before the short skeleton chose to do something about it. With a surge of magic, Sans froze Kreacher and aimed in the general direction of whatever had been behind the curtains. His magic whiffed through nothing but paint, canvas, and wood.

Kind of.

It felt weird, almost like feeling cloth snag on something unexpected. There wasn't a SOUL behind the curtains, but there was a rather dense enchantment. Blue magic catching magic still seemed to have the desired effect—regardless that Sans hadn't been aiming to freeze spellwork—and an abrupt silence descended. Sirius, who honestly hadn't been faring very well in his confrontation with the curtains, loosely let the heavy fabric fall as he curiously turned to his friend.

“huh.” Sans could see now that the horrible shrieking had, in fact, been coming from a painting. Proof positive (in a sense) that portraits could move and talk in this world. “i'm surprised that worked.”

The painting in question was of an insane old woman. A really insane old woman, if that hadn't been made clear by the screaming. Other than the crazy in her painted eyes, the first thing Sans noticed was that she wore a black cap with a small veil, covering up most of her filthy gray hair. In fact, her clothes looked like she had been painted immediately after a funeral, and the rest of her appearance made him wonder if perhaps the funeral in question had been her own. Her skin looked old, but more than that it looked sickly: wrinkly and yellow and basically the perfect example of what skin shouldn't look like. Even as a skeleton who had lived underground surrounded by
monsters, he knew that sort of coloring wasn't healthy on a human.

Though most of her painted self was kept immobile by Sans's blue magic, her eyes still darted back and forth furiously. For an instant after she spotted Sans and his skeletal-ness, something akin to shock, maybe even fear, flashed over her face. It was quickly replaced with a maniacal glare, however, as if doing so might see them both drop dead.

“lovely woman,” Sans remarked without a hint of sincerity.


The skeleton regarded the painting for another moment before shaking his head slowly. “my condolences.”

He felt both the painting and the house-elf tense indignantly at that—or at least that's what he imagined it was, he obviously wasn't well versed in how the portraits work. They clearly had more to say (shout, more like), but Sans wasn't too keen about letting them deafen him again.

“I know, right?” Sirius pulled the old curtains shut again, then turned to scowl at Kreacher. “It looks like he’s even worse than before. He's a horrible little bastard, but he never attacked anyone in the Order.”

Curious, and of course because he would need to eventually, Sans loosened his magical grip on the house-elf.

“MURDERER! FILTHY DISGUSTING MUR—”

Glad that he hadn't loosened his magical grip on the painted lady behind the curtain, Sans quickly clamped back down with a grimace. “i think he might have a vendetta on me for some reason.”

If looks could kill, Kreacher's glare would have dusted Sans right where he stood.

Sirius was staring at the house-elf with clear disdain, but at the same time there was an edge of uncertainty: there had been plenty of not-time in the void to get over the crap from his youth. After a moment he crouched in front of the short creature. “Look. Sans isn't a murderer, so—”

“at the very least, nobody i've killed has stayed dead. the one's that weren't already dead, i mean. ’cause…”

“Stop,” the wizard said, pinching the bridge of his nose and shooting his skeletal friend a look that promised he'd weasel the full story out of him eventually. “You're not really helping me on this.”

Sans just shrugged.

Faced with such nonchalant apathy, Sirius could do nothing but sigh and return his attention to the furious (and in his opinion still completely bonkers) house-elf. “Kreacher.” It might as well have been an insult, the way he said the name. “I'll be honest here: I hate you and you hate me. But criminal record or no, I am the current Lord of the House of Black. Sans is my guest and I won't stand for your insane attacks against him.”

Kreacher continued to glare, but something shifted in his eyes—a hint of unwilling acknowledgment and whole lot of confusion. When Sans dropped his containment again, the elf stayed silent for a long moment, shaking with barely contained anger, before viciously hissing, “Then Master wishes to protect one of Master Regulus's murderers.”
“well that's just patently false.”

“He's clearly delusional,” Sirius sighed, scrubbing a hand through his hair. “More than before, if that's even possible.”

Kreacher's eyes lit with rage and something deeper, and there was an absolute conviction drowning in sorrow that rang through his entire expression. Sans knew that look, had seen it in the mirror those rare times he couldn't push through his memories: the look of someone who had lost their whole world.

“Kreacher knows what he saw, Kreacher still sees it.” In his dreams, in his nightmares, Sans read from the house-elf's face and in his hoarse whispering voice that grew more desperate the more he said. “Master being dragged down and Master has commanded Kreacher to go so Kreacher must go but Master is DROWNING because of those HORRID DISGUSTING CORPSES AND—”

Sans cut him off sharply, not with magic but with a single look. His eye sockets were empty pools of black and, when he spoke, his tone was indisputable. “I did not kill him.”

He completely let go of the magic holding the house-elf.

Kreacher jerked as his balance was returned to his own control. One of his ears twitched. He took a step back, eyes never leaving the skeleton, but hidden in his boundless loathing was just the barest hint of consideration. Then there was a sound like a snap and the house-elf was gone.

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There wasn't really much else to see, really. It was interesting enough, to be sure, but it's a bit difficult to appreciate the cool bits when a lot of the other bits are actively… well, gnawing on your ankle. Sans was distracted from Sirius's tour around the house when he caught sight of a pair of small creatures with compound eyes, beetle-like wings, and twice as many limbs as expected trying to do just that, tiny jaws clicking uselessly against his lower leg bones.

“There are a lot of… things that made themselves at home here once the place was abandoned,” Sirius was saying, smacking away what appeared to be a swarm of living dust balls that had puffed out of the carpet as he led the way into the drawing room. “Most of them are fairly harmless, though, so it should be fine until we get to cleaning.”

“hmm,” Sans hummed distractedly, still curiously watching the little pests' attempts to bite him.

“Mind you, the furniture's probably loads more dangerous in comparison. Like that grandfather clock there, it—” He abruptly cut himself off.

“…yeah? it what?”

“Sans, you're being chewed on.”

The skeleton glanced back down at his feet, finding that another one had joined in. He hadn't noticed.

“yes,” he agreed. “that would seem to be the case, wouldn't it?”
Sirius looked torn between smacking himself, smacking his friend, or smacking the things currently gnawing on his friend. Something was going to be smacked, though, that's for sure.

It was Sans.

Of course the skeleton ducked under his swing, even if there wasn't any real force behind it. With a huff, Sirius repeated, “You're being chewed on. Do something about it!”

“What are these things anyway?” Sans asked, kicking his leg out to temporarily scatter the three creatures.

“Doxys. They're annoying little biters.” Sirius flicked out his wand and waved it in a quick, jagged motion. “Flipendo.”

The spell caught all three doxys and knocked them straight to the ground. Another swish conjured a net-like sack and bundled them all up in one fell swoop, then chucked the bag into the corner to deal with later. No longer distracted, Sans finally looked around the room they were standing in. It was, as Sirius may or may not have mentioned, a drawing room, which here means a room where guests can be received and entertained. So really it doesn't have much to do with drawing at all. Opposite a pair of tall windows, curtains drawn, was a very large tapestry of what appeared to be a family tree. There were also two old dusty sofas sat facing each other, a fireplace full of cold ash, and a couple of short end tables in the corners.

Oh, and a piano. Don't know how he missed it on the first glance. Seeing the musical instrument made Sans a bit nostalgic for his own trombone.

“Anyway, there's not really much to this room,” said Sirius, eyeing the large tapestry as if it had personally insulted him. “Just more dusty furniture.”

Sans, recalling the earlier warning that said dusty furniture might cause something significantly more dangerous than coughing, decided to check it out (or rather, CHECK it out) and swept his magical senses through the entire townhouse.

“Oh woah… that's a lot of magic stuff,” he observed, almost-sorta blinded by the density of the spellwork. Then he paused, catching something dark, darker, yet darker than any other signature he'd ever sensed, something that reminded him of a shattered red wraith with only broken remnants where there should be a SOUL. Even just barely brushing against it made his magic twitch away in a reflexive flinch. “Also, dafuq is that?”

Sirius turned to him in surprise, having never heard anything close to a curse from Sans (save for once, the one time Sans had finally opened up just a little and explained some of what he had been through). “What are you talking about?”

Zeroing in on the source, Sans found that it was a small glass case resting innocently on one of the tables. If he hadn't still had his senses aimed in that direction, he might have been inclined to think it was nothing of importance. As it was, however, he could all but see a black aura floating in the air around it.

“That!” he provided, pointing at the item in question. “You mentioned dark magic was something of a family speciality, but geeze.”

Following his friend's gesture, Sirius looked over to the glass case. Inside, resting on a velvet cushion, lay a golden locket, beautifully decorated with an ornate 'S' and inlaid with green gemstones. “It doesn't look that bad.”
Sans joined him in staring at the piece of jewelry. “Looks can be deceiving.”

“Well,” Sirius crossed his arms with a shrug, “we’ll just have to remember to get rid of it when we clean the place.”

The skeleton might have scowled at that, but said nothing else—it did belong to Sirius, after all. But he knew he would be avoiding this room for the foreseeable future.

At least until that thing was removed.

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It took a few days to get settled in, but some of the problems Sirius had been worried about turned out to be non-issues. Or at least, they became non-issues after Sans nagged Sirius into making Kreacher go out to purchase food and stuff. He was even working on getting the wizard to treat his house-elf less harshly, if not with a modicum of civility.

The level of violence Sirius flung at Kreacher wasn't too severe—never much worse than a hard shove, really—but still.

“you know,” Sans remarked, using that offhand manner that made it hard to tell how serious he was actually being, “i don't really mind name-calling.”

Glancing up from the stacks of books and loose pages littering the table—the two of them were hanging out in the library, as had become the norm—Sirius frowned. He had (literally) kicked Kreacher out a couple of minutes ago, given he didn't trust the little bastard nearly as far as he could throw him, so it was easy to guess that the skeleton might be going somewhere with this.

“...And?”

He shrugged. “just sayin', i mean, if i can be polite after an accusation of murder, i don't think it'd kill you to be a bit nicer.”

“I am impressed with that, by the way.” Sirius turned back to the table of research, flipped a few pages of the book he had open, scanned through a few paragraphs, then flipped back. “Merlin knows I couldn't deal with that.”

“despite having none, i have pretty thick skin.”

“So I've noticed. Both of those things.” The wizard grinned, leaning back in his chair.

Sans pushed himself out of the stack of pillows he had accrued on the floor—and really, Sirius didn't know why he'd chosen that over any of the several perfectly good chairs available—and strode up to the table. “just... keep it in mind, will ya? little dude's annoying, but that's not a great reason to punt him every time you make eye contact.”

Something in the skeleton's voice made Sirius look back up, eyes meeting unusually intense eye-lights. They held each other's gaze for a moment, and then: “Fine. I think I can handle that.”

“thanks. whatcha' working on, anyway?”

“Glad you asked!” His eyes lit with mischievous glee, dropping the somber air they had slipped
into as he shoved a few loose pages in Sans's direction. “I've been planning.”

“uh-huh.”

Sirius ignored the jokingly exaggerated disbelief on his skele-friend's boney face. “Yes, since we've basically time-traveled there's a lot to consider. I've been trying to write down everything I know happened, stuff Harry told me about his fourth year, and so on.” He suddenly frowned slightly. “It's been… frustratingly difficult.”

“difficult?” Sans asked. “you mean you're having memory troubles?”

“Not particularly, just annoyed with my past-self for not getting all the answers I need now.”

“well, hindsight's 20/20. i doubt you expected to be teleported two years into the past by a skeleton after pseudo-dying.”

The wizard nodded; obviously yes, he couldn't say he had.

“but,” Sans continued, gesturing to the selection of thick old books Sirius had laid out in front of him, “i doubt you need magical tomes to help jog your memory.”

Sirius tapped the pages he had messily pushed over earlier with a grin, advising, “Read them, Rattles. I didn't shove them at you to be ignored.”

So the skeleton did, flipping quickly through his friend's notes. They were filled with line after line of text written in Sirius's pointed cursive scrawl, sketches of what looked like runic formulas, and careful diagrams of something circular (along with plenty of significantly less careful doodles). While the handwriting did make it a bit difficult to make out some words, sometimes even full sentences, Sans had experience reading through messy research.

“is this that 'glamour' thing you mentioned back a few days ago?”

“That's right!” the wizard said, sounding smug. “It's taking longer than I'd like to modify the spell itself—make it stronger—but I've worked out how to anchor a weaker version to a bracelet you can wear on your upper arm.”

Sans almost wasn't prepared to catch the silver circlet of metal that was chucked at him. It was the bracelet in question, a band about as wide as two fingers and marked with a series of runes. He turned it over in his hands—metal clicking almost musically against bone—as he scanned its enchantments.

After taking a moment to appreciate the effort put into it, Sans set it down and remarked, “are you in some kinda hurry? you sound a bit rust.”

“Good one. Anyway, I figured you would want the option of disguise before I invite Rem—” Sirius paused, then abruptly stood up, the motion disturbing his research papers. “Merlin, wait, I need to go get that hyperactive owl for Ron!”

Sans blinked, eye sockets shuttering shut then open in what was clearly slight confusion. “ya lost me there, paddy-paws.”

Not answering quite yet, Sirius flicked out his wand and cast a quick spell to check what day it was. Suddenly looking a peculiar cross between a bit relieved and horribly stressed—Sans wasn't sure how that worked—the wizard haphazardly gathered up his notes and shoved them into messy stacks.
“We'll be cutting it close, but the train shouldn't leave Hogsmeade until 11 o'clock so we have some time.”

“explanation, please.”

“I suppose it wouldn't be that big of a deal if the feather ball doesn't get to them while they're on the train, but—”

“paddy-paws.”

Jerked from his rambling by Sans's demand for attention, Sirius refocused and explained, “Right. So first time through, after the whole Pettigrew fiasco, I felt a bit guilty that Ron—that's Harry's friend, if you don't recall—”

“i do.”

“Better with names than me, then.”

“stars, i should hope so,” Sans teasingly mocked; Sirius's skill at putting faces to names had been made abundantly clear with Perkins at the Ministry. Sure it had been a while, but the man had given them his full name. That should have at least sounded familiar to the wizard's brain, even if just in a déjà vu kind of way.

“Anyway,” continued Sirius, moving past that point since he couldn't disagree, “Pettigrew had been pretending to be his pet rat so that whole thing meant that Ron no longer had his pet. I felt a bit guilty, so I went and bought this crazy little fluff-owl off some guy in Knockturn Alley. It was mostly dumb luck, but the owl was alright and now I still owe Ron a new pet.”

Sans nodded, understanding the gist of things, before asking, “this 'knockturn alley'… it wouldn't happen to be where wizards make shady deals in the dark, would it?”

“Yeah, a lot of dark wizards and unsavory types hang around there. Not the best place.”

“and you've mentioned a 'diagon alley' before, too. is it perhaps… less than perpendicular?”

Sirius looked positively confused now, staring at his friend in a very no-clue-where-you-are-going-with-this manner. “Maybe? I guess the buildings aren't very straight.”

“wow.” The skeleton touched one hand to his forehead, staring blankly into the middle distance as he wrapped his non-existent brain around something. “just a step and a half away from asgore-level naming skill. i appreciate the puns but wow. is there a horizont alley somewhere as well?”

“Yes, but it doesn't have very many stores. Basically just a cross street of Diagon Alley that leads to Knockturn Alley.”

“i… i was being sarcastic, but i mean really?”

Waving off the pun name debate direction the conversation had turned toward, Sirius said, “I think I've already told you that wizards have peculiar naming sense. Right now I need to go re-find Pigwidgeon for Ron.”

“the owl was named 'pigwidgeon'?”

“Wasn't my idea.” He had reached the library door and was now just holding it open, waiting on Sans and looking antsy to get a move on. “Well? Are you coming?”
Sans was interested, of course, but first… Tapping the silver bracelet sitting on the table, he asked, “this works?”

“The glamour doesn't actually have much color yet, but you definitely won't look skeletal.”

The skeleton grinned, grabbing the bracelet and slipping it up his arm until it sat just above his elbow under his jacket; it cleverly tightened slightly so if wouldn't fall off.

“then let's go shopping.”

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

I didn't even need to make up 'Horizont Alley', it's already a thing. Kinda. It's a street at The Wizarding World of Harry Potter theme park. Mind, I'm not using the theme park for the layout, even if I might use names of streets or stores. But come on, there's no way I could pass up that chance.

This chapter and the next are sort of transitional, with not much terribly exciting happening. So we've hit a bit of a calm spot after the whole time-travel and escape stuff, hope ya don't hold it against me.

Thanks for all the comments! I read all of them and try to get around to replying eventually. Sometimes I can't think of anything to say, but I appreciate them all the same!

By the way, if you have suggestions for tags I should add to thins story, that would be a huge help. As you can tell, it's pretty sorely lacking on that front. Because I suck at coming up with categories. Thanks in advance!

In unrelated news, I'm going to take this chance to plug another story which I began posting shortly after this chapter was first published. It's a Naruto one with an OC lead, so if you're interested in that sorta thing go ahead an check it out. Here's the description for you curious few:

"Axel Brandt is a highly intelligent but overall normal guy. He lives a normal life, has a normal engineering job, has normal friends, so on and so forth. But then he died… or not. Displaced and still very much alive, now he's found himself in a distinctly abnormal situation. Ninjas are not something he wants to deal with."

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Knockturn Alley was, to be generous, a bleak, creepy place. The cobbled street and side streets were all poorly lit with dreary gray buildings blocking out most daylight, and there was more trash than grout between the stones. Everything smelt of mildew, poison, shady deals, and dark magic. Wizards and witches that ventured through the alley did so quietly, sneakily, as if they wanted nobody to notice or remember their passage.

For good reason, since often these wizards and witches were there shopping for things of... questionable legality.

This is why the pair casually chatting and trotting down the alley's cobbled street right now were so peculiar.

The taller of the two wizards had pale brown hair, wavy locks peeking out from under a hilariously too-large pointed hat. He had an easy smile, unconcerned that he was passing stores selling everything from human bones to shrunken heads, giant black spiders to cursed jewelry. His funny hat, colorful robes, and carefree demeanor stood completely at odds with his surroundings.

And that hadn't even taken his odd companion into account.

A child in Knockturn Alley—maybe a Hogwarts first year at the oldest, and even then he was pretty short—was unheard of, at least so long as they weren't associated with a traditionally dark family. This one was so pale that it looked as if all of his color had been drained away, but it wasn't because he was afraid. Pure white hair framed a round face, a broad Cheshire grin, and a pair of clever black eyes. And there was something about his appearance as a whole that made him seem... different: more like he was a rare, ageless magical creature than a school age wizard. But that perception was then completely overshadowed by his far-too-big blue muggle hoodie, red plaid pajama pants (also too large), and pink slippers.

Wizards are known to be eccentric, but really.

The short one tripped over one of the long ends of his pants, barely managing to catch himself before face-planting on the cobbles. His friend watched with a raised eyebrow, though his smile only seemed to grow; especially when the kid began grumbling and trying to fold up the pant legs with minimal success.

"Remind me again why you've been wearing my old clothes, Sans?" he asked, a flick of his wand and a spell neatly solving the size problem.

"i spilled ketchup on my shorts yesterday," said the now-named Sans with a shrug. "haven't gotten
around to cleaning them."

He started to nod in understanding, large pointed hat flopping up and down, but then paused and glanced down at his companion in confusion. "How did you even get ketchup? I haven't seen any in the kitchen."

"oh i have my ways, paddy. i have my ways."

Paddy—what a weird name—rolled his eyes. "I'm sure you do."

Mr. Moribund, owner of a store by the same name, had seen all sorts walk down Knockturn Alley's grim streets: dark wizards and witches, vampires, half-breeds, deranged lunatics, and more. This pair stood out more than any of them. Returning to checking the locks and wards on his shop's front door, he shook his head: the stupid buggers would probably get themselves cursed, and good riddance.

"Hey! You there, with the grouchy face!"

Startled, Mr. Moribund turned back to the odd pair. The tall one, Paddy, waved to further catch his attention. Flabbergasted and somewhat annoyed, the shopkeeper asked, "Are you talking to me?"

"well yeah," replied the kid, voice sounding somewhat like he was chuckling to himself. "though i suppose a lotta people around here have grouchy faces, so i understand the confusion."

"Did you happen to be at The White Wyvern, say… I think it would be two nights ago now?" Paddy seemed to ignore the other man's wary countenance, charging right into asking questions.

"Who wants to know?"

The colorful wizard raised an eyebrow and crossed his arms. "Me. I asked, didn't I?"

"Then," Mr. Moribund scowled more than he already had been, "who are you, and why do you want to know?"

"cautious dude, ain't he."

"They all are," Paddy replied before answering Mr. Moribund with another question. "If you were, did you happen to notice a fellow there with a small, hyper scops owl? I want to buy it."

Mr. Moribund—who was, in fact, the fellow from the pub with a small, hyper scops owl and willing to sell—was becoming progressively more confused by the moment. This wizard knew that there had been someone at the pub two nights ago with an owl he didn't much want, but didn't know that that someone was the person he was talking to right now? Besides that, what kind of wizard goes to a pub in Knockturn Alley of all places to try an buy an owl?

"And if I did notice such a person?"

"I'd ask if you know where to find him. Like I said, I want to buy that owl if it's still available."

The shopkeeper considered. He had bought the owl with a few others, in hopes of using them for local deliveries. One in particular was far too energetic for his tastes, however, so he had been looking to get rid of it. Of course, if it was too energetic for him, it makes sense that none of the other regulars at The White Wyvern would be interested either.

This colorful crazy wizard, though…
"8 galleons."

"What? I'm not paying that much for information!"

"No." Regardless of how the man had known about the visit to the pub, it didn't change the fact that Mr. Moribund didn't want to keep the owl. He was a businessman, and in the end the how didn't matter nearly as much as the gold. "That's how much I want for the owl."

Paddy blinked. "Oh. Oh, perfect! That sounds good to me, assuming it's the right owl."

Shaking his head slightly—he had no idea what the man meant by 'right owl'—Mr. Moribund unlocked his store and went inside. He left the odd pair waiting at the entrance, not wanting to let such... light people into his shop.

"glad that's done." Sans poked the taller wizard's arm and winked. "it was a hoot getting to sightsee, but owl of this walking is tiring me out."

Yes, he certainly didn't want them anywhere near his merchandise.

Mr. Moribund was more than happy to leave the pair behind when he fetched the small bird from inside his shop. He was even happier to feel his wallet 8 galleons heavier and see all three of them out of his life. The kid waved goodbye with another Cheshire grin, and part of the shopkeeper thought it might have been purely to unnerve him.

It's more likely that the boy's just far to friendly. The whole lot of them, actually, owl included.

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Sans appreciated the discomfited twitch he received from the shopkeeper when he cheerily waved back as they walked away. It's the little things in life that make it a worthwhile: like low-key freaking out random dark wizards just by being nice.

They made their way back to Diagon Alley, leaving the darker shopping area behind—and yes, they did cross Horizont Alley, and Sans was still amazed that he had needed to explain to Sirius why he had burst into laughter the first time he had spotted the ironically crooked street sign. As they walked, the disguised skeleton peered curiously into the cage Sirius was being careful not to jostle; the little owl inside was being oddly silent. Sirius had said Pigwidgeon had been a tiny, energetic attention-seeker. Not right now, though. The bird was perched perfectly still, fluffed up as much as possible, and looking quite aloof.

It was an impressive show of fake confidence, but the poor owl was obviously (to Sans, at least) very dejected. Thus Sans decided that this sad, technically-not-yet-named Pigwidgeon needed to be informed of their plans.

"neat place," he remarked, stuffing his hands into his pockets. "gonna send birdie off to ron now or what?"

The owl seemed to deflate a little bit more, hearing that he was soon to be sent off yet again: that these new people wanted him just as much as the last.

"I still need to write a letter, so they don't send him right back thinking he's mine." There was a sad
hoot from the cage, so Sirius held it up to smile at the worried bird. "No need to get so puffed up, little feather ball. For all Ron's complaining, he really loved having you as his owl."

And now the owl was somewhat confused.

Sans waved in the direction of an ice cream parlor they had passed by earlier, though the motion was more of an indistinct shove because he didn't bother to take his hands from his pockets. "wanna grab some unhealthy grub and write up your note?"

"I'd say yes, but I don't have any quill or parchment."

"you can't just… magic them into existence?"

"No," Sirius replied, shaking his head and then needing to re-adjust his large pointed hat. "Conjured items don't last very long, especially the farther it's taken from the conjurer."

The pale eyebrows of the skeleton's disguise quirked up, disappearing under his bangs. "so not like my bones and stuff, then. if i don't un-create them they just stick around." He smiled softly. "my bro actually kept a whole box of 'em in his room cus he was always so proud of his handiwork."

"That's… alright, not going to lie, but that's pretty adorable."

"he's the coolest," Sans agreed, voice sadly wistful, before reluctantly moving on. "anyway…"

With a lazy sigh, he pulled his hands from his pockets and made a strange grabbing motion at empty air—which suddenly wasn't empty at all. Sirius's favorite eagle-feather quill—easily recognized by the black stain along one side from a mishap when he'd charmed it to be self-inking—popped into existence. Sans handed it over to his surprised friend.

"all the paper on the table has scribbles on it," he said, as if that explained everything. It didn't, and Sirius kept staring. "where do you keep the blank ones?"

"I, uhm, the desk drawer in the corner?"

"you sound real sure there, paddy-paws." Another grab and Sans had a few sheets of parchment in hand.

Sirius stared between the newly-appeared items, his disguised friend, the owl, and back again before he swiftly turned and strode toward the ice cream shop. Despite having his hands full of birdcage and quill, he still managed to get his colorful robes to flare out dramatically when he gave the multi-dimensionally understood shrug of 'well, there's no use arguing with that'.

Acceptance, of course, didn't mean he wasn't going to question it. So, as they wound through the crowd of shoppers, Sirius only somewhat rhetorically asked, "Let me guess: was that more shortcut trickery?"

Sans sassily winked and, though he had been smiling already, smiled broadly; interestingly, the left edge of the lips on his glamour pulled a bit higher than the right, something his boney skull (while more flexible with expressions than logic would suggest) couldn't replicate. "i do have a very particular set of skills."

"More like a— a…" He floundered for a second before recalling a particularly suitable muggle phrase he'd heard before: "Like a veritable Swiss Army knife of skills, Rattles. And that's just based on what I've witnessed."
Of course Sans just kept right on grinning.

Giving up his argument, Sirius continued in a quieter tone, "We don't even know if you can even use wizarding magic yet, and if so that would be in addition to all your cheat skills!"

"...'yet'? have you been planning again, paddy-paws?"

"Well, yes." The wizard looked a bit sheepish, but defended himself by clarifying, "Of course the plan won't go anywhere if you can only use your magic so I wasn't going to bring it up quite yet."

They had reached their tasty treat destination—the sign read 'Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour'—and as such dropped that conversation in favor of more sugary things. A bell on the door tinkled when Sans pushed it open, a quiet and cheerful sound that suited the store's quiet and cheerful ambiance. It was a bit of an awkward time of day for ice cream, being before noon and the lunch rush, but there were still two witches and a wizard perusing the frozen selection, a father cleaning up his child's sticky sugar mess, and a nearly sickeningly affectionate couple sitting at the table by the front window. The owner watched them all from behind the counter, looking over his store with the air of someone perfectly content with his lot in life.

"Hello," the man greeted with a broad, toothy smile. "Welcome to my humble ice cream parlor, home of all your ice cream needs!" Then he paused, probably remembering something, before cryptically adding, "Within reason, of course."

"darn, and here i was hoping you could replace the icecaps with a more delicious alternative."

Fortescue's expression became one of exaggerated disappointment. "Such a shame that I cannot assist in such a noble endeavor. But though quantity on that scale is rather impossible, I can guarantee quality."

Indeed, it turned out that he could. After choosing their ice creams—some kind of pink flavor for Sirius, plain vanilla for Sans, and even an adorably tiny scoop of mouse flavor for the owl—they claimed a table near the back of the parlor. Pigwidgeon (though still not actually named such) had been let out of his cage and, after eating up his treat in record time, decided to perch on the closest horizontal bar: in this case that happened to be Sans's forearm. It didn't go quite as planned. The owl's small talons grabbed nothing but thin air, given that the glamour of human skin wasn't as solid as it appeared.

"woah there, little bird-bro." Swiftly caught in a dim blue glow, the owl was kept from careening straight past Sans's arm and directly into his ice cream. "hope that didn't ruffle your feathers too badly."

Sirius glanced briefly up from his third attempt at writing out a letter, smiling at the owl's dumbstruck look. After collecting his wits, the owl began regarding Sans's forearm with great confusion and distrust; tentatively nosing at the immaterial flesh with his beak. Taking a delicious bite of his vanilla ice cream (purposefully ignoring the curious poking from the owl), Sans then used his spoon to gesture inquiringly at the two crumpled paper balls—them being the remains of the previous two letters—and the in-progress third try.

With a sigh and a ruefully annoyed-at-himself smile, the wizard flopped the quill down on top of his rough draft. "I thought I was more eloquent than this."

Sans ate another spoonful of sugary goodness before replying, "you do realize you're writing a trio of kids, right? 'eloquence' is not really much of a requirement."
"Well, I mean, yes, but…" Sirius sighed again, trying to find the words to express himself. "This is Harry. My godson. And his friends, who just earlier this week thought I was some murderous traitor."

"yeah but you're not, so…?"

"But—"

"yeah but you're not," Sans repeated sternly. "it's as simple as that. you're you and should just write what ya wanna say to them."

Picking up his quill again, Sirius stared at it for a long moment: as if doing so would somehow reveal to him what to write. "What I want to say?"

"duh. what else would you put in a letter?"

A moment passed in silence, save for the occasional clink of spoon against dish. Sirius twirled his quill, thinking. Then he smiled, discarded his third letter attempt, and started in on a new sheet of parchment.

"I think I can do that."

=X=X=X=

_to Harry, Ron, and Hermione_

This is hopefully my last attempt at writing this letter (though if you're reading this in the first place, my hope came true so I don't know why I mentioned that at all but I'm getting off topic). My friend—yes, Hermione, the one who led my escape from Hogwarts—has advised me to just put down what I want to say, so here it goes.

Harry. You are my precious godson, my best friend's son, and I love you. Re-reading that makes me feel like an embarrassing sappy ninny, but they might as well be the truest thing I have ever written.

Okay, cheesy reaffirmations of affections aside, you three don't need to worry about me. I have a safe place to stay, and it's closer than you probably suspect. I didn't flee the country, if you thought I would. No, I've holed up in an old house at a location that cannot be disclosed, but you can bet as soon as I clear out most of the nastiness you'll get an invite. Again, don't worry: the place is warded to Azkaban and back so nobody we don't want finding us will.

Also I got my wand back, which means I can use magical means to disguise myself and hide! No need to worry, like I said. Anyway, the story of getting it back is a bit too long to send off in this brief letter, so suffice to say my friend and I snatched it right from under the MoM's overly-large schnoz.

Speaking of my friend, I'm sure you all have questions. I won't be answering them, since that's his business, but know that I trust him with my life. He's cool, bit peculiar, but all the better for it. You'll meet him eventually.

This letter is getting on the long side for this tiny owl to deliver (the bugger shot me a glare for that, think he can read?), guess I better wrap things up.

Ron, this owl is yours now. While technically Scabbers was never a rat to begin with, I still feel responsible for taking your pet from you (even if I don't regret it at all and I doubt he was much of a pet to begin with). Treat him well, he's a good bird for all that he's only the size of a pixie.

Hermione, sorry that I don't have anything to give you in exchange for the help. We'll work that out
later. Still, thanks: even I can tell you're the common sense of your trio. And Harry, I actually do have a present for you! One broom doesn't really make up for all the holidays and celebrations I missed, does it? (Do thank Crookshanks for that, he was quite helpful.) Anyway, do owl me so I can take advantage and easily send something back. I just need to find it first, but it should help loads with keeping us in contact. Stay safe.
—Sirius and rattles (hello, by the way)

=X=X=X=

The train was maybe half an hour from King's Cross Station when Harry became aware of an adorably small owl frantically clinging to the compartment's window by its beak, tiny talons too preoccupied holding a letter nearly as large as the owl itself. Once they managed to get it inside, the owl ended up on the floor between the three of them, apparently needing a long moment to recollect its wits.

"Who'd you reckon it's from?" Ron asked, trying to catch a glimpse of the folded parchment the owl was now sitting on.

Seemingly reminded of its delivery, the owl sort of… well, it tried to take off to carry the letter in Harry's direction, but instead the poor bird only managed a tired jump. It gave a small hoot, exhausted. Hermione picked it up and settled it on the chair between her and Crookshanks—the orange cat opened one eye from his nap to give the tiny owl a curious once-over, but in the end seemed alright with the arrangement—before passing the letter over to Harry.

The letter hadn't been sent in an envelope, which was pretty strange, but was instead just the parchment itself folded and held shut with a sticking charm. Harry popped it open, reading the last line to see who it was from.

"It's from Sirius!"

"Really?"

"Yeah!" Suddenly noticing that there was, in fact, a second name at the bottom written in tidy lowercase letters, Harry amended, "Oh, and somebody else apparently. Do you think…?"

Hermione made a gesture that suggested he should get on with it and just read the darn thing.

"Fine, fine."

The message wasn't too long, but that didn't stop it from raising far more questions than it answered, which kept with the theme set by that moonlit, time-travel-y night when everything had come to a head. Harry got the impression that it hadn't really been his godfather's intention, keeping the details tantalizingly mysterious, but more a side effect of keeping things brief.

Except the part about this 'Rattles' person, which he pretty obviously just wasn't going to clarify in a letter.

"Well." Hermione huffed, shaking her head with a sort of detached annoyance. "He certainly managed to tell us quite a bit while simultaneously being spectacularly vague."
Ron made a noise of agreement, mouth too full of candy to enunciate any words, before swallowing and leaning over to peer at the little owl. Feather's puffed up defensively, the owl hooted once in a distinct 'what're you looking at?' manner. After a brief stare-down, Ron declared, "Tiny little bugger."

In response to that, the owl simply puffed up further and hooted with greater determination.

"It—" She paused and, based on the letter, corrected herself. "He's a scops owl, Ron. They're all quite small, so they're usually only given local post."

The owl hooted again, this time in a sort of tired agreement, before suddenly going very still. Large orange eyes—most of the bird's face, really—zeroed in on Ron again, seeming to realize something. Then, apparently reinvigorated, the tiny owl zoomed into the air and directly at Ron; this boy, the owl had realized, was now his (or the other way around, but that's just semantics). Ron was understandably startled, jerking back and knocking his head on the back of his seat.

He winced, more in surprise than pain, and grumbled a quiet 'bloody hell'.

When a small weight settled on the top of his head and he heard Hermione laugh, he just sighed. The owl had clearly discovered his chosen perch, which is to say Ron had a rather unconventional feathery hat.

Ignoring the owl-based shenanigans, Harry seemed to be a bit stuck on the part that suggested Sirius had not only enlisted, but had actually received assistance from a cat to order his new broomstick. Even though he hadn't known his godfather for all that long by now, he still felt like that course of logic fit the man perfectly: disguise as a dog, get help from a cat, it was the obvious choice. And, of course, it worked.

Harry smiled, tucking the letter away for safekeeping, and turned his attention back to his best friends. Ron was apparently getting Crookshanks to check his new feathered companion for fraud—not wanting to repeat the Animagus fiasco—but was having trouble coaxing the owl off his head to do so. Perhaps he and Hermione should help their red-headed friend, but it was much more funny to sit back and watch him try and gently prod the stubborn bird onto his hand before deciding on a new approach: crouching and pointing the top of his head in the cat's direction.

The past week had been a series of unexpected twists, ending off their third year at Hogwarts in a rather strange way, even by his standards.

But it had ended well, Harry thought with another smile. Still a bit short on answers, but he could get those later.

Right now he just laughed with his friends and, with a not-really-criminal godfather he could threaten to sic on his uncle and the promise of getting to see his friends (and the Quidditch World Cup) before next term, found himself actually looking forward to the coming summer.
don't hold that against me.)

…I can't really think of anything else to say about this chapter. Pigwidgeon has been introduced, some more of Sans's chea- er… tricks, and so on. The usual. Oh, though you did get to hear what the glamour looks like. Whatdy'a think?

Anyway, thanks again to everyone who leaves a comment! As I've said before, I read them all and can't be happier that, well, you guys seem to like this. If you want, please leave a comment with what you think of it all, ideas, or any mistakes you've noticed!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Enter the Werewolf

Chapter Summary

Tea drinking and a new prank target, how fun!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sans's room was messy, as should be expected. It was one of the smaller rooms on the third floor, and likely wasn't technically meant to be a bedroom in the first place. The bed—well, just a mattress, really—took up most of the floorspace, leaving just barely enough space for the door to actually open. Both the bed and its sheets, which were wadded up in the corner, had actually been commandeered from another room. There was also pile of socks, a few books snagged from the library, two pillows, and a small box of clothes.

Sitting on his mattress, lazily flipping through a book on wizarding history even though he wasn't really absorbing any of the information, Sans yawned. And then, rather suddenly, a loud and very happy whoop of excitement jerked him from his distracted page turning.

What had happened was clear: three days after sending off the tiny owl, Sirius had finally gotten a reply.

Sans quickly sent a net of blue magic through the house, aiming to shut up the annoying painting before she could get screeching. It's a bit trickier to use blue magic without having line-of-sight on the target, but, with Sirius being who he is, Sans had gotten some practice over the past few days.

Deciding not to return to his unproductive not-reading, Sans teleported from his messy room and into the mostly empty dining room. There was quite a bit of space, since the once-large wooden table had been magically resized and most of the chairs were stacked in the corner. They only needed two, after all. Sirius was sitting in one, while Hedwig was perched on the back of the other.

“Good afternoon, Rattles!” Sirius greeted with a broad smile, waving him over with his mug of tea. “You're finally awake, and just in time!”

Sans had actually been awake since uncomfortably early in the morning, but he had decided his time was best spent lazing around his room rather than lazing around in the rest of the house. Irregular naps had become something of a habit during the resets; in addition to the nightmares that made trying for a full night's rest completely unappealing, there was always the disorienting possibility of abruptly waking up due to being jerked through time so… well, he didn't actually sleep through nights anymore.

Praise be to naps.

“What can i say, i was bone tired.”

Ignoring the pun—it was one he'd heard before—Sirius set aside his drink to flip through the mail. He had apparently gotten all three replies in one, since Harry's owl, a beautiful snowy bird at least an order of magnitude more elegant than Pigwidgeon, had brought letters from each of the kids.
However, there were four letters instead of just three, and the odd one out was addressed to Sans. Technically it was addressed to 'Rattles', but same difference.

Sirius reached across the table to hand it over. “That'd be from Hermione, I'd bet.” He smiled knowingly. “Probably decided to bypass me entirely and just ask for answers directly from the source.”

Tearing open the envelope, Sans found… wow, a lot of questions. An impressively long bulleted list filled the majority of the parchment, and while some were fairly simple—the first one was just asking for his name, since she rightly guessed 'Rattles' was a nickname—others had significantly more depth. Some of them even branched out into 'if so' and 'if not' sub-questions. He stared at the paper for a long minute while Sirius opened his own mail.

“man, and none of them are multiple choice.” Sans flipped it over and found that the list continued on the back. “does she want an essay or something?”

In a frank deadpan, Sirius answered, “Yes.”

“…oh.”

Grabbing a banana from the bowl of fruit sitting in the center of the table and taking the seat opposite his friend (momentarily disturbing Hedwig’s perch on the chair), the skeleton settled down to read through the letter more closely. The true question of the day became whether or not he should actually bother answering all of her questions, and as he read farther down the list he became more certain that even answering half of them wasn't all that likely.

It would just be too troublesome.

Not to mention he had no real desire to approach a lot of the later ones. Take, for example, any of the questions asking about his personal history. There were also a few wanting specifics on how he had managed to get Sirius out of his makeshift prison cell, and there was no way he'd try and explain the mechanics of folding space-time coordinates to her.

“Oh, right!” Sirius suddenly exclaimed, apparently reminded of something by the letter he was reading. “That would be later this summer, wouldn't it? How could I nearly forget the Quidditch World Cup!”

Sans, who had begun eating his afternoon breakfast of a single banana, asked, “that's the, uh… broomstick game thing, yeah? maybe it was just swept under a mental rug.”

“I can't let such carelessness fly, Rattles,” returned Sirius with a grin.

“guess you need to clean up your act, then.” The skeleton paused to finish off his banana and toss the peel onto Sirius's dirty lunch dishes before adding, “nice one, by the way.”

“Thanks. Anyway, I'm glad Harry'll be able to go see…” Sirius drifted off, a puzzled look on his face.

It didn't take Sans long to figure out what the issue might be. “did, or rather, will something happen there? other than sports, i mean.”

“Yes, there was definitely something.” He closed his eyes, brow furrowed as he tried to remember everything he could. “It was in the papers. I think… a Death Eater attack?”
“that seems like, ya know, a major thing you probably shouldn't have forgotten,” Sans remarked, brow raised.

Sirius just shrugged. “I had other things on my mind. Anyway, do you suppose we should do something about that? Tell someone or something?”

“who would you tell?”

“Uh.” Sirius leaned back in his chair, picking up his tea again and thinking about his (very limited) options. Then he slowly nodded and acknowledged, “…That's a good point.”

“i have those sometimes.”

After another few minutes of considering silence, the wizard finally suggested, “Perkins, maybe? But I'm not sure he'd be able to do much, since he's not an Auror or anything like that.”

Sans didn't know nearly as many people, but he thought through those he had heard of. “i guess bumblebee would have the political sway, at least from what you've told me.”

“'Bumblebee'?"  

“that dumbledore guy,” he clarified with a shrug. “since it seems to me that he needs to mind his own beeswax sometimes.”

Having just taken another sip of his tea, Sirius almost choked on a snort of laughter and had to cough a bit to catch his breath. “Don't you think that might be a bit…” He cleared his throat again, blinked, reconsidered, and finally smiled wryly. “Alright, so you might have a point. Besides, I'm not sure I want to deal with him quite yet.”

“understandable. maybe send an anonymous letter?”

The wizard paused mid-nod, having thought of something. “Oh, now there's an idea. Or I could just tell Remus when he visits and have him deal with Dumbledore.”

“remus is… uhm…” Sans stalled out, not quite remembering right away, and he absentmindedly tapped his finger on his chin with a quiet clink as he thought back. “your old school friend, i think.”

“Got it in one,” Sirius said, smiling fondly. “I'm planning on sending him a letter. You know, assuming Hedwig is fine with a detour on her return trip.”

The snowy owl hooted agreeably from her perch on the back of Sans's chair.

“take that as a yes.” The skeleton lazily waved his hand at the bowl of fruit, using blue magic to snag an orange and hover it over to himself. As he carefully peeled the fruit, he asked, “so he's gonna visit soon?”

Sirius took a sip of tea and nodded. “Yes, or, well… hopefully. I haven't sent the letter, obviously, so I don't really know.” His tone didn't change much, still sounding relaxed on the surface, but Sans heard a slightly fragile, uncertain edge to the statement that suggested his friend was worried.

“right, then will we need to set up a tea party for his eventual visit? i haven't found the fancy dishes yet,” Sans said with a grin, hoping to reassure Sirius both with the joke and his trust that there would be a visit.

It apparently worked, since Sirius's smile, which had become a bit brittle, brightened into
something more genuine. “I was thinking more along the lines of pulling a prank, but if you'd rather—”

“no, no, no,” Sans was quick to interrupt, “tell me more about this plan of yours.”

The prankster was happy to do so, laying out his remarkably simple scheme in one brief sentence. “It’s simple really, we just introduce you to him.”

“i guess meeting a bunch o’ bones like myself would—”

Sirius held up a hand, cutting him off. “Not quite. You see, we introduce you with the glamour. But here’s the trick: sometimes you don’t actually have it on. Subtle stuff, like whenever he’s not looking right at you or something.”

“oooh,” he hummed. “how spooky. i can do spooky. ominous footsteps, especially—very good at those.”

It had looked like Sirius was about to continue his train of thought, but Sans's comment derailed him somewhat and he couldn't help but ask, “Do skeletons take classes on crafting scares, or do you just have an odd hobby?”

Though nothing about his outward expression changed in the slightest—maybe the whole no-flesh thing really did help with keeping a straight face—Sans suddenly looked more… shadowed. And then it passed, having come and gone in an instant.

“welp, practice makes permanent,” Sans said without missing a beat, tone light but maybe just ever-so-slightly more cynical than usual.

Taking another sip of tea, Sirius decided to leave that apparently distressing line of questioning for some other time and returned his attention to the potential prank. “Plus it's like hitting two birds with one spell: not only do we get to mess with him, but we also get to use him to test the effectiveness of the disguise.”

“so… we have a plan?”

“You don't have to sound so surprised,” Sirius groused. “We’ve had plans before.”

Sans grinned, thoroughly unconvinced. “history begs to differ.”

“Hey, they were technically plans.” He didn't bother trying to defend further than that: Sans had a point, after all. Summoning paper and a quill from the library and pausing briefly to gather his thoughts, Sirius began penning a letter to his old school friend.

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Remus hadn't known what to think.

The letter had arrived at breakfast, dropped quietly onto the sill of his kitchen window, open despite the light drizzle outside. At the time he only glanced over at the unexpected mail, curious but not really curious enough to stop sipping his morning tea and nibbling on his toast. It wasn't until he got up, washed his plate, and poured himself another cup that he actually looked at it
again. Remus had picked it up, mentally going down a list of the people who would actually bother writing to him in the first place. It was a depressingly short list.

Then he saw it: his nickname written across the front of the slightly damp envelope in a very familiar scrawl.

It was from Sirius.

_Sirius._

Which was, of course, why that evening found him standing in the rain on a street corner in muggle London.

The neighborhood, while not entirely falling apart, per se, was certainly not holding up very well. Just look at the buildings, all peeling paint, broken windows, and dead plants. It was basically a checklist of undesirables. Trash and scraps of rubbish drifted in the rapidly forming puddles, and a distinctly rotten smell mixed in with the rain. Overhead, one of the streetlamps couldn't seem to decide whether it should be lit up or not, settling instead with flickering on then off then on again at random.

Remus grimaced in discomfort as he shifted under his umbrella, nervously scanning the streets for any sign of his friend and the mysterious 'Rattles' mentioned briefly in the letter.

“heya, pal. whatcha' waiting out in the rain for?”

The werewolf startled, unused to being snuck up on (for good reason), and turned his head sharply to his left. Standing there, calm as can be, was a young kid with snowy white hair; he was grinning broadly, as if he hadn't just nearly given Remus a heart attack. A bit damp from the rain, the boy's hair frizzled wildly in whatever direction it wanted. This did a good job of matching the haphazardness of the rest of his appearance. He was wearing pajama pants several sizes too large for him, the legs rolled up to his knees in an unsuccessful attempt to keep them dry, and a blue not-certified-for-rain jacket. His umbrella, while open, didn't seem to be doing much to keep his lower half from getting soaked, but the boy didn't seem to mind.

However, one point in particular caught Remus's attention: “You're… not wearing any shoes?”

“they'd get wet out here, duh.” The kid's smile widened a touch farther as he kicked his bare foot in one of the puddles, sending up a small splash that sparkled in the flickering streetlight. “you saying maybe i shoe-l'd?”

“I'm saying, well—” He paused, confused and concerned in nearly equal measure. “You're not cold?”

The question was waved off with a shrug. “nah, it's remarkably hard to chill me too the bone, despite everything.”

Now it was mostly confusion. Remus was about the ask what could have been meant by that, but was stopped short when the wolf in him noticed something: while the boy smelled mostly like tomatoes, freshly fallen snow, and something almost _supernatural_ that he couldn't quite identify, there was also something _very_ familiar.

If he tried to describe it, he'd say it was the smell of friendly, mischievous smiles. And, for some reason he had never figured out, blueberries: a friend he had foolishly spent twelve years trying to forget.
Hesitantly, Remus asked, “Are you… Rattles?”

“That i am,” the kid said with a flourish, sweeping his umbrella to the side in a dramatic bow regardless of the rain. “and the name's actually sans. do with that what you will. what gave it away?”

“Just a feeling,” he replied, not wanting to go into the details of, well, smelling someone.

The answer might not have been very satisfying, but it seemed good enough for Sans. With a lazy shrug, the boy just turned and began walking away. Then he paused, since the werewolf hadn't moved.

“Well, you coming?”

Remus nodded and, gathering his wits and his courage, followed after the strange kid. As they walked, he looked up and down the street: dark and dim in a way that couldn't be entirely credited to the dreary weather. It wasn't somewhere he'd usually want to visit, even if this was a special case. Still. “Where are we going?”

Sans stopped short. “oh right, i need to tell you the thing.”

“What?”

“The thing,” he repeated, glancing back over his shoulder at Remus. “our secret hideout is at number 12 grimmauld place.”

For a second—granted, a very brief second—Remus didn't quite process just what that random bit of information meant. After all, he didn't really need to know the address when Sans was right there leading the way. Then his eyes widened in surprise.

Sirius had cast a Fidelius, and he trusted Sans enough to make him the Secret Keeper.

Something inside him was a bit jealous of that trust, but he pushed it aside. He wouldn't have deserved that trust anyway: he hadn't been there, he should have been there for Sirius twelve years ago…

But he hadn't been.

As the two of them continued down the rainy street, Remus silently decided; if Sirius trusted Sans, then Remus could—should—trust the boy as well. It was the least he could do.

The next time they stopped, it was in front of an especially grim and depressing looking townhouse marked with the number twelve.

“Yo, paddy-paws!” Sans called, walking up to the entrance but staying suspiciously off to the side. “He's here!”

The boy's caution was justified instantly as the door burst open, there was a strangely shimmery sounding crackle, and then a spray of technicolor glitter launched past him and directly at Remus. It was fast, and more than that it was mostly unexpected.

Mostly.

Remus hadn't been a part of the Marauders for nothing; his wand was in his hand and casting a reflective shield almost before he realized it. Sure he didn't quite get all of the sparkly stuff, but if
he was left looking a bit more shimmery than usual, the door was positively *bedazzled*.

As was Sirius, grinning like an imp whose joke went perfectly as intended, despite all the glitter on his face and in his hair and coating his clothes. His eyes gleamed with the light of that familiar devil-may-care attitude, lit up in a way he simply hadn't been at the Shrieking Shack. He looked... happy. Far more settled and *whole* than the man he had seen just a few days prior. This man was more than just freed from his physical prison cell: he was healing.

There was nothing Remus could do but smile back and laugh—happily laugh in a way he hadn't even thought he could manage anymore. And, for the first time in a long time, he felt like everything would actually turn out alright. Not return to what had been, but perhaps something like it.

Because the man who had once been his best friend was *still* his best friend: *he hadn't broken*.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own *Harry Potter* or *Undertale*.

Just a quick note here, this following month is gonna be hectic. I'm finally moving back to the US, but first a friend and I will be sightseeing around Europe for a month. Updates will still come out as usual, but since I'll be writing while I'm on the road the chapters might be a bit shorter. We'll see how it all works out.

Anyway, thanks to everyone enjoying what I'm writing! I hope you'll stick around to see where the story goes.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Tea Time

Chapter Summary

Because it's always better to chat over tea and cookies. Mostly cookies.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Somehow Sans hadn't gotten any of the glitter on him. Any of it.

This somewhat miffed Sirius, since it meant he had missed half of his targets. Clearly his skeletal friend was a very sneaky little bugger. Sneaky and maybe a bit paranoid. It's not like Sans had been told there would be a magical glitter cannon in the front hall to welcome them back. It was supposed to be a surprise!

A fun, colorful, sparkly, difficult to clean surprise!

But alas, the snowy white hair of his disguise remained glitter-free. Another attempt, another failure (though funny), and Sans was still un-pranked.

For now.

Remus, however, had been hit. And while his long-time friend had managed to fling most of his welcoming surprise right back in the prankster's face, a sizable amount still hit home.

“I should have expected this,” sighed Remus, but there was laughter in his voice.

Sirius trotted down the front stairs, completely ignoring both the rain and the glitter he was now soaked in. His smile was so wide it threatened to split his face it two. “Ah, but Moony— It wouldn't have been as fun if you'd known!”

“A valid point.” The werewolf uselessly brushed at his clothes: despite the puffs of sparkles coming off with each pat, the amount on him didn't actually change.

“hey, so, not to rain on your parade, but…” Sans waved broadly at the wet weather, artificially glittering puddles and all. “this puts a bit of a damp-er on things, don't it?”

Squinting up into the clouded gray sky, Sirius nodded. “So wet, dark, and dreary out here. At least it's dry inside!”

“most of the time.”

It had been a spur-of-the-moment prank, launched when they were cleaning out the dusty bedrooms. There had been floating buckets, dancing mops, rainbow water, and a lot of, well, splash damage.

“Yes,” Sirius agreed. “Most of the time.”

Remus followed the pair inside, taking in the interior and deciding that, honestly, Sirius's two word
description was all that was needed: dark and dreary, indeed. Although he would also add that it smelled like mildew and sadness. And maybe madness—the bad sort, in particular—but he wasn't quite sure what that smelled like.

Bitter and metallic, maybe. Unsettling.

As Remus walked down the hall, he became aware of an unfriendly gaze watching him—not threatening, really, but far from welcoming. The werewolf tried to subtly glance up the stairs, where the feeling seemed to be centered, and looked eye to bloodshot eye with a scrawny house-elf. A single burning glare, and then the creature simply vanished with a snap.

“I'm guessing that was Kreacher,” he remarked, sounding a touch surprised. “From the horror stories you told in school, I would have thought our meeting wouldn't have gone so well.”

Sirius cocked his head, looking pretty surprised himself, before glancing to the now-empty top of the stairs as well. “Honestly, I was expecting… I don't know. Shouting, at least.” A shrug, and he added, “I mean… well, Merlin; the bugger yelled like crazy when he first met Sans. A repeat performance was expected, even if he's somehow getting more tolerable by the day.”

“hey, he had an inexplicable grudge against me. can't say that about everyone.”

With a look that suggested he very well thought he could, Sirius shepherded his two friends into the dining room. There, much to his surprise, he found a tray of biscuits, a steaming teapot, and three teacups. Kreacher had apparently decided to be a little more than just barely civil. Of course, the snacks were inconveniently set in the center of the broad table, but they were there.

Sans looked pretty smug.

“Maybe he poisoned them,” Sirius mused, mostly kidding.

“don't worry, i'll eat some first.”

Remus, not following how risking poisoning could help, asked as much. “How would that help?”

There was a glint in Sans's eyes, a sure sign of impending puns. ‘let's just say i have a gut feeling that i can in-test the food safely.’

“'In-test'?”

“like 'ingest', but i'm testing the food,” Sans explained. “i thought about going with 'in-test-ine', but it's like double the joke this way.”

The disguised skeleton made a show of reaching across the table to grab the closest cookie, inspected it in a distinctly sarcastic way, then stuffed it in his face. He washed it down with some of the tea and remained completely un-poisoned.

Sirius still didn't look like he trusted the whole set-up, but Remus somewhat hesitantly poured a cup for himself and took a sip.

“this would be when i should fake passing out, maybe fake some painful groans…”

Remus, quietly smiling, shook his head. “No, no, no. Allow me.” He cleared his throat once before, in the most disinterested tone possible, stating, “Arg, oh, the pain. Hnrg. Distress and other such complaints.”
“It was a valid concern!” Sirius objected.

“sure it was."

Sharing a laugh at Sirius's expense, Remus and Sans clinked their teacups together as a toast to messing with friends. It took a bit more pestering (and a few baked goodies thrown in his direction) before the paranoid prankster finally took a biscuit for himself, and they could settle in to snack time.

“So,” Remus hesitantly began, once they were fed and watered. His voice was a bit unsteady, nervous, but he had decided it needed saying. “I… I'm sorry. It was my fault, and when I heard what had happened after I… uhm,” he pointedly drifted off, shooting a look at Sans.

“He knows,” said Sirius, answering the unasked question.

“He knows?!”

“about your furry problem?” Sans shrugged. “no big. i'm weird and my friends are weird, so what's one more?”

The tingles of betrayal that had curled around his heart fizzled as fast as they had begun, and Remus couldn't help but stare at the pale kid sitting beside him. “You— What? But I'm a—”

“—werewolf, right?”

Stunned, he just nodded. Sirius looked like it was all he could do not to burst into giggles.

Looking completely nonplused, as if befriending dangerous beasts that could tear him apart was something he just did on a daily basis, Sans said, “yeah, that's fine.”

“That's fine?” Remus squeaked, voice momentarily too confused by that point to figure out how to sound normal.

Sirius couldn't help it. Really. He all but collapsed out of his seat, his laughter proving too much for his chair to handle. Even Sans chuckled a little bit, though more because of Sirius's antics than the confusion Remus still felt stuck in. At a loss for what to do, Remus just watched his friend—no, both of them: his friends—laugh and smile and, after a moment, he realized that he was smiling with them.

“hey, don't forget to breathe, paddy-paws.”

“That's… still good… good advice.” Gasping for breath—the laughing had petered off, but he was still grinning like a loon—Sirius pulled himself back upright and dusted himself off. “Don't worry, Moony. He's a good guy.”

Still reeling, Remus nodded again. “I— Apparently. How did you even meet him?”

“Uhm.” Sirius, not sure what else to say, took a drink from his teacup as he tried to figure out how to explain.

“it was a dark time in both of our lives,” answered Sans. This caused a humored snort from Sirius to dissolve into coughing due to a rather unfortunately timed sip of tea.

“For Sirius, yes. I can believe that.” Remus shot a look at his still-hacking friend as the man tried to regain control of his lungs. “But what about you?”
Sans nodded solemnly. “my life had become quite empty before he stumbled in. a real void, you could say.”

At this point, Sirius decided to stop trying to not to laugh. It wasn't working anyway. Through his chuckles, he managed to say, “Well, I mean… That's one way to put it!”

“All right, now I know I'm missing something here.” Remus crossed his arms, adopting the expression Sirius had always called 'the disgruntled professor'.

“no, it was really nothing.”

Regaining himself, Sirius nodded. Then, seeing his non-skeletal friend's pointed look, he decided he should probably clarify, at least a little. Despite the light tone Sans had taken, this was important. “The whole series of events is rather hard to explain. Besides—”

Something flickered in his periphery, distracting him for a moment. Both wizards glanced over, but it was just Sans grabbing another cookie from the plate. The disguised skeleton paused, suddenly the center of attention with food halfway to his mouth, and then just waved for Sirius to continue.

“Er, anyway.” He found his momentarily derailed train of thought. “The full story isn't mine to tell. And it's… well. It'd probably be best if you let Sans decide when to talk about it.”

The mild-mannered werewolf was quiet for a moment, but in the end he agreed; he knew what it was like, before he'd had friends he could trust. “If that's—”

Another flicker and abruptly Sirius figured it out.

“Hey!”

Remus startled at the interruption—loud noises do not mix well with sensitive hearing—but it wasn't aimed at him.

“Yeah?”

“You're not— The idea was to—” Sirius waved between Remus and Sans, paused, then sort of just waved randomly with greatly exaggerated distress. “The prank was for him! Not me, him!”

Sans cocked his head to the side, still grinning. “Can't really aim it, ya know.”

Ceasing his comedic flailing, the prankster slapped palm to forehead with a groan. “I… didn't think that through. Ignore me, Moony, for I am but a fool!” He added a few more dramatic flourishes for the sake of having a few more dramatic flourishes.

“Oh, Sirius. Padfoot.” Remus rested a conciliatory hand on his friend's shoulder and slowly shook his head. “I already knew that.”

“You wound me!”

Stuffing the cookie he had taken earlier into his face, Sans spoke through a mouthful of crumbs. The food, remarkably, didn't seem to effect his enunciation. “You set yourself up for that.”

“It was true, so Sirius just sighed. “Enough poking fun at me, you two. Let's move on to something more interesting.”

There was a pause as everyone waited for somebody else to provide a topic, but Sans was still too interested in the cookies—or at least pretending to be too interested in the cookies—to initiate new
conversation and Sirius was clearly drawing a complete blank. Remus realized it was up to him. Besides, he had plenty of questions.

“What happened to you after I was…” Hesitating slightly, searching for an appropriate word, he finished, “Incapacitated…?”

“I was incapacitated for a bit in there, too,” Sirius began. “Basically I ran into the woods to distract you, Dementors showed up, and I passed out. Woke up locked in one of the empty classrooms. Not the greatest situation for an escapee.”

“no worries, i helped.”

“Yeah. Sans—” He suddenly started cracking up at his own as-of-yet unspoken joke, needing to take a second to refocus. Clearing his throat, Sirius tried again. “Sans is really good at popping in and out of places he shouldn't be.”

Remus watched perplexed as the two of them shared a look. While it was almost all Sirius could do to try and hold back the giggles—key word there being 'try'—Sans had a remarkable pokerface. His broad grin made it difficult to tell what he was thinking, but even then there was a light in the his eyes that definitely meant mental laughter.

The werewolf blinked. Looked again.

It almost seemed like… there was real light in Sans's eyes.

Then the disguised skeleton yawned, eyes squinting shut and somewhat blearily back open, and it was gone.

“yep.” Sans continued the story by one sentence, adding, “harry and co. had already freed buckbeak; two birds, one stone. kinda ironic when i put it that way. whatever, then we just flew outta there.”

“Just… 'flew outta there'?”

Sirius nodded, then very-much-on-purpose dropped a rather dramatic remark as nonchalantly as he could: “The next thing we had to do was, of course, to break into the Ministry.”

“You had to WHAT!?”

=X=X=X=

After Remus's ability to understand what had happened took that sudden nosedive into sheer confounded disbelief, it was decided that, for the sake of sanity, they would temporarily move on to other things. Which was why they were now moseying through the dusty hallway toward the stairs. Sirius was apparently doing a repeat of the tour he had given Sans, but mostly he was just chatting with Remus and only occasionally pointing things out.

“Careful,” warned Sirius in a loud whisper, giving a large covered painting as much of a berth as he could manage in the small hallway. “That would be Mother's portrait. It's… Merlin, calling her 'insane' isn't nearly enough.”
Sans took a wide step to the side as he passed, shaking his head slowly. “screamed a lot when we first got here. i mean really, what a poor-trait to have.”

Remus snorted at the pun and followed their lead, not wanting to deal with screeching artwork. If that woman's painting was anything like the horrible mother—horrible person, really—that Sirius had described to him during their school days, they would need to figure out how to be rid of it. Permanently.

“Only stopped because Sans could probably rip her enchantment to pieces.”

Which, Remus mused to himself, didn't really make much sense at all; moving portraits were a complex bit of magic. He wasn't even sure where to begin to go about undoing spellwork like that. Actually, after a brief moment's thought, he wasn't sure it could be done at all. Though from what he'd seen, impossible seemed rather par for the course now. Still, he had to know: “How would he do that? I doubt he's even gotten his Hogwarts letter yet.”

Pausing partway up the stairs, Sirius considered. “Good point. I need to figure out what to do about that.”

That earned the prankster a look from Sans, as well as a pointed, “oh?”

“Plans, Rattles.” Sirius tapped his forehead twice, smiling mischievously. “I've had time.”

Sans skeptically raised one pale eyebrow. Remus, knowing that his long-time friend's idea of a plan was far closer to just flying by the hem of his robes than anything else, mirrored the expression.

Faced with such disbelief, Sirius sheepishly amended, “…Just not quite enough to iron out all the details.”

“I'd say he has maybe, oh, 5% of a plan, optimistically speaking.” Sans turned to Remus and asked, “you?”

“Well, it depends on the size of the undertaking.” The once-professor pretended to tally up some numbers on his fingers—counting up to three, down two, up to six, and then just abruptly landing at zero. “He seems invested in this 'plan', so we can be pretty sure he's at least named it by now.”

“Hey, I'll have you know I even have a vague outline!”

Sans and Remus shared a laugh at their mutual friend's lukewarm rebuttal.

The kid had a peculiar laugh, Remus noticed. It was unexpectedly low, very much like his voice, and had an almost clattering quality on the edges. The clatter—or rattle, he supposed, given Sans's nickname—was somewhat muffled, but it very much sounded like Sans had a bag of wooden blocks and just gave it a shake with each chuckle.

At the top of the stairs, Sirius decided to simply ignore the snickers and resumed his role as tour guide. Rapid fire, he pointed out three rooms of interest.

“Bathroom there, if you need it. Next is an empty bedroom, which, like all the other unused bedrooms…” he paused, giving Remus a significant look, “…is completely available. Oh yeah, and the drawing room. Sans doesn't go in there.”

“It's haunted,” Sans explained, stating it like the most natural thing in the world.

“But ghosts—”
not ghosts.”

Remus, adding another mental tally to the 'Sans is a weird kid' counter, pushed open the door and glanced inside. The drawing room might once have been elegant, and he could almost see the echo of what it had once been in the dusty space. But then, there was something unsettling about it—something eerie and other and dark—that put Remus's hackles on edge. Waiting a moment longer in the doorway, he finally stepped inside, looking around the supposedly haunted space with cautious interest. Sans remained firmly rooted by the door, though Sirius, for one, didn't seem to notice any undue creepiness and just sort of plopped down on one of the couches.

Still looking about, trying to pinpoint what was making him so uneasy, Remus asked, “Then what do you mean by 'haunted'?”

“Well, it's not the room as a whole. More like just a small piece.” Sans then pointed out a small glass case on the other side of the room. “To be specific, that small piece right there.”

It was an ornate locket, resting innocently on a velvet cushion in the glass case. The poisonously green gemstones decorating the golden pendant glinted with a light all their own, like eyes staring back at him. Remus, technically a creature of the dark arts himself, could tell that the locket was positively drenched in dark magic. “Sirius, why haven't you gotten rid of this… thing? Curses are not to be taken lightly.”

“It's a nasty curse, and I don't even really know what it is.” Sirius explained with a shrug, peering over from his slouched position on the sofa. “I wasn't too keen on—”

Sans interrupted him. “It's not a curse.”

Taken aback by the quick correction, both wizards simultaneously asked: “Wait, it isn't?”

“Nope.”

Staring closely at the necklace with even more trepidation that before, Remus tried to think of what else it could be to give off such an aura of dark magic. Nothing good, obviously.

“Well?” Sirius, after waiting for Sans to clarify and getting only silence, prompted, “What is it, then?”

After trying to find the proper words for a moment longer, Sans finally decided to just plow on. “It's uh, it's like… a SOUL. Or I guess maybe a soul? Basically the same thing, but either way it's stuck itself to the pendant.”

Silence.

“Merlin's beard, that's… If that's true…” Very slowly, Remus stepped back from the glass case.

“It is.”

Growing increasingly concerned, Sirius glanced back and forth between his two friends.

“Sirius,” Remus said, “I think you've got a Horcrux in your living room.”

Chapter End Notes
Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

I'll be brief, given it's already late where I am and I've been traveling all day. This chapter was written before my trip began, hence it is the usual length. Next month's chapter is, unfortunately, only half-size. The one after that will probably be on the short side as well. Just a heads up!

Also, just noticed it's been a full year since chapter one went up, so… Happy Birthday, Under the Veil!

Updates on the first of every month.

Thanks to everyone whose taken the time to read and comment or leave a kudos or… well, reading is the important one. Sorry about the lack of replies to your comments. I'll get there eventually (after this trip ends, probably). I hope you've enjoyed it so far and continue to as it continues!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
“a horcrux?” Lured in by the promise of an explanation for the creepy undead jewelry, Sans had actually entered the drawing room and joined Remus beside the small glass case.

A slow nod: the once-professor's expression was a mixture of grim disgust and horror.

With a curse (of the non-magical variety), Sirius immediately abandoned his comfortable seat on the couch, stepping between his friends and the dark artifact. It hadn't done anything yet, insofar as he could tell, but he wasn't about to let them stand so close to something—someone—with so much darkness. He had been raised as the heir to the Black family name, after all, and that meant he knew just what sort of dark magic had been cast on the ornate pendant.

Startled by the abrupt motion, Sans very nearly summoned a bone to instinctively whack Sirius's face. It was only luck and reflexes born of long, repeating fights that kept him in check. But he was unsettled: twitchy and too wound up by the dark SOUL shard, its corrupted magic hovering right at the edge of his senses in a discomfortingly familiar manner.

To be honest, when he looked at the locket… he almost expected it to be a small blood red heart.

Sirius and Remus had been going back and forth with ideas of how to deal with it, which gave the skeleton a chance to mentally pull himself back to the present, refocusing very deliberately on the immediate now.

“Unfortunately I don't have a basilisk just slithering around somewhere,” Sirius was saying. Then he paused, thinking back on Harry's stories of a certain secret chamber. “None that I know of, anyway.”

“right, uhm…” Sans shifted from one foot to the other, still antsy but at least no longer so close to straight-up skewering someone with bones. “quick question: what's a 'horcrux’?”

Apparently having forgotten just how out of the loop Sans could be sometimes—not to mention the fact the knowing about Horcruxes was rare enough among wizards anyway—Sirius took a moment to figure out how to phrase his reply.

Remus beat him to the punch, replying, “Dark magic, that's what it is. A Horcrux is half of a soul, split and bound by murder in pursuit of immortality. I found a reference to them when trying to find information about werew… about dark creatures. Didn't like what I found.”

Unable to come up with a better description, Sirius just nodded.

Knowing what he knew about SOULs and the detection thereof, Sans frowned slightly. Then, cautiously reaching out with his magic, he tried to gauge how large the piece stuck to the necklace
actually was. It definitely didn’t feel like a full half-SOUL: closer to a sixth of the average, maybe. A quick mental calculation told him it was actually an eighth, given fifty percent splits.

Now in lecture-mode, Remus continued, “There aren’t many ways known to be effective at destroying them, since there haven’t been many wizards willing to make one.”

“Thank Merlin,” Sirius interjected.

Remus nodded. “Quite. However, most methods that can destroy a Horcrux do so by damaging the container so utterly that it simply cannot be repaired, by magical means or otherwise. This is understandably difficult.”

“does the amount of SOUL in the thing matter with that?” Sans asked, an almost morbid curiosity spurring him to look more closely at the dark item. Despite its small size, it was very securely bound to the necklace. But then again, since he had been able to split Frisk from Chara—a significantly-larger-than-half SOUL strong enough to shape timelines—it probably still wouldn't be that hard to break off.

Remus gave him a rather confused look. “I don’t quite get what you mean. I’d imagine that a more powerful wizard would leave behind a more powerful Horcrux, but what do you mean by ‘amount’?”

“ya know, since it’s an even split each time.” In a pseudo demonstration of the division, Sans held up eight fingers, four on each hand. Next he took away four, then two, then one, which left him with just one still pointing up. “would the first one be harder to destroy than the rest, do ya reckon? i mean, it does have more SOUL in it…” He drifted off when he noticed the expression on Remus's face.

“First one?” The wizard's voice shook with unease and a certain horrified disbelief.

Sirius looked very much like he wanted to echo that sentiment, but couldn't even find the words to properly declare just how wrong the existence of even a single Horcrux was… and here the skeleton was suggesting there might be multiple!? He was left silently staring at Sans in shock.

Sans, for one, decided to just plow on and explain himself. “well, yeah. that thing's only got an eighth of a SOUL in it.”

Following the line of reasoning, Remus finished, “And if the ritual splits a soul in half each time… Beside this one, there must be at least two other Horcruxes out there.”

“And if there's already three,” Sirius added, disgusted by the thought he was about to put into words, “then why not even more than that?”

“Merlin.” It came out almost as a whisper, as if Remus could barely consider the possibility—didn't even want to consider it.

There was a sort of stunned-and-disgusted moment, the three of them just staring at the offending jewelry, before Sans finally ventured, “so… can i destroy it or…?”

Now the silence was certainly more stunned than anything else. Although Sirius just looked like he was mentally reminding himself not to have expectations about what Sans could or couldn't do.

Then there was a snapping pop and a new voice, rough with age and edged with deep distrust, joined the conversation.
“…Destroy?”

Sans took the abrupt arrival of the resident maybe-crazy house-elf in stride, covering his twitch of surprise—he still wasn't used to others being able to teleport—with a lazy yawn. The two wizards, however, very nearly jumped out of their skin. Though of course, Sans thought to himself, it's not as if he had skin to jump out of in the first place.

Kreacher, very hesitantly and still with that edge of dislike, repeated his question. “Mr. Sans thinks he can… destroy it?”

“i know i can destroy it, actually.”

At this point, Remus seemed to realize just how much of this situation wasn't adding up with what he understood as 'normal'. “Okay, wait. You think you can… Actually, how'd you know it was a Horcrux in the first place?”

A long, considering blink, and Sans replied, “as ya do, ya know.”

“No, actually. I don't know.” Remus crossed his arms, temporarily ignoring the dark artifact, his friend, and the house-elf in favor of this new question. “Care to explain?”

“…no?”

“Classic Sans,” Sirius half-joked, half-grumbled. “Explanations aren't his strong suit.”

“i'll have you know i don't own a suit.” With a twitch of a finger, Sans slowly lifted the Horcrux and its case into the air. It left behind the outline of a perfect square in the dust on the table. “and i never will, thank you very much. too formal.”

At first Remus didn't notice the odd wandless magic going on behind him, since he was too focused on the odd person in front of him. Persons, really: Sirius shouldn't be excluded. Remus was busy working himself into a curiosity knot, with every question leading around to more and more. “And that remark about the Ministry…” He turned to Sirius. “Or scaring your mother's portrait… or— Or how you're even here?”

“There's a perfectly illogical answer to all of—”

And finally, from the corner of his eye, Remus noticed the floating case.

Sans continued his unobtrusive CHECK, thoughtfully spinning the Horcrux with a circular gesture and completely oblivious to the increasing shock he was causing by doing so. The once-professor slowly looked from the white-haired boy's waving hand to the case that followed the same motions. With no incantation. Wandless.

He took a steadying breath, and the werewolf in him once again noticed the supernatural scent. Indoors, without the rain or steaming tea to distract his nose, it was all the more noticeable: Sans simply didn't smell human.

“Who are you?” Remus asked, incredulous and reeling at the thought of inhuman. Reeling, but not scared or even really worried: mostly he was just confused and very, very curious. “Or, well, if it's not rude to ask… What are you?”

Sirius groaned. “He's on to us, Rattles. It'll be twice as hard getting a prank about you past him now. Not that it really worked in the first place, so…”
But the prankster didn't have a chance to continue moaning about lost prank potential.

“QUIET! QUIET, QUIET, QUIET!” Kreacher shrieked, his small frame shaking with a tumult of emotions.

All eyes (though one pair weren't quite as real as the other two) turned to the elderly house-elf. The wizards had forgotten he was still there and the disguised skeleton had been otherwise occupied.

Kreacher wasn't angry. He wasn't shouting hateful words or spitting curses: he wasn't even *thinking* them. This was too important for trivial things like that. Too important for blood superiority or creature bigotry to get in the way.

Because it was a chance to finish what Master Regulus had asked of him.

“Mr. Sans.” The house-elf's voice was steady, even if his large, bloodshot eyes glistened with barely constrained tears. “You says you can destroy it.”

“yes?”

Large eyes blinked shut, and quietly Kreacher pleaded, “Please. For Master Regulus.”

Sirius was… well, there wasn't any other word for it but 'stunned', but that didn't seem quite strong enough. He was completely flabbergasted, shocked into disbelief; the house-elf that had always been such a nuisance, so rude and sharp-tongued in that original timeline, had just nicely asked —nicely!—for a favor. And it was certainly a favor, though Sirius wasn't sure how his brother fit in to the whole thing.

“What in Merlin's name does Reggie—” Sirius stopped, voice unexpectedly unsteady as the familiar nickname pulled at heartstrings he had thought long-since withered away, fifteen years and a timeline ago. “What *did* he have to do with this?”

Kreacher looked to him, eyes wide and voice hoarse as he answered, “Everything.”

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own *Harry Potter* or *Undertale*.

Super short chapter, sorry, but on the upside next month's will be much closer to the usual length. University has begun, but that shouldn't affect chapter length too much.

Updates on the first of every month.

We've just hit 325 kudos! That's— That's incredible! I can't possible thank you all enough for the support you give this story, even just by reading it! I hope you continue to enjoy this little (not so little, nearly 50,000 words!) story of mine as it goes on.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Chapter Summary

Sans used [Hyper Beam]! It was super effective!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

He hadn't thought about his brother in a long time. Certainly not in any meaningful way, at least. Perhaps it had come up briefly when he had told Harry about the family tapestry, but he knew that couldn't count. Not when all he had had to say—all he had allowed himself to say—had been more about pureblood bigotry than his brother.

His own little brother.

Perhaps he had been avoiding it. Just like how, even here and now, after everything—the void, dying… he still avoided looking over at the green-painted door that stood across from his own room.

“Explain,” Sirius demanded, wholly focused on Kreacher and what secrets he might hold.

Kreacher shook his head, even though his eyes never left the floating glass case. “No. No, Master Regulus…” the house-elf's voice broke on the name, but he pressed on. “He said to never tells the family what happened. Never.”

“then tell me,” said Sans, stepping in before Sirius had a chance to angrily force out the answers he wanted. “this has something to do with the shouting that happened when we first met, yeah?”

A jerking nod, but Kreacher tried to protest. “But Master Regulus——”

“of course,” Sans pressed on, “if sirius happens to eavesdrop on us, that's not you telling him.”

The house-elf said nothing for a moment, and his eyes briefly flicked from the Horcrux to Sirius and back. Eventually, as if he couldn't bear to look at either, his gaze drifted to the floor between his feet.

Then, voice soft and sore with long-held grief, he began, “Kreacher was to help the Dark Lord and come right back home.”

Silence.

“tell me,” Sans repeated, low tone coaxing but patient. Setting the case back on the table, he sat down on the floor across from Kreacher and simply waited.

After a long moment, and in that unsteady way that meant he was trying to keep himself together, Kreacher continued his story. “The Dark Lord used Kreacher to hide the locket away, in a basin on an island in a cave. Made Kreacher to drink a hideous potion. The thirst—” His voice shook, but now that he had started, he wasn't going to stop. “Left Kreacher to die, but Master Regulus told to come right back home.”
“So you did.” Remus had joined them on the floor at some point, listening with rapt attention. “He… he saved your life.”

The house-elf just nodded. “Kreacher tolds him what had been done, and Master Regulus…” A deep, steadying breath. “Master Regulus could not do nothing, not when he knew now the Dark Lord's weakness.”

Sirius repeated the words without speaking, mouth making the shapes but seemingly incapable of sound. The implication that Regulus—Reggie, his little brother—had been willing to… willing to stand up for what was right, if only given a chance, was staggering. Part of him thought that Kreacher might be embellishing: trying to make the master he had cared so much for into more of a hero than he actually was… but then, given that this was his family they were talking about, Sirius doubted taking action against the self-styled Lord Voldemort would be viewed favorably.

The house-elf again fell silent, and so Sans prompted, “you went back.”

A nod. “This time, Master Regulus drank the potion. It… it makes him so thirsty… Kreacher knows how badly. But the water in the lake isn't safe.” Kreacher's voice began to sound nearly fevered, though it had dropped to a quiet whisper. “Master Regulus, no, please, in the water… so many hands, rotting and reaching and— and Kreacher was told to go, to leave, to take…”

“Infri.” Remus closed his eyes, mind filling in the blanks and drawing up what the scene must have been like. He could remember when he had first read about them, sitting in the Hogwarts library with a number of books from the Restricted Section stacked at his side. Just recalling the illustration he had seen in the book made him shiver in disgust.

Kreacher seemed either unwilling or unable—Sans was fairly sure it was the latter—to tell more. A heavy silence descended over the four of them.

Sirius had always thought his brother had died running away, fleeing from the choices he had made like… like a coward: weak and finally unable to bear the weight of his crimes.

But Regulus hadn't.

Merlin's beard, he never had been very good at figuring out how Slytherins think.

Flopping down to sit on the floor with the rest of them, Sirius let out a whooshing sigh that stirred the fake hair of Sans's glamour. A part of him idly noted that it was a fairly convincing bit of illusion, if not quite perfect. Another part of him recognized that observation was a rather lame attempt to distract himself from what he had just learned.

“infra… they're those— ah.” There was a note of sudden understanding, pieces falling into place, and Sans paused to try and figure out a softer way to put it. Not having much luck, after a moment he just went with, “dead bodies, reanimated?”

This seemed to strike a chord with Sirius, who remarked, “That explains the yelling, then.”

“Yelling?” Remus asked, before recalling what had been briefly mentioned of their first encounter with the house-elf. Trying to line up the same pieces his two friends clearly had, he got the distinct impression that he was missing something major. “But what— I mean, Sans, you mentioned something about a grudge… but what does that have to do with Infri?”

The two shared a look: never a good sign. Remus resisted the urge to smack one of them. Or maybe both of them.
“well,” Sans started, “i must've looked like the dead when he saw me.”

Sirius smacked at him—keyword being 'at'—before shifting the conversation away from possible kinda-undead people and back to the house-elf, the house-elf’s story, and the dark artifact. “Ignore that for a minute, because I just— Kreacher, this… that's really what happened?”

“Kreacher does not lie!”

With a look that was nearly as skeptical as a look could be, Sirius just waited in doubtful silence.

The house-elf had the decency to look a bit chagrined, ears folding down slightly, and he quietly appended, “Not about this.”

On the family tapestry, right beside his own scorched-away name, a stitched skull stared down and mocked him: his own brother, dead and gone… and Sirius had scorned him for so long. It was unbelievable, that Regulus would have gone so far into the dark, yet not become lost in it. Not completely.

But he wanted to believe it. Merlin, he wanted to so badly.

A rush of guilt tugged at his already emotionally-sore heart: wondering how different things might have been if he had been there for his brother. Maybe, if he hadn't pushed him away with the rest of his family… Maybe Regulus wouldn't have even started down his dark path. Wouldn't have needed to. Looking back, the reasons Sirius had left them behind—left him behind—felt shallow.

And now, well. It was the least he could do, to try to finish the last thing his brother had begun.

He sighed, and his voice was so quiet he was likely the only one who could hear what he was even saying. “I thought… I wish… ‘sorry’ isn't enough, but I don't have much else for you, Reggie.” Sirius closed his eyes for a second, then nodded once. “But at least we can finish off this locket for you.”

Sans reached out with his blue magic again, popping open the glass case and carefully floating the Horcrux a good distance above where they all sat on the floor. “so should i take that as permission, or…?”

“How do it.”

With a nod, the disguised skeleton once again turned his attention to puzzling out the best way to destroy the dark artifact without blasting a hole through the wall. Or sending a brilliantly white blast of magic out through an open window like some kind of glorified signal flare: he'd overheard some of the reactions to the blast he'd accidentally overpowered back at Hogwarts. Stuff like that was really noticeable, and he wasn't sure what all the Fidelius would (or could) keep hidden. Best not to risk it.

A flick of his wrist sent the locket spinning around to face him, and one crooked finger dragged out the wriggling tear of hideously stained SOUL into the visible spectrum. Maybe it had once been a rich shade of purple, back when it had been whole and new and so very young, but Sans could tell that all color had long since been drained away by oppressive black hatred. Overwhelming hatred.

Even just brushing against the level of violence this SOUL had dealt sent icy shivers down his spine.

He gave it a tentative magic poke, knowing that even though it looked like it could disintegrate in a strong enough breeze, SOULs are not something that should ever be underestimated.
Trying to categorize the different enchantments he could feel under his magical grip, Sans tweaked a few of the larger strands that held the whole collection together. Abruptly, there was a slight snap in the magic, like a latch being forced undone.

With an ominous click, the locket flicked open.

“…those aren’t pictures,” Sans murmured, staring at the pair of crazed brown eyes peering out from where there should have been photos.

The eyes rapidly swiveled around, as if taking in the scene, before focusing with eerie intensity on Sans. Then hissed words filled the air: words in English overlaid by an inhuman, serpentine tongue.

“I have seen your heart,” it whispered, rhythm steady, almost like it was chanting, “and it is mine.”

That was the closest translation, anyway, and pretty much what the English voice had echoed. Sans wasn’t the best at speaking serpent, but he had spent some time learning back in the Underground; there were all sorts of monsters, after all, and over the years Sans had met quite a lot of them.

The locket didn’t seem to appreciate the lackluster response its spooky message had received—that was how Sans was interpreting the distinctly put-out magical twitch he felt, anyway. Then, with remarkable force, the enchantments on the locket lurched. The dark eyes suddenly stretched, pooling outward like a pair of uncomfortably large water drops about to fall. With a swirl of color, the eyes vanished, replaced by…

Another pair of dark eyes, but infinitely more familiar to Sans. Rosy cheeks and a mocking smile, brown hair cut short around their face: just as he remembered.

He froze, and distantly he thought he could hear a ringing laugh.

“You didn’t solve anything, Sans.” Chara spoke with the Horcrux’s voice, hissing overtones and all, but it almost didn’t matter. He just watched numbly as an immaterial hand formed, followed by the rest of their arm: the sleeve of the striped jumper was poisonously green.

Sans didn’t technically need to breathe, but he would guess this was at least a little bit like drowning. He felt a hand rest on his shoulder, a voice call for his attention, but it seemed so very far away.

The distorted Chara grinned, twisted and cruel, and darkness leaked down their face from where brown eyes used to be.

“You should just give up.”

He’d done so before. There wasn’t any reason not to do so again. It was just… so much easier than trying and trying and trying only to fail them every time. To fail his brother.

“As if he’d ever forgive you!”

That gave him abrupt pause, because that thought was so completely at odds with everything Papyrus stood for. Everything. His brother was strong and brave and always—always—so painfully forgiving.

Papyrus would forgive him for giving up back then.

Even if Sans didn’t deserve it, and that was always what hurt the most.
The Horcrux was already scrabbling to grab another spiritual foothold in Sans's head, trying to ferret out all of his fears to fling back against him. It had already stolen those few phrases from the dark void, chosen specifically to weaken and tear and open a hole in the skeleton's SOUL to let the blackened fragment in... but it had miscalculated.

Badly.

Sans could feel the probing tendrils now that he knew what was going on, and he knew he would only have this brief moment of clarity to strike. He didn't have time for fancy magical finagling: to poke and pry the SOUL away from its bejeweled shell with a careful hand. There was going to be collateral damage.

With a veritable flood of blue magic, he pushed the trio of stunned witnesses away against the walls. Still unsettled—magically and emotionally—by the Horcrux rooting around in his head, Sans couldn't do much more than hope that he didn't overcharge the blast like he had in the forest.

As was, his magic was causing little flickers and distortions in his glamour. Sans was a bit too distracted to take note, but the illusion in the area around his left eye-socket was especially thin, leaving behind a black hole filled with flickering gold and blue.

A single Gaster Blaster materialized in the air above where he still held the locket suspended, pointed straight down.

It took and instant to charge, and, with a rush of air, it fired.

Stars, the screaming: long, drawn-out, and nearly mad.

The white light was concentrated—focused, thankfully, right where he had wanted it—and likely more than powerful enough to vaporize the possessed jewelry on its own. Just to be on the safe side, however, Sans twirled his magic into a very familiar pattern. Sparks of red and blue mixed into a streak of purple as karma tore apart the corrupted SOUL.

When he stopped the blast, all that was left was a toasty chain and the melted remains of half a locket; there wasn't even a slightest hint of the dark presence that had possessed it moments before.

There was also a sizable hole through the floor.

Remus was staring... and honestly, it didn't seem like he was capable of much else at the moment. In contrast, Sirius crawled over to the perfectly circular hole and peered through to the dining room below. Thankfully the huge table remained undamaged, though one of the chairs was now little more than dust and splinters in a slightly scorched circle on the floor.

“Merlin's beard,” Sirius whispered, before leveling a somewhat peeved expression at Sans. “You know, I should probably be concerned that you just blasted a hole through my floor.”

Sans blinked, still refocusing. “but...?”

“Well, I never did like this rug.”

“then you're welcome, i guess.”

Though Remus was still trying to process what he had just witnessed, he did his best to scrape his jaw off the floor and demand answers. “How—? What was—? Floating skull!? And you're just —?”
Or at least, to try to demand answers.

“gaster blaster,” Sans provided. “the skull thingie's called a gaster blaster.”

Remus took a deep breath to sort himself out. “While informative,” he began, voice still a bit unsteady with barely contained confoundment, “that doesn't really tell me anything.”

“exactly!”

“And don't think I've forgotten my earlier question! I fully intend to find out who—it—you are,” Remus added; he didn't particularly care if Sans turned out not to be human, that'd be pretty hypocritical, but it certainly wasn't in his curious nature to just leave a puzzle unsolved.

“gee, how many times i gotta say it?— i'm just a nobody,” Sans said, repeating an oft-used pun that Remus couldn't even appreciate yet.

As if to punctuate the complete contrast between that remark and the magical feat he had just performed, what was left of the locket dropped through the brand new hole and clattered noisily onto the dining room table below.

“Sure you are,” deadpanned Remus, and it's quite possible no one had ever managed to pack that much skepticism into just three words before. It was pretty impressive, actually.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

By the way, if you like Regulus Black, I definitely recommend Harry Potter and the Deus Ex Machina by Karmic Acumen. It's got time travel and interesting ideas and cool magic and a whole lotta canon divergence… good stuff. Bit mean on Dumbledore, though, so heads up about that.

It's the month of spooky skeletons, guys! I hope you all have fun plans for Halloween, even if those plans consist of staying home and watching old so-bad-it's-good horror movies or something. That may or may not be my plan. You have a month to work it out.

Thanks for all the comments and kudos, and I hope you continue to enjoy!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Remus had actually taken Sirius up on his offer of a place to stay, though it wasn't clear if it was simply because he wanted to spy on Sirius or because he wanted to spy on Sans. That's what Sirius joked, anyway.

Although Sans was pretty sure both of those things were actually true.

Regardless of reason, Remus's presence meant that Sans would have to keep his glamour up virtually all the time. Not that he was particularly against the other man discovering his skeletal-ness, but, not to be contrary, he rather liked Remus not knowing. It might have been a while since the last timeline where they all ended up on the surface, but Sans keenly remembered how humans treated monsters: fear or detached fascination, typically. Certainly not like fellow people, most of the time. So it was nice to be treated as just Sans, secrets and quirks and all.

Of course, with Remus being a werewolf (and thus almost a monster himself), he probably wouldn't be species-ist or anything, but Sans didn't see any reason why he should risk it.

Besides, it was kinda funny watching the man try and figure him out.

A few hours ago, Remus had gone back to his apartment to grab his things. This meant, of course, that Sirius and Sans were currently free to do whatever without their soon-to-be roommate demanding answers.

And Sirius knew just what he wanted to do.

As soon as Remus walked out the door and Apparated away, Sirius spun around to Sans with a scheming grin. “Guess what?”

“Oh no.” Sans knew that look. “What’s the plan now, paddy-paws?”

“Nothing new, don't worry.”

Sans let his glamour drop—knowing he wouldn't get too many chances later—as he followed Sirius back to the drawing room. If the not-new plan in question was what he thought it was, then Sans was admittedly interested. “Is this about that magic type thing?”

“Yep!”

Since Sirius seemed more interested in sitting himself on the edge of the newly made hole in the floor, legs dangling down into the dining room below, Sans had to prod, “…so what about that magic type thing?”
“Well, that should be obvious,” he replied, leaning back on his hands. “I want to see if you can cast spells.”

“thanks for spell-ing it out for me.” Sans, in a remarkably fluid motion for being all bones, flopped down beside his friend. “how?”

The wizard paused, thinking for a moment. Then he went with a most remarkably simple answer, “You try to cast a spell, I guess.”

“in case you somehow missed it, the last time i used a wand it exploded.”

“Exploded’ is a strong word.” Sirius waved the issue away. “Besides, wandless magic is totally a thing. Even if most people can't do it. And you already do stuff without a wand, so, I mean, you can just wave a stick or whatever and pretend.”

“just any ol' stick?”
Spinning his own glorified stick as he thought, something occurred to him: “Best we avoid Ollivander anyways.” Sirius nodded to himself, sagely adding, “That man knows things.”

“speaking of knowing,” Sans interjected, “i know no spells.”

A shrug. “We'll start simple, obviously. Like, uh, 'Lumos'. That's pretty much the first charm you learn at Hogwarts, anyway.” After another moment's thought, he added, “Wait, haven't you already done a light spell thingy before?”

Sans nodded and absentmindedly kicked his feet as they dangled, then said, “you're dead set on this plan, aren't ya.”

“Yep!” Sirius said again, with the same eager cadence as before.

The skeleton heaved a put-upon sigh, even if it was mostly just for show. “if i must, then.”

“Fantastic!” With a flourish—Sans wasn't sure there was any other way, at this point—Sirius held his wand at the ready. “So, since you've already got a light spell, let's try... uhm. Oh bugger, you've got a float-y spell too. Maybe 'Incendio’?”

“that sounds like burning,” Sans said, and he gave a pointed look to the hole: a stellar example of damage he could cause with magic. “not so hot on that idea.”

Sirius had to agree, and so he went back to the mental drawing board. Then, rather swiftly, he exclaimed, “I know!”

With a flick of his wand, the glass case that had held the Horcrux flew over to him. It was a pretty piece of glasswork, if perhaps a bit simple. The edges of the case were beveled, and the base had a delicate outline of curling vines carved into its sides. Sirius held it up, appreciating how the glass glinted in the light.

He proceeded to drop it down the hole. It shattered rather spectacularly on the table a few meters below.

“what?”

“There,” Sirius said, sounding satisfied. “Now we can have you fix it. The spell's 'Reparo’, by the way.”
Sans leaned forward, looking down at the shards of glass. “could i maybe get a demonstration?”

Cue dramatic scoffing noises. “I suppose.”

Very deliberately tracing out a spiral triangle in the air, Sirius spoke the name of the spell and then let the magic do its work. On the table below, the lid of the case reformed, pieces moving about as if the world was suddenly being rewound. Sans tracked the magic, watching the invisible layers of magic flicker through sequences of colors and saturations. The repaired lid clacked gently against the tabletop once the magic finished its work.

“Ta-da!”

There was no response from Sans, as he was too busy twisting his magic around to notice. Mentally tugging what colors he thought he might need from the swirl of magic in his SOUL, he sent it cascading down in the same pattern he had seen. A few of the larger glass pieces twitched toward each other, and two that were rather close fused together. Then the shards fell still again.

Sans huffed, slightly annoyed at the result.

Sirius, on the other hand, whooped and gave the short skeleton a congratulatory pat on the back. “You see that?! Ha-HA, I knew it!”

The skeleton gave the wizard a skeptical look. “you did, did ya?”

“Er… I hoped… it?”

Mentally shuffling out the colors again—choosing more shades of greens this time, since he thought it might help—Sans again settled his magic over the broken case. And indeed, more pieces clicked together. He kept the stream of energy slow but consistent for a second or two, slightly adjusting colors and patterns, until he felt something almost to fall into place: like stumbling across the key to solving a tough puzzle.

The rest of the shards swept together and, all at once, the case was restored.

Spell complete, it was obvious what Sans should say: “ta-da?”

“Perfect!” Sirius actually dropped himself down through the hole, falling into a crouch on the table with a loud thud. He poked the newly repaired glass case with an excited smile. “Do you know what this means?”

Sans took a shortcut directly into sitting on one of the chairs, and he regarded his friend with an almost wary interest. “what?”

Taking a seat himself—still on the table, of course—Sirius replied, “We need to get you a stick and a letter.”

“or i could just, you know…” The skeleton snapped his fingers with a click and a bone appeared in his grip. It was about twelve and a half inches, slightly tapered, and not perfectly straight.

It did look a bit like a white wand.

Sirius made a grabby gesture, wanting to look closer, and Sans obligingly handed over the bone. As Sirius turned it over in his hands, he noted that, strangely enough, it had a triangular cross section. The tips both ended as expected for a bone—bulging slightly where it would meet a joint—but with a flick of his own wand he smoothed the thinner end into a clean taper. While it still wasn't
perfectly straight, it definitely looked like a proper wand now. He gave it an experimental swish and flick, as if it were a real wand.

Though the wizard didn't notice, the grand piano lurched slightly, rose maybe an inch into the air, then quietly settled back down. Sans, however, gave the instrument a suspicious look. Perhaps his fake wand would be slightly more kosher than expected.

With yet another flourish, Sirius passed it back to Sans. Once it left his hand, he noticed something like a comfortably magical tingle fade away; it felt very much like handing off a real wand, but, since that made no sense, he ignored it. “And that's that! Now I just need to pester Perkins into getting your name on the Ministry list!”

“What list?” Sans asked, curiously inspecting his magic-made bone-turned-wand.

“Student list,” Sirius answered with a shrug. “The Ministry finds muggleborns the same way they detect underage magic, basically, so they're in charge of making up a list of new students and sending it to the headmaster. Then he sends out the acceptance letters.”

Sans tucked his new 'wand'—and maybe he didn't really need to use the quotes—up his sleeve before saying, “that seems kinda, i dunno, overcomplicated. with all those steps, how can it be performed to the letter every time?”

As he prepared to go into what little detail he knew of the system, Sirius realized the question was probably more for the sake of the pun: Sans probably wasn't actually all that interested in how it works. Before he could think up a pun reply of his own, the pair of them heard the front door groan open.

“Remus must be back!” Excitedly hopping off the table, Sirius rushed to the door.

“If that's not him i'd be pretty concerned.” Sans flicked on his glamour and, of course, elected to take his own shorter route.

Opening the door just as Sirius was about halfway down the hall, Sans stepped aside. Just in case Sirius decided to—and yes, there it was: a spell flew past that, to Sans, felt like giggles. Well, it flew past them both. Sirius had tripped up on the old carpet, sending his hasty prank spell sailing harmlessly through the air over their heads.

“Good to see you too, Padfoot.” Remus had a clearly shrunken chest at his feet and a small bag over one shoulder. He levitated his luggage over the threshold with a swish and flick of his wand and let the door click shut. “You might want to work on your aim, though.”

Sirius pouted. “That would have been dead on if this bloody carpet hadn't—”

He stopped, dropping the conversation entirely in favor of something he was frantically trying to fish out of a pocket. It was a mirror, apparently, and Sans could tell that it had the same sort of echo-y magic as the little black notebook Perkins had given them. Sirius turned and headed back toward the dining room, Remus and Sans hurrying a few steps after him.

“Is that what I think it is?” asked Remus.

“i couldn't tell ya.”

Then the magic in the mirror almost seemed to flip, and Sirius cheerily greeted, “Hey, Harry!”
Harry was sitting on his bed, an unwrapped package resting on his lap. It wasn't a very large package, containing only a very brief letter and a small mirror, but he regarded it like a great treasure. Although, to be honest, he wasn't quite sure what sort of treasure it was. The short not-nearly-clear-enough note was not very helpful, and reading it over again didn't really help at all.

“But how do I…?” He flipped the paper over to see if there might be anything else on the back. Nothing, and back to the front to continue staring at the single sentence. Aloud, he read: “It's a two way mirror, so just give me a call whenever you want to talk’. It'd be helpful if I knew how to!”

His own reflection stared back at him from the small mirror, and he gave it a somewhat annoyed glare.

It, obviously, just continued mirror-ing.

Hedwig hooted at him, and Harry had the sneaking suspicion that she was having a bit of a laugh at his expense. He gave her a petulant look: it wasn't his fault that he didn't know how to use the darn thing. At least being completely stumped gave him a weak excuse as to why he didn't contact Sirius as soon as he received the gift the day before; in reality a good portion of that time was spent completely oblivious to the fact that he had gotten anything. He had only found the package when he woke up, apparently having slept on it.

“Well?” he asked the bird, and he wasn't quite sure how rhetorical he was being. “Do you have any ideas?”

Another hoot and a ruffling of feathers was his answer.

Harry nodded anyway, as if his owl had just delivered some sage advice, and turned his attention back at the mirror. “I see, I see. Now if only I knew Sirius's phone number, then—”

He was cut off as the mirror in his hands suddenly grew very warm. Its glassy surface looked, for a single moment, as if it was made of water. Ripples cascaded across Harry's reflection, and with each passing shimmer his own face was replaced by another. In complete open-mouthed astonishment, Harry found himself staring down at a smiling Sirius.

Sirius waved, though it was a bit more like excited flailing. When he spoke, his voice came from the mirror with perfect clarity. “Hey, Harry! I was wondering when you'd call!”

“Sirius!”

“That's my name, don't wear it out,” he joked, his eyes lit up with good humor. The image tilted wildly as Sirius shifted his mirror, and Harry thought he caught sight of something—someone?—bluish white in the background before it quickly ducked out of sight. His godfather shot a look over his shoulder and grumbled something about reflexes before returning his attention to Harry. “How's it going, pup?”

Harry couldn't help but smile, a warm feeling settling in his heart. “Well enough, I suppose. Though I did just spend the better part of an hour trying to figure out how to call you with a mirror.”

Someone out-of-frame remarked, “i told you your note was too vague.”
Another voice—one Harry distinctly recognized—asked, “Did he write more than one sentence? Because I doubt it.”

“Wait a minute…” Harry frowned, somewhat confused. “Was that Professor Lupin?”

“That it was,” the voice replied, and the image reflected in the mirror again turned at a crazy angle as Sirius adjusted to include Harry's smiling professor in the call. Or rather, Harry supposed, his ex-professor; he still thought that that was unfair.

Professor Lupin grinned, and Harry noticed rather abruptly how different he looked when compared to the glum man he had said goodbye to before heading to the Hogwarts Express. The man seemed far more at ease with himself, unburdened. Or, well, as unburdened as a werewolf is likely to ever get. And even though there were still dark, sleepless circles under his eyes, Lupin's smile lit up his face and shone with a reawakened sense of mischievousness.

Suddenly the mirror spun again, and again a bluish white blur slid away.

Sirius addressed the blur, complaining, “Oh, come on, Rattles! If you're planning on making background quips, you should at least introduce yourself.”

Harry knew that name, obviously, since it was attached to the biggest mystery of the past month. He immediately tried to spot the illusive 'Rattles' in the scene: uselessly craning his head side to side, as if that would somehow actually turn the image.

“how about… i don't do that thing you just suggested?”

“Tough luck, Rattles.” Sirius turned to Lupin. “Help me catch the bugger?”

“My pleasure.”

The squawk of sudden alarm startled a laugh from Harry, and, after carefully propping the mirror up against something on a table, both Marauders took off. He could hear the noises of them chasing after someone he couldn't see from his limited perspective. Then they both dashed through the frame again, chasing that blur.

Out of sight, Sirius called, “Remember, no shortcuts!”

“What do you mean by 'shortcuts’?”

“i'll flee how i wanna flee, thanks.”

Harry, to the open air in front of the mirror, remarked, “Why run away at all?”

The noises stopped.

“Yeah, I mean, you're going to meet him when you go to Hogwarts anyway.”

“oh, so that's official now?”

“Yep! …Kinda?” Sirius returned and reclaimed his seat before whispering conspiratorially to Harry, “He hasn't got the letter yet, but I'll figure out something.”

Next to reappear in the mirror was Lupin. Well, Lupin and the individual who must be the ever-mysterious Rattles. Hilariously, in order to be able to bodily haul Rattles into the magical call, Lupin appeared to have captured him by the scruff of his jacket and now held the kid squirming a good foot and a half above the floor. The kid. Now that caught Harry off guard: Rattles looked to
be a few years younger than Harry himself!

“And this is…?” asked Harry, trailing off for somebody to fill in the answer. Because sure, he thought the short, white-haired boy was Rattles, but part of him—most of him, to be honest—needed to hear it confirmed aloud.

Still being held aloft, the boy raised a nonchalant hand in greetings. “I'm Rattles. Also known by my actual name: Sans.”

“Now was that so hard, Sans?” Lupin chided, finally lowering the pale kid back onto his own two feet.

“yes.”

Sirius snorted in amusement.

Harry was still kinda reeling from the realization that Rattles was a kid like him. “Aren't you a little young to be helping convicts escape from imprisonment?”

“aren't you?” Sans returned with a cheeky grin.

“…Touché.”

And so the conversation went, from joke to joke to story and so on. This was probably the happiest Harry had been all summer, and it showed in every easy smile and relaxed laugh—though he did try to keep quiet to avoid disturbing his aunt or uncle. Or Dudley, perish the thought of him finding out about the mirror: the bully'd break it, guaranteed.

Sirius, at one point, had even gotten up and walked around his safe house where he had been (and would be) hiding, turning the mirror away from himself to show off the place. It was a bit gloomy—though Sirius claimed they had been working on that—and just generally old looking, but it was a sight better than the leaky Shrieking Shack or some random cave would have been. Harry had, admittedly, been somewhat worried about that, so he was happy that his godfather had somewhere safe and dry to sleep.

He was even happier when Sirius promised that he could come visit—maybe even live there, if he wanted—just as soon as they swept out all the lingering dark magics.

“How long should that take?” Harry asked.

Taking a distracted moment to calculate possible timeframes, Sirius very nearly stumbled and fell down what appeared to be a very random hole in the middle of the floor. Remus caught him in time, having been watching for that very event. From wherever he was out of frame—unseen seeming to be his most natural state of being—Sans chuckled.

“man, harry.” Sans's face poked up in the corner briefly to flash him a quick grin before ducking away again. “he must be giving you his hole attention, i guess.”

Sirius, who had by now successfully maneuvered around the hole and out of the room entirely—Harry still had no clue why there was a hole just... there—sounded slightly salty when he said, “Oh no, are you jealous, Rattles?”

“i don't need your sar-chasm right now, paddy-paws.”

“Puns.” Lupin shook his head in mock disappointment. “It seems I shall never escape them. Sirius,
Sans... Even your father, James, wouldn't pass up a good pun if the chance presented itself.”

Harry blinked. “Seriously?”

“Well, naturally!” His godfather, grinning broadly, began to say, “It's very Sirius—”

He was swiftly cut off. “No, please, not this one again.”

“do it,” urged Sans.

There was a moment of silence—Harry tried not to snort at the apparent standoff happening on the other end of the mirror call—and then, very quickly and nearly under his breath, Sirius finished, “Very Sirius business.”

Remus smacked himself on the forehead, but he was smiling as widely as the rest of them.

Yes, Harry grinned to himself. This was definitely the happiest he had been all summer.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Happy Halloween!
May your spooks be spooky, your tricks be tricky, and your treats be… treat-y?

And so it seems that Sans is capable of wizarding magic: all he has to do is play with the pretty colors until it matches up just so. He even gets a magic stick!
If you're curious how his summoned bone can work as an actual wand, it's because magic. More specifically, it's because it's made of magic. Typical wands have a magical core surrounded by a magically compatible wood. His bone, in essence, has a magical core surrounded by more solidified magic. Pretty neato, if I do say so.
And I do, 'cause I just did.

Comments are always appreciated, and I read every single one (even if I procrastinate replies)! If you have a comment, question, or critique, please leave a comment. Thanks to everyone who has read and enjoyed, and special thanks to those who have left a kudos or a comment!

Some of the reviews on the fanfiction.net version brought up good points, so I figured I would include my answers here as well.

mdmpinkie9088: Unlike the case with Gaster—who was likely pulled in against his will, teared apart, and forgotten by the world at large—Sans had a safe entry point to the void: through Chara and Frisk going to the reset 'screen'. Thus people still remember Sans, he's just gone missing.

Nyx the Author: I had considered placing the Underground somewhere in the world of Harry Potter, but decided that wouldn't be possible. When Sans left the void, he couldn't return to his own timeline(s) because it would restore the resets. Even following Sirius, if they shared the same world then every point Sirius would remember would also restore the resets (even though he wouldn't have known they had been happening).
See ya on the flipside, everyone!
The child woke up with a start. They were laying on their back in a small patch of sunshine-yellow flowers, and they knew that without even needing to look around. Some scattered petals drifted through the air, disturbed from the child's fall from the surface; never mind the fact that, from the child's perspective, it had been so very long since that fateful tumble. Light from somewhere above cast the rest of the room in shadow, as if they had landed in a spotlight. The ceiling of stone stretched over head, cracked rock that faded-but-still-unusual shade of purple.

Frisk lay there for a long moment, suspended in their disbelief.

A yellow petal landed on their nose and they sneezed.

Then they sat up.

The world remained firmly where it had been: grass, flowers, stone. Real and solid and… and real.

They stared down at their hands—clean, so long as dirt doesn't count and it really doesn't— with undisguised wonder. But before they could even push themselves to their feet, there was a vibration through the soil. With a sort of fwoop sound, a large golden flower sprouted at their feet.

Flowey wasn't smiling. If anything, he looked rather bewildered. Maybe even angry. Either way, it definitely wasn't the hollow, deranged, or sarcastic smile Frisk was used to seeing.

“What. Did. You. Do?” he asked, his already high-pitched voice maybe a full octave higher with sheer desperation.

“It's—” Frisk had trouble speaking, both because they felt rather emotionally swamped and they were out of practice. “It's gone n-now, Flowey. N-no more… no more resets. Ever.”

The flower blinked. “Wha—?”

But before Flowey could even begin his planned barrage of questions, he found himself smooshed into a desperate hug. The pair of leaves that stood in for his arms twitched uselessly, pinned. He could feel Frisk shaking.

“It's— it's f-finally over.”

Flowey tried for another wiggle a few minutes later, after the child stopped shivering. This time Frisk let him go. “What do you mean 'no more resets'?” he asked. “That's not— That's not possible!”

Swiping a sleeve over their face in an attempt to clean up, they shrugged. When they spoke, their

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Those Left Behind

Chapter Summary

A brief look back into the Underground.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes
voice was even more hoarse than before. “I…” Frisk took a breath and admitted, “We had been fighting Sans, but then when we died he followed us and—"

“Smiley Trashbag followed you!?"

Not phased in the least by Flowey’s shocked interjection, Frisk simply continued, “He must have blasted them or something. I d-don’t know, since he asked me to reset and—"

“Smiley Trashbag asked you to reset!?"

They nodded. “And he split t-them from me. I can’t feel Chara at all any more. At all.”

The flower almost flinched, and an indecipherable expression flickered in his eyes. He was quiet for a long moment, seeming to almost fold in on himself. His leaves curled over the spot where his SOUL would be hidden, had he had one. “I can’t feel them either.”

“It’s over,” Frisk repeated. “I-it’s actually over.”

It looked like Flowey was going to say something more, but he was cut off by the sound of an angry snarl.

A flare of orange light lit up the end of the hall, silhouetting a familiar figure. Multiple balls of fire spun out toward them, casting flickering shadows around the room. “Get away from them!”

The fires swirled, trying to find an opening to burn away the plant without hurting the child.

“W-wait!” Frisk clutched the yellow flower close, trying to shield him from the seeking flames. “D-don’t hurt h-him, p-please!”

With a surprised jerk, the fires stopped moving.

“My dear child…” spoke a motherly voice, soothing even when it sounded so concerned. “That flower is dangerous, you must trust me. I have seen it before.”

Flowey stiffened, another almost-flinch, and looked away.

Frisk shook their head. “N-no.” They took a breath and, with more determination, continued, “No. He helped me. I… I was scared a-and he’s kinda scary too but he’s my best friend.”

Still caught in their embrace, Frisk felt Flowey go very still.

Toriel stepped carefully to the edge of the flower patch and peered down. She might not be able to see the flower’s face, but she searched for any sign of falsehood regardless. There was none. Flowey didn't so much as twitch toward an attack—didn't move to attack this child as he had nearly every other child she had helped in the ruins.

“It… He hasn’t harmed you?”

“No,” they answered firmly.

The tall fluffy monster decided to keep a cautious eye on the flower anyway, though she would refrain from further attacks. For now. But enough of fighting, she still needed to introduce herself. “I am Toriel, caretaker of the Ruins. I pass through this place every day to see if anyone has fallen from the surface. Are you injured at all, my child?”

Frisk shook their head, and they couldn't help but smile at the monster who was their mother in all
but blood. Not now—or yet, perhaps—but that didn't change Toriel's kind, mothering nature from wanting to check that they were okay anyway. Then, seeing that the child was reluctant to stand but not wanting to tower over them as they talked, Toriel knelt down.

To Frisk, the world seemed to blur. Darkened as a memory pulled them away. They were no longer on the patch of flowers, no longer free from that oppressive voice in their mind, and they were standing before a huge door. Toriel, clothes torn and stained with her own blood, had been forced to one knee by Frisk's own hand. There was already dust in the air, choking and heavy with their sins. Pieces of Toriel crumbled away, and her eyes looked at the child with newfound horror. "Now I see who I was protecting by keeping you here."

All Frisk could do was watch, even as someone else's pleased grin spread across their face. Flowey felt Frisk's heart rate skyrocket, and their breathing came in short, desperate gasps. Every exhale sound like they were begging for something, crying for something, but as if they didn't have a voice to speak with. "Frisk? Frisk!"

The child started to shake, and there were tears in their eyes. He twisted his leaves around them in an almost-hug, trying to bring them back from whatever this was… Then his eyes landed on Toriel, who had come as close as she dared—not nearly as close as she wished—when the episode had begun. His mind made the connection easily enough, and he curled a vine out to gesture for the goat monster to come closer.

"Help," he said, making it sound less a request and more a demand.

Toriel didn't need to be told twice. She wrapped the child into a warm embrace, a soothing pulse of green healing magic settling the child's mind into peaceful rest as she rocked back and forth. Flowey, who had been gathered into the hug as well, given Frisk's determined grip, set a leaf on their chest. Their breathing had calmed, and he was inexplicably relieved. "You are both coming with me."

Flowey looked up with a start, and there was an angry retort on his lips. "Both of you," Toriel repeated, and her voice left no room for argument. "This poor child needs you, so, even though I still have my doubts… you shall be coming as well." The paw not gently cradling Frisk scooped up the dirt around the base of his stem before he could protest, depositing him carefully into one of the deep pockets in her dress. She didn't even seem to care that doing so meant filling her clothes with soil.

"Hey— Watch it!" Flowey yelped, swaying with the abrupt relocation.

Toriel stood up gracefully, still hugging the sleeping child to her chest with one fluffy paw. "Let us go home, my child."

The movement provided Flowey with a chance to untangle himself from Frisk's grip, so, instead of being stuck squashed in the middle of an unwanted embrace, he was able to straighten out and simply look around as he rode along. If he didn't know what he knew—couldn't feel what he felt, that emptiness Chara had always at least somewhat filled—he would have thought nothing different of the world. The walls were the same cracked, purple stone as always, the occasional vine tracing a path from the floor to the ceiling. Toriel hummed a calm, moving melody as she made her way through the halls and puzzles of the Ruins.
Flowey drooped, and one leaf couldn't help but curl over the space where his SOUL would have settled.

That emptiness, consuming him since he had woken up all those resets ago.

It had torn at Chara too, he knew.

Yet now… it was gone. He felt almost, well…

He felt.

That, more than anything else, told him that this time was different.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Some of you might know that I was tentatively planning a possible parallel story about what's happening in the Underground. I've decided to simply tell that story in short bonus chapters that will come every once in a while, as opposed to setting up a whole 'nother fanfic.

I hope you had a happy Halloween!
Thanks for all the wonderful comments and I hope you enjoyed this short bonus chapter!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Planning Dog Days

Chapter Summary

And so passes the summer: cleaning and relaxing.
Maybe relaxing a little too much, actually.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Remus finally seemed to be settling in to his new place of residence after a week of unnecessarily anxious unpacking. The first day had basically been him nervously asking if it was really actually honestly alright with them, and either Sans or Sirius giving the affirmative. For some reason, the werewolf must have remained unconvinced, given it would take him less than an hour to ask again.

He had claimed one of the larger bedrooms on the second floor, and the three of them had needed to work together to clear out all the dark nasties that had moved in while the house had been all but abandoned for nearly a decade. They had moved on with that particular venture to the library, which, Sirius claimed, was likely the worst of the lot. Something to do with all the dark magic tomes drawing creatures and such.

If it wasn't the worst, then Remus shuddered to think what the rest of the rooms could be like.

"got 'nother biter over here, moon-moon." Sans waved his hand at the wizard in question, a book still attached by paper fangs. One might not expect origami to be sturdy enough for such a thing, but one would be wrong. At least when magic is involved.

The nickname was new (mostly, as it was sort of similar to 'Moony') and Remus wasn't sure how he felt about it yet. It was likely here to stay, though, given his impression of the short magical… kid. He still couldn't say what Sans actually was, but since he looked like a kid on the surface, gosh darn it, that's what he was going to be called.

"Immobulus," Remus cast, freezing the violent literature mid-chomp. Another spell checked for what sorts of dark magics it covered and sorted it appropriately; they weren't getting rid of any books—that'd be a waste—but they were sorting out the darker stuff to be stored somewhere other than the relatively accessible library shelves.

Which is to say, they were being moved to the slightly less accessible library shelves near the ceiling, soon to be bespelled with security charms and so on.

"thanks." Sans checked over his fingers but apparently didn't find the book-dealt damage worth further notice. "i really need to learn that spell. blue magic works for freezing stuff in place, but i still gotta be careful with that."

The werewolf had been pondering the possible security enchantments to set up on the top shelves, but the secretly-a-skeleton's statement drew his attention. So, ignoring his internal debate between spell versus rune wards, he asked, "Blue magic? Does that have anything to do with that blast responsible for the brand new hole in the other room?"
"kinda sorta maybe?"

"I'll take that as a 'certainly'."

Sans snorted in amusement and, for once, saw fit to give some explanation. "blue magic's just a type, see?" With a relaxed wave that still had Remus gaping, even after a full week of living with him, he summoned up a small light blue bone. "i use it a lot for gravity manipulation, but lighter blue is more keeping stuff still and less throwing it around. the blast did have blue mixed in, but not too much."

Ever the curious academic, Remus couldn't help but ask, "Is this color magic only applicable to your spells, or does wizarding magic follow the same patterns?"

Before Sans could reply—it was an interesting question, and one he'd just begun to pursue himself—Sirius burst in with a great huzzah, then promptly tripped over his own feet. He fell flat on his face. Then, face still smooshed into the carpet, he held up a book and waved it in Sans's general direction.

"Behold!"

"yes, i see: a book!"

Turning his head so that he could give Sans his best unimpressed stare, Sirius chucked the book at the disguised skeleton. Sans blue-magicked it to his hand and, up close, recognized it to be the paired notebook Perkins had given them. Knowing that, it was fairly simple to guess the source of Sirius's excitement.

Opening it and looking over the latest entries, Sans, in an attempt at imitating Perkins's voice, read aloud, "'Expect your letter within a few days. Good luck, and I'm not sure if that's directed at you, Sans, or Hogwarts itself.'" He coughed, as if to clear the fake voice from his throat, and, with a nod, snapped the notebook shut. "ya know, that's fair."

Sirius rolled onto his back, pointing his arms into the air in a grand, all-encompassing gesture. "It's perfect!" His arms fell back to the floor with a soft paff. "Well, mostly. If only I, too, could join in the fun."

"why not?"

Remus, who had been the only one still trying to do the cleaning, decided it was a lost cause: this conversation was more interesting than old, maybe-cursed books anyway. Jokingly, he suggested, "Shame your Animagus form is a dog. You could sneak in if it were a cat or an owl. Or, well, a rat. That's clearly worked before."

"Merlin's beard," Sirius whispered, easily brushing aside the old anger at Pettigrew as the opportunity of that idea unfolded in his mind. He surged upright and spun around to face them. "IT REALLY IS PERFECT!"

Naturally, Remus was a bit concerned. "What?"

The energized wizard clapped his hands together with a sense of finality. "Simple! I shall be Sans's guide dog."

Now Sans was concerned. "my what? i'm not blind, paddy-paws."

"Sure, yes, fine." He thought for a moment, before just shrugging. "I don't know, if not a guide dog
then maybe I could rig a glamour to…” Another thought struck. "I could be a tiny dog! Chihuahuas are sort of like toads, right?"

"no." Sans was absolutely sure of that. "chihuahuas are not like toads at all."

Taking an extra second to reconsider, Sirius had to concede that point.

Still skeptical of the entire doggy infiltration plan, Remus had to ask, "But still, a dog? Would that even be allowed?"

"Well," Sirius shrugged, "we could probably just fill out a special pet permission paperwork thing."

Remus frowned slightly. "Really? I didn't know there were forms for that."

"I mean, probably."

"Of course," the werewolf said with a shake of his head. "Yet another plan based on 'maybe's."

"That," Sirius corrected, "was a 'probably'. Big difference."

"so, how do i put this…” Sans ran a hand through the hair of his glamour, enjoying the tingle of strange magic across his phalanges. It was becoming a bit of a habit lately. "are you even house trained?"

Sirius gave a dramatic gasp and clutched at his heart. "How could you doubt me so? I can use a toilet!"

Sans looked to Remus for confirmation, and the studious man gave a solemn nod. "It took a while, I've heard, but Padfoot is perfectly capable of using the toilet. And yes, I mean as a dog."

"I put a lot of effort into learning how to do that."

"Merlin knows why."

"Because reasons."

Teleporting an inked quill to his hand, Sans reopened the notebook and jotted down a few lines. The magic on the page gave that odd ripple that told him that it had been updated in both. At the curious looks he was getting, the disguised skeleton shrugged and provided, "oh, just asking about pet paw-missions for the school—never can be too care-fur."

"Those were good ones," Remus said, and he clapped twice in appreciation. Only twice. It gave him enough time to come up with a reply pun: "You have real tail-ent."

"thank you, thank you. i do try."

Sirius looked somewhat doubtful at that. "Your speed leads me to think that it's not so much 'try' as it it is just second nature."

Sans just shrugged and grinned; puns were so ingrained that it basically was at this point.

Trying to pull them back onto the topic at hand, or at least a topic tangentially related, Remus started to ask a question. "With you planning to sneak into Hogwarts—"

"Is it really sneaking if I do it legally and in full view?" Sirius mused.
Remus ignored him, continuing, "—and I have no doubts you'll succeed somehow, so what will I be doing for a full year? I need to know if I should continue my job search."

"by all means, do so," Sans encouraged; he had more job experience than one might expect of him, given his lazy nature, and he knew all too well the stress of needing an income. "I mean, sure—you don't need to pay rent to stay here, but having spare cash never hurt."

It seemed that Sirius agreed with that sentiment, as he rather enthusiastically exclaimed, "MOONY YES. If you get a job, then I won't have to make due with my old stash. That cubbyhole's looking mighty bare right about now."

"I guess visiting Gringotts would be difficult, given that you're a wanted criminal." At his friend's suddenly gobsmacked expression, Remus suspiciously asked, "It would be difficult, wouldn't it?"

Sirius looked sheepish, one hand anxiously scratching behind his ear. "Alright, so I may or may not have a fairly effective disguise I can wander around in… I just didn't even consider that plan…?"

"you said that bank's run by goblins and not spellwork, yeah?"

Both wizards nodded, wondering what point this abrupt topic change would lead to.

"which means there's definitely people you'd need to interact with." He grinned and, with a shrug, added, "i just wouldn't bank on them not figuring you out."

"But would they care though, that's the real question." Remus wasn't entirely sure, but goblins tended to keep to themselves. Even the prospect of the reward for information on Sirius likely wouldn't sway them, since it's well known that goblins believe wizards are not to be trusted in matters of gold.

Apparently Sirius agreed. "It's not so much that they wouldn't know it was me, but more that they wouldn't do anything about it."

"ah." In a knowing tone, Sans noted, "apathy is a wonderful thing."

The trio fell silent at that, apparently not sure where the conversation should go after that stunning observation. Sans privately wondered if the timing of that pause could be considered ironic, given that lack of action and apathy go hand-in-hand. He decided it was less ironic and more awkward as the quiet persisted.

"So, Moony," Sirius began, breaking the silence with a request that—based on his cheeky grin—was said in at least partial jest. "If you do get a job, will you buy Sans's school supplies?"

Remus hummed, as if considering the option. "Perhaps… but I'll need something in exchange."

"oh? what do ya want?" Sans asked.

He got a one-word reply: "Answers."

The two who were in on the whole Sans-is-literally-just-a-skeleton deal shared a significant look. After a moment, Sirius said, "How about I give you an IOU instead?"

=X=X=X=
In the end, Remus did agree to an IOU: he got it in paper, signed by both Sirius and Sans. It described a very serious promise to explain all—and not just most, but all—the weirdness by the end of summer. Which probably meant he wouldn't get his answers until the day the Hogwarts Express left for the school, but at least he'd get them.

With July having come and gone with no answers and the end of August just around the corner, that prediction was looking more likely by the day.

Although, since procrastination and general laziness (plus the efforts to clean up the house) kept pushing back their visit to Diagon Alley, technically Remus had yet to actually earn the IOU. Sans had indeed received his Hogwarts invitation, and so they did have a list of what he would need… they just hadn't gotten around to actually getting those things yet.

"When exactly are you planning on getting your school supplies?" Remus finally asked one morning while they were all gathered at the table for a late lunch. Sans had only just emerged from his tiny closet of a bedroom, despite it being a couple of hours past noon. As an early riser, Remus had no clue how he did it.

"Some time before the first of September."

Sans was too busy drenching his food in ketchup to reply with anything more descriptive than an agreeing hum.

With a sigh that spoke volumes about how bothersome it could get living with two perpetually calendar-dumb individuals like Sirius and Sans, Remus said, "I should hope you're aware that that means you have less than a week to make the trip."

"Uh-huh," Sirius said, distracted by his sandwich. "Plenty of time."

After a moment spent chewing, Sans paused. "wait. first of september… less than a week… uh, wasn't something gonna happen this summer, paddy-paws?"

Sirius swallowed another bite before replying. "What?"

Now the kid looked positively concerned as he attempted to prod Sirius into remembering. "some sports thing? you said something happened, you know…" With the air of someone skirting around a secret via vagueness, he added, "from back when."

The wizard remained confused for another second, when all of a sudden something seemed to click. The color drained from his face. "Merlin's questionably stylish trousers, Remus!"

Caught off guard by his sudden re-entry to the conversation, Remus confusedly asked, "What?"

"The day, man!" Sirius was getting rather jittery. "What day is it?"

He was glad that he could actually provide an answer, even if he wasn't sure why it mattered. "The 24th." Since just the number didn't seem to be enough, he added, "Of August."

"Sweet merciful Merlin, we still have a day." Sirius all but sagged in relief, sandwich long since forgotten. "I still haven't figured out what to do about it though."

"About what?"
With a look that suggested that he thought the answer to be obvious, Sirius exclaimed, "The Quidditch World Cup!"

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

First off, apologies that this chapter is shorter than usual and (maybe) a bit filler-y. That's just how the cards fell, so to speak, and if I wanted to make it longer it would have been unmanageable for me to still stay on schedule. So yeah, sorry 'bout that. Also I've updated/fixed the order of chapters 18 and 19. No actual changes to the chapters, just flipped where they were.

So actually I didn't know about the Book of Admissions and the Quill of Acceptance (yes, I've shamed my HP trivia nerd status). For the sake of this story I'm gonna leave it as-is.

Many thanks to everyone who reads this story, enjoys it, leaves a kudos, or comments! You are all amazing, and I hope you continue to like this story as it goes on.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Chapter Summary

And they're off to the game (or rather, the camp grounds)! Let's hope everything works out swell.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next day found Sans being dragged reluctantly from his floor-mattress at what he considered to be a far too early hour: any time before noon. Sirius was doing the dragging, naturally.

“Hurry up!” he pestered, sitting the bedraggled skeleton at the dining table. Although, given his disguise was currently on, he looked like a drowsy kid instead; the glamour did a remarkable job simulating the disarray of just-woken-up hair. “Faster! We need to get going!”

“quit-it-tch,” Sans said, managing a pun despite being only half awake. “i'm up, aren't i?”

Remus, who was sitting with one of the books from the library propped open on the table, teasingly asked, “Well, it's actually hard to tell. Are you?”

“arguably, yes.” When he sat down, a plate of plain toast and three sausages appeared on the table. He muttered a quick thanks to Kreacher; the elf's opinion of him had taken a sharp turn after the Horcrux incident, and he had apparently decided that Sans was his responsibility.

Sirius, whose meal had been provided somewhat more grudgingly, was shoveling his own food into his face far faster than was recommended. Though he said nothing, Remus looked a peculiar mix of impressed and vaguely disgusted. And maybe a bit concerned that his friend would end up choking on something. He didn't choke, thankfully, but that meant he finished long before Sans had made his way through a single piece of toast.

He glanced up to the grandfather clock in the drawing room, just barely visible through the ceiling's gaping hole. “Oh pixie poop, it's already past ten?”

“it's only past ten?”

“That it is,” Remus replied, shooting his antsy friend a look before calmly turning another page of his book. “And you should know the game doesn't actually start until much later. Even I know that.”

Sirius seemed largely unconvinced, but he did take a breath and try to settle. Kind of. He wasn't very successful, but it's the thought that counts. “But what if something happens?”

“if something happens, something happens.” Pushing the rest of his breakfast away—leaving two and a half sausages and most of his toast untouched—Sans shrugged. “we'll help when we get there and we'll get there soon enough. so don't get your dress in a twist.”

“It's a robe, not a dress.”
“i call 'em like i see 'em, paddy-paws.”

Remus, who tended to favor more muggle fashion, snorted in amusement. Then, when Sirius shot him a vaguely annoyed glare, he simply turned the page and tried to appear nonchalant. Keyword there being 'tried', obviously.

With a disdainful sniff, doing his best to imitate a puffed-up pureblood, Sirius said, “Just because you never learned to appreciate the effort that goes into looking this good—”

“sirius.” Sans shook his head slowly, then gestured to what the wizard was wearing. “in case you didn't notice, your pants are on the wrong way 'round.”

He looked down at himself. “Oh, so they are.”

The condition of his trousers was easily fixed right then and there with a quick flipping charm; it probably took more effort for Sans to resist the urge to pluck at the magic and make the flip vertical rather than horizontal, but he managed. After all, as hilarious as it might be to induce sudden head-pants… well actually, the more he thought about it the more it seemed like a lost opportunity.

Oh well.

Pants on correctly and food eaten, Sirius returned to pestering Sans to hurry up.

Currently being poked, the disguised skeleton sighed. “do you even know where we're going?”

“Yeah, duh.” Sirius gave him a look that asked if he thought he was stupid or something. “The Quidditch World Cup, obviously. I've only been talking about it since you woke up.”

“that… that wasn't helpful, paddy-paws.”

“He's asking if you know where it is being held,” Remus filled in, recognizing the communication disconnect.

Suddenly Sirius looked rather sheepish. “Ah. So you see, well, not exactly…”

“so you have no clue.” Sans sighed. “great.”

Their resident werewolf swept into the conversation once more by smacking Sirius over the head with a rolled up newspaper; he ignored the muffled complaints from enchanted ink and paper. The largest headline, with little stylized brooms swooping in and around the letters, quite clearly spelled out everything they needed to know.

“Ah-hah, see?” Sirius celebrated (quietly, by his standards). “Simple, we'll just ask this magic paper how to get there.”

Sans snorted. “and by 'ask' he means 'just read that headline'."

Of course, it turns out that the headline article was only sort of helpful, since Sirius didn't recognize any of the location names it had listed. He glared down at the newspaper, as if personally offended by its lack of convenient answers. Remus rolled his eyes and, apparently having predicted this exact scenario, he whacked Sirius over the head with yet another rolled up piece of paper: a map.

“You're a lifesaver,” Sirius praised, though he did move his chair out of hitting range just in case. The map was marked with where the Quidditch stadium actually was, as well as a number of spots
were Portkeys had apparently been set up earlier in the day to deliver people there.

Reading the map himself, Sans curiously asked, “what are ‘portkeys’?”

“Items bespelled to warp whoever is touching it to somewhere else.” With a shrug, Remus turned back to his book. “I never liked traveling by Portkey.”

“So can you get us there, Rattles?” asked Sirius, looking to his conveniently-skilled friend.

Sans tapped the map at about where they were, then traced his finger over to the place marked as the stadium. “dunno, but probably not. i can only take shortcuts to places i've been before or places that i can figure out precisely where it is relative to me. the map's not got a legend, so it's no good.”

“Augh, really?”

“yes, really.”

Sirius flopped his head down onto his crossed arms in disappointment. “So now what?”

With a shrug, Sans replied, “you're the idea guy, aren't you?”

“You know,” he said, shifting so that he could peek at the disguised skeleton despite still squishing his face onto his arms, “you have a remarkable amount of faith in my idea-making skills.”

“it's got me this far.”

The wizard stared down at the map for a few minutes, willing a solution to just come to him. No such luck, unfortunately. Even sitting up didn't seem to get his brain juices flowing any better.

“Merlin's beard, this is getting me nowhere,” he complained, scrubbing one hand through his shaggy hair in distress.

“But you two need to get somewhere, Padfoot,” Remus said, tone somewhat teasing. “Nowhere won't help here.”

“And really,” continued Sans, “there're heres and nowheres everywhere, so somewhere has to be where heres and nowheres aren't. easy.”

Sirius shot them a tepid glare, but he must not have been bothered by their wordplay since he couldn't resist adding his spin. “Since this is getting me nowhere, let's go somewhere.”

Sans asked, “where?”

Standing up, Sirius pointed to one of the marks on the map and replied, “There.”

Just to finish it off, Remus asked for confirmation. “Here?”

“Yes, yes, that spot right there.” Without checking to see if they followed him out, Sirius walked away. From the hallway, he called back, “Let's get going sometime this decade, please.”

To Remus, Sans quietly rhymed, “that's fair, i'm aware… though i don't care.”

The werewolf snorted in amusement before waving them off; he was quite content to remain cozy in the house with a book and a nice cup of tea, forgoing the Quidditch World Cup altogether. It wasn't that he disliked the peculiar flying sport, he just knew where his priorities lay: staying in and relaxing the day away.
Which made Sans a little jealous, to be honest. But never mind his personal laziness, he had a head-wizard to keep out of trouble. So, waving his own goodbye, Sans followed Sirius.

As he walked out, Sirius made sure to grab the much-too-large pointed hat that was hung beside the door. He plopped it on his head and felt the wash of glamour magic sweep over him, changing his facial structure ever so slightly and dyeing his dark hair into light brown curls. A wave of his wand transfigured his robes to complete the look, meaning obnoxiously bright colors. It obviously was not as drastic a change as the one enchanted into Sans’s silver bracelet, but it did the trick.

The pair walked down the front steps and beyond the boundary of the Fidelius, and then Sirius held out his hand. “I’ll take us the rest of the way.”

Sans eyed the hand skeptically. “using your ‘apparate’ thing?”

“Oh come on, Sans,” Sirius said, tone teasing. “It's not like I'll splinch you.”

That statement was not very reassuring. Not least of all because Sans didn't actually know what splinching even was, and, from context, he wasn't sure he wanted to know. At least not before taking the metaphorical leap. Still looking very unsure about this whole idea, he took Sirius’s hand.

With a smile that was probably more scheme-y than intended, Sirius said, “Right, so you're going to feel an odd sort of squeezing sensation.”

“That sounds—”

But Sirius didn't give his reluctant friend enough time to finish what was sure to be a snarky reply. With a quick spin and a sharp snap, the pair vanished from the street.

A second later, Sans decided that Apparating is one of the absolute worst ways to travel.

The world shut into darkness, completely black nothingness tightening down on him from all sides. His magic was being pulled in to a single point, compressed to near vanishing, and that brought with it a strangled pain. It felt as if he was being ground to dust. He would have thought himself dying, if he hadn't been so intimately familiar with that sensation. All at once, the point his magic was collapsing into seemed to fold through itself.

In a rush, reality returned.

Legs buckling under him, Sans slumped down into damp grass. Or, more accurately, he mostly slumped down: Sirius still had a strong grip on his hand so he ended up dangling slightly by one arm. This was fixed with a click from his elbow as he disconnected, followed logically by him falling the rest of the way to the ground.

“we are never doing that again,” Sans said with vehemence, “and i mean never.”

Kneeling down beside his friend, Sirius regarded the arm in his hand. Separated from the rest of the disguise as it was, it had gone back to being bones. The rest of the glamour was still fine, however, meaning the spell apparently compensated for the loss of limb. Sirius prodded Sans with the skeleton's own arm a few times before the poking implement took matters into its own hand, so to speak, and smacked itself out of his grip.

“That bad?”

“worse,” Sans confirmed, grabbing his arm from the ground and slipping it up his sleeve. It reattached with a satisfying pop, and he finally turned his attention to wherever it was that the
horrible teleportation trip had deposited them.

It was an empty, altogether unremarkable park. The grass was wet, green, and filled with weeds. Nearly the entire field was weeds, actually, with yellow and puffed-up-white dandelions scattered quite thoroughly. But just slightly to their left, it looked as if all of the plants—weeds or grass or otherwise—had been completely squashed.

Having also given the area a quick once-over, Sirius then drew his wand and gave it a arching wave. When nothing happened, he joined his friend on the ground with a heavy sigh. “Don't really know why I thought this would be helpful,” he moped.

Sans, who had been eyeing (in a sense) the squished plants, asked, “so… what did you just try and do, exactly? and why come here?”

“Portkey spot,” he answered, as if that explained it all.

Which, in a sense, it did. The only problem was that, given that it was already approaching high noon, there were no Portkeys left here to hitch a ride with.

But that didn't mean there were no clues to follow, given Sans's feel for magical traces.

In fact, there was a curious magical tear in the middle of the patch of trodden grass; much like the uncomfortable inside-out folding of Apparition magic, the tear seemed to somehow rip through itself to somewhere else.

Sirius had taken to grumbling about Portkeys and activation timers and, with particular intensity, “Of course there wouldn't be any left by now, you nitwit!”

Ignoring the wizard entirely, Sans scooted his way through the weed-filled grass until he was sitting right at the edge of the optically invisible rift-to-elsewhere. It wasn't strong enough to carry him off, not by a long shot: obviously it was just leftover residue from the Portkey when it made the trip. As a test, he tentatively reached out toward the old trace of magical transportation with his own shortcut.

The end of the shortcut briefly vanished beyond his perception, but after a moment, like a lens coming into focus, he could begin to make out somewhere else. Another field, to be precise, though it looked to have far fewer weeds than the one they were sitting in currently.

“hey,” he said, waving for Sirius to come closer. Once within grabbing range, Sans snagged Sirius's wrist and, streaming the images directly mind-to-mind, shared what he was seeing at the other end of the shortcut. “does that look right to you?”

It took Sirius a moment to reorient himself, given half of his vision had just been replaced with whatever was going on somewhere else. And, to his surprise (and happy relief), that somewhere else looked be be exactly where they wanted to be: he was sure that he could make out tents farther off past the trees. As if in response to that thought, the image blurred and zoomed to a new location amidst what was certainly a massive slew of magical campsites.

“Yes!” he exclaimed. “Yes, that's definitely the right place!”

Sans nodded, glad to hear that, and then shifted the far end of the shortcut again to find a more discrete entry point. “have all your pieces in order?”

Sirius snorted, his good humor well and truly returned now that the plan was back on track. “You're the one always falling apart, Rattles.”
“good point.” Pretending to take that joking remark under careful consideration, Sans made a show of double checking that he did, indeed, have all of his fingers, toes, and limbs.

And, with no further discussion, Sans whisked them away.

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The next order of business, Sirius knew, was to find Harry.

Given the huge crowd of wizards and witches hanging about their tents in what was, as far as he was concerned, a near infinite expanse of campsites… finding one boy could be a bit of an issue.

Then again, he did have something that should be useful.

As Sans curiously scanned the milling magicals—either impressed by the numbers or maybe just uncomfortable, it was sometimes hard to tell with him—Sirius pulled out a mirror from one of his pockets. It warmed in his hand as he attempted to open the connection with the other mirror.

It took a moment, but then the glass rippled and his reflection was replaced by someone else.

“Hello, Harry!” he happily greeted.

The boy looked at him, expression confused and increasingly concerned. “Uhm, w-who are you?”

Sirius adjusted his floppy hat and smiled as if he had just received a fantastic compliment. “Yes, my disguise is quite fabulous, isn't it?”

Harry's eyes grew wide with understanding. “…Wait— you're Sirius?!”

Another voice on the other side of the mirror—it was probably Ron—asked, “Serious about what, Harry?”

Unintentional or not, that pun could never get old.

“Serious about him being Sirius!” This, naturally, cleared nothing up. In another accidentally unhelpful attempt to explain, Harry added, “He’s Sirius!”

A voice that he recognized as belonging to Hermione called halt to the ridiculous confusion. “Seriously, you two!”

“no, no,” Sans spoke up, staying out of sight on the mirror but unable to resist word play. “only one person here gets to be sirius, and he's pretty much the least serious man i've ever met.”

“Thank you, I do try.”

Harry seemed to finally gather his wits. “But, well… is it really you?”

Before he could get an answer, it seemed that Hermione and Ron had sorted out their end of the confusion. They peered in from the edge of the frame, and Harry readjusted so that they would be included better. When they saw what Sirius now looked like—not only not the frazzled, near-mad man from the end of last school year, but looking like someone else altogether—they were positively gobsmacked.
Sirius was quite disappointed that nobody had a camera on hand: those expressions were hilarious. “And hello to you two as well, Hermione, Ron.”

“Bloody hell,” said Ron, suitably impressed. “How’d you manage that?”

Hermione waved the question away before he could get a reply. “He's just going to say something like ‘with magic, naturally’, thereby leaving us curious but answerless.”

“with magic as an option, would anyone ever get a response other than that?” Sans asked.

“Anyway…” Somebody had to bring the conversation back around, and frankly Sirius was surprised that it was him. “Do you know where you are?”

Harry looked around himself, then said, “I've no clue. I know how to get back to camp, but other than that…”

“Our camp's at the north edge of the field,” Hermione provided, her answer being significantly more useful. “Near the woods.”

Sans got a distant look in his eyes, one that meant he was looking out elsewhere through a shortcut. Since that probably wouldn't be enough to find their campsite, Harry added, “We have two tents, and they look completely ordinary on the outside—a sort of off-white canvas…” He paused, sighed. “But I suppose most of the tents around are like that so that probably doesn't help.”

“We'll head that way, and hopefully it'll all work out.” With a smile and a quick goodbye, Sirius cut off the mirror call. He turned to Sans and was about to say something, but was cut off when the world shifted around him: a shortcut with no warning given.

“this should be the north edge, i think.”

And that was all the explanation Sans gave for the sudden location change.

An unexpected shortcut was infinitely better than unexpected Apparition (given Sirius didn't feel like barfing out all of his insides), but that doesn't mean he wasn't disoriented. Actually, he was very disoriented: it took him a moment to regroup. “Give me some warning next time, Rattles.”

Picking a direction to start walking, Sans just shrugged. “no promises.”

They made their way through the crowded tents, scanning the people nearby for any familiar faces. Sans was also scanning in a more magical sense: he might not be familiar enough with the kids to be able to pick out their signature out from far off, but within a certain distance it would be no problem.

Though that range turned out to be unnecessary.

Apparently their chosen direction had been a lucky guess, since it wasn't too long before Sirius caught sight of somebody he recognized.

“Arthur!” he called, speeding up and waving for the attention of a redheaded wizard who seemed to be attempting to light a fire. He was holding the match the wrong way. “It's been ages!”

The wizard, Arthur, glanced up in confusion and blinked at the stranger with the colorful robes and floppy hat. “Uh, hello?”

Sirius barreled on with a smile. “Hello, indeed! Last I saw you, you were covered in glitter and
paint. Hope it wasn't too difficult to clean out.”

It seemed that Arthur just became more and more confused with every passing moment; he looked quite discombobulated by the whole thing. “Er, glitter and paint?”

Taking pity on the poor man, Sans provided, “back at the start of the summer.”

That seemed to be enough for him to make the connection. “Oh, yes. That. It worked itself out after an hour or so.”

“Good to hear, I—”

“Now wait a minute!” Arthur interrupted, before he could be conversationally swept away. “I don't mean to be rude, but… who are you?”

“Patrick Pawdy, at your service,” Sirius introduced himself. “But you can call me Paddy.”

Sans, who hadn't known about this fantastically named alter-ego, tried not to laugh.

By now, Arthur Weasley was very confused indeed. But before he could ask further questions, he was interrupted by a happy shout and a trio of curious children. Harry was grinning like a loon.

“You're actually here,” said Harry, tone somewhere between plain joy and disbelief.

“Are you really—” Hermione began to ask, before realizing it might not be a good idea to blurt out that someone who was officially a wanted man was right there. So she stuttered to a stop mid-sentence.

It was Ron who picked it back up, taking advantage of the same word play that had thrown them all off earlier to ask for confirmation without giving anything away. “I can't believe you Sirius-ly did that.”

“oh, you know what they say,” Sans spoke up, signature grin in place. He gestured to the outfit of crazily clashing colors Sirius was wearing. “colorful is the new black.”

Harry, having apparently not even noticed he was there, blinked at him. Then he blurted out, “You're even shorter in person!”

“hey, good things come in small packages.”

Thinking back to some of the letters she had gotten as she looked between Harry and the kid with snow-white hair, Hermione connected the dots. “You're Rattles?”

“Him?” Ron sounded very much like he couldn't believe it. “You mean he's the one who… You know…”

With a cheeky grin, Sans nodded. “the name's sans. rattles is just a nickname.”

Shame that his glamour was still insubstantial, otherwise he'd offer for a handshake; the old whoopee cushion in the hand trick is always funny.

Chapter End Notes
Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Happy New Year! May 2018 be better than 2017 has been. And also better than 2016 was. Actually, let's just hope it will be a good year, and ignore, for the moment, the years that came before. As a new start, ya know?
Thanks to everyone for enjoying this story! I love reading all the comments, or even just seeing the alert that somebody left a kudos. It's good to know what people think of my writing.

The following is a response to a review over on fanfiction.net but, since it has some good points, I thought I'd go ahead and include it here.

Myth (the reviewer): So, Time-Turners. They won't really come up in this story, but they are kinda interesting when it comes to paradoxes. Sans can feel if one is activated (or had been, once the person arrives in the 'past') and thus knows the duration of the Time-Turned… uh, time. But I don't think Time-Turners actually change the timeline, not like RESETs. It's a closed loop: the person traveled back, so there was never a timeline where the person didn't travel back.
And the CHECKs that Sans have been using are, in my mind, a simpler version. It just looks at the SOUL for qualitative data rather than the quantitative stats (that's the HP, LV, AT, and DF stuff). Quantitative is used more in fights.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Meet and Greet

Chapter Summary

In which I, the author, once again pull in characters that were only mentioned in passing in the book.
Hope you don't mind.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hermione was confused.
Or, perhaps more accurately, Hermione was flabbergasted and… maybe a little concerned?
Maybe.
Because it turns out that Rattles was just a kid. Rattles, who cheerily smiled and introduced himself as Sans: the mysterious individual that had just turned up to help Sirius escape from Hogwarts. Who had been able to, somehow.
He couldn't be any older than a first year.
Sans was shorter than she was, for Merlin's sake!
Short and with a build that could generously be described as being delicate; from what she could see, he looked to be barely more than bones. The large blue hoodie and black shorts he was wearing looked absolutely gigantic on him, adorably enough.
“You're wearing slippers,” said Ron, unsure what else to talk about. “Pink slippers.”
Hermione glanced down at everyone's feet. Sure enough, as if making up for the lack of color in his skin and hair, Sans was wearing bright pink slippers. And, of course, she'd already noted his very blue hoodie.
The color stood out quite a bit, given both his skin and flyaway hair were startlingly white, as if there was no color there in the first place. Even his eyes were colorless, both irises as black as night.
Regardless of his peculiar appearance—being a wizard could explain away a lot of that—he was still a kid.
But here he was, as inexplicably as when he had just been there in that locked-down classroom. As inexplicably as how Sirius had gotten out of that locked-down classroom.
“i know.” Sans kicked out one foot, showing off the odd footwear. “i'm a fashion pioneer.”
“I suppose that's one way to put it,” sighed Sirius.
Mr. Weasley, who was quite confused by all this, waved for everybody to stop. And, rather surprisingly, everyone did. Going with what he hoped to be the simplest question, he asked, “Do you kids know this fellow?”

Seeing their shared glances, Mr. Weasley likely realized that it wasn't so simple after all.

“Er, yes?” Harry didn't sound very sure.

Hermione nodded and, much more firmly, repeated, “Yes.”

Ron just shrugged. “We met last year, and Harry's apparently talked with 'em more over summer.”

“and once *patrick pawdy*—” The name was said with emphasis, and Hermione noted it as the chosen pseudonym for Sirius’s disguise, “—gets it in his head that you're gonna be friends, well… you're gonna be friends.”

“*Patrick*—” Harry had to swallow his laughter, masking it with an unconvincing cough. “Yeah, yes, definitely.”

Still looking a little lost, Mr. Weasley just vaguely nodded. Then—and Hermione thought it might just be in an attempt to stall for time to gather his thoughts—Mr. Weasley invited everybody into the tent.

To be honest, Hermione could sympathize with the feeling.

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Arthur had invited them in, but that tent looked very small. Not large enough for six people, certainly.

Sans eyed the small tent skeptically, until his magic brushed against the canvas and he felt peculiarity; it was warped, like the inside surface of the fabric was somehow larger than the outside. Actually, now that he'd noticed it, a lot of the tents seemed to feel that way.

Catching how the expression on his friend's disguised face went from disbelief to interested curiosity, Sirius smirked. He could guess that Sans knew *something* was up with the tent—just from his own personal experiences, getting something past Sans was harder than wrestling gold from a goblin—but that didn't mean he couldn't be surprised.

Wouldn't be surprised, probably. But was the attempt to surprise that mattered.

Harry, Hermione, and Ron had already vanished into the tent, but Arthur was still waiting for a reply.

"I'd love to come in!" Sirius exclaimed, channeling the personality he figured somebody named 'Patrick Pawdy' (who also wears a frankly uncomfortable number of colors) would have.

It was a remarkable performance, to be sure, but probably very much how Sirius would have behaved anyway.

Sans followed after everybody else as they all trooped into the tent that, based on appearances only, he was convinced would be too small. And if it should be too small but kept fitting more
people, then there had to be really interesting magic afoot.

He lifted the entrance flap aside, and saw that he was right.

“okay,” he admitted. “that's pretty neato.”

The tent was larger on the inside than the outside, and significantly more comfortable than a tent had any right to be. There was a stove, sink, table and chairs, beds, rugs, maybe even a bathroom: it might as well be a canvas house. It was a bit old fashioned looking and smelled slightly of cats, but that was easily overlooked given he had been expecting a tent and walked into what was, for all in-tent-s and purposes, a three-room flat.

“What, that's it?” Sirius sounded a bit disappointed. “It only ranks as 'neato'?”

Sans shrugged, still taking in the view. “i said 'pretty neato', actually.”

After filling an old kettle with water and setting it on the stove to heat up, Arthur gestured to the table and, more to the point, the seats around it. “Feel free to make yourselves at home.”

Then he sighed to himself, sounding rather disappointed.

“Something wrong, Arthur?” Sirius asked.

“It's just…” The redheaded wizard frowned slightly. “I had hoped to use the fire outside to prepare the afternoon tea. But it went out ages ago and I can't seem to restart the darn thing.”

“you can't light it again?”

He shook his head. “Not by muggle means.” Another sigh. “Which would be the whole point.”

Sans glanced back toward the flap, wondering just what the point really was, then over to Sirius. Before his friend had a chance to explain (or attempt to explain) Mr. Weasley's infatuation with all things muggle, they were rejoined by Harry, Ron, and Hermione. The three of them gestured for Sans and Sirius to come over to the marginally more private end of the tent, waving in what might loosely be called a secretive manner.

It really wasn't very secretive.

“Looks like the kids want you two,” Arthur noticed. “I'll just bring the tea over once it's ready, alright?”

Of course, while Sans wasn't too keen on the idea of willingly offering them time to pelt them with questions, Sirius jumped at the chance to spend time with his godson. Pelted questions or no. He all but dragged Sans over to the kids’ chosen corner of the tent and, once there, summoned up five chairs so that everyone could sit down.

That conjuration was just a cover, Sans felt, noticing an odd dampening sort of quiet fall over the group. The sounds around them were almost muffled, and if he focused his magic further he could tell there was some element of mimicry to whatever Sirius had just done.

“some sort of privacy spell?” he asked in cautiously quiet undertones.

Sirius nodded, openly explaining, “Nobody else can hear what we're saying; if they try to eavesdrop, then they just get some perfectly inane, non-incriminating conversation.”

“Wicked,” Ron whispered in appreciation.
The group settled in for what would be, Sans expected, a bit of an interrogation. Luckily for him, the bulk of the questions were aimed at Sirius: how he had escaped Azkaban was in there somewhere, along with how he had stayed escaped. But, of course, following that line of inquiry led then to the end of the school year and, therefore, to Sans.

Who was temporarily saved from answering anything when Mr. Weasley brought over the tea, though that didn't take long. As soon as the redheaded wizard had left, Hermione asked her first question.

It… wasn't what Sans had expected.

“Are you from America?”

He wasn't sure why she asked that, and he wasn't really sure how to answer. Sure, in his dimension the country the monster's lived under might have been called 'America', but that wasn't really the same country she was asking about. The two versions of the same country could be completely different, for all he knew. After a moment of consideration, Sans replied, “…i’m not from here, that's for darn sure.”

Catching on to that very non-answer, Harry narrowed his eyes over his steaming cup of tea. “So is that a 'no', or…”

Sans shrugged. “kinda maybe. depends.”

“On what?” asked Ron. “You're either from somewhere or you're not, right?”

Interjecting before Sans could deflect again, Hermione pulled the line of questioning back the direction she had originally been aiming for. “Either way, you said you aren't from here. Not to be rude, but… why Hogwarts?”

“He's a wizard, isn't he?” Somewhat confused, Harry gave his friend a quizzical look. “Of course he'd come to Hogwarts.”

Hermione looked like she wanted to roll her eyes but, admirably, she restrained herself. “If he's from America, he could have gone to a magic school in America.”

This was apparently news to Harry, who looked at Ron for confirmation and got a slightly confused nod. “Like that liver-something place.”

“Ilvermorny,” Hermione instinctively corrected. “But that's beside the point right now. Why Hogwarts?”

Eyeing his own cup of tea speculatively, Sans shrugged again. “eh, i sorta found myself here on accident. nowhere else to go, so why not?”

“On accident?”

“I helped him out of a…” Sirius paused, grasping for words that wouldn't send the conversation spiraling away into the unbelievable truth. He settled with: “An unforeseen situation.”

At Hermione's relentlessly curious expression and its promise of more questions, Sans offered, “my arrival was pretty… uh, sudden. you think that's the right word to use there, paddy?”

Sirius considered this. Thinking back to dying, falling into the void, meeting a talking skeleton, escaping the void and traveling back in time with said skeleton, being imprisoned in his old school,
another escape, and not to forget the whole infiltration of the Ministry: it might be hard to say how long the void bit lasted, but to Sirius 'sudden' felt like an understatement. The rest of the summer was a relaxing intermission in comparison, Horcrux and suspicious Remus notwithstanding.

With the air of a man agreeing to something inherently obvious, Sirius nodded. “'Suddenly', 'abruptly', 'unexpectedly': any of those would work, too.”

Hermione looked to be positively intrigued. “How did you two meet?”

“How does anyone meet?” Sans asked, before answering himself. “we happened to be in the same place and ran into each other.”

There was odd emphasis on the word 'place', as if that word didn't quite fit there but he had no better substitute; since Hermione didn't know what to make of that, she decided to just ignore it. After all, she reasoned, it's not as though there is somewhere out there that can't qualify as a place. Probably.

Sirius nodded ruefully. “I wasn't expecting to meet anyone, so it was pretty surreal. Like I was caught in some weird prank across space and time.”

Sans nearly choked on his first sip of tea, and a complicated expression ran across his face: fond and sad all at once. He quickly schooled his features into his usual grin, but he stared into his cup and didn't look back up.

But of course Sirius noticed his abrupt discomfort. Concern for his friend overriding any need to act natural, he asked, “Sans, are you all right?”

“Yeah, great.” For another long moment, the disguised skeleton still didn't look up from his cup. Then, with a smile that looked somewhat strained but deeply fond, he said, “you just… reminded me of someone.”

“Who?” The question was out before Hermione could censor herself; she immediately scrabbled to apologize, realizing as soon as the word left her mouth just how insensitive she was being.

Sans just shook his head slowly, and actually provided an answer. “My brother. But he’s…” There was a brief hesitation, then he finished, “he's gone.” His voice fell into a whisper. “or, well, i'm gone.”

Silence. Nobody really knew what to say after that.

Desperate for a new topic, Ron latched on to the one thing he knew would be capable of distracting Hermione from their mysterious new friend: school. He couldn't believe he was actually about to say what he was going to say, but desperate times call for desperate measures. “Harry, do you remember if Professor Flitwick assigned us anything this summer?”

The plan worked like a charm. Hermione rounded on her redhead friend, chastising him for forgetting their homework, and was, thus, thoroughly distracted.

Sans appreciated the gesture, recognizing Ron's strategy for what it was; he'd used it himself to distract Papyrus, after all. Still, the tent was feeling much to small now and the air felt thick in his ribcage. Bittersweet memories crowded him, and, like a weight, they were pulling him down.

It was time to make yet another escape.
Sans wasn't quite sure how, but he had managed to get away while Hermione pestered Harry and Ron about homework. Now, after ducking out of the magically spacious tent with a sigh of relief, he had to figure out something to do to stay escaped. After glancing around the busily excited camp grounds, Sans decided that disappearing into the crowds could only help further his odds of avoiding Hermione—er, avoiding her questions.

She seemed nice enough, but he could tell that she was (horror of horrors) a hard-worker. Really, that had to be why he had been so... uneasy. Honestly. No other reason.

Certainly not that her nagging reminded him of his own brother, pestering him to recalibrate his puzzles or to stop lazying around at his post. That the boiling water had been in a kettle, not a pot. Even that the tea he had been offered hadn't smelled like golden flowers, the flavor the king had always brewed for him whenever he visited.

Or that seeing them all joke and laugh together, as friends and family, made his smile feel suddenly brittle.

Not that it really mattered why he had slipped away, only that he had. He just needed some time to think, so, not sure what else to do, Sans turned away from the tent and started walking.

He had walked along nearly half the perimeter of the campsite, not wanting to walk through the densely crowded tents: it was enough to take in the crazy magic chaos from the edge. More than enough, Sans reaffirmed to himself as he watched a small magical child throw a tantrum as their older sister got to play with a miniature broom and they did not. It had taken a while, but Sans was finally feeling a bit more in order. At least, he was pretty sure a cup of tea and friendly conversations weren't going to send his mind careening into bittersweet memories again.

A little farther down the loosely defined camp border, nearing the opposite end from where he had started, Sans noticed that the path he had been following split. Farther off, leading away from the swarm of magicals, the path became a proper dirt road.

And there, far enough away that details would be lost to distance, was a quaint two-story stone cottage.

Sans found himself turning and walking that direction without even really meaning to. Staring up at the house, there was a twinge in his chest where, had he been human, he would have had a heart: apparently recollections of his past couldn't be left behind at the pace of a leisurely stroll. He couldn't say why the house brought up treasured memories of his own home in Snowdin—they really looked nothing alike—but it did all the same. Perhaps it was something familiar in the shape of the front door, or the small doghouse he spotted just off to the side, or maybe simply the lived-in feeling of a place well-loved.

Home was so very far away.

He had accepted that when he first realized what his solution to the resets would entail, and he still accepted that. But his acceptance wouldn't make that distance hurt any less.

Abruptly, Sans was pulled from his musing when he was almost steamrolled by a pair of children booking it at top speed. He managed to dodge, obviously, and stood back to watch as the two brothers—they looked far too similar to be anything but—chased each other around the yard.
“You’ll never catch me,” taunted the boy in the lead as he leapt over a rock. “I'm the greatest escaper-er to ever escape!”

“This isn't—” Clearly out of breath, the chaser paused to find his voice before finishing his sentence: “This is not how you're supposed to play hide-and-seek, Miles!”

Miles, who was probably the older brother, laughed. “This is the 'seek' part!”

Sans smiled a sad sort of smile, watching the brothers bringing up painfully happy memories from so, so long ago.

“Hey!”

Wait. That had been directed at him. Probably. Glancing around briefly to make sure there were no other people that could have been addressed to, Sans pointed to himself for further confirmation.

“Yes, you in the blue hoodie.” The still panting chaser pointed to his older brother and, with a blunt tone that was almost a request, said, “Help me catch him.”

Sans blinked, surprised. “uh, i've always been better at the 'hide' part, but…”

Butting in before he could finish his sentence, Miles gasped and said, “Will, you can't just— just get help from some new kid!”

The one named Will just quirked an eyebrow. “Just like you can't run after I find you?”

“Ye… Wait, I mean, no!”

“Hah!” The tired chaser pounced on that slip-up with renewed energy. “You just admitted it: no running away!”

Miles held up both hands. “But consider this,” he began, before immediately turning tail and running at top speed back toward their house.

Making to resume the chase, Will only made it a few steps before pausing. He glanced back at Sans, maybe a little embarrassed at asking. But still: “So, you coming?”

Hesitating briefly—he would never describe himself as ‘athletic’ by any stretch of the imagination—Sans found himself nodding, a genuine smile pulling at the corners of his illusionary lips. “let's get 'im.”

=X=X=X=

John Roberts couldn't help but smile as he watched his two boys (somewhat uncharacteristically) drag a third into their games. The new kid was unusually pale—the pure white of his hair stood out even at a distance—but he was no weirder than some of the other people he had let through to the campsite over the past day or so.

Take, for example, the admittedly elegant man and woman who had walked up just a few hours earlier dressed as if this was to be the location of some grand party, rather than a campsite in a field. The tidy suit and sleek evening gown they had worn did look fantastic on them, but obviously that wardrobe choice made no sense for a trip to the outdoors. It was a little surreal, to be
perfectly honest; as if they were something straight from a storybook, a feeling only strengthened when they, like a few others he had met, had tried to pay with foreign gold coins.

He had shrugged it off at the time, but after they had left he went directly to tell his wife about that particular peculiar pair.

But enough getting sidetracked, John had come outside for one reason and one reason only.

“Boys, it's time for tea!” he called, waving for their attention. “Feel free to invite your new friend as well!”

Miles looked between his father and the pale boy, cheeks pink from exertion or embarrassment or a combination thereof. Still, he shouted back an affirmative before conferring with the other two about something: the game they had been playing or the offer of food, John wasn't sure. Either way, all three trotted in his direction, so he called it all good.

Once the kids were close enough that shouting wasn't necessary, John asked, “So then, who's this?”

Will stepped up to introduce everyone. “Dad, this is Sans. Sans, this is Dad.”

With a broad and cheeky (though slightly lopsided) grin, the boy said, “hello, dad.”

“Come off it,” Miles grumbled, though his dad could clearly see that it was mostly teasing. “You know what he meant.”

“Well i don't have anything else to call 'im, do i?”

Chuckling, John decided he'd be better off handling his own introduction. “You can call me Mr. Roberts.”

“My name's sans,” the boy said. He hesitated for a moment, looking down at his own hands. After focusing on them with peculiar intensity—for a brief moment, somehow, there was a faint flicker of blue light—Sans offered his hand, and John shook it with a firm but carefully gentle grip. “though of course you've literally just been told that, so oops.”

In his own larger hand, Sans's felt small and delicate. Almost insubstantial, as if it were nothing more than bones, but still strong enough for a confident handshake. “Aye, but there's no problem double checking that I haven't forgotten.”

The front door behind them suddenly opened, and Nancy Roberts looked at the four of them—sons, husband, and stranger—with a curious smile. She made a show of counting them all up, then simply said, “I suppose I should set out another cup.”

“Oh, uhm…” Sans seemed a bit embarrassed, or maybe unnecessarily apologetic. “i've already had some tea, so i'd rather just have water. if that's alright with you.”

“Of course that's alright!” In fact, his wife looked a tad miffed at the unintended suggestion that her hospitality might not extend to getting him a glass of water. She gestured for everyone to come in, holding the door open invitingly.

Miles, however, seemed to have a different idea. “Oh, come on, Mum! It's so nice out, can't we have a picnic or something?”

“Can we?” Will sounded just as excited by that idea as his older brother.
Nancy shared a look with her husband, then nodded. “Alright, but you two are in charge of clean-up.”

Both of his kids ran into the house with happy shouts, presumably to find the old picnic blanket: a worn quilt that did the job perfectly. Of course this left their new friend, Sans, looking after them with a bemused sort of smile.

“abandon me to deal with the parents, will ya?” Sans said in mock despair. “i'm doomed, i say. doomed!”

“So you're doomed now?” John knew it was the oldest joke in the book, but he couldn't resist: he was a dad, after all. “And here I thought you were Sans.”

The boy's grin broadened. “can't i be both?”

“I don't know, who's Both?”

“me, clearly,” Sans replied with a laugh. “i keep setting myself up, giving you perfect o-pun-tunities for jokes!”

His wife just shook her head with a smile and a long-suffering sigh. “Oh dear, another jokester.”

“i prefer 'punster', actually.”

Before she could reply, both of their boys came tearing back out into the yard with the tattered quilt flapping behind them like a glorious navy blue banner.

Nancy pinched the bridge of her nose in exasperation, but John could tell that his wife was smiling. She waved Sans and him off toward where the blanket was being spread out, saying, “I'll get the tea and biscuits. Oh, yes—and a water for you, dear.”

“thanks,” Sans said, smiling confidently. But John was pretty sure he could see the faintest blush of embarrassment coloring the pale boy's cheeks.

Since he could see his sons struggling with setting out the large quilt, John led the way off in their direction. Sans joined him, and as they got closer they noticed that Will had sprawled himself out over the picnic blanket, arms and legs spread wide to cover as much as possible, while Miles searched the ground nearby.

“What are you two getting up to now?” John asked, trying not to laugh.

“i can't bed-cover all the possibilities,” Sans said, “but, from what i can sew together of the stich-uation, my blanket guess would be they're trying to pin down the fabric.”

He gave a low whistle, impressed. “That could, quite possibly, be the most puns I've ever heard in a single sentence.”

The boy sketched an exaggerated bow, looking quite please with himself, then went to actually help out with the blanket; it had caught a particularly strong breeze and flipped up over Will. Tugging it back flat, Sans wagged a finger, reprimanding, and told the blanket firmly, “stay put.”

“I doubt that will help,” groused Will, slightly peeved that he'd been all tangled up.

“you'd be surprised.”

Sure enough, though it didn't seem to get any less breezy, the blanket didn't fold over itself again so
his boys were able to find enough sizable rocks to hold it down with no further difficulty. By the
time his wife rejoined them—bringing over the kettle, a tray with teacups and saucers (the cheapest
set, just in case), one glass of water, and biscuits—John could proudly say that they had set up a
truly superb picnic spot.

“What do you think of this?” he asked, sweeping a hand to indicate both the blanket and the view
of their two boys running around with a new friend.

“It’s lovely, dear.” Nancy smiled and she delicately sat down. Her eyes followed Sans and Will as
they laughed, clearly enjoying their attempt to chase Miles down. “I don’t know why I was ever
worried.”

John joined her on the blanket, nodding in agreement; both of his sons tended to stick together,
despite the usual sibling bickering, and they hadn’t tried to make any friends beyond each other.
Miles was already thirteen, with Will only two years younger, so it was natural for their parents to
worry.

He heard Sans shout something about a secret technique before flopping lamely into the tall grass
of the field and vanishing from sight. Miles tripped over himself at that—startled or amused, it was
hard to tell—and Will pounced on the chance. Sans sat up at the sounds of a playful scuffle, though
he was rather far away from where he had disappeared.

“Boys!” Nancy called out, waving for them to stop. “Let’s wrap this up, I have tea and biscuits
waiting for you!”

Miles and Will immediately scrambled to their feet, but Sans just let himself fall sideways into the
grass again. Then, inexplicably, the pale boy popped back up again: somehow he was now only a
few meters away. It would seem that children could be quite speedy when they want to be.

John spared a moment to count up the biscuits and ran some mental math. “Looks like we have
enough here for everyone to take three,” he said, divvying out the teatime snacks. “Dear, are you
spoiling these boys?”

Seeing the opportunity for what it was, his two sons snatched up their allotted sweets before either
parent could have a chance to rescind the offer. Sans, however, just took one.

“i take it three’s a luxury?”

Leaning close to his new friend, Miles whispered, “Usually we just get one. Two if we’re lucky.”

“Mum must really like you, Sans.”

“well, what can i say?” The pale boy shrugged, then took an almost theatrical bite from his biscuit.
“i’m just that sweet.”

As a father, John felt somewhat compelled to reply with a pun of his own, but before he could he
was interrupted by a sharp noise from the direction of the camp. Somebody had apparently set off a
firework far too early, and they could see the streaming sparks of color over the tents. It must have
been an expensive firework too, given the twinkling green and gold lights were spiraling about as
if they had minds of their own.

“Did you see that!” Will demanded, once the last sparks vanished. “That was totally wicked!”

Nancy ruffled her son’s hair with a quiet chuckle. “Yes, I saw. I am sitting right next to you, you
know.”
“I wonder if they'll be setting off more fireworks this evening,” mused John, since it was quite obvious to him that there must be some sort of major event going on to attract so many strange folk. “You know, after whatever it is they're up to is finished. I'm sure it would be spectacular.”

Miles pantomimed the launch and explosion, wiggling his fingers and making appropriate sound effects. “Like magic.”

Suddenly, with a loud snapping sound, there was an unfamiliar lady standing on their picnic blanket. John had absolutely no idea how she'd got there.

And, for some reason, she held a stick pointed directly between his eyes.

“Obliviate!”

The world around him went dark.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

I've always taken issue with the nonchalant, nearly abusive attitude wizards have toward muggles. Especially with regards to obliviation. I mean, in the book Mr. Roberts gets his memory wiped for musing that all the peculiar people in the camp might know each other. He doesn't mention magic. He doesn't mention anything that's really unusual or unexplainable, and they just wipe his memories! Apparently, and I quote, he "needs a Memory Charm ten times a day to keep him happy" (from chapter 7). Ten times a day! I just— that seems really messed up to me. An overreaction, at the very least.

Not to mention that later, when the attack has begun, there's... well, I'll talk more about that after the next chapter. Suffice to say that, reading between the lines, something cruel and morally repugnant is just written off as nothing important.

Updates on the first of every month.
I still can't thank you all enough for all the kudos and comments and just, thank you all so much! I hope you continue to enjoy reading this story as much as I enjoy writing it!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Time-Stop

Chapter Summary

In which Sans does something magical society definitely wouldn't approve of, and couldn't care less.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The energy for the spell had built in what felt like an instant, giving Sans barely any time to react. But then again, barely any time was more than enough.

In that instant, with a sharp and draining swirl of his magic, he froze the witch and her spell in place.

And to do so, darkening the quaint cottage yard around him, Sans froze everything else as well.

It was painfully exhausting. Stopping time always was—like finding a crack in his SOUL, forcing it wide open, and holding it there. To make things worse, he would be feeling the effects for nearly a full week. Nothing major, really, but aches and pains were always annoying to deal with.

He'd done it before, though. And he'd do it again.

There was a faint glow at the tip of the strange witch's wand, glowing a faint greenish color where the spell was mostly formed. But that faint green was not for healing, he could tell; then his sense of it blurred, and it was hard to recall what it felt like as soon as he withdrew his magic.

So Sans stared at it, unsure what exactly he should do.

Everyone was still frozen in place—himself included, since moving in a time-stop put even more strain on his magic. The witch had jabbed her wand squarely at Mr. Roberts, right at the bridge of his nose, but Sans was pretty sure the spell would reach out toward the rest of the family as well. And with an incantation like 'Obliviate', so obviously similar to 'oblivion'... well, Sans didn't want that spell near any of their heads.

On that thought, he turned his considerable focus on the spell, not letting himself be distracted by the frozen family or the tearing ache in his SOUL from keeping time itself still. Carefully brushing his magic against that of whatever the witch had been trying to do, Sans did not like what he was feeling. He didn't know what he was feeling, exactly—not from such a basic observation—but he knew he didn't like it.

So, for the first time in who knows how long, he cast a full CHECK. Sure, it was on a spell and not a person, but with precise enough control the difference doesn't matter. The information wrote itself into his mind.

* Obliviate — ATK 0
* A spell that erases memories.

For an instant, the horror—and, in no small part, the anger—almost distracted him enough to lose
his grip on time. There was no hesitation when he jabbed a knife of magic into the spell and yanked it away from its intended effect. Time slipped forward by a millisecond because of his split focus, but it was worth it.

He would never—never!—let something like that happen.

His memories might hurt—every remembered voice or face only reminding him of what he had lost—but they were his. For so long, memories were all that he had to live with. He hadn't had a future. With resets turning back time, every present that he ever lived through would ultimately cease to exist outside his own recollections.

To think that wizards had a spell that could possibly take that away from him… He shuddered.

Though, having nullified the memory curse to do absolutely nothing, now he had to figure out what to do about the witch. She was sure to notice if the magic had no effect, and then simply cast the spell again.

Unacceptable.

He needed a different plan.

Taking a page from Sirius's book on planning, Sans went with a plan that would likely give the entire pureblooded wizarding community conniptions if they ever found out.

With a wince from SOUL-deep stress and a push of magic, the patch of space not caught frozen in time expanded across the picnic blanket, now encompassing the entire Roberts family. Mr. Roberts, who had begun the motion of jerking back from the witch before time stopped, toppled over to the side and knocked over his teacup. Distracted by his fall, both parents didn't immediately notice their odd (to say the least) circumstances.

Miles and Will, however, blinked past their confusion right away and peered about themselves in open amazement.

“What's going on?” asked Will, voice shaking ever so slightly.

“Why's it so dark all of the sudden?” Miles put a protective arm around his little brother, wrapping the younger boy in a comforting half-hug, but he sounded just a little scared too.

Gathering himself up, Mr. Roberts finally noticed that something was seriously amiss. “What in the blazes—”

“right, so— uhm, sorry.” At his voice, the entire Roberts family turned to look at him. Sheepish, he ran a hand through the white hair of his disguise. “bet this is a bit… sudden.”

Mrs. Roberts was staring at the witch—still paused with her spell cast halfway—and said pointedly, “I'm quite sure that 'sudden' is not the right word.”

Her wording, which echoed what Sirius had said earlier, startled a laugh out of Sans.

With more insistence, Will repeated, “What's going on?”

“Yes,” Mr. Roberts seconded, with similar noises of assent from the rest of the family. The man, like his wife, had focused on the frozen witch. “What is going on?”

And so Sans told them. Wizards, magic, memories… Well, he told them what he knew. It was hard
to sum up the entirety of his knowledge on wizarding society, but he was a pro at simplifying needlessly complex things: he did consider himself something of a scientist, after all, and advanced SOUL theory isn't known for its simplicity.

“Alright,” said Will, the first to pull himself out of blatant shock at the summary explanation provided. “So, wizards. They're real. And they actually wear pointy hats?”

Sans nodded.

“Wicked,” Miles breathed.

Mrs. Roberts, who still looked a little lost, pressed one hand to her chest to help calm down and focus. After a few deep breaths, she visibly gathered herself. “Why would they keep themselves secret?”

“dunno.” Sans shook his head, unsure himself. “i think it's kinda silly, tibia—” He paused, realizing that the pun would make no sense since he didn't look like a skeleton at the moment.

On the topic of secrecy, the excitement dampened somewhat and Miles risked a glance at the still temporally frozen witch. “Was… was she really going to wipe some stuff from our brains?”

With a scowl, Sans nodded. “i've changed it—the spell, i mean—but she'll notice if nothing happens.”

Suddenly realizing something, Mr. Roberts jolted upright. “Am I right in… in guessing that…” He had to take a deep breath and close his eyes, and there was a simmering anger in them when they reopened. “They were going to wipe our memory purely because of that offhand comment about the fireworks?”

Miles blinked, then seemed to shrink in on himself. “Like magic', I said. I-I'm sorry, I didn't—”

“You did nothing wrong,” Mrs. Roberts cut in, and if looks could kill that witch wouldn't even have a chance at regret for targeting that mom's little boys.

“Yeah! I can't believe wizards are such arse— uh, jerks!” Will exclaimed, though his momentum was a bit staggered when he veered away from the swear; Mrs. Roberts shot her husband a scolding look while the man did his best to look perfectly innocent.

Sans nodded in agreement, not minding the almost foul language since, given this situation, he could understand the impulse. “i have no clue what their problem is, but i refuse to let something like that happen. not when i can stop it.”

“Thanks,” Miles said, and, though his expression still held some misplaced guilt, he smiled.

“Okay, so, now that that's settled—” Will took it upon himself to steer the conversation somewhere less scary-depressing. “Next question: why is nothing moving other than us?”

“trade secret,” replied Sans with a wink.

Mr. Roberts, looking down at the picnic blanket, all at once grew very still. He got a look on his face like he wasn't quite sure he actually wanted answers but was going to ask anyway. “By 'trade secret'… do you perhaps mean 'stopping time'?”

Everyone followed the father's gaze, and so everyone realized all at once that the teacup he had knocked over earlier had never actually toppled. The cup was barely off of its saucer, but it was
undeniably suspended in the air with most of the tea sloshed over the brim. It was frozen in place.

“…maybe.”

“So then she—” Mr. Roberts gestured to the witch, “—shouldn't have any idea that you told us all of this, aye?”

Sans nodded.

The older man thought on that for a moment, then said, “Good. We just pretend her spell worked, then be careful not to say anything that will make them come back.”

There was just one problem with that plan, that being that none of them had any idea what sort of effect they should imitate. All Sans knew was that the spell wiped memories; he didn't know if the victim would be dazed or fine or nauseous or what. The five of them sat about for what felt, to them, to be several minutes—though of course time wasn't actually moving at all.

Finally Mrs. Roberts set a hand on her husband's shoulder, startling him from his contemplation. She said simply, “It's no use sitting around thinking about it. We'll just have to give it our best shot, dear.”

“true 'nuff,” Sans said with a sigh. “it's not like we'll figure it out by over-thinking it anyway.”

“I say we pretend to pass out!” Will said, raising a hand as if he was answering a question in class.

Miles rolled his eyes. “That's stup— er,” he glanced at his mother and corrected, “silly, Will. We should just pretend like she smacked us or something.”

“Let's go with a vacant sort of confusion,” Mr. Roberts spoke up. “I dare say we'll be able to pull that off nicely after all these revelations!”

And so it was decided.

Helping everyone get back to wherever they had been before his time-stop was a little tricky—if they were too far off, it's possible the witch would notice. But Sans wasn't too worried, since people can be surprisingly oblivious sometimes. Especially if they weren't paying close attention.

Sans raised one hand, three fingers pointing up, telegraphing the moment he would resume time so that everyone would be prepared.

“Wait!”

He paused, hand still in the air. Will was bright red, more embarrassed than he'd looked in the past few hours they'd been playing around—even more so than when he'd tripped over nothing and stumbled around trying to regain his balance. Sans just curiously cocked his head, waiting for him to continue.

“Er, okay, since I won't be able to ask this later…” The boy took a deep breath, then gestured to himself and the rest of his family. “We're not magical.”

Sans nodded, one eyebrow raised in curiosity.

Fiddling briefly with the bottom of his shirt, Will finally gathered enough courage to ask, “But… but we're still friends, right?”

“well yeah. assumin' ya wanna be,” answered Sans, almost without thinking. A moment later he
noticed that the question had brought a unbidden smile to his face.

Will smiled back, and even Miles looked a little relieved. It was plain to see that these two boys hadn't really had that many friends before, though Sans personally had no clue why. They were nice kids.

“Right,” Miles fake-coughed, trying to cover up his own embarrassment (and relief) at this whole friendship conversation. “Let's do this.”

Sans obliged, resuming the countdown with his hand.

Three fingers.

Two.

One.

And with that, he let time go.

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He still kinda wanted to punch her, to be honest.

In fact, even as he felt time resume around them, he wondered if maybe he should.

Or rather, if he should have.

Hitting the witch smack on the schnoz right now wouldn't be a great plan. Sure, it might make him feel a little better, but one of the major points about time not being stopped meant that actions had consequences.

It wouldn't be worth it now, given the risk to the Roberts' memories.

The energy of the now defunct spell washed over the family and, with a prompting poke of blue magic, they all proceeded to put on their best imitation of a confused, memoryless expression. Will even did his best to go cross-eyed.

It was probably lucky that the witch didn't even seem to spare them another moment's thought.

Lucky, yes: but the disregard still made Sans seethe.

“You there,” she said, calling for his attention with an annoyingly carefree tone.

Sans tried his best to appear as if he hadn't just been fantasizing punching her in the face with all the force his skinny little arms could supply. Not trusting his voice—he doubted he could keep his tone civil—the disguised skeleton simply nodded in acknowledgment.

“Uh… You are a wizard, yes?”

Technically no, but Sans was boss at dodging questions. He took a breath, letting the anger leak away as he exhaled, and then answered, “didn't you see me come over from the campsite?”
The woman blinked at him twice, clearly not recognizing that he had indeed walked here from the currently magic-occupied camp grounds, then nodded. “Of course,” she said, with much more confidence than she actually felt.

“then that's that.” Sans smiled, and it was all teeth. “shouldn't you leave now?”

“Ah, well, I suppose so,” she said, glancing over to where the family was still doing their darnedest to look disoriented. And frowned, ever so slightly.

Not a good sign.

“then leave.” Sans cut in, the angry bite in his tone snapping her attention back from whatever she may have noticed.

With a shaky nod—she actually looked a little scared, but he couldn't get himself to care all that much—the witch turned on her heel and vanished in a snap.

Which, really… the whole thing had gone quite a bit better than expected.

“So is sh—” Will cut himself off mid-question, realizing that saying something suggestive of them having memories that they shouldn't really wasn't a great idea.

Sans just shrugged.

“Quickly— Act natural!” Miles exclaimed, before immediately throwing caution (and that advice) to the wind as he took off at top speed with one last yell aimed at his brother and new friend. “You cops can't catch me now, I have the advantage!”

Although, given they had been playing tag before, perhaps this was how they could 'act natural'.

Nearly choking on a swallowed laugh, Sans ended up spluttering into a coughing fit; it would seem the eldest brother had recovered somewhat from his earlier unnecessary self-condemnation. At least he wasn't alone in his good humor, as it had startled a chuckle from both parents as well.

Will, however, didn't miss a beat; he scrambled to his feet to commence the chase with admirable speed. “A headstart? That just means you need to run longer!”

“welp, duty calls.” Patting down his jacket and shorts to dislodge any dirt or grass or leaves, Sans turned to the parents with a smile. “stuff to do, friends to chase.”

And then he was off.

Sans played with the two boys just a little while longer, running around more than he probably had in the entire rest of his life. Granted, he stuck around partly to make sure that the magical people in charge of cursing away memories didn't have any second thoughts… though mostly because he was genuinely enjoying himself. It might just have been the thorough distraction of chasing and being chased, but Sans was able to briefly have fun for the sake of having fun.

It was nice.

He had promised to write them occasionally, though he'd need to investigate whether he could send them mail by owl without calling the Ministry down on their heads. Maybe he should just play it safe and deliver any packages himself: he knew a great shortcut, after all.

It was several hours before Sans finally said goodbye, and when he got back to the tent it turned
out that everyone else had gone off somewhere. He didn't know why they were all away—he didn't think the game had started yet—but, given how tired he felt, he appreciated the lack of people. Exhausted, really: playing around had been fun, sure, but there had been a lot of running.

So really, it would be a shame to not take advantage of the peace and quiet.

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Sans slept through the entire game, and, in hindsight, Sirius wasn't sure why he'd expected anything different.

Not that either of them could have gone to actually watch the game in the first place, given they had no tickets, but that was beside the point.

Pushing past the flap hanging in the single doorway, those who actually had tickets came back to find Sirius reading through a muggle comic book and Sans curled up in a nest of blankets: they had no clue where those things had come from. They certainly hadn't been in the tent when everyone else had left to watch the game.

“No need to worry about waking him,” Sirius said, not even bothering to lower his voice. “Pretty sure he could sleep through an avalanche without so much as twitching.”

Ron, who was already quite good at remaining completely asleep even as other boys in his dorm got ready in the morning, looked vaguely jealous.

All those who had gotten to watch the game gathered up at the table, pulling over chairs as necessary, to discuss any particularly interesting plays they'd seen. This, naturally, made Sirius quite jealous; he was a Quidditch fan, after all, and it rankled that he hadn't been able to watch.

He flipped a page of his comic, trying his best to ignore their verbal replays of what had supposedly been a phenomenal Wronski Feint. But, of course, ignoring people very nearly went against his entire being, so he was soon joining in with his own thoughts. Even though he hadn't actually watched the game at all.

When Ginny nearly spilled hot chocolate everywhere falling asleep at the table—Sirius happened to notice and caught her just in time—everyone decided that it was time to call it a night.

Sans, naturally, didn't stir at all as everyone changed into pajamas and got into bed. He didn't even notice when he was nearly squished after Sirius conjured up a mattress and some sheets without double checking distances.

There were still sounds of singing and celebration from the other side of the camp, but, after such a long day of excitement, Sirius only needed to close his eyes to relax into a comfortable sleep.

And then, quite suddenly, he realized something was wrong.

There was shouting, but not the happy celebration from before.

Screams.

Sirius sat bolt upright, looking around the darkened tent in confusion. It didn't help that his overly-
large floppy hat was still stuck on his head, courtesy of a Sticking Charm; it wouldn't do for his disguise to fail because the hat fell off as he slept. He could hear somebody—Arthur?—trying to wake up all the snoozing kids. Though given that it was clearly still dark out he hadn't the faintest idea why—

Oh sweet Merlin.

“Sans!” he yelled, scrambling immediately to try and rouse his friend. “Wake up, man!”

“wha…”

Harry and Ron—the former looking sleepy but mostly awake while it was a mystery how the latter was even upright—stumbled over. “Mr. Weasley says…” A yawn broke into his sentence. “We need to hurry… no time, get outside…”

Deciding there was only one option with a chance to wake Sans, Sirius grabbed him by the shoulder and hauled him bodily to his feet.

“woah! woah—i'm up!” Sans lurched around for a moment, trying to find his footing after being so suddenly pulled into the waking world. “…apparently literally.”

All of them were hurriedly rushed out of the tent and into chaos.

It was dark and people were running, which everyone should know is a bad combination. In the light of what few campfires were still lit, Sirius could see witches and wizards fleeing into the forest. It was happening. The attack was actually happening.

To be honest, a part of him hadn't thought it would. Things were different from the first time, after all.

He had no idea what to do.

Wait, no: he had to make sure Harry stayed safe.

A plan that encountered an immediate problem, since both Harry and Ron had moved beyond his range of protection to meet up with Hermione and the rest of the Weasley crew.

“Harry!” he called out. “We need to—” The words were stopped in his throat by a bright flash of green light. For an instant, the sudden brightness seemed to flicker the whole world into darkness.

Sirius knew that color, that exact painful shade of green.

He could see them now; people in hooded black cloaks, faces hidden behind white masks. Cruel laughter rang across the entire camp, mixing eerily with shouts and screams. They were marching across the field, some firing vile colored spells indiscriminately into the camp. Most, however, held their wands aloft. Above them, suspended and being twisted into painful contortions, was what looked like a family of four.

And floating there in the air was a rapidly fading trail of green. It had been forced into a perfect right angle, mere inches before it would have hit one of the smaller figures.

Inches before it would have killed a child.

Beside him, Sans stood with one hand outstretched. Where he should have had eyes, there was only blackness.
He was still smiling, but it was a dark thing. Empty.

Cold.

Then, with a chime and a crackle of magic that sounded nearly like music, his left eye filled with blue and gold flames.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Yes indeed, another cliffhanger. And this one's even worse than before!

The idea for Sans being able to stop time is from that scene at Grillby's when he asks Frisk if they've heard of a talking flower. He says that he wants to ask them something, then everything outside their little bubble stops moving and they chat. After the lights come back and things start moving again, he even says that he forgot what he wanted to say.

To me, that sounds like he's covering for having stopped time. Take that headcanon as you will.

By the way, reading between the lines, it really does sound like the Death Eaters killed one of the Roberts family. There is mention of a strong green light, and a few paragraphs later they notice that one of the children is limp. Given the attackers want to torture and humiliate—and yes, ultimately kill—this family, I doubt they would let a child escape into unconsciousness.

And later, when Mr. Weasley mentions so nonchalantly that "that was a big thing they had to make him forget"… well.

There's nothing concrete, of course, so maybe I'm just seeing things that aren't there. But I think that paints a rather dark picture for what had been done to that poor family.

Updates on the first of every month.

Thank you so much for all the great comments and all the kudos and… just, thanks.

You guys are amazing!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Sans stalked forward, left eye socket lit with enough supernatural energy to physically crackle through the air. The magic was distorting the glamour around his face, twisting and blurring, going all the way down his chest; even his hoodie, despite being real, looked as if it were warping as the illusion stretched around and through it.

Seeing—or, perhaps more importantly, feeling—that angry energy roiling through the air, Sirius decided he and the rest of the group should make themselves scarce.

Clearly Sans had business to take care of.

“Harry!” he called, hurrying over to his godson (and everyone else). “We really ought to get moving. As in, right now.”

At the very edge of his hearing, despite the frantic yells and general cacophony surrounding them, Sirius could have sworn he was hearing music.

“Do you… hear something?” Hermione asked.

Harry rolled his eyes. “Besides the screaming? No, not really.”

The girl huffed, but said nothing more. Sirius was secretly glad he hadn’t started hearing things that weren't there. Or, well, if he had gone mad, at least he hadn’t gone mad alone.

Then he felt a heavy magical weight settle over him, and was promptly reminded that they really should get to running away. Setting one hand on Harry's shoulder, he pointed in the direction that looked to be the quickest and safest escape route and began ushering everyone away.

He managed to shepherd the trio of students a decent distance when Harry abruptly realized something. “Wait!” he demanded, trying to see back the way they had come. “Where's Sans?”

Hermione gasped, glancing around and clearly hoping to catch sight of white, blue, and pink. “Don't tell me he's still—!”

“He'll be fine, trust me on that one,” Sirius cut in, glad that they were at least out of sight from whatever nonsense Sans was clearly getting up to.

“What do you mean 'he'll be fine'?!?” Flinging a panicked hand in the direction they had fled from, Ron was having none of that. “Those are Death Eaters out there—”

There was a sudden sense of blue—though nothing around them really looked blue—and Sirius had the inexplicable feeling that he was standing near something massive. It was sort of like the sense
of vertigo when looking over the side of an abrupt hundred meter drop, except in this case the hundred meter drop hadn't been there moments before.

Alright, so it was some pretty intense nonsense.

…He probably shouldn't call it nonsense.

Harry had gone still, and so had both of his friends. “Was that…?” he began, unsure how to string the right words together to ask what he wanted to ask.

When Sirius nodded, it was with a quietly smug satisfaction. “I told you,” he said. “Sans can take care of himself.”

“Okay,” Ron allowed, swallowing his astonishment. “You… might have a point.”

=X=X=X=

Sans hadn't been this angry in a very long time.

It was cold, but it burned.

He could feel it, settling deep in his bones with a grim certainty; a familiar SOUL shaking rage that he had sometimes thought he would—could never feel again. Resets had worn him down, until everything began to feel distant. Unimportant.

Because all he could do was watch.

Watch as everything crumbled to dust around him, time after time after time.

But it would seem that he was not so numb after all.

“hey,” Sans greeted, tone deceptively calm even as his magic burned through the air. He kept his head down, face hidden by his twisted glamour and the shadow of his hood. A few of the masked freaks noticed him as he approached, and, while he could read confusion in the line of their shoulders, they didn't act very worried.

Yet.

“So it seems we have a would-be hero, gentlemen,” came a smooth, confident voice from amidst the masked figures. One of them stepped forward, posture practically oozing pretentious prick.

Sans zeroed in on him with a sharp glare, both eyes dark with rage. He was rewarded when the man couldn't quite keep himself from flinching back.

“i'm no hero,” he said, and there was a certain bitterness in his tone. “but then i don't need to be.”

With an unseen sneer that Sans could nevertheless hear in his voice, the man asked, “Well then, little boy. Tell me, what do you need to be?”

Exactly what he was: a judge.

“i have a better question,” Sans said instead, slipping into a familiar script. “do you wanna have a
bad time?"

The man laughed.

The skeleton just smiled.

“seriously. if you don't stop this, well…” He shook his head slowly, pulling his hands from his pockets and readying his magic. “you won't like what happens next.”

In answer, the figure swiftly raised his wand. “Avada Kedavra!”

It had a sickeningly green light, a color Sans recognized as a SOUL reaching beyond itself to act directly on another. But this spell aimed to rip a SOUL from its body and so tear life from whatever it touched, the color a cruel parody to the familiar shade of kindness. A rushing sound filled the air as the unblockable killing curse swept toward its intended victim.

Dead on target.

Until Sans simply tilted his head and, for the second time in as many minutes, deflected the spell harmlessly away into the sky.

“welp, can't say i didn't warn ya.”

Then he slammed his power down on all the cloaked figures, staggering them under the sudden weight. With another thought, summoned bones burst through the ground to pin them in place. It wouldn't hold long, obviously—wizards could probably pull some magic trick to just vanish them away—but it didn't need to.

Right now, it just needed to distract them.

In the next moment, while the Death Eaters still couldn't react, he flung out a hand to capture the Roberts family in a comforting cocoon of blue magic. A careful wave brought them over, behind him, and there he set them gently down.

Mrs. Roberts immediately scrambled over to her sons, frantic to see that they were alright and still breathing and alive. “Oh god, oh god,” she breathed, and there were tears in her eyes. “That green light, I thought— Will, my precious little boy—”

“Mum!” Will hugged her tight. Then, with a spike of horror, realized, “You're— you're bleeding!”

She ran her fingers through his hair, soothing even despite her slight tremor. “I'll be fine, dear.”

“F-f-f-fine,” Miles stuttered. He couldn't stop shaking, and his whole body was still reeling from an echo of pure unrelenting pain. “B-Better b-b-be.”

The father pulled his son in close, careful to be as gentle as physically possible; Miles had been hit by a sickly yellow-green light, and it had… well, Mr. Roberts might not know exactly what it had done, but he would never forget the choked screams.

The family huddled together, holding each other tightly to remind themselves that they were alive.

“everyone okay back there?” Sans asked, though he kept his back turned so he could keep an eye on their attackers.

“ Mostly,” Will managed. “We'll live, at least. I think.”
The pure relief Sans felt at that somewhat surprised him, but this was not the time nor place to pause for introspective contemplation. Case and point, it seems that the Death Eaters had finally regrouped. Sans ducked one spell, sent three others into the ground, and froze the last mid-air by grabbing it with blue magic. It fizzled out fairly quickly.

“that's good news.”

Taking a moment to consider his next move, Sans risked a quick glance back at the family. He could teleport them away, but he couldn't take the time to scout a safe location while he had to deal with— a burst of spell fire was suffocated with a flick of his wrist.

That wasn't much of an option, then. He could wind up sending them back into danger.

So. He just needed to deal with the root of the problem.

Easy enough.

First, however, he would make sure they had a shield. Just in case. With a thought, an impossibly large flat bone rose vertically from the ground between himself and the family: a shoulder blade. It should serve well enough.

And then, Sans began to walk forward.

Ah, so now the cloaked baddies are starting to get worried. As well they should be.

With a twisting grab, he pulled all of their SOULs into the visible spectrum. The campsite, which had already been quite dark, might as well have faded away entirely, leaving the cloaked figures illuminated only by the light of their own corrupted hearts.

Stars, their collective level of violence made his metaphorical skin crawl. Some were worse than others, obviously, but, as he mentally ranked them, none registered under LV3.

Oddly enough, many of the SOULs were covered in fine hairline cracks; he could feel the slight texture against his blue magic. Some of them looked faded, shadowed, losing their color to black hatred. One—and only one—bore signs of direct manipulation, its color faded and laced through with immaterial puppet strings. He made a note to treat that one carefully, and his mind flickered through memories of a red wraith clinging to an innocent child.

It was a question, lined with disturbed shock, that pulled him from his musings.

“W-What is this?”

Taking an unnecessarily long pause gave him the time he needed to carefully seek out any oddly unfocused magic signatures matching the SOULs he could see, thereby locating every wand they had available: even any spares hidden away in their cloaks.

Nearly ten seconds after the question had been asked, he shrugged. “nothin' much.”

Sans recognized the smug one from earlier, still standing at the front of the group. It was a little insulting to see that the man had a cyan SOUL, though cracked with lines of pitch black. At least he was looking significantly less confident now.

“Who— What are you?”

“just a guy from outa' town,” came his glib reply.
With no further warning—he had never understood why monsters never seemed to take the initiative—blue magic lashed out to grab every wand he could identify and pulled. Some managed to keep their grip, but a little over half of them had their wands yanked from their hands.

While they were still staggered, Sans summoned bones at both sides of the group and fired. It was a bit tricky to be perfectly precise, given the hoods and masks, but most shots struck his intended target: the temple. Three of the those who kept hold of their wands—and were therefore more capable—managed to cast a shield in time. The rest did not.

Death Eaters dropped like stones, unconscious.

The smug one was one of those still standing, and, to his credit, he wasted no time returning fire. Too bad for him that Sans was also a master of the strongest defense: just don't be where the attack hits.

Stepping aside, the spell flew by and splashed harmlessly against the bone shield behind him. Then he had to duck, dodging under another beam of light.

When he straightened again, he swung his arm up level with his enemies. A twist, and their SOULs chimed dark blue. The last three Death Eaters had time to gasp, feeling an unexplainable weight that was both external and yet, in some way, fundamentally internal. Sans whipped his arm toward the sky, and they were bodily launched into the air.

Naturally, he caught them before they could crash back down and end up dead. Even without that final impact, however, the sheer shock (and fear, most likely) had been enough to knock them out.

With no more conscious threats, it was simple enough to just sweep the whole contingent of Death Eaters behind a cage of bones and bundle up all the wands well out of their reach.

It was done.

Sort of. He still had one last thing to do.

Sans walked over to the downed attackers, or rather, to one specific attacker: the only one he hadn't shunted behind bone bars. Up close, he recognized slight traits on the glowing heart that told him that, despite his physical size, this person was still just a kid: definitely no older than twenty. Their SOUL was green, underneath all the compulsions. The puppet strings of another wizard's influence wrapped around it so tightly that it was closer to a vacant, washed out gray.

With a flick, casting a color he was not used to using, the strings snapped. A glow of magic that shimmered ever-so-slightly red played over the damaged area, strengthening and supporting, giving this person back their willpower.

Determination: powerful stuff, to be sure.

Finding the correct one from the bundle of confiscated wands took a minute, given how bleached of character the SOUL had become, but he was decently sure of his choice.

“wakey wakey,” he said, gently smacking the previously-mind-controlled human. “you probably wanna get going before the wizard equivalent of the cops finally show up.”

A groan, and the young wizard slowly raised a hand to his head. When his hand met the cool silver of the mask, he jerked upright. “What the—?!?”

Sans leaned back to avoid being hit by the startled teen. “cool your jets, kiddo. you may need to
take off, but no need to launch directly into my face.”

He imagined that the expression under the mask was a hilarious mix of sheer confusion and... well, confusion probably just about covers it. Unless disorientation can count as a separate emotion. Either way, the teen was now glancing around with a clear lack of comprehension.

With the situation being what it was, the first thing the teen focused on was probably not the thing he should be giving priority to. “I’m older than you.”

Without magic warping his glamour out of shape and rather effectively hiding his appearance, he was back to looking like a regular (though pale) eleven-year-old kid.

“But— But you’re younger than me!” he continued; clearly his mind was trying desperately to catch up with the events of the past few minutes.

Rather than answer, Sans just shrugged. But the teen had already moved on to more pressing observations.

“How did you…? W-What did I do? What's going on? Who— Where—” His next partially-formed question was interrupted when he noticed the small glowing heart floating in front of his chest. “What is that?”

“that's your SOUL, but that's not important right now.”

“My WHAT?!”

“like i said while you were still snoozing,” Sans continued, as if that incredulous outburst hadn't even happened, “it'd be best if you got a move on.”

“I'm sorry,” the teen said, tone dripping with sarcasm, “Forgive me if I seem caught up on the fact that, apparently, that thing is my soul!”

Holding out his best guess for which wand was his, Sans pressed on. “this is yours, probably. now —”

The teen had a rather sudden realization. “What's it doing outside of me?!”

Really, it was as if the two of them were having two completely separate conversations. With a sigh, the disguised skeleton mimed pinching the bridge of his nose: not actually having a physical nose there made it trickier, but he was confident in his acting skills. He snapped his fingers and all the still-visible SOULs faded away.

“better?”

“Presumably,” he answered, rubbing at his chest under the black cloak. “Alright then. Next question: who are you?”

Sans grinned. “i'll answer if you do.”

There was a long pause, then the teen reached up and took off the mask. His young face was pulled down in a frown, but Sans was reasonably sure that was just his default expression. He pushed back his hood as well, revealing dusty blond hair in a fancy formal cut.

“Cassius,” he said at last. “Cassius Warrington.”

“nice to meet ya, cass.” Sans enjoyed the slight consternation the swiftly-chosen nickname caused.
the name's sans. maybe i'll see ya at school later."

"School? I doubt they'll let me go back, after finding out I'm a—"

Waggling the teen's wand in his face, Sans interrupted him. “like i said, you need to skedaddle. besides, we both know you were here for, shall we say, somebody else’s reasons.”

Looking quite shocked—a typical response to being exposed to Sans—Cassius carefully reclaimed his wand. “How do you know…” His confusion abruptly hardened into suspicion. “What do you want?”

“do i need a reason?”

The flat look that got in response was all the answer needed.

“okay, sheesh. how about this: i don't tell on you,” he waved over to the indisposed Death Eaters, “you don't tell on me. deal?”

Cassius glanced upwards, thinking it over and likely trying to figure out if there were any secret strings attached. At long last, he cautiously nodded and was about to say something… but then the words died away in his throat. Eyes wide, he stared into the sky. Sans followed his gaze.

Overhead, a terrifying image began to form: green lights and dark clouds swirling into existence, shaping themselves into an enormous skull whose jaw opened to release an equally huge snake. The mark loomed overhead, casting fear into the hearts of those who witnessed it.

It was all very impressive.

But, to be honest, Sans was in no mood to appreciate the subtle craft and power that had gone into creating that spellwork.

All he cared about was that it was making people scared.

And that, he would not let stand.

“hold that thought, cass.”

He held his hands outstretched toward it, gathering focus and magic in his fingertips as he reached for the spell's structure. It was as complex as he had suspected, all twisting together as the image moved and changed. But, since he wasn't going to try and alter the spell, its complexity didn't really matter all that much. In fact, it might be a bonus: knock out the linchpin and it should all unravel.

Cracks of white began racing across the surface of the mark as Sans none-too-gently shoved his magic deeper into the construct. All the way to its core.

It was disgusting.

Of course Sans couldn't see it, given he was still standing on the ground underneath it, but the impression he got from its energy was more than enough.

“What are you doing?”

“getting rid of it.”

He summoned a Gaster Blaster there, far overhead and hidden right at the center of the image; it
was barely within his range, but he managed. The white breaks on the dark image widened, forced open by the new magic in its midst. Focusing on his distant summon—it was surprisingly high up there—he charged its attack.

But Sans kept its jaws closed.

Then, after another moment to build power, he detonated the blaster.

The cracks of white bloomed into true destruction with an almost victorious boom. Shattering like glass, the dark mark was torn to pieces that disintegrated as they fell from the sky.

“Gah?!”

It would seem he had confused poor Cassius, who at this point had probably experienced more emotional twists than is recommended for a span of time under ten minutes.

Sans stretched, satisfied, before returning his attention to the not-willingly-a-Death-Eater. “so do we have a deal?”

Mutely, Cassius nodded.

“cool beans.”

Then, with virtually no warning at all, he opened a shortcut directly underneath the teen's feet. He fell, naturally, and vanished from the campgrounds. Addressing what now looked like just empty air (but was, in fact, empty air still connected to somewhere else entirely), Sans wished him good luck. And ignored the disoriented mess of expletives he heard in return.

Now that the excitement was over with—for reals this time, seriously—Sans realized there was yet another problem looming.

He turned to the bone shield, mostly forgotten, and dismissed it with a flick of his wrist. The family that had been huddling behind it startled, drawing closer together before recognizing him and relaxing once more.

Something very much like guilt—and he was intimately, *exhaustedly* familiar with that feeling—wrapped itself around his ribcage.

“…i'm so sorry,” he said, after what felt to him to be a long moment. He swallowed nothing but air, but it felt heavy in his jaw. “i should have… should have…”

Mrs. Roberts shushed him. “Don't. You saved us, young man. No wondering about— about what-ifs or anything.”

“but—”

“I'd s-smack you r-r-right now, if I c-could.” It looked as if Miles might have tried to menacingly shake a fist at him, but given he didn't have the strength to clench his fingers together he ended up just floppily waving his hand in the air.

Will nodded, clearly understanding in some way, and asked, “Should I hit him for you?”

Sans found himself taken aback, unsure what to say.

“Look,” Mr. Roberts began, drawing his two sons even closer as a fond reprimand. “What my sons are trying to say is, well… Thank you.”
“i… don't know what that has to do with smacking me,” he said, hesitantly.

“Boys,” murmured Mrs. Roberts, quietly. Her tone was fond and tolerant, if perhaps a bit judgmental. “They're just saying the same thing I did, though less directly.” She looked Sans square in the eye. “Don't blame yourself.”

He almost tried to protest, but wisely stopped before the words could get past his jaw. Blaming himself came so easily, and nobody had ever… had ever known to tell him not to, because all of his failures lay in countless forgotten pasts.

Sans nodded, and that seemed to be enough.

Looking around their little group—peaceful and calm in contrast to the still-burning campgrounds—Will couldn’t help but wonder, “So, what now?”

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Just imagine Megalovania playing at the barest edge of your hearing during all of this fighting. Or look up one of those 20 minute long arrangements of the song on YouTube and listen while you read. I had it playing in the background while I wrote sometimes, that's for darn sure.

In keeping with my tendency to take characters that show up for a grand total of maybe three sentences, meet Cassius. Yes, he is in the books. I think he's even on the Slytherin Quidditch team, for what that's worth. He will return when the crew gets to Hogwarts, and, given he knows at least a little bit of the great Sans Mystery™, he will definitely seek him out and attempt to get answers. Good luck, Cass. You'll need it.

Updates on the first of the month. University has been kicking my butt this semester, so the next few chapters may be a bit one the short side. We'll just have to see.
Thanks to everyone who reads and enjoys this story! Special extra thanks to people who take the time to write a comment or follow for future updates! You guys are the best.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Wrapping up Loose Ends

Chapter Summary

Now that the excitement has passed, it's time to sleep. Eventually. Maybe there's a few more things left to do, actually.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

By the time the ministry officials finally showed up, it was much too late for them to do anything. Because, well, all of the attackers had already been dealt with. The officials appeared, braced for a fight, and encountered only a still-slightly-burning campsite and a pile of unconscious Death Eaters caught behind the strangest glowing white bars. There was no sign of who had caused this result.

Well, that's not entirely true. The few witnesses they could find were raving about some mysterious blue figure, glowing with white light, who had simply… taken down the Death Eaters. A figure that had waved their hand and had force follow in its wake. Who had stood calmly as a killing curse flew directly at their face, and then watched as it flew harmlessly into the sky.

So the officials asked their questions again, because surely that couldn't be right.

But the witnesses just shook their heads, perhaps as disbelieving as their questioners, and repeated what they had seen.

It was rather helpful that, at least for the moment, these accurate accounts were being regarded as crazy stories. Conveniently, this assumption of craziness also seemed to slow down those officials. It was all pretty entertaining. Sans—who was monitoring the goings-on from a distance—could certainly appreciate it.

One of the uniformed wizards abruptly walked into frame from outside the edge of the shortcut window, clearly frustrated with his questionee.

“I've talked to three witnesses, and they're all bonkers.” The wizard was fuming, his back and forth pacing fueled by annoyed energy. “If the next one spouts the same impossible nonsense, I swear —!” He had been ramping up anger, but now he abruptly deflated back into bargaining. “I just want a straight answer, is that too much to ask?”

A voice nearby—and it was actually nearby, not from the other end of his scouting shortcut—pulled his attention away from the spying he had been doing.

“sorry, did ya say something?”

Mrs. Roberts frowned at him, concerned, then whispered, “See, dear? He was off in his own little world. I know he saved us, but he's still only Will's age. He—”

“I know, I know,” her husband answered. He, too, kept his tone soft: in consideration of their two
sons, both of whom were snoozing on the couch together.

A few minutes ago, Sans had whisked the whole family away from the campgrounds and straight back to their own home. The destination choice was a bit rushed, perhaps, but it was the best he could do on short notice: he'd felt a curious twisting in the fabric of reality, guessed it was because of somebody arriving express from elsewhere, and decided to evacuate.

With the adrenaline finally having a chance to drain away, tension and stress and fear leaving behind exhaustion, it was only natural that Will and Miles both fell asleep straight away. They hadn't even made it to their own beds before passing out. Although to be fair, that probably had at least some to do with them not being willing to leave their parents quite yet.

Slightly embarrassed by their concern, Sans spoke up again. “I'm right here, guys.”

“I know,” she said, and she nudged a glass of water just a little bit closer to him. Her smile was relieved, but also worried. “That's part of why I said it.”

Sans took the offered drink, and he could still hear the distinct sound of his bone fingers clinking against glass. The glamour could only do so much, after all. He stared down into the water, swirling it slowly.

“I'm fine. This wasn't even…” The second sentence petered away, his story dying before it could begin. He couldn't very well explain the whole of his situation—he didn't even want to—but he still needed to say something. “I'm fine,” he repeated.

Mrs. Roberts, being a mother, certainly didn't miss that unfinished sentence. She gave him a very stern look, but thankfully didn't press for details. He would have dodged any further questions, of course, but the problem was that he wasn't quite sure he would have wanted to.

He shook himself from his thoughts; he had a question of his own the ask.

“Do you…” Sans almost couldn't get the words out his mouth, but, as much as he personally loathed the idea, he had to know. Ignorance is bliss, after all. His memories—nightmares—of dark, deadly, dusty timelines is testament to that. “Do you want to forget?”

Mr. Roberts looked momentarily thoughtful, his eyes turning to his quietly snoring sons as he considered the option. His wife, however, answered instantly and with no hesitation at all. “No,” she said, firmly, and there was an almost dangerous glint in her eyes. “This was…” The words stuck in her throat for a moment, and she, too, couldn't help but look over to Will and Miles, reassuring herself that they were fine. “Tonight was horrible—It was beyond horrible. But those—I can't bring myself to call them 'people'. They're dangerous, and I can't let myself forget that.”

It wasn't an answer he had expected, but it was certainly an answer he could respect.

“Then I'll keep an eye out,” he said, and he gestured to the pile of pillows and blankets. “So you can go to sleep too. I 'spect you're exhausted.”

“Us? You should be the one in need of more sleep, after everything you did tonight!” Mr. Roberts protested, and his wife echoed that sentiment.

Sans shrugged. “If wizards do show up, I'm best to deal with 'em.” Which was a good point that the parents really couldn't argue against. To reassure them, he added, “Besides, magic helps with the whole sleep deal.”
They still looked none too pleased about the idea.

“at least go lay down, guys.” He waved a hand and one of the blankets followed the motion, invitingly beckoning them to come over and sleep. “a lot of sheet happened tonight.”

“Language!” reprimanded Mrs. Roberts, but she was smiling a little and her husband couldn't help but chuckle.

Holding up his hands in self-defense, Sans jokingly protested, “but i have im-pun-ity!”

“That doesn't hold in this court, I'm afraid.” From the look in his eyes, the dad was setting up for a joke of his own. And indeed: “You'll need to be pun-ished.”

“ah, such a good ol' reliable pun,” Sans complimented, willfully ignoring Mrs. Roberts dramatic muttering about wanna-be comedians.

The joke seemed to be the best argument in favor of sleeping, and therefore not being subjected to more lame wordplay. So Mrs. Roberts walked the short distance away to claim a space among the blankets, gently settling down beside the couch within arms reach of her children.

But Mr. Roberts, still hesitant, had to ask one more time: “Are you sure?”

“yeah,” Sans reassured, perfectly sincere. “i'm fine.”

So the man joined his wife, piling up a few more blankets and pillows to soften the floor. As they settled themselves down with their children nearby and safe, finally letting themselves relax a little, it didn't take long for the two adults to swiftly drift off to sleep as well.

Sans kept watch as the minutes slowly ticked by: monitoring the immediate area, the campsite via a shortcut, and the sort of immaterial plane he could feel twisting whenever a wizard or witch tried their Apparate trick.

Like right now, actually.

There was a loud snap, and suddenly there were two more people standing in the living room. The sound disturbed one of the sleepers—he couldn't tell which—but they just grumbled, rolled over, and didn't actually wake up.

“you're lucky they were already snoozing before you just decided to pop in,” Sans said, addressing these two newcomers in a tone sharp with implied reprimand.

Both officers looked a bit surprised to see him there, especially the woman: he recognized her, since she was the same person who had tried to wipe the Roberts' memories earlier. She clearly hadn't expected to see him again, even though she was visiting the same family. And for some reason, she seemed a bit uneasy around him.

No clue why that could be the case, though the last time they met he had been a bit… judgmental. Nothing too serious.

(Inside, he was vindictively pleased that she was still a little spooked by him.)

The second officer—a balding, middle-aged man—either didn't notice his partner's anxiety or he just didn't care. “Who's this? I thought there were only two boys, and neither looked, well…”

Sans just smiled, because he was perfectly aware that he looked odd: aside from his clothing,
which some would say to be weird in and of itself, he was basically colorless. He was fairly sure that Sirius had planned on adding color later, but had just never gotten around to it.

“He's a, er, friend of the family?” the witch replied, but it sounded more like a question than an answer. “He was here earlier today, too.”

“That I am and that I was.”

Ignoring Sans entirely, the wizard turned to his partner again. “And he’s… one of us, is he?”

“If you mean 'am I magical',” Sans cut in, stealing back the question that really should have been aimed at him in the first place, “then the answer is 'yes'. Not that it should matter to you, but I might as well be made of the stuff.”

It would seem the old man was unaccustomed to being treated in such a way: that is to say, so bluntly that it was bordering on impolite. Clearly Sans had no intention of treating him as an authority figure, despite his position as a Ministry employee. Testily, he asked, “And what, exactly, do you mean by that?”

 Mostly to be a bother, Sans returned, “What part?”

“Mr. Peasegood,” the witch interrupted, nervously eyeing the small child staring down her partner. If asked why the boy unsettled her, she wouldn't be able to give a concrete answer: he just did.

“Perhaps we ought to just finish up and leave.”

“True,” he mused, dropping the previous subject entirely. “I suppose we should.” The wizard made as if to aim his wand toward the sleeping family, but hesitated when he felt the chill look leveled at him.

“Hey now, there's no need for that,” Sans said, still smiling. But it was a hollow smile, not doing much to hide the threat behind his otherwise benign words.

For a moment, the room was perfectly silent. There was almost a weight in the air—it wasn't an actual magical force, like blue magic would have been, but… more like a promise. They couldn't see nor hear nor physically feel anything, but both the witch and wizard nevertheless knew there was danger.

It was, somewhat surprisingly, the woman who spoke up next. She gathered her courage, then walked out between her partner and the sleeping muggle family.

Sans quirked a brow at that, but did nothing other than keep a careful eye on her.

“It's fine,” she said, looking very uncomfortable with suddenly being the center of attention. “Probably. I imagine somebody's already dealt with them, right? I mean, why else would they be at home already?”

Interestingly, it seemed as if she didn't even quite believe her own words: he could see it in the way her eyes couldn't settle, heard it in the way the question lilted upward unsteadily at the end.

He wasn't sure what she was trying to pull—if anything—but Sans decided to roll with her suggestion. “Yeah, ages ago. Isn't it better to not wipe minds… unnecessarily?”

She nodded, genuinely in agreement, and his opinion of her rose a few notches.

The man, annoyingly enough, looked unconvinced. Scowling at the sleeping family as if somehow
this whole situation was their fault, he again raised his wand. “Better safe than sorry. Obliviate.”

Mad enough to whack him over the head with a femur—it took all of his reset-trained control to refrain—Sans simply ground his teeth together. He flicked out his own magic and tore away all the intent and power from the spell, and it became nothing more than the light it gave off.

Oddly, the woman was giving him a rather peculiar look. Almost as if she knew what he had just done—or was at least suspicious that he had just done something. She didn't say anything about it, though, so he elected to ignore her.

“There,” the man said, gustily. “Now we know for sure.”

She hummed noncommittally, but still nodded. He seemed to take that as complete agreement, and, with one last glance at Sans, decided his business was done. Turning sharply on his heel, there was that strange sensation of reality twisting and a sharp pop. He was gone.

Hesitating and gathering her courage, the woman took a step toward Sans and held out her hand. “My name's Matilda Nettlebane.”

A little perplexed at this sudden introduction, Sans nonetheless shook her hand. “I'm Sans.”

“Nice to meet you,” she said, apparently both as a belated greeting and a goodbye. “And good luck.”

Then, with a pop, she vanished as well. The room at last returned to restful silence.

But only for a moment.

“Well,” whispered a small voice from the other side of the room. “That was scary.”

“Terrifying’, Will,” replied the older brother, just as softly. “The w-word you're looking for is 'terrifying’.”

Sans hummed in agreement, remembering somewhat too late that he should be trying to keep it quiet so as not disturb anyone. “How long were you up?”

The two boys shared a glance, trying to recall the time in the conversation that they had tuned in, which Sans took to mean 'long enough'. He carefully made his way over, mindful of the sleeping parents, and perched on the arm of the couch.

After a long, only slightly uncomfortable silence, he said, “…I'm sorry.”

Miles sighed. “Are we gonna have to go through this again?”

Will shook an angry fist at him, and it was somehow less threatening than the first time earlier when his brother had tried the same move. Probably because the kid was trying to hold back a yawn, meaning he was making a funny face.

Smiling at them—though, given how dark the room was, they probably couldn't see it very well—Sans shook his head. “Nah, I geddit. But still.”

“Fine,” said Miles, and he very slowly levered himself up into a sitting position. “You can be sorry, so long as you know you're being silly. You'll get over it eventually.”

“Perhaps.” Frowning slightly, Sans watched as Miles gently readjusted the blankets. The kid was moving very carefully, as if he was… “Hurt,” he murmured. “You're hurt. Or were hurt… but I don't
He put up his hands, as if he could physically pat away the concern. “I was, before. It hurt, but d-didn't actually do a-a-anything but hurt.”

The stutter was back, brought by the reminder to recent memories. And with it was a smile that tried to hide deeper pain: easily recognizable. Sans could pull it off flawlessly, after all.

Practice makes perfect.

“can i… would you mind if i CHECK that you're really okay?”

“Check what?” Will asked, before his older brother got the chance to. “And why?”

Sans rested a hand over his chest, picking his words carefully. “just to be sure. i can look a little… deeper than most.”

Eyes wide with amazement, Will whispered, “You have x-ray vision?”

“What? no!” He managed to keep the surprise quiet, and he had to swallow back a laugh. “…though that would be cool. no, it's a different sorta thing.”

Both kids seemed slightly disappointed, even Miles. “Oh. Well, If you think it m-might help.”

“this… may feel a bit weird.”

Sans briefly considered using a full CHECK, which would give him statistics without drawing out the boy's SOUL. Then again, if the problem wasn't something physical, the numbers might not show anything. It could be like his encounter with those Dementor things had been: none of his stats had changed, but there had definitely been an effect.

So, with a deliberately slow gesture to telegraph what he was doing, he beckoned the SOUL. There were two awed gasps, though one sounded slightly uncertain: the process did feel peculiar in a way that just couldn't be explained.

“What is it?”

“It's your… uh…” Sans wondered if he should maybe just say it was a representation, like a health meter or something, rather than just straight up telling him that it was the core of his very being. But then, honesty is the best policy. “your SOUL.”

Neither boy seemed to know how to respond to that.

The SOUL was vibrantly orange, the solid color a typical characteristic of youth. A little small, perhaps, but that, too, is normal for children. It wasn't covered in sludge or darkness, it wasn't cracking apart or hung up by strings or any other blatantly obvious sign that something was wrong.

But he knew a thing or two about SOULS, and he could see that it was bruised. Battered.

“What's wrong?” Miles asked, a little nervous: the soft orange glow was enough light for him to tell that Sans was frowning.

“nothing much,” he answered. “just annoyed that i'm not better at green— er, healing magic.”

Will, who had been distracted from his worry by the glowing heart, immediately turned back to the actual matter at hand. “What's that mean? Is he okay? He is okay. …Right?”
Sans smiled, reminded of his own brother. “he's fine,” he reassured. “but i can't help him along.”

Or at least, he couldn't help him heal.

Cupping the small orange SOUL between his hands, he channeled one of his most familiar colors: cyan. A glimmering bubble formed around the heart, creating a shield that would destroy anything that might try to pass through.

And, with pure enough cyan energy, that includes curses and other spells.

Which was, of course, his end goal.

The flow of pure magic made the glamour over his fingers go slightly transparent, which earned appropriate responses of astonishment. He didn't particularly mind, focusing instead on completely enclosing the SOUL in the protective bubble. Only then did he sit back and stuff his hands into his pockets.

Without him holding it in the visible spectrum, the orange heart simply faded back to where it belonged.

“That was so cool!” Will exclaimed with all the energy he could cram into a near whisper. “And a little creepy, but mostly cool!”

Miles rested a hand on his chest, as if checking that everything was back to normal. “That was so weird feeling.”

“told ya.”

“Your hand did that thing,” continued Will, “like when you put it over a torch and can see the bones!”

Sans chuckled a little, and wondered how they would react if he dropped the glamour entirely. He didn't, of course… but, a little hesitantly, he did pull his hands back out of his pockets. They still weren't entirely solid looking, more like colored glass than skin.

“Woah.”

“it's really neato, right?” He wiggled his fingers at them. “no bones about it.”

Even as they watched, it was almost like his skin came back into focus. After a minute it was back to being a normal, albeit pale, hand.

Miles blinked, then asked, “So… what’d you do?”

“stuff and things,” Sans replied, before turning to Will. “and you're next.”

The younger boy scooted a little closer, interested despite the lack of concrete answers. “Okay, but… what was that stuff?”

It was probably too dark for him to have clearly seen the expression Sans made, but Miles guessed well when he preempted, “And don't just say 'magic'.”

“fine, fine. it's a shield.” As he explained, he reached out to Will's SOUL. “i'm gonna shield all of you. that way i won't have to worry when i leave.”

A small blue heart shimmered into visibility, healthy and bright with life. Sans smiled, relieved,
and again he gathered cyan light in his hands.

“Is that really my soul?” Will leaned closer. “Why’s it blue?”

It was hard to talk and focus at the same time, so Sans didn't answer until the bubble was in place. “means you're honest, will.” He almost said 'kiddo' instead, force of habit, but given he currently looked the same age that would be a bit weird.

“And orange?”

“bravery.”

Miles shot his brother a smug look, pleased with his trait, and Will rolled his eyes.

Although he was really beginning to feel the effects of all the magic he'd used in the past day, Sans pressed on. He wasn't anywhere near his limit yet, after all, and there were still two more SOULs to shield.

Then maybe he could turn his attention to whatever trouble Sirius might have—or rather, certainly gotten caught up in.

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After all was said and done, it had taken Sans a good few hours before he got around to figuring out where Sirius and the rest had ended up. Of course, most of that time had been spent keeping watch while the Roberts family finally got some sleep. He was getting pretty tired himself, but keeping them protected from anyone that might want to rip memories out of their skulls was more important.

Figuring out that shield spell trick was really the only reason he left as early as he did—he set it up around all four of them, managing to not disturb the snoozing parents when he shielded them. Then he waited for the boys to fall back asleep, wrote them a note to explain things, and finally bid them a one-sided farewell.

He was perfectly willing to stick with them until the coast was clear, as it were. But, well, he did have other friends he might have to bail out.

And he was really tired, by this point.

Sirius was surprisingly easy to find, once he actually started looking. Though the reason it was so easy was because he was with Harry, and Harry was found just by scanning the area then following where most of the commotion was. It worked like a charm.

The commotion in question had had something to do with a temporarily stolen wand that had been used to cast that big floating skull-with-snake image earlier. And the wand in question was Harry's, because of course it was.

Somewhat unexpectedly, Sirius was actually trying to stay at the fringes of the argument. It was a good choice: disguise or no, he was still a wanted man.

Sans waited for the argument to cool down, then a little bit longer for the people to begin heading
off their separate ways. He rejoined them just before they reached their tent. One quick shortcut and he was keeping pace with his friend.

“sup’. anything interesting—”

He was interrupted by a discombobulated mess of surprised noises as Sirius nearly tripped over himself and knocked into Harry. Who, in turn, stumbled into Ron. Luckily the red-head kept his footing, though he still loudly proclaimed his annoyance.

“Sans!”

“Sans?”

“What?”

“guys calm down.”

“Calm down?” Sirius demanded. “Where have you been?! You just vanished after the whole… uh,” Realizing he probably shouldn't be so loud about this, he was left with gesturing vaguely upwards. “You know…”

Sans shrugged, then yawned. “just keepin' an eye-socket—” He must be more tired than he thought. “er, keeping an eye on some friends.”

Sirius frowned slightly, likely catching that slip-up as well. “How are you feeling?”

“ugh, tired.”

Looking between the tent and his clearly exhausted friend, Sirius considered his options. Then he turned to his godson. “We should probably get going.”

The trio had been silently watching this exchange, feeling very much unsure how to respond to any of it. After all, they knew just who had taken care of the Death Eaters. Even if he did look like a sleepy, harmless kid right now.

Harry swallowed. “You don't mean just back to the tent, do you.”

Sirius shook his head.

“Well.” He took a breath, then smiled. “Okay. I'll hear from you soon, right?”

“Course, pup.”

Sans yawned again, and was very much thankful that they would be heading home and not just claiming the most comfortable patch of floor in the tent. He closed his eyes, taking the chance to unfocus a little while they said their goodbyes.

He zoned out so completely that he almost didn't notice when Sirius set a hand on his shoulder.

“Let's go, lazy-bones.”

Sans waved a sleepy farewell. “see ya at school, guys.”

Then they were gone.

The shortcut deposited both of them on the front steps, grim Grimmauld looming before them;
Sans could probably have taken them directly inside, but he was tired enough that doing so would have significant risk of sending them into a wall or something.

Pushing through the front door and calling out a cheerful greeting to anything that would listen, Sirius took off his colorful jacket and floppy hat to hang up by the entrance. His glamour fell off with the removal of the hat, leaving him looking like himself again.

There was a sound of a door opening somewhere else in the house, and a few seconds later their resident werewolf—looking like he hadn't actually gone to sleep yet, despite wearing pajamas—poked his head around the corner at the top of the stairs.

Remus quirked his head to the side, pointedly looking at the condition their clothes were in. “It was rather exciting, I take it?”

With a half-shrug-half-wave that clearly indicated that Sans was disinterested in explaining, he turned and slumped off to his room, exhausted and sore from all the goings on of the past day. Stopping time, stopping crazy wizards, stopping mind-wipes: it had taken a lot out of him.

Sirius just nodded, and didn't bother with a more detailed answer. It will all be in the news tomorrow, anyway.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

So, remember how last chapter I warned that the next few chapters might be a bit short? Yeah. It seems that wasn't the case here. I don't know how this happened, because I really was planning on keeping it short to have time for school stuff. Anyway, next week is finals for me. Good luck to everyone in the same boat.

Also, AMAZING NEWS! SarcasticBeanie drew some fanart for this story! It looks amazing, and I cannot possibly express how happy it's made me. Here's the link: https://archiveofourown.org/works/14347077
Thank you so much, SarcasticBeanie! You're the best!

For more fun news, if you wanna see more art I drew a scene from the last chapter to celebrate just passing 900 follows over on fanfiction.net! It can be found on my deviantART account, here's the link: http://fav.me/dcaddsk

Sorry this update was a bit later in the day, I only just finished it up this morning.

Updates on the first of the month.
Thanks to everybody who has read and enjoyed, and I hope you continue to do so!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Terror At The Quidditch World Cup  
by Rita Skeeter

The unthinkable happened this past night, just hours after the exciting conclusion of the Quidditch World Cup, as swarms of Death Eaters stormed the campgrounds surrounding the pitch. It was chaos, witches and wizards fleeing desperately into the forest: screams of fear and pain filling the once peaceful night air. Wicked spells lit up the terrifying scene, destruction following in their wake. Muggles and muggle-borns alike were caught into the air, tortured and humiliated.

Ministry security on site was woefully underprepared for such an assault, with many of the officers having joined in with the post-game revelry. This sheer incompetence allowed the attackers to sweep through the campgrounds with hardly any opposition. By the time officials finally mustered enough force to possibly turn the tide, it was much too late. The Death Eaters had already declared their own victory—the Dark Mark rising in the sky—and swiftly vanished back into the night.

Aurors were able to apprehend only fourteen of the attackers.

Or at least, that's what they'd have you believe.

Exclusive interviews with several wizards and witches who had been on the scene paint quite a different picture—one that, as astonishing as it might sound, claims that those fourteen attackers were eliminated by a single individual before any Ministry officials even reached the scene.

“I know that it sounds unbelievable,” said young Cedric Diggory, Hogwarts prefect for Hufflepuff. “I mean, I was there—I saw it!—and even I think it was crazy!”

Those near where the Death Eaters had been apprehended recall having felt an incredible weight of magic pressing down on them, seeming to originate from a lone figure draped in blue and white light. This courageous act, singlehandedly holding back the rioters’ advance, saved countless innocent lives from the assault.

The Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge, was unable to be reached for comment confirming or denying this incredible feat. Given how well the Ministry handled the rest of this catastrophe, perhaps that silence speaks for itself.

Although nobody knows who mysterious individual was or precisely what happened—as, of course, anyone would take the distraction provided as a chance to get to safety—the entire camp witnessed what happened to the Dark Mark overhead. Just as the night seemed darkest, with the monstrous symbol of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named looming in the sky above, suddenly cracks of brilliant white lanced through the colossal image. In mere moments, the horror shattered into...
nothing but specks of rapidly fading light.

The Minister refused to comment on that as well.

If the terrified wizards and witches who waited breathlessly for news at the edge of the wood expected reassurance from the Ministry of Magic, they were sadly disappointed. A Ministry official emerged some time after the appearance and subsequent destruction of the Dark Mark alleging that nobody had been hurt, but refusing to give any more information. Whether this statement will be enough to quash the rumors that several bodies were removed from the woods an hour later remains to be seen.

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“Sweet merciful heavens,” Remus breathed, looking down at the paper in his hands. Or, more specifically, the headline emblazoned across the front page.

There had been a Death Eater attack at the Quidditch World Cup.

More to the point—and much more interestingly, given what Remus knew—the attack had been halted in its tracks. Nobody knew who had done it, though that didn't stop the paper from speculating. It was what they did best, after all… to the point that it became a little ridiculous. One of the smaller articles swore that it had to have been Merlin himself, returned from history to save the day.

The particular article he had just read was… actually, surprisingly accurate. Or, at least, it seemed accurate based on what Remus was speculating to have happened.

And speculation was easy enough: Sans had happened. The kid had done something, Remus was sure of that, and soon he would finally get his answers. They had a deal, after all, and summer vacation was finally coming to a close.

Sans stumbled into the dining room looking less than half awake—likely he'd just woken up, given the condition of his white hair—and plopped down in one of the chairs around the table. He eyed the food options, mostly fruits and bread, but in the end he didn't take any. Instead he poured himself a glass of water and sat back.

“So.” Remus set aside the paper, turning his attention to the ever-mysterious kid, and asked, “Will we finally be off to Diagon Alley today, Sans?”

He got a yawn in response, followed by a dull nod.

“And will you finally give me answers when we're done shopping?”

“didn't forget 'bout that, did ya?” Sans sighed, as if he was annoyed by the prospect, but his smile looked genuine. If, perhaps, ever so slightly nervous.

Before Remus could respond—because yes, of course he remembered the deal—the door swung open again. Not by much, and it ended up closing again almost immediately. There came a noise of distress and annoyance from the other side, and it was distinctly canine in nature.

With a curious look and a gesture, Sans outlined the door in blue and beckoned it open.
A dog strutted in, head held high with a familiar cocky confidence (regardless of having just been foiled by a simple doorknob), and jumped onto one of the chairs.

Although a bit larger than the breed usually comes, it was a golden retriever.

*He* was a golden retriever.

“How...?” Remus frowned slightly, trying to figure out how Sirius—it *had* to be him—had changed his Animagus form.

Sirius barked, looking very pleased with himself.

“on the collar?” Sans said, as if repeating something the dog had told him just then. “that does make sense. dogs don't wear much *claw*-th, so i guess you had limited *pup*-tions.”

“Something about the collar?” Looking between the kid and the dog—who nodded, by the way—Remus almost didn't want to ask. Key word being 'almost', because he ended up asking anyway. “…How did you know that, Sans?”

Running a hand through his white hair, the boy just shrugged. “well, he said.”

“He— But he's a dog right now!”

“so?”

Remus set his head in his hands for a moment, regrouping. “He's a dog. How did you know what he meant by that bark? Did you just guess?”

“nah,” Sans replied, perfectly nonchalant. “my doggish is near fluent.”

The werewolf mouthed that sentence to himself, looking as shocked as anyone has ever been. Then, with a rallying breath, he gathered up his thoughts and said, “Is that so.”

Even with the facial features of a golden retriever, Sirius managed a smirk.

“Why is it,” Remus said, “that every time you actually *answer* one of my questions, I'm only left with more of them?”

“dunno,” said Sans. “i try to be perfectly honest.”

“Yes, by avoiding questions altogether.”

Sirius barked once, clearly in agreement; so it would seem that he had been on the receiving end of the kid's deflections as well.

Sans just shrugged—a good, reliable, tried-and-true reply to any topic he'd like the conversation to move away from. His fallback method was, naturally, an overload of puns.

“well, what can ya do,” he said, tone light and humorous. “i can't *paws*-ibly answer all your *dogged* questions at once, now *canine*?”

The dog, with a sound that was somewhere between a bark and a sneeze, laughed himself clear out of his chair. He did try to stop himself at the last second, but, with a clatter of claws on wood, his paws failed to find grip.

Doing his best to keep a straight face (with limited success), Remus refused to let himself be
distracted. “You will need to answer those questions, Sans.”

With a sigh that suggested there was nothing he'd want to do less than be transparent and non-confusing, the kid took one sip of his water. In a theatrically strict tone, all business, he said, “we have a trade agreement, moon moon.”

“And today I was planning to make good on my half of that deal,” Remus replied, and his tone became teasing, “assuming you ever wake up enough to leave the house.”

“hey, i am awake. look at me go, being awake and stuff.” Sans dropped out of his chair to stand up, as if to prove just how not-asleep he was.

Deciding that too much time had passed without him getting attention, Sirius—still a dog—attempted to get back onto his seat. Unfortunately, he swiftly encountered the same problem that had made him fall off in the first place: his paws couldn't find much grip. Wobbling unsteadily and nearly slipping clean off again, he was forced to steady himself by skittering his paws onto the dinning room table. Then, faking like the entire nearly-falling-over thing had never happened, he barked twice.

Sans nodded, seemingly agreeing with whatever the dog-speak meant. “you might as well, i doubt anyone'd recognize you.”

Which was enough information for Remus to guess, “Do you want to go for a walk?“

It was unclear how much was acting, how much was Sirius, and how much was the fact that he was physically a dog, but regardless this must have been quite the exciting prospect for him. Very much resembling a true golden retriever, Sirius hopped off of his chair and romped around the room and then out into the hall, barking happily all the while.

Which was clearly a raucous agreement to his question. Remus stood up as well, planning to follow the happy hound toward the front door.

“hey, ya know…” Sans said, having thought of something. “i haven't actually taken you on one of my shortcuts yet, have i?”

Remus paused in the doorway. He knew what they were, in a manner of speaking. That is, he had seen the kid vanish with less warning than an unexpected sneeze, and seemingly regardless to the wards on the house that should prevent such things.

So, not sure if he should be anxious or interested, Remus shook his head. “No, you haven't. Should I take it that you plan on taking one to Diagon Alley?”

“well, 's the fastest way to travel. that's why it's called a shortcut.”

Then the kid walked out of the dining room: following Sirius to the front door, presumably, though there wasn't really any difference between vanishing from the entryway and vanishing from literally anywhere else. It just seemed to be an accepted tradition that, when leaving the house entirely, you do so from the front door.

Remus was just one step behind him.

After all, the sooner they finished their shopping, the sooner he would get his answers. And, with one last glance back at the paper still neatly folded on the table, those answers were something he desperately wanted.
Diagon Alley was an interesting place. As well it should be, given it was home to odds and ends from every sort of magical being in the whole of the wizarding world. Every window was a view into the peculiar and, for lack of a less obvious term, the magical.

But right now, Remus found that he was much more interested in the (also peculiar and magical) young boy walking with him.

Sans was a mystery. A friend, to be sure, but those two things are not mutually exclusive.

Right now, the kid was staring down at the somewhat-crumpled letter in his hands. His expression more suited somebody reading through a long list of tiresome chores, rather than a list of the magical items he'd need to further his magical education and prepare for magical society.

“do i really need all o' this stuff?”

Remus tried to recall everything from the list with limited success. “I probably still have the textbooks you'll need, they haven't changed in years. Of course, I doubt Padfoot still has his books, but he might have some of the other items. A cauldron, perhaps?”

The golden retriever, tail wagging, gleefully barked and shook his head.

“you did what?” said Sans, apparently interpreting something from that. “how'd you manage that?”

While he was interested in whatever story his long-time friend was now regaling the boy with, Remus naturally had no idea what was being said. Therefore he decided to just ignore them altogether and instead try to figure out the best way to get all the school supplies they'd need as quickly as possible.

He had a feeling that the longer they stayed here, the more likely they were to do something large and dramatic: Sirius had always been something of a showman... dog.

“Anyway,” Remus steered the conversation back on track, “we should get you your school robes first. I can go pick up some of the other things while that's going on.”

Then, just as they began their trip down the alley, Sans paused. “hey, so since you're buying,” he said, head tilted to the side at a curious angle, “i take it you found a job?”

“Well, yes,” Remus replied, his steps slowing as he turned to them in surprise. “Didn't I tell you two?”

Sirius barked, accusatory.

It was obvious that the dog was miffed: he didn't need Sans's peculiar ability to understand dogs to get that much. So apparently he really had forgotten to share the good news. To be fair, the past summer had been considerably more hectic than he was used to. Maybe that scrambled his brains a little.

At their expectant looks, he continued, “Well, Perkins helped me get a job in the Ministry. It's not much, of course, just pushing papers around between departments.”
congrats regardless. jobs can be hard.”

Sirius arrived at the clothing store first, unhesitatingly nosing his way inside. A bell over the door gave a friendly chime when it swung open, and a voice from somewhere behind all the fabrics—sounding just this side of frazzled—called out that it would be a moment before she could get to them. Apparently, despite how close to the start of the school year they were cutting it, the store was still caught in that back-to-school busy period.

“It's no rush,” Remus reassured.

Sans glanced around at all of the different robes hung up on racks or mannequins, most of them plain black but no small number in ridiculous colors and patterns, and he quietly remarked, “i know i got style, but i dunno if i'm fashion savvy enough for this place.”

After a few minutes browsing the selection, a squat woman—looking quite harried but still smiling—bustled out from somewhere. She was followed by a floating tape measure that twisted through the air as if it had a mind of its own. For a moment, it seemed that she would call out a greeting. Then her eyes landed on Sans.

“What are you wearing!”

Sans looked down at himself, as if he couldn't remember what he had put on that morning: blue jacket several sizes too large, black shorts that fit more like pants, pink slippers, and a plain white shirt. Everything seemed to be in order to him.

The dog snorted, clearly amused.

“We need to get him his Hogwarts uniform,” Remus said.

She nodded, but didn't otherwise reply: almost as if the sight of Sans—or perhaps just his outfit—had scrambled her senses for a moment. Her eyes slipped down and landed on Sirius, who wagged his tail in a friendly manner. That, at least, garnered a response.

“I'm sorry, dear,” Madam Malkin said, looking genuinely apologetic. “Your uniforms will be no problem, but I'm afraid your adorable doggy needs to stay outside.”

Sans turned to took at Sirius, and, with a hard-to-spot devious glint in his eyes, he pitched his voice into what could be called ‘quiet nervous child mode’.

“he's my service dog, so he's gonna be at school with me. i-i thought maybe…” Putting on his best acting skills, shyly scuffing one slippered foot against the floor and fiddling with his hands, he dropped his voice to be even softer. “could he maybe get a uniform too?”

Clearly he was a fantastic actor, as Madam Malkin caved all but immediately. “Alright, dear. I'll see what I can do.”

Remus chuckled to himself, enjoying the somewhat conflicted expression on the golden retriever's face: it would seem Sirius both did and did not want to play doggy dress-up. “Well, if you're all set here,” he said, as Sans and the dog were led to the back to get sized, “I'll be off to get some of the other things you'll be needing.”

“okay, uncle remus!” chirped Sans, still channeling happy-but-nervous child.

He found the address to be endearing, if a bit weird, and he tried to only let the first of those two
emotions show on his face. As he stepped back into the alley, Remus called one last goodbye over his shoulder. The door clicked shut with another soft jingle from the bell, and he immediately realized that he didn't actually have the list of what he needed to buy.

But, since he knew he still had his own school books, he was fairly sure that the only things he needed to get were potions supplies. Which hopefully shouldn't be a problem, as the Apothecary probably sells full kits for incoming first years.

When he returned to the clothing shop, potions kit floating behind him, the fitting was not yet finished. Sans was swamped in black fabric and grinning like it was the best thing in the world. It was likely the smallest size she had on-hand, and she was still hard at work tailoring it down to fit the short kid. Scissors snipped and cut, working to get the robe down to a reasonable fit, while needles hovered in the air waiting their turn.

Sirius was seated to the side, his part already done: he was wearing a tidy white dress collar and small black cape. Remus wondered briefly if, once Sans was sorted, the dog would get a small house tie to go with it.

He hoped so.

“How's it coming along?” Remus asked, taking a seat on one of the chairs to wait.

Madam Malkin flicked her wand like a conductor before an orchestra, and a few of the sewing tools set to work hemming up the fabric. “Two sets are all finished, but I've had to do each myself.” Another wave of her wand carried off the excess material that had been cut away. “He's such wee child, even my smallest set needs quite a bit of adjusting.”

It didn't take much longer for her to wrap up her work, and both Sirius and Sans changed out of their new robes. The witch still looked almost offended by the kid's choice of outfit, but she didn't say anything more about it as the three of them finished up their business. They left the store and the bundles of clothing were floated up to join the rest of their shopping.

Borrowing the list from Sans for a moment, Remus quickly checked that there wasn't anything he had forgotten. He was pleasantly surprised to see that he had only missed the telescope, and he was certain Sirius hadn't done anything too destructive to his old one. Hopefully.

“I suppose all that's left is to get is your wand.”

“Oh, well actually…” Sans pulled out a white rod from his baggy sleeves, nearly thirteen inches long, and gave it a demonstrative flourish. “I already got one of those.”

Remus blinked, having not expected that. He had to wonder how the wand had even fit up those sleeves and still allowed the kid's elbows to bend. Not to mention that the kid threw around wandless magic like it was nothing: it simply hadn't occurred to him that Sans might actually have a wand.

“What is that made of?” he asked, looking at the wand more closely.

“Magic,” came the reply that he really should have expected.

The wand was (as noted previously) completely white, with no sign of wood grain or— actually, it didn't even smell like wood. He breathed in, smelling that oddly supernatural scent that he associated with Sans. It almost seemed as if the kid and the wand were made of the same stuff, though that made less than no sense.
Although it did smell kind of like…

The white stick vanished back up the sleeve of the blue jacket before he could pin down that thought, and Sans stuffed his hands into his pockets with a satisfied smile. “we done, then?”

“I… suppose we are.” Then Remus crossed his arms, giving the kid the same stern look he gave students who were missing homework. “So. Will you answer my questions now?”

“well, first of all—”

Shortcuts—as Remus had found out earlier, when being whisked away to Diagon in the first place—were very much like blinking. Except, of course, that the eyes shut on one scene and open to see somewhere completely different. The only physical discomfort was, ironically, the disorientation inevitable when suddenly changing location without any other indication.

The instant they reappeared in the entryway at Grimmauld Place, Sirius collapsed back into human form with a spluttering protest. “Why always with the sudden vanishing?!” he demanded, rolling into a seated position on the floor. “It's just because it startles me, isn't it?!”

Sans shrugged, grinning unrepentantly. “no comment.”

Remus refused to let a little sudden teleportation get in the way of the answers he was due. “Can I have some answers now?”

That seemed sufficient to distract Sirius from his annoyance. Smiling, he nudged his friend expectantly and pestered, “Yeah, Rattles. C'mon, the man wants answers!”

“I have questions for you, too, Sirius.”

“Curses.”

“throw me a bone, paddy-paws,” Sans said. “i've been scratching at my skull here, trying to figure out the best way to tell him ulna this stuff. and there's no way i'm gonna be the only one patella-ing this story.”

Sirius blinked. “You've stepped up your pun game, Rattles.”

The kid smiled, then shrugged off one of the sleeves of his jacket. His arms were thin—worryingly so, though he had always waved off Remus's concerns. He wore a silver bracelet up at his elbow. Now his hand reached up to it, and pulled it down to his wrist.

“This isn't a prank, by the way,” Sirius said, tone for once completely devoid of teasing levity.

Sans took off the bracelet, and changed.

Pale skin vanished altogether, leaving behind a grinning skull—not terrifying or spooky, just familiar—and a skeletal arm. And skeletal legs, poking out from between the shorts and the pink slippers. Bright white lights shone in the eye sockets, friendly and amused.

Remus just stared, mind struggling to process what he was looking at.

“i'm a skeleton from another dimension.”

Chapter End Notes
Disclaimer: I do not own *Harry Potter* or *Undertale*.

The last paragraph of the article is taken mostly from the book, assuming the excerpt on the wiki is indeed in the book. I don't actually have my copy on hand to check right now. Either way, it's not mine.

And now Remus is in on the secret. I seriously doubt these answers are what he was expecting, although, at the same time, he probably had no clue what to expect. This is Sirius, after all. Who know what sort of stuff he could have gotten up to in the past year.
But time travel? Alternate dimensions?
Yeah, that was a surprise.

And now, MORE AMAZING NEWS! MuffinQueen has also drawn some fanart for this fanfic!
Here's the link: [https://archiveofourown.org/works/14520621](https://archiveofourown.org/works/14520621)
Thank you for the great art, MuffinQueen!

Updates on the first of the month (based on Colorado, since that's where I am).
Thanks for all of the comments and kudos! It's super motivating and helps me figure out just what sort of topics I need to clarify or touch on in future chapters. You guys are great!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Gone

Chapter Summary

I have an older brother.
I can't imagine what the world would be like without him in it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Papyrus hadn't seen his brother all day, and he was beginning to become concerned.

He knew that Sans would occasionally disappear—sometimes in the middle of a conversation—but this time just felt… different. As if his brother wasn't simply holed up in his bedroom or in the basement. And there was a peculiar sense of something missing.

Today was inexplicably different from yesterday.

It was quiet, which was typical for when Sans was snoozing somewhere, but it almost felt too quiet. Early was never really a time his brother enjoyed being awake, but he usually would have slouched out of his room to take up residence on the couch by now. Or he would have already passed by as he headed out to his post or to Grillby's or to the basement lab.

He tried to remember if anything noteworthy had happened last night: anything that could have hurt or unsettled Sans.

But Papyrus had yet to see tooth nor bone of his brother all morning. He knew Sans was a lazybones, but this was unusual. Poking his head out of the kitchen to send a worried look up toward his brother's room, Papyrus decided he was going to have to take action.

Dusting off stray noodle-bits from his mittens and hanging his apron off the tall sink, he took a moment to check that the tomato bobbing about in the pot of pasta was softening up nicely. Perhaps Sans could be persuaded from his room by the power of delicious spaghetti.

“SANS?” he called, hoping to get a response. Even if it would probably be a pun of some sort.

He headed for the stairs. When he passed by the dirty sock, he noticed that the notes were no longer standing upright. They were scattered, as if whatever had been holding them up was gone. For some reason, that made him even more worried.

His red boots thunked loudly on the steps.

“I KNOW THAT… YOU…”

He reached the top of the stairs, and got a clear view of the door to Sans's bedroom. There was no flickering firelight at the base of the door. No red and gold flames harmlessly defending his brother's room.

Something cold settled into his bones.
“…SANS?”

No response.

Papyrus hurried to the door, knocking twice and impatiently waiting for his brother to pop up and tease him for worrying over some prank.

No response.

Maybe Sans was still asleep.

Hesitating for a moment, he finally got out his copy of the key. The lock clicked and the door swung open to darkness. He flicked on the lights.

Nobody was there.

There was the treadmill, shoved out of the way against the wall. Five socks had collected in one corner of the room, opposite the dresser with the broken lamp. The mattress had only the bundle of clumped up sheets, no sleeping brother to be found.

The unusual quiet was even more obvious now, and, with a start, Papyrus noticed that the tornado of trash in the corner of the room had fallen apart into a pile of garbage.

Sans was gone.

He shoved that thought away, refusing to acknowledge the possibility. Perhaps his habitually lazy brother had actually gone to his post, and he simply hadn't noticed him leave. That had to be it.

Right?

Papyrus was out the door, tearing out of Snowdin as fast as his long legs could carry him. Some of the other residents gave startled shouts as he passed them. He didn't care.

Crossing the narrow bridge then skidding on ice, he ran past all of his deactivated puzzles—as well as the cleared space set aside for whatever puzzle his brother came up with. But at the moment, the tall skeleton didn't care that the spot was empty. Sans wasn't there, and that was all he noticed.

Any of the other sentries he happened across, he asked if they had seen him. None of them had.

As he neared his brother's sentry station—the farthest one from town—he found himself slowing down. He needed to know, to hurry and find his brother, to reassure himself that Sans was okay, but at the same time… a part of him already knew.

The station was empty.

Sans was gone.

Feeling almost numb, Papyrus blindly continued down the path. Tall tree after tall tree passed him by. He knew there was a door at the end; it led into the Ruins, and his brother had mentioned once that it was a great place to practice knock-knock jokes. Maybe, perhaps…

His footsteps crunched loudly through the snow. He barely noticed.

The purple stone wall that marked the boundary of the Ruins rose into view between the trees. There was a large stick in the path. He stepped on it, and it cracked loudly though the quiet.
There was nobody by the door.

Papyrus stood there, and, although there were other places Sans might yet be, he thought he knew why the world had felt so inexplicably different today.

Because something was missing.

Someone.

That realization hit with SOUL-deep certainty. It hit, and it felt like he was shattering. Everything hurt and everything in the world was wrong, because his brother was gone.

In front of him, the door swung open.

He barely noticed.

“I do not wish to fight,” somebody said, confident but defensive. “So long as you intend my child no harm, you…”

The voice petered away when, slowly, Papyrus looked up.

In the doorway stood a tall monster with fluffy white fur, rich purple robes, and a large paw held out protectively to defend a small figure hiding behind her. From one of her pockets glared a familiar yellow flower who, despite his scowl, seemed mostly rattled by the entire situation.

“Oh, goodness…” Her tone softened, becoming worried and gentle. “Are you alright?”

Flowey was staring at him, bewilderment twisting into shocked disbelief: near denial, but now faced with too many signs to continue crying false.

Then there was a painful, strangled noise—as if somebody else had just witnessed the confirmation of all of their worst fears. A small hand pushed aside the shielding paw, and a small child stumbled out into the snowy clearing. They were short, fragile as hope, and human.

And they were trembling, tears in their eyes. “H-he's really g-gone, isn't he?”

Papyrus had no idea who this human was, but, somehow, he knew they were asking about Sans. There was nobody else they could have been asking about. He didn't care that it made no sense.

Because nothing made sense.

Sans was gone.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Happy—! Uh, today isn't really a holiday, so far as I know. So I guess this is just 'Happy June 24'!  
(Or sad. This chapter was pretty sad.)

Sans is well and truly gone: not replaced or forgotten, but simply… missing. Cut out of the fabric from the very moment reality reset that final time. His brother feels it, a
sudden unease shivering down his spine. And Frisk… well, to be honest, they knew that Sans wouldn't be waiting for them outside the Ruins—knew that he was gone. But they still hoped that maybe, just maybe, he would be there. He wasn't, of course.

Here's a question for you guys: What do you think should happen with the selection of the Champions? Should it still be Cedric? What about Cassius? Wouldn't that be a twist! Will our dynamic duo prevent Harry's entry entirely? Hmm… questions, questions.

I have other exciting news, but I haven't gotten permission to share that here yet. Suffice to say, *it's freakin' unbelievable!*

Usual updates are on the first of the month, this one's just special. Thanks for all the support in kudos, bookmarks, and (especially) comments! You guys are amazing, and I hope you continue to enjoy the story.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Back on Track

Chapter Summary

Breaking news!—Sans is a skeleton and Sirius is an inadvertent time traveler. Remus, what's your take on all this?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Based on his expression, Remus was at a total loss for words. This was understandable, as Sans had likely just toppled over a few of the load-bearing pillars that held up the man's understanding of the world in the span of a single sentence.

He blinked. Once, twice. Then he rubbed at his eyes, as if thinking he had somehow fallen asleep and begun dreaming up this crazy explanation.

Sans remained skeletal.

"WHAT."

"Yes," Sirius remarked, perfectly calm, "that's what I thought you'd say."

Remus rounded on his long-time friend, and he jabbed a terribly confused finger in the direction of the grinning skeleton. In fact, it seemed the poor fellow couldn't quite figure his way around any more words than that one, as his further attempts to parse the situation into speech resulted in a jumbled mess of incomprehensible syllables. Though the word 'puns' seemed to come up more than once.

Actually, Sans was becoming a little concerned. "remus. buddy. you okay?"

Sirius, however, looked to be thoroughly enjoying himself. "Don't worry, Rattles," he reassured, "Ol' Moony here just needs a minute to process."

And indeed, a minute and a half later, Remus had regained control of his words. "Where do I even begin? The whole..." a broad gesture to all of him, "skeleton-ness, or the fact that, apparently, you're from another dimension?"

"I hear that the very beginning is a very good place to start," Sans stated, as unruffled as ever, 'but 'start' is a bit foggy because, well..."

"Oh no." Credit where credit is due, the man had a finely honed sense for when things were likely to go crazy. He had just... underestimated the magnitude this time. "I take it you have more bombshells you'd like to drop on me."

Sirius perked up, and Remus immediately regretted saying that. He should have waited, given himself time to come to terms with what he had just learned, before poking for more.

Grinning a dangerous grin and speaking with flippant nonchalance, Sirius revealed, "Also I'm from two years in the future. More or less."
There was silence then, and it was a real shame nobody had thought to have crickets on hand to fill the air with cliché. At least there was a return of the one-sided, dumfounded staring: jaw gaping as all mental processing power was diverted elsewhere. That took care of the requisite drama quite nicely.

Then his mouth snapped shut, and Remus carded a hand through his hair. “Well. That… honestly raises way more questions than it answers.”

“it wouldn't be in form if it didn't, moon-moon.”

Platform 9¾ was bustling with activity, families and students rushing to make the train on time. Given the damp on everyone's clothing and the continuous pattering of water hitting the distant ceiling, it must be raining fairly heavily outside. Sidestepping a cart loaded with luggage and a gaggle of eager students, Sans deftly steered his own hand-me-down trunk through the crowd. Its small wheels protested, squeaking all the while, but other than that it rolled easily over the smoothly tiled floor of the platform.

Though the last few days had involved a lot—a lot—of questions and clarifications, overall Remus had taken the news fairly well. And right now, he wasn't even thinking about unexpected skeletal-ness: he was just worried about how little Sans had packed.

“You're sure you have everything?” Remus asked.

For what might have been the tenth time that morning, Sans reassured, “even if i forgot something, it's not like i can't just pop by and pick it up.”

Still, the ex-professor eyed the small luggage with suspicion; the skeleton had decided that he only needed the very smallest of the available trunks. Although he had some good arguments. After all, the physical limits on any suitcase, box, or what-have-you become purely visual with liberal application of the right spells. It's not as though any of the muggles they might have passed on the way to the platform would know they needed enough for a full year, so there's nothing inherently strange about a small bag.

“P-professor Lupin?” called a quiet, stuttering voice from behind them. It belonged to a round-faced boy, pushing his cart through the crowd as he made his way closer. He gave a nervous wave when they turned around.

“Oh! Hello, Mr. Longbottom,” Remus greeted with a smile that became a touch sad. “Though I'm afraid I'm not your professor anymore.”

The boy flushed with embarrassment, looking like he wanted to both apologize and vanish into the floor, luggage cart and all, but he gathered himself up. “I-it's a real shame, that. You were the best one we've had.”

Undeniably flattered and thrown a bit out of sorts by the complement, the ex-professor found he didn't quite know what to say beyond a grateful, “Thank you.”

“So, uhm…” He shifted his hands on his cart. “If you're not teaching, then why…”
“Why am I here at the station, waiting for the train? Well.” Very deliberately, Remus settled his hand on a messy head of white illusory hair. The glamour moved believably, but it felt disconcertingly like holding fingers under a sunbeam.

“heya,” Sans said, catching that unsubtle cue to speak up. “I’m Sans, in-coming first year.”

“Neville Longbottom, fourth-year.” He seemed to hesitate for a moment, then stuck out his hand with a somewhat uncertain smile that was, nonetheless, friendly and welcoming.

Sans decided this kid was alright, and—with a bracing layer of blue magic—he accepted the offered handshake with a grin of his own. He spared a moment to mourn the fact that he didn’t have a whoopee cushion to accompany the greeting.

There came a loud whistle from the train, warning that there were only a few minutes left until departure, and the overly excited not-dog standing nearby gave an eager bark. One or both of those noises startled Neville quite badly, enough so that he jolted his whole cart with a clatter. The cardboard box sitting on top of the boy’s trunk made a noise like a disgruntled croak.

“You have a dog?” Neville asked, as if the golden retriever’s existence was more confusing than any of the other less-than-typical things that happened in the wizarding world.

“to keep me from dying or generally freakin’ out,” Sans replied glibly. “plus, he might get bone-ly without me around.”

Though he might not get the true depth of that pun, Neville nonetheless chuckled a little.

Remus smiled, and he reached out to ruffle non-real white hair again. “Best get going, or you’ll miss the train entirely. I have it on good authority that this year will be quite interesting.”

Which was a very stealthy way to say that the combination of Triwizard Tournament plus dimension-hopping skeletons and time-traveling criminals was guaranteed to produce chaos.

Neville jolted, and—only slightly hesitantly—waved for the punny first-year to join him as he headed for the train. Still a little mumbly, he suggested that maybe they could find a compartment together and Sans nodded in agreement.

Sans did pause before following, however. “guess i’ll see ya again eventually.”

“I imagine it won’t be until next summer,” Remus replied with a knowing smile.

“welp. later, moon-moon.” He turned and walked away, joining Neville by one of the train doors and helping the boy haul up his trunk.

With a distinct spring in his step, Sirius-as-golden-retriever circled around Remus one more time as his own non-verbal goodbye before following ‘diligently’ after the two students.

Waving a final farewell, the three of them vanished into the train.

By some stroke of good fortune, they did manage to find an empty compartment to claim as their own. Sans slid his small trunk under the seat and flopped himself down with a tired huff. He hadn’t even started school yet and he was already exhausted.

Not so exhausted that he couldn’t surreptitiously help boost Neville’s luggage up onto the overhead rack, however: a twitch of a finger casting blue to lift the surprisingly heavy trunk.
Neville had left the cardboard box on his seat, and Sirius was curiously sniffing at holes punched through the side. The lid lifted a bit, revealing the squat face of an old froggit—or rather, a toad. One webbed foot reached out and batted the sniffing nose aside. Sirius, a little startled and annoyed, gave a quiet growl before jumping onto the seat next to Sans. The box shut again after a low, disappointed ribbit.

“where would you even go?” Sans said to the toad. “we're on a train. finding you would just be a matter of time, dog or no.”

Sirius was giving him one of those looks—obvious even as a dog.

“Did you say something?” asked Neville, turning back around now that his luggage was safely stored away.

Without missing a beat, Sans covered, “just wondering what's in the box.”

Picking up said box and taking its spot on the seat, Neville lifted the lid and, looking somewhat relieved about something, smiled down at the toad inside. He proudly presented the gangly amphibian. “This is Trevor.”

“that reminds me… neville, trevor,” Sans gestured at his currently canine friend, “this is paddy-paws, also known as simply 'paddy’.”

Sirius held out a foreleg, asking for a handshake. Somewhat cautiously, Neville closed his toad back in the box and shook the offered paw. “Nice to meet you, Paddy.” He looked to Sans, impressed. “He's pretty well trained.”

“i wouldn't go so far as to say that…”

Before he could say anything else, the door to their compartment slid open. It was a girl, still rolling her trunk around and clearly looking for a compartment. She had pale blond hair, silvery eyes, and was wearing such an odd assortment of colors that she would have fit right in next to the disguise Sirius had worn as Patrick Pawdy.

She gave Sans a curious look, but then turned her attention to the much more nervous Neville.

“May I join you?” Her voice had an almost dreamy quality, as if she was perpetually distracted by something nobody else could see.

Neville scooted over, making more space on his seat. “I-I don't mind.”

“go ahead.”

He helped her with getting her trunk put away, and then she settled herself across from where Sirius had decided to curl up.

“You know,” the girl said, dreamily matter-of-fact, “I've never met a skeleton before.”

Sans blinked, but otherwise maintained his perfect poker face. His 'dog', however, did not.

It turns out that the dog equivalent of a shocked gasp is to sneeze violently and nearly fall over. At least his complete distress was distracting enough that Neville didn't really have time to process what the strange girl had said.

Feigning complete innocence with a slightly curious grin, Sans asked, “really? and here i thought
everyone had a skeleton.”

“Of course,” she continued, with that same airily peaceful tone, “but usually we have—”

“my name's sans,” he interrupted swiftly.

“Luna Lovegood,” she introduced herself, seemingly perfectly fine with the abrupt turn the conversation had taken. Then she turned to Neville, tilting her head in question.

“Oh, well, uhm… I'm Neville Longbottom.” For want of something more to say, the nervous boy also took the time to introduce the two pets. Luna simply smiled, unbothered.

There was a hiss from the pistons, and the train finally began to move forward.

They all chatted for a while, eventually falling from near-awkward questions about school and the like into an unexpectedly comfortable line of discussion involving plants and the effects ambient magic could have on their growth. Neville clearly knew his way around flora, and Luna offered a refreshingly sideways perspective whenever a line of reasoning looked to be reaching a dead end.

Rain pattering against the window was a soft accompaniment to their talk, and Sans found it easy to relax and even found himself adding in what he knew from living in the Underground. All the plants down there had only been able to take root and thrive because of the magical presence, after all.

After the scenery had long since changed from city to wet fields, Sans noticed that his faux golden retriever kept glancing at the door. Knowing those subtle looks probably weren't Sirius asking to go to the bathroom, it was easy enough to guess he was just antsy and wanted to go find his godson.

“not to derail this, but paddy's lookin' kinda jittery,” Sans said, taking advantage of a lull in the conversation. He stretched, then got up to open the compartment door. “so yeah. he's train-ed, but sometimes a dog's just gotta let off some steam.”

“I'll come too,” Neville replied, moving to join him. Hesitated, and it was unclear who his next statement was directed at: “…Well, I mean, if you don't mind.”

Luna blinked, before simply nodding and pulling out a magazine from somewhere. “I'll keep watch.” She set one hand on the cardboard box; the toad inside made a small annoyed noise.

“be back soon.”

Sirius led the way nose-first, trotting down the train with all the confidence of a dog on the trail. It was clear that he knew what he was doing, especially when they began to hear sounds of a hubbub up ahead at the end of the carriage.


There was a small crowd gathered around one of the compartments; three students already wearing their green-trimmed Hogwarts robes were talking to whoever was inside, and their derisive tones were clear even at a distance.

“Weasley… what is that?” the blond one mocked, clearly about something inside.

Sans peered in from under his pointing arm, having easily sneaked past the two impressively large goons that stood flanking the prissy one. The object of interest was likely the frankly hideous
maroon cloth draped over a cage to muffle quiet hooting. Sat inside were Harry, Ron, and Hermione: right at the center of commotion, as expected.

“i’d say that's an owl. but who am i to say?” He grinned at the three very surprised kids. “hey guys.”

The blond—his guess was that this was the aforementioned 'Malfoy'—made a startled noise, stumbling back from the unnoticed newcomer. Sans paid him no mind.

Harry found his voice first. “Sans??”

“yes,” he said, stepping aside so that Sirius could wiggle his way inside and saunter over to an incredibly surprised Harry. “you've met paddy, of course.”

“Seriously—?”

“yes to that, too.”

He could feel the blond boy growing more and more annoyed behind him, likely because Sans was quite blatantly ignoring him.

“Who do you think you are!” demanded Malfoy, having recovered from his earlier shock.

“isn't that a kinda big question to be asking an eleven-year-old?” Sans replied, purposefully misinterpreting what he had been asking. “that's a bit more existential than i can handle at the moment.”

Malfoy looked completely speechless. Before he could gather himself back up, Sans brushed him aside and waved Neville forward. The nervous boy was clearly unsure about this whole situation; his worried glance at the blond boy earned him a sneer full of disdain, and he flinched slightly.

“ah.” Sans positioned himself between them, though he played it off as if he was just adjusting with the motion of the train. “so you're bullies.”

The two goons flanking the blond stepped up threateningly, but, completely unfazed, Sans just grinned at them. He turned his attention fully on Malfoy.

“let me give you a bit of advice.” His unsettling smile remained unchanged. “stop.”

Then he closed the compartment door.

Dusting off his hands of the whole interaction, Sans turned back to the four stunned students and one smug looking dog. And an owl, technically, though all he could see of Pigwidgeon was his small beak nibbling at the lace trimming the maroon dress robes covering his cage.

“i think that went well.”

Sirius, lazing on the seat next to Harry, gave that remark his best canine eye roll and tucked his nose under his paws.

Chapter End Notes
Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

And they're off to Hogwarts! Let's hope this year doesn't turn out to be a train wreck for them!
…I'll see myself out.

Updates on the first of the month. And heads up just in case you missed it, but chapter 27 was a bonus chapter posted on June 24th. Thought I'd mention that here.
Thank you so much for all of the support in kudos and (especially) comments. All the advice I got from my questions last chapter have given me much to think on, so double thanks!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
“That was totally wicked!” Ron exclaimed, nothing short of celebratory. “Did you see Malfoy's face?! He looked positively green!”

There was a pleased-sounding purr, and Sans spotted a fluffy orange ball of fur curled up comfortably beside Hermione; so there was a cat in here, too. Turning yellow lantern-like eyes on the disguised skeleton, the cat gave him a curious sniff.

Sirius stepped between them with a doggy smile and a wag of his tail, and that seemed enough for the feline to judge Sans as being alright.

Things went quiet.

“You're not wearing your slippers,” Hermione noted, for want of anything else to say.

Sans rocked back on his heels, then sat on the floor with his back against the door. Indeed, he was already wearing his full Hogwarts uniform, shoes included.

“in this weather, water you thinking?” He grinned. “to be honest, i was downpour not wearing shoes at all, but remus wouldn't let me go barefoot.”

Hermione didn't seem to catch the puns, though Ron snorted in amusement. She sent her friend a slightly confused look, unsure what the joke was, and noticed that even Neville was trying not to grin. Unwilling to ask about what was so amusing, she instead turned the conversation to school.

Somewhere in the midst of their chatting about classes and professors, the topic turned to the incoming first years and, as a consequence, to Sans.

“So,” Harry started, his mannerisms indicating that this was a question he had been sitting on for quite some time: “What house do you think you'll end up in?”

Sans leaned his head back to get a better look at the four kids, but didn't really bother getting up from his slumped spot on the floor. “what're the options again? it's like… snake, lion, bird, or badger, right?”

To be honest, he only half paid attention as Hermione gave him the rundown of the different houses. All the vague things he'd heard about the sorting suggested that he wouldn't really get to choose anyway, so he figured he'd get the details on whatever house he ended up in after being sorted there. Knowing colors, mascots, and at least one adjective was enough for Sans.

“Bet you he'll be in Gryffindor.” Ron said it like it was something obvious.
Harry seemed to agree. “No bet, Ron. That's a given.”

His expression didn't change very much, but Sans looked away out the window and his eyes might have dimmed ever so slightly. Personally, and perhaps somewhat uncharitably, Sans very much doubted that he would end up in the house of bravery.

And the Gryffindor colors were red and gold, which… well, he'd rather not surround himself with that.

Sirius nodded, and huffed a bark of agreement.

“Really?” asked Hermione, with the surprised air of one who disagrees quite completely. “I, personally, would guess Hufflepuff.”

“Hufflepuff?” Harry sounded skeptical.

“Of course!” she replied. “Between courage, ambition, academics, and loyalty, I rather think loyalty stands out in his case.”

Sans felt his smile hallow out, becoming brittle and fake, but he kept it firmly in place. He looked to the ceiling of the compartment, and, with a deliberately lazy speed, let his eyes slide shut.

Ron was clearly unconvinced, and tried to go about voicing that without spilling the beans to Neville about escaped criminals and vigilante justice against Death Eaters.

“But you know what he— I mean, back then, he—” Clearly struggling to find examples that could be shared in present company, he shifted gears. “Neville! What house do you think he'll end up in?”

Startled to be so suddenly brought into the conversation, the boy took a moment to process the question and go over what little he knew of Sans. There wasn't much to review, given they had only met a few hours before, but some things stood out to him. Neville nodded to himself. “Ravenclaw.”

Harry looked as if that option hadn't even occurred to him.

“Come off it!” Ron scoffed, waving to where Sans looked to be falling asleep upright. “Hufflepuff or Ravenclaw? Does that look like a hardworking academic to you?”

Hermione huffed. “Well, alright then. I'll change my vote.” Before the redhead could even crack a smug smile, she finished, “I'll go with Ravenclaw, too.”

That startled a laugh out of Harry, sent Ron spluttering, and Neville looked vaguely pleased that she agreed with him.

As the conversation began to move past potential house placements—for which Sans was grateful—it turned to the Quidditch World Cup. That topic coming up was probably inevitable, though Sans was less grateful about that. At least it was entertaining watching Harry and Ron try to avoid certain topics. They focused exclusively on what happened during the game itself—chatting about impressive flying and points scored and completely ignoring the rather more significant event that happened hours after the game had ended.

“Gran didn't want to go,” Neville said, and he looked a strange mixture of disappointed and relieved. “I guess that was a good thing, in the end. Did… did that really happen?”

Ron quite deliberately pretended to misunderstand. “The Wronski Feint? Yeah, it was—”
Hermione smacked his shoulder. “You know what he meant, Ron. Are you trying to be funny?” She said ‘funny’, but she clearly meant ‘obvious about the fact that something fishy is going on’. “Yes. It did really happen.”

“i was there, too,” Sans added, unconcerned, as if the whole thing had very little to do with him. “front row seats, in fact.”

The remark earned him a reproachful look from Hermione, who likely didn’t appreciate his relaxed attitude given his involvement should probably be kept under wraps.

“Are you alright?” Neville sounded rather alarmed.

“it's been days, don't worry.”

The fact that it wasn't a definite answer was, apparently, not very reassuring. Met with six pairs of worried eyes—that would be Harry, Ron, Hermione, Neville, the dog, and the cat—Sans felt something tight and warm settle in his ribcage.

“i'm fine,” he said, shrugging. “maybe just a little… tired, ya know?”

Maybe there was something in his voice that he wasn't hearing, because that didn't seem to make them less worried either.

With a slight frown, Hermione suggested, “Maybe you should go back to your compartment, get some rest there instead of sitting on the floor here.”

“kicking me out, i see.”

“No, I just—!”

Harry, seeing her falter, stepped in and offered Sans a hand up. “Yep! Kicking you out, can't have you stay here. We're much too noisy for naps, you see.”

Pulled to his feet, the disguised skeleton was somewhat baffled by their insistence that he get back to his compartment and sleep. The usual comment on his sleeping habits was to try and keep him awake, after all, and certainly didn't encourage him to take naps.

Harry offered to walk with them, but Neville waved him down; he would be leaving, too, after all. And so, in short order, the three of them were all standing in the corridor with the door shut behind them. Neville really needn't have left with them, but he seemed a worrying sort and probably wanted to make sure Sans got back safe and sound. As for Sirius, he looked a little less than pleased to be leaving so soon, but leave he did—leading the way with another worried look up at his friend.

When they walked into their compartment, Luna didn't so much as look up from her magazine. She did, however, greet them.

In a manner of speaking.

“Neville should sit by me.”

Having just been about to nervously suggest that very thing, Neville blinked at her in surprise.

Luna turned a page of her magazine. “Then Sans can lie down.”
“i really don't think—”

She looked up at him, smiling. “Then you can take a nap.”

Her tone was as airy as usual, but brooked no argument. Neville took his spot beside the surprisingly assertive girl, so, with no other choice, Sans just shrugged and flopped down on his designated seat. Sirius curled up on the floor, one still-worried eye watching his friend.

“honestly, i'm fine.”

The dog snorted, and one didn't need to be able to speak doggish to understand the distinct 'you better be' communicated in his concerned gaze.

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The rest of the train ride passed fairly quickly, and Sans did almost drift off once or twice: he must have been more tired than he thought. When they finally arrived at their destination, Luna and Neville had to head off to wherever the upperclassmen went, apparently confident that Sans would know where to go.

He did not.

Luckily, though, somebody was shouting over the rain and the general din, gathering up the other first year students at one end of the train platform. Sans, being significantly shorter than the rest of the crowd, couldn't see who it was until the push of other people all but shoved him into the person in question. He looked up.

And up.

And up.

And decided that Hagrid—since this must be he—was every bit as gigantic as Sirius and Remus had said when they were debriefing him on some of what to expect. The incredibly tall and broad man smiled down at him.

“From what I see, yeh must be the last one,” he said, voice gruff but undeniably friendly. “This way, then. Mind yer step, now!”

Sans moved with the rest of the crowd, following Hagrid along a very dark, very steep path through a dense forest. Even with the leafy canopy overhead, rain had turned the ground to treacherous mud that pulled at shoes and threatened to slip out from underfoot in turns.

Sirius—despite his best effort—was becoming an absolute mess of dirt, water, and leaves.

And then, emerging from the trees onto the shore of a broad lake, they had their first look at Hogwarts.

Or, well… the other first years got their first look at Hogwarts. Sans had, of course, already seen the castle back at the start of summer. He had to admit, though, perched as it was on top of a mountain with the storm as a dramatic backdrop, the castle cut an impressive figure.

The rain felt as if it was falling harder than ever. Sans surreptitiously gathered some of the water in
a cup of blue magic and hosed Sirius down, taking advantage of the other students' distraction. The
dog shook vigorously, dislodging even more mud, and Sans kept the mess from hitting anyone
else.

“Right then,” Hagrid waved toward the lake, where a small fleet of boats were tied up to a dock
that looked like it had been put together at the last minute. “No more'n four in each, and hold
tight!”

There was a chorus of dismayed noises—some even a little scared—as the first years collectively
realized that, yes, they were going to be crossing the lake in this weather.

Sans got in a boat with two of his fellow students, both of them looking nervous but ecstatic despite
the pouring rain. One was a boy with mousy brown hair, and he seemed unable to sit still: eagerly
bouncing in place and chattering non-stop. The young blond girl sitting beside him was
demonstrating rather remarkable patience, as she hadn't yet smacked the boy for risking tipping
them out of the boat.

Still on the ramshackle dock, Sirius snuffled at the lip of the boat doubtfully. He tested it with one
paw, not liking how he couldn't hold it steady while trying to board.

“either get in by yourself,” Sans said in a teasing threat, “or i'll be forced to take matters into my
own hands.”

Sirius shot him the look that deserved, but finally decided he could make the jump: then, claws
skittering off the damp wood, he almost didn't. Nobody noticed the slight hint of blue or the way,
for one split-second, gravity didn't seem to affect the rain-damp golden retriever.

Or, for that matter, how the whole boat became slightly tinted to keep it from capsizing.

They did notice the sudden tipsy-turvy motion, however—boy and girl both scrambling for a
handhold along the edge of the boat with exclamations of surprise. The dog flopped to the bottom,
all four legs deciding they'd rather not try and keep him standing if the floor was going to wobble
so much. Sans chuckled at his friend's expense.

When things stopped rocking, the other two occupants of the boat finally noticed their fellow
passengers.

“Oh, I'm sorry, uhm…” The girl tucked a strand of her wet hair behind her ear in what was
probably an anxious tick. “Hi. My name's Laura Madley.”

Having failed to find a good handhold when the boat had rocked, the boy had fallen to the bottom
and was now nose-to-nose with Sirius. So, of course, the first thing he said was: “Hello, doggy.”

Sirius replied with a soft woof.

The boy sat up, trying to wipe some of the mud from his trip to the bottom of the boat off his face.
He had limited success, but the rain at least helped with that. “I'm Dennis Creevey.”

“sans,” he introduced himself. “and this is paddy.”

Further conversation was interrupted by Hagrid, shouting over the rain and water. It was hard to
make out what he was saying, but, whatever it was, it resulted in the boats surging forward all at
once.

The lake was choppy, wind and storm pulling up worryingly tall waves that splashed a spray of
cold water into their faces. They all might be thoroughly soaked by the rain already, but the prospect of falling overboard really wasn't appealing. Everyone held tight to their seats.

Or at least, almost everyone did; Dennis was too fascinated by the castle and would have fallen in completely if Sans hadn't caught the distracted boy by the back of his shirt and hauled him back.

It was a relief when the boats carried them through a curtain of damp vines and into a tunnel that led under the school itself, and an even greater relief to leave the boats behind altogether.

Laura was squeezing the water out of her frazzling braid when she noticed. “How'd you dry your hair so fast, Sans?”

He blinked, then went a bit cross-eyed looking at the fluff of white hair that hung in front of his face. Sure enough, without rainfall actively falling on his head to push it flat, his hair had returned to looking as it always did: flyaway and bone dry.

“uh, trade secret,” he replied, not having a better answer for her. His clothes were still dripping wet, of course.

She just smiled and shook her head at that, still-wet braid whipping drops of water across the stone floor.

Hagrid led the way up some stairs that ended at a huge oak door, and he knocked on it thrice. It was opened by a tall, strict-looking witch.

“Here they are, Professor McGonagall,” Hagrid said. “Safe n' sound.”

The stern professor looked over the sopping wet crowd; she gave Sirius—or rather, Paddy, the golden retriever—a curious look, but didn't comment. Instead she pulled her wand from her robes and waved it over the group.

“Ventus,” she intoned. Hot air swept past the damp students, drying out their soaked robes.

Sans noticed the warm oranges and yellows streaking through the magic of her spell, even if it didn't visibly have a color.

The first years followed Professor McGonagall into the entrance hall, a space lit inefficiently by torches along the walls, and then into a small side room.

“Welcome to Hogwarts.”

She then proceeded to explain some details about the sorting, the different houses, house-points, and other stuff Sans didn't much care about. He was thoroughly distracted, actually, probing thoughtfully at the veins of magic flowing through the castle's very walls. It was fascinating.

In fact, he hadn't even noticed that the professor had left until he heard exclamations of surprise from some of the other students and looked up from the flagged stone floor under his feet.

There were ghosts.

Not like Napstablook, but still definitely ghosts.

The silvery figures drifted through the walls, floating overhead and chatting to each other in a way completely detached from the amazed students below them. Or seemingly detached, anyway; Sans was fairly certain, based on their semi-transparent expressions, that they were dropping those
subtle warnings and factoids about the school on purpose. He rather thought the whole thing looked rehearsed.

A squat old monk and a man bedecked in clothes outside the current century drifted through the wall, arguing about another specter—an apparent trouble maker—named Peeves.

Professor McGonagall returned shortly, and the ghosts floated away. She made quick work getting all the first years to line up, then led the way out of the waiting room and through the impressive double doors on the other side of the hall.

Sans was, admittedly, very impressed.

Not by the numerous students and professors, nor the colorful draperies hanging down over the four long tables. Not the shiny gold dishes waiting to be piled high with food. Not even Professor McGonagall, standing at the front of the hall with a list of names beside a stool wearing a very old hat.

No, what impressed him was the complex magic built into the masonry overhead.

Dark clouds, mirroring those looming in the sky outside, filled the space where the ceiling should be. Floating candles cast dramatic light on the underside of the illusory storm—the false rain glittered as if fell, then simply vanished before it could even reach the top of the banners. A flash of lightning streaked across the ceiling; a moment later, he could hear the distant rumble from outside.

Then the hat started singing, which drew Sans's attention away from the enchantment on the ceiling. Most of the song covered things he already knew, but the penultimate line had him frowning.

"what does it mean," he mused, "when it says it will 'look inside your mind'?"

Laura, who happened to be standing next to him, shrugged. Down by his feet, Sirius gave a snort that sounded suspiciously like a chuckle.

“When I call out your name,” Professor McGonagall said, addressing the first years, “you will put on the hat and sit on the stool. When the hat announces your house, you will go and sit at the appropriate table.”

And so the sorting began.

“Ackerley, Stewart!”

He shook the whole time he was being sorted, twitching anxiously and fiddling with the hem of his robes as everyone waited for the hat to do whatever the hat was going to do to sort him.

“RAVENCLAW!”

There was applause, and the newly-sorted first year hurried off to join his new housemates. There had been no talking, just hat on and then sorted; the line in the song was perfectly literal.

“Baddock, Malcolm!” called Professor McGonagall.

A ridiculously tall eleven-year-old boy walked forward to take his turn under the hat; his stride was long and seemingly full of confidence, but anyone adept at reading body-language could tell the kid was as nervous as the first one, just better at hiding it. The boy's hands were balled into fists,
and still Sans could see that they were trembling.

“SLYHERIN!”

There was noticeably less cheering for him, so Sans took it upon himself to clap as loud as he could. And shot a glare in the direction of red and gold when he heard a mocking hiss.

Dennis Creevey went to Gryffindor, which, based on his grin, was exactly where he'd wanted to go.

The crowd of first years began thinning as students were sorted away into their respective houses. As child after child went up to the stool, Sans couldn't help but wonder just what memories the hat would be able to pull from his head. It was an unsettling thought.

Laura ended up in Hufflepuff.

There were only five more first years waiting now, Sans included. Then one went to Gryffindor and another to Slytherin, and there were only three left waiting.

“Quirke, Orla.”

“RAVENCLAW!”

“Skelton, Sans,” called Professor McGonagall.

“welp. that'd be me,” he said, walking forward with Sirius trotting at his heels.

As he stepped forward, he heard a bit of a commotion at the table decked out in green and silver. Glancing that way, Sans saw somebody rather familiar staring back in open (then swiftly closed) shock. He pointed a pair of finger guns at Cassius—who looked vaguely confused and affronted by the gesture—and then turned back to the matter at hand.

Sans sat down on the little three-legged stool, and McGonagall plopped the old hat down on his head. It slid down rather farther than it should, squishing the hair of his glamour over his eye sockets and effectively blinding him.

He waited. A minute passed.

Nothing happened.

After waiting another three minutes—Sans prided himself on being very patient—he was pretty sure something should have happened.

“uhh…”

The hat on his head twitched, as if startled, and then a voice near his temple whispered, “Oh my, how peculiar. Very peculiar, indeed.”

“that's exactly what i wanted to hear from an apparently semi-sentient fashion disaster,” Sans murmured in response, a little peeved. He already stood out enough, and would have preferred his sorting to be as average as possible.

There was a low laugh—reminiscent of flags blowing in a gentle wind—then the voice, while still quiet, became noticeably more playful. “How rude! I'll have you know I'm the height of stylish head-wear.”

“well, aren't you just the most sarcastic hat in the world.”
“I suppose I'll take that as a compliment,” the hat replied, sounding rather smug.

“good,” said Sans, smiling.

The brim of the hat twisted in what might have been the clothing equivalent of an eye roll. “I'm afraid I've allowed myself to veer quite off track. As much as I'm enjoying this unusual chat, we really do have a bit of a problem.”

“having trouble getting in my head, are ya?”

That earned him a disgruntled-sounding hum; the hat was probably embarrassed or ashamed that he had been set upon a student he couldn't sort.

This was a huge relief, and something Sans had been somewhat hoping for.

“well,” he began, as nonchalant as ever, “if you're gonna read a brain, you first need a brain to read.”

“What, pray tell, is that supposed to mean?”

Sans shrugged, and was very careful to pitch his voice as low as possible so that nobody else could overhear, “you see, strictly speaking, i don't have a brain.”

“I see. Yes, that would… Wait.” If the hat had eyes, they would have gone very wide. Loudly, forgetting all the careful whispering they had been doing, it exclaimed, “WHAT?!"

Sans winced. “easy on the volume there, hatty.”

“You don't sound like a liar,” the hat said, back to secretive whispers.

“that's because i'm not.”

“Then what are you?”

“a new first-year you still need to deal with, obviously.” He leaned back slightly on the stool, tilting his head up and wondering just how long he had been sitting there in front of the entire school. He imagined that the last student waiting to be sorted was just growing more and more anxious as this dragged on.

“I suppose you have a point.” The hat went silent for a moment, thinking, then asked, “So. Which house do you think you belong in?”

“really? you'll just let me choose?”

Huffing, clearly unable to come up with any alternative, the hat grumbled, “I don't have many options at this point.”

Faced with this unforeseen (but kind of foreseen) opportunity, a part of him couldn't help but regret his lack of attention during the train ride: discussion had, at one point, turned to the various differences between the houses. Another, bigger part of him still thought the idea of dividing students by trait was silly.

Sans lifted the brim of the hat slightly, looking at each table in turn.

“i do like the color blue,” he mused, as if nothing else particularly mattered.
Beside him, Sirius gave a decidedly dissenting sniff; of course he would have wanted to go to
Gryffindor, which was coincidentally the one house Sans would refuse to choose for himself.

“You are an odd one,” the hat sighed, in as much as a hat could sigh. “But at this point that's as
good an argument as any for RAVENCLAW!”

The last word, as had been done with the other students, was shouted out into the Great Hall.

“nice talking with ya,” Sans said, taking off the hat. It replied with a snide farewell.

He was already a few steps from the stool when people seemed to remember that they usually
clapped at this point. It was as if the watching students and professors needed to process and catch
up, gears spinning but not clicking together for a moment.

Sans glanced over everyone in the hall as he headed toward the table in blue. Harry and Ron
looked slightly put out by his sorting—and therefore their lost bet—while both Hermione and
Neville were smiling. At the green table, Cassius was clapping politely even as he struggled to
keep the stupefaction off his face.

With a slightly pouty golden retriever trailing after him, Sans managed to claim a spot with the
blues next to the only person in his new school house that he actually knew.

“Hello again,” Luna greeted, a welcoming if somewhat unfocused smile on her face.

“it's been so long,” joked Sans. “i was worried you might have forgotten me.”

She tilted her head, long blond hair falling over her shoulder. “I hope you're not feeling too blue
about ending up here.”

It was a pun, for sure, but presented with such a straight-faced and oblivious tone that Sans still
found himself second guessing. He grinned.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

OKAY. SO. BIG NEWS.
You might remember how a few chapters ago, I mentioned that I have freakin' amazing news
to share? Well, Now I can tell you. Brace yourselves.
A user by the name of DangerPuff has DRAWN A COMIC BASED ON THIS FANFIC! It's amazing and beautifully drawn and you should immediately check it out.
I curse the fact that I can't just add a link here! You can find it easily at the end of the fanfic, and I'll add a link here for future reference.
https://archiveofourown.org/works/15186650/chapters/35219477
BUT AGAIN, AND I CANNOT SAY THIS ENOUGH: Thank you so much, DangerPuff!

Plus, I also got some fanart from InsertSomthinAwesome over on deviantART. It's got
Remus, Siriu, Sans, Toriel, Flowey, Papyrus, and Frisk! Thank you so much, I love it!
Link below, check it out!
https://goo.gl/CYn9eX
And all this just in time, too! Happy Second Birthday, Under the Veil!

Anyway, back to business.

About this chapter—specifically, about the fact that the hat can't read his mind. You may recall that the Horcrux snarfed out some of Sans's memories during their confrontation, and that is because the locket was looking through his SOUL. The hat is charmed to read minds, and so it looks through someone's brain. Sans is smart, definitely alive, but he just doesn't have a brain.

I hope this little twist to how sorting a skeleton would work was as fun for you to read as it was for me to think up and write!

Also, I think Hermione is a pretty literal person… and probably not great at wordplay. I mean, she calls her group for house-elf liberation S.P.E.W. for goodness sake! That word does not inspire trust, in my opinion.

(Wow, this was a long and exciting author's note. And also a long chapter. Phew.)

Updates on the first of the month.
Thank you so much for all of the kudos, comments, and even just taking the time to read. (And also thanks for the fanart, I still can't believe people draw fanart of this story!)

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Dinner and Minor Drama

Chapter Summary

Dramatic entrance: Li-ten-ning/10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Since there was only one student after him and—more importantly—that student didn't end up sitting under the hat for nearly six minutes like a certain skeleton had, the whole ceremony thing wrapped up in short order. With the final name called and sorted, Professor McGonagall carried off the hat and stool.

At the head table, a wizard with a long white beard stood up and gestured for the students to quiet down. All attention turned his way.

Recognizing him from descriptions he had been given—plus having personally seen him at a distance during their escape from Hogwarts—Sans figured he must be the famous (infamous) Headmaster Dumbledore.

“I only have two words to say to you,” the old wizard said, voice magically loud enough to be heard throughout the entire Hall. “Tuck in.”

Sans snorted, undeniably amused by the unexpected humor. To be honest, he hadn't been holding out too much hope for the headmaster's character, given what he had been told about the circumstances behind Sirius's twelve years of incarceration. Still, someone who sincerely likes bad jokes has a sort of integrity; perhaps he should give Dumbledore a bit more breathing room before judging him.

The plates filled with foods, everything from roast beef and sausages to carrots and salad. There was even a tray of hard candies, for some reason. There was a small flutter of magic by his feet, and when Sans glanced down he saw that a bowl filled with dog food had appeared.

Sirius, to his credit, did not turn his animagused nose up at the non-human chow.

Still, though. It felt weird sitting among piles of delicious food while his friend was left with what was essentially scraps. Nobody noticed that the food Sans set on his own plate simply vanished, and certainly nobody noticed how that food seemed to just appear on the ground in front of a conveniently hungry dog. He did eat one or two spoonfuls of the mash potatoes, though.

It was a good few minutes into the meal before conversation resumed.

“Your name doesn't make much sense, I think,” said Luna, head turned contemplatively. She gestured vaguely in the air with her fork, either not noticing or (more likely) not caring how it shed lettuce leaves as she waved. “Given you do have a skeleton.”

Sans nodded. “well, if it clears anything up, my middle name is 'ian’.”

She blinked at that, then her expression became thoughtful as she tried to puzzle out how that new
information changed what she already knew.

He had been planning on a pun for his name since he first learned he would need a last name, and coming up with one he considered suitable was easier said than done. His first choice was, naturally, something along the lines of 'Skinner': taking direct advantage of his first name to pun about his skeleton-ness. The problem being, of course, that nobody would be able to appreciate the joke. And that then he would have to be called 'Mr. Skinner' by his professors.

So that plan was bust.

“ya know, sans ian skelton,” he added, as if that helped.

Luna tapped her finger thoughtfully on one of the tomatoes in her salad. Her eyes brightened when an idea struck, and, smiling almost serenely, she asked, “How is your last name spelled?”

“precisely,” Sans answered.

She looked pleased.

Before further discussion or confirmation of his one-step-removed name pun could continue, however, the plates full of dinner food were magically cleared away and replaced by assorted desserts. Spooning herself what could be technically termed as 'just one bowl' of pudding—the pile wobbled a bit precariously taller than the height of the dish—Luna then began preparing another.

“woah.” Sans raised an eyebrow at the second bowl, somewhere between impressed and concerned. “you sure you should be pudding that much?”

She quirked her head to the side, then glanced between the dessert and him. “This one is yours,” she said, as if that should be obvious.

Sans blinked. Sirius, sitting on the floor, flopped his head down on the seat with a upward glance at his friend. His doggy expression was clear: eat the food, or else.

So, of course, Sans took the offered bowl.

He had never been one for sweet foods, though, and wasn't sure what to do with the sugary pudding. Nice Creams are all well and good, but he would take ketchup—or even amazingly well-cooked spaghetti—over popsicles any day.

“You ate the potatoes.” Luna sounded thoughtful. She cocked her head to the side, watching with apparent interest as he poked at the dessert.

“goes great with ketchup. doesn't work so well with pudding.” Adopting a thousand-yard stare, he concluded, “a man's gotta draw the line somewhere.”

Sans scooped up a spoonful and swallowed, and Luna looked positively intrigued. In as much as her airy demeanor seemed to allow, anyway. “How does it work?”

Answering with regards to potatoes, he said, “photosynthesis, partly.”

“But skeletons aren't plants?”

The people sitting around them were clearly tuning out their entire conversation, or were at least used to Luna spouting nonsensical statements. Well, mostly; there was a group of girls sitting on the other side of the table who snickered amongst themselves in a distinctly mean way.
Sans frowned to himself, though his smile remained fixed in place. Hearing that disdainful edge to the laughs, Sirius's ears pulled forward angrily.

Still, he decided it would be best to ignore them for now.

Besides, he had a question of his own; brows raised in surprise, he asked, “you know what that is? i was under the impression wizards tree-ted science like dirt.”

She smiled, and, with what seemed to be nothing more than a distracted whimsical comment, didn't let him steer the conversation away: “You're not green.”

He shrugged, took one last bite of pudding, and set aside the bowl. “well then, luna my friend, since you're so set on asking how i function, the answer is simple.”

Her eyes sparkled like light on water. “Magic?”

With a nod, arching his hands over his head and giving his fingers a wiggle for emphasis, Sans said expansively, “magic.”

She nodded, sagely. “Of course.”

Then what little remained of the dessert vanished from the plates, followed closely by the plates themselves disappearing—a swirl of magic very much like his shortcuts whisking away the dirty dishes. Sans blinked, a little startled. Sliding a hand across the table where his bowl had been, he curiously prodded the afterimage of the spell. It was similar to his own in color, though with a bit more green.

He was pulled from his musing by a gentle tap, and Luna directed his attention back up toward the head table. The headmaster was rattling off a list of basic school rules, what cool things were prohibited in the halls (and in the school at large), and a mandatory safety warning regarding the forest. Having been in the forest previously, Sans wasn't really sure what could be so dangerous… well, other than maybe those flying cloak-demon things. But he had already taken care of that.

And then, just as Sans had stopped paying attention again, it seemed like the entire student body began freaking out. Quietly freaking out, but freaking out nonetheless: mostly whispered shock and speechless glances, and it was enough to drag him back.

“what'd i miss?” he asked, leaning over so Luna could hear him over the appalled murmuring. “i wasn't paying attention.”

“Apparently Quidditch is canceled this year.”

She actually sounded vaguely bothered by that, which Sans wouldn't have expected: Luna just didn't really strike him as a sporty person.

“oh no,” he said, in a perfectly distraught deadpan. “not sport ball, i love that game.”

“Shush,” Luna chided.

Then a bang from the doors of the Great Hall opening cut the headmaster off mid-sentence.

A flash of lightning danced across the enchanted ceiling, the rolling rumble of thunder filling the air. Framed in the doorway was a hooded figure, cane in one hand and peg leg sticking out from the bottom of the dark traveling cloak. It was a real top-tier dramatic entrance, definitely full points there. Bonus for the quality mysterious vibes.
Sans could respect a good introduction, to be sure.

From under the seat, Sirius bristled. And growled, low and quiet and angry.

“ah, so this is the guy?” He flicked through his memories, trying to find more info from their various debriefing sessions. The guy in question had just pushed back his hood: scraggly dark gray hair, a face covered in scars, and one blue eye swiveling wildly in its artificial socket.

Sirius nodded, stiff and still looking very much like he wanted to tear into the peg-legged man’s remaining good leg.

Voice quiet, pitched specifically for dog ears only, Sans said, “what was his name… sad-pie gloomy?”

The golden retriever whipped his head around to stare at his friend, expression torn between wanting to laugh like an idiot and demanding he take things more seriously.

Well, in that case: “wait, was it pissed-peeper pessimist?” He consulted his mental thesaurus. “or maybe angry-optic? yeah, i'm thinking it mighta been angry-optic mopey.”

Sirius rolled his eyes, and huffed. He did look amused, though.

“wait, it's 'mad' as in 'crazy'?” Sans translated. “…so you're saying he's wacky-optic mopey.”

Luna leaned over, glancing between dog and skeleton curiously. “Mad-Eye?”

“yes, of course!” He snapped his fingers with a boney click, as if he'd only just remembered. “it's mad-eye mopey.”

Looking for all the world as if he expected—or maybe wanted—the ceiling to fall on them both, Sirius exhaled forcefully and gave his friend a sharp look.

“i'm not underestimating anybody,” Sans defended. “i'm just making fun of him.”

The cloaked figure made his way to the high table, one asymmetric thump of a step at a time. He reached Dumbledore and held out a scarred hand, which the headmaster took with a welcoming smile. There was a whispered exchange—over before Sans could even consider eavesdropping—then Mad-Eye took his seat to the headmaster's right.

A twist of magic had a few new plates of food appearing in front of him, which he regarded with suspicion. He pulled one over that was loaded down with sausages, gave them a paranoid sniff, apparently found them safe, and began to eat. That crazy blue eye was still spinning about, as if trying to track an insane mosquito at close range.

“May I introduce our new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher?” Dumbledore was as chipper as ever, even faced with the confused-shocked silence pervading the Great Hall. “Professor Moody.”

Sans leaned down to the golden retriever still glaring daggers at the scarred man. “ah, so it’s moody. well, at least i was close.”

The dog broke off his glare, sneezed quietly, then settled back down to the floor.

A couple of the professors tried to applaud, welcoming, but stopped fairly swiftly as it didn't catch on. It would seem the entire student body was too generally confounded by the past two announcements to do anything but stare.
The crazy-not-angry-magical-blue-eye of the new staff member continued its wild swirly regard of the entire room, but the rest of him didn't seem to care about the splash he'd made as he continued his meal in an undisturbed hurry. He pulled a flask out from his jacket, took a swig, and then tucked it back away.

Feeling the incredibly faint current of magic that followed—so small that he would have missed it if he hadn't been focused on the target—Sans knew what had just happened.

“looks like we've got an alcoholic,” he remarked, purposefully nonchalant.

Sirius's ears twitched, acknowledging the code with a quiet angry bark. They hadn't been completely sure when the switch between real and Polyjuiced-fake had taken place in the original timeline, but this time around, at least, the imposter was already running the show.

Dumbledore coughed into a fist, clearing his throat, and decided to swiftly move along before the silence suffocated anyone.

“As I was saying,” he said, trying to gather attention again, “we are to have the honor of hosting a very exciting event over the coming months.”

That statement at least got some people to refocus off of the new professor.

“was that what he was saying?”

Luna shrugged, not interested in the announcements anymore. Instead she reached into her pocket, pulled out a pair of flamboyantly colored spectacles, put them on, and turned her gaze to the Head Table. She hummed to herself, thoughtfully.

The paper glasses had a large, flared-out frame made of something shimmery and pink, and it made her look sort of like Snowdrake, if somebody had dropped him into a massive bowl of glitter.

“What're those?”

She tilted her head to the side, as if his inquiry required a great deal of consideration. Then, with a dreamy smile, Luna took the glasses off and tried to put them on Sans. Being a skeleton with no ears or nose beyond the immaterial ones on his glamour, the paper specs slipped right off and landed in his lap.

He blinked down at them, then back at her. “that does not answer my question.”

Luna was unbothered. “A project I'm working on,” she said, “to help people see.”

Picking them up, Sans skeptically regarded the almost-solid-color lenses attached in the paper frame before curiously holding them up to his eye sockets. Specks like motes of dust twinkled into existence, appearing one moment then vanishing, as if the glasses were struggling with a bad connection.

“huh.”

“You're JOKING!” exclaimed somebody from the table in red, presumably in response to whatever announcement Dumbledore had just made. The outburst startled laughs from everyone, the tension from Mad-Eye Moody's imposing arrival shattering into giggles.

“I am not joking, Mr. Weasley.” His voice remained even, but there was a chuckle in his grin. “Although I did hear a rather good one recently about a werewolf and a dog visiting a bar…”
Sans blinked, seeing that sly smile for what it was. The headmaster never looked his way, but he
could very well recognize the knowing glint behind half-moon spectacles. From the measure of the
headmaster's body language, he knew that Remus and Sirius were in cahoots about something—but
Sans would bet two bottles of ketchup that the headmaster didn't know nearly as much as he
thought he did.

For one point, if Dumbledore knew about the skeleton thing he probably would have included that
in his cheeky remark.

A werewolf, a dog, and a skeleton visit a bar, Sans thought to himself with a sad smile. Sounds like
the usual for Grillby's, no big deal.

Dumbledore was pulled back on track by Professor McGonagall, who loudly cleared her throat.

“Where was I? Ah, yes, the Triwizard Tournament. Well, some of you will not know what this
tournament involves, so I hope those who do know will forgive me for giving a short explanation,
and allow their attention to wander freely.”

Which Sans was glad to do. He did, after all, know quite a bit about the tournament to come. Or at
the very least, his doggy friend did.

So, while the rest of the school was briefed on what the upcoming year had in store, he zoned out
and toyed with the idea of falling asleep right there at the table. He was, in a word, bored. Luna
had taken back her odd glasses, so he didn't even have those to fiddle around with.

“—and will give your whole-hearted support to the Hogwarts champion when he or she is
selected,” said Dumbledore, wrapping up his speech. “And now, it is late, and I know how
important it is to you all to be alert and rested as you enter your lessons tomorrow morning.
Bedtime! Chop chop!”

This was the cue for all the students to noisily get up and make their way to the doors. The first
years, Sans included, were swept up in the flow of bodies exiting and simply doing their level best
to stick with people wearing the right colors.

As the student body split up—Slytherins and Hufflepuffs heading down, and both Gryffindors and
Ravenclaws faced with a lot of stairs—the individual houses split up quite a bit as well.
Upperclassmen had learned faster ways to navigate the castle, but the newbies to the school had to
stick with the prefects and trust they knew what they were doing.

When there were only kids in blue in the crowd, one of the prefects stepped up to the front of the
group. His brown hair was combed tidily to one side, his uniform was clean and orderly, blue tie
tight, and overall he had a look almost perfectly opposite to Luna. He smiled, friendly and
welcoming.

“Right then,” he said, making sure he had everyone's attention. “Welcome to Hogwarts! My name's
Marcus Turner, I'm one of the Ravenclaw prefects. Feel free to come to me if you need anything.”

“How about a map?” quipped one of the other students.

Marcus shook his head. “Can't help you there, I'm afraid. Your best bet if ever you get lost is
asking a portrait for directions, or maybe a passing ghost.”

As the group continued up staircase after staircase—apparently the Ravenclaw common room was
in a tower, for some reason—the prefect continued sharing odd tidbits and factoids about the
school in an annoyingly not-exhausted tone of voice.
Sans, who was trying not to look like he was huffing and puffing his way along, very much resented that. This castle was big, he was small, and in a group like this he couldn't cheat with shortcuts.

At the top of a tight spiral staircase was a small landing, just large enough to fit all of the Ravenclaw first years if they squeezed in tightly.

Marcus gestured at the door. “Here's the entrance to our common room. It's not particularly secret, but don't go spreading it around like the Gryffindors do with theirs.”

Taking advantage of his short stature, Sans wove his way to the front of the group. Sirius had a bit more trouble, but got there eventually.

There was no doorknob, but, smack-dab at the center of the door, there was a bronze knocker shaped to look like an eagle in flight. A heavy ring was clutched in the bird's talons, and magic had been forged directly into the metal.

“We don't use passwords, you see,” the prefect was saying, lifting the ring away from the door. “Instead, you need to answer a riddle.”

Then he let the knocker thud back to the wood.

The eagle's beak opened, and a soft voice asked simply, “What has fewer holes, the more it is torn?”

“a net.” Sans answered at once.

“Swiftly answered,” the voice remarked. “Welcome, young Ravenclaws.”

And so the door swung open.

The common room was a wide round space, as open and airy as the sky outside the tower walls. Though, of course, less rainy. Large arched windows lined the walls, flashes of lightning peeking from between shut curtains, and rain pattered peacefully on the glass. Patterns of stars were splashed across the domed ceiling and the carpet underfoot, and were even faintly carved onto the various pieces of furniture.

Sans approved. Though he thought it could use a single sock, positioned just so at the side of the largest bookshelf; he'd handle that later.

Again the group split, with the girls heading off their own way and the boys being led up yet another staircase to their own dorm. There were five beds—large four-posters hung with heavy blue curtains.

Sans found his small luggage at the end of one of them, alongside a large dog cushion: the perfect size for a certain golden retriever. He kicked his shoes off as Sirius curled up on his dog bed.

The disguised skeleton climbed into his own bed with difficulty, and Sirius had a doggy chuckle at his expense as he struggled. Cursing tall mattresses, having had to make use of his trunk to get all the way up, Sans flopped down on the pillow.

Then the lights flicked out, and the patter of rain lulled him to sleep.
Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Some of the dialog in this chapter is directly from the book, so extra disclaimer there.

Sans Ian Skelton => Sans ‘e’ in Skeleton
It's a joke about the spelling. We're reaching levels of pun that shouldn't even be possible.

Updates are on the first of the month based on where I live, which is Colorado. As always, thanks for all the support! I never thought this little story floating around in my head would do so well once I got it on paper: I mean, for goodness gracious over on fanfiction.net we're almost at 900 reviews! So yeah. Thank you all so much for the kudos and comments! I hope you continue to enjoy.

The following is my a reply to a review over on fanfiction.net, but I thought that if it came up there, you guys might be questioning it, too. Chara showing up from the locket was just the Horcrux poking around in Sans's SOUL to find people it could use against him. In the actual book, Ron sees Harry and Hermione taunting him. I figured Chara would be a good prospect that the shard would latch onto, as they are something Sans fears that the Horcrux could actually replicate. Thought I'd clear that up.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Alright, that was a lie: Sans didn't actually go to sleep.

Though he would never admit it to anybody, he knew that there were actually a few things more important than sleep, and setting up some baseline plans with his partner-in-maybe-crime for the upcoming school year happened to be one of those things.

So at midnight Sans snuck past his new roommates—all snoozing peacefully—and out of the dorm. He had made sure that the curtains on his fourposter bed were drawn shut, to keep anyone from noticing his absence; plus it offered an easy entry point if he needed to pop back in for any reason.

He could probably have just popped out, actually, and taken a direct shortcut from his bed to some empty classroom where he and his friend could talk undisturbed. That would have been a good idea, save for the fact that, to be honest, he was feeling perhaps a little bit antsy after such a busy day. Sans, as he had learned ages ago, didn't do well amongst crowds of strangers; especially young human strangers.

Which might be a tad species-ist, but he thought he deserved at least some paranoia at this point.

Besides, castles were pretty cool at night.

Peaceful and dark, with only silver moonlight from the windows to light his path.

The quiet clatter of doggy paws on the stone floor told him that Sirius had followed him out. Continuing past the common area, Sans ducked out of the riddle door and into the school beyond. Sirius—still a golden retriever, of course—trotted after him with a quietly affronted bark; apparently he had only just barely got his tail clear before it shut behind them.

Together they set off down the staircase.

“Alright, fuzz-butt,” he said, listening to the magic in the air for any sign of patrolling faculty, “you got any idea for a safe space to chat?”

Whether as a human or as a dog, Sirius was always pretty easy to read: for example, at the moment, his expression was quite clearly the canine equivalent of 'what do you take me for, of course I do'. At the next juncture of hallways, he chose to turn left and trotted off.

Given every wall had living portraits that could probably snitch on sneaking students, it was unexpectedly easy to get around without being spotted. Mostly because those portraits, for some reason, apparently slept at night. Only once did Sans have to grab Sirius by the tail and pull him back into a niche to hide, as ahead of them a pearlescent ghost drifted through the stone.
They had waited for a long moment, just in case, then continued on their way. Another left and a right later, and Sans realized just where the dog had led him.

“really?” he asked, stepping past to get a look at the room. “back to your one-time temporary prison cell?”

The empty classroom Sirius had been stuck in back when they had first arrived was, perhaps, a little bit dustier than he remembered. Otherwise, it looked quite the same.

There was a ripple of magic as the Animagus switched back to being human, the full rainbow array of colors swirling through Sans's sixth sense like light through a soap bubble… which wasn't quite right. The disguised skeleton tilted his head to the side, feeling the unusual hiccup in the flow of energy for the transformation. It felt almost like it had snagged slightly on the thread of another spell.

Sans turned, a question on the tip of his metaphorical tongue, and saw—

Oh. Well, that would explain it.

Don't laugh.

“sirius?”

The wizard was stretching, appreciating being bipedal again. “What is it?”

Sans was desperately holding back giggles, but it was difficult. He cleared his throat, tried to keep most of the laughter out of his voice, and stated, “frankly, this is pure gold.”

Sirius squinted at his friend, trying to figure out what the joke was—because there clearly was a joke in there somewhere. “What's that supposed to mean?”

Cutting straight to the point this time, Sans asked, “have you shifted with the glamour on before?”

Frowning slightly—probably confused by the apparent non sequitur—Sirius shook his head. And froze, as hair that should be black swung by his eyes gold. He smacked a hand to his head, as if he could somehow feel that the color had been changed.

“Oh sweet Merlin, I've gone blond.”

Which was the last straw, really, and Sans burst into laughter. “more than that, paddy-paws!” he gasped between giggles. “you really need a mirror.”

With a swirl of his wand, Sirius went ahead and conjured one up. Looked at his reflection, and promptly choked: for indeed, his hair was not the only change.

“What's happened to my ears?!”

Flopping down at the sides of his head, peaking out through and matching the unusual blond color of hair, were ears of a distinctly canine nature.

Sans shrugged, still trying not to laugh. “fido-n't know for sure, pup i'd say your disguise mutt be sticking around.”

“Now is not the time for puns.” He whipped out his wand, trying to figure out how to disable the charm on the collar when the collar was currently mixed up with his Animagus form and, therefore, immaterial. Human clothes vanish when changing, Sirius couldn't believe he hadn't
considered what would happen going the other way.

“fool,” Sans said, grinning, “for it is always time for puns.”

Sirius worked out the proper counter spell fairly quickly, and soon enough he was looking properly himself again. Which was a real shame, Sans thought; his friend had looked ridiculous, and he had had no camera with which to document the event.

But they had snuck out on business, and so business must be done.

Pulling himself onto one of the long bench desks, Sans sat and propped his chin up on one fist. “so. what's the plan, man?”

“No plans, Sans.”

“nicely handled.”

“Thanks.”

Hands in his pockets, Sans leaned back and raised a brow. “rhyming aside, that doesn't help the situation. we need to make some choices.”

“I know, it's the worst.” Sirius walked up to a chalkboard that, in all honesty, he couldn't recall having been there the last time he'd seen this room. Although to be fair, he had been a bit distracted at the time. Grabbing a nub of chalk, he began scribbling notes.

They had a few major options and a functionally infinite number of small ones; even the choice of what to eat might have unforeseen consequences, after all. Still, Sans mused to himself as he watched his friend write, they didn't need to sweat the small stuff. He was fairly sure that the main points of interest were the dangers of the Tournament itself and dealing with the confirmed-to-be-fake Mad-Eye. Not to mention the return of Dark Lord Voldie come the end of the school year.

Sans frowned at that thought.

“Now see,” Sirius remarked, finishing his quick writing and tapping one of the items, “I think this is the most important thing to consider.”

“that just says 'harry', circled thrice.”

“Precisely.”

Sans read the rest of the board. “all of them say 'harry', they're just each circled a different number of times.”

“What, did I stutter or something?” Sirius asked, adding another circle.

“not sayin' he isn't important,” Sans shrugged, “he is. but we shouldn't build plans around him. not without tellin' him, anyway.”

And maybe that was a little—a lot—hypocritical of him to say, but at least this kid seemed to have all his wits about him and acted under his own control without, say, the influence of a murderous ghost child puppeteering from the shadows. Plus there was no reset loop crap to take into account, or anything they might scheme that the kid necessarily shouldn't know about.

Still, though, perhaps he should double check that whole possession thing. Just to be safe.
The wizard flicked a dismissive hand to clear the blackboard with a bit of wandless magic. “Alright, true. What do you think should be first priority?”

“well…”

Sans actually hesitated to finish his thought. He'd had this realization a few weeks ago, and had spent a good deal of time trying to weasel a different conclusion out of reality with no success. He scowled, distinctly displeased.

Of course Sirius noticed and, concerned, asked, “What is it?”

“…we have to let him come back.”

“We have to… What?” Sirius must have thought that he had misheard, clearly convinced that he had gotten something wrong. “What do you mean by that?”

Still frowning, Sans said, “just think about it. why can voldie even come back this time?”

Sirius considered the question carefully, as if he was expecting there to be some sort of twist answer. “The Horcrux.”

“horcruxes,” Sans corrected with emphasis. “there's at least three, so far as we know.”

Then the point seemed to click, and Sirius, eyes wide, echoed what he had said months before: “And if there's already three…” He drifted off, horrified. “Merlin's pants, there could be loads.”

“We have no clue how many horcrux things this psycho actually made,” Sans confirmed. “so long as there's even one left out there… he's not gone.”

Sirius folded to the ground, like his strings had been cut, and put his head in his hands. For a long moment, there was only silence. Scrubbing his face, the wizard finally looked up to regard his friend and face that most unfavorable of truths.

“I suppose you have a plan for that, then?”

“more of an idea.”

Sitting with his legs now stretched out over the floor, Sirius waved him on.

Sans gestured one hand, and the chalk floated up and drew a large circle on the blackboard. “the hor-crux of the matter is that, once voldie is back, we'll be able to tell how many bits of SOUL he's got squirreled away.” As he spoke, he directed the chalk to split the circle in half, then split one of the halves in half, and so on until the chalk wasn't precise enough to do so anymore.

There is some merit to arguments claiming an upper limit on how much strain a SOUL could take before simply shattering, a point where it is unable to be divided further. Or at least, a point where dividing again would begin to tear away at what makes a person able to function on the most basic of levels. Say a single drop of water represents the entire life force of a monster, containing everything that makes that monster a sentient being. Following this metaphor, a human SOUL would be several liters worth of water. Dividing that in half again and again would reach the scale of a single drop after maybe twelve splits, and through that Sans had a rough estimate for the maximum number of Horcruxes there could be.

But then again, it is still possible that there may be no real upper limit: this is dealing with exponential decay, after all, and can never actually reach zero. It's all guess work, really.
Sirius eyed the chalk circle for a long minute, frowning at the plan it represented. “I get it. I don’t like it, but I get it.” He sighed. “And I guess that means the best course of action is to just… let things go like they did the first time.”

“mostly,” Sans agreed with an almost apologetic shrug, before adding, “but if it makes ya feel better, i sorta doubt things will go the same way.”

“Right, that butterfly paradox thing you mentioned.” The wizard sounded like he was coming to terms with that idea, and rightly so; his only experience with time-travel had to do with contained loops that, by the standards of resets, weren't really time-travel at all.

When Sans had first been told about Time-Turners, he had been naturally a little (a lot) concerned. But a few questions into how they worked, and it turns out that they're really not much more than a glorified cloning device. The past remains unchanged, and the only difference is a new perspective for the traveler.

Which kind of calls things like, say, the entire concept of free will into question.

But that's all beside the point.

“heck, who knows if the baddie's plan even involves the tournament anymore.” Sans shrugged. “we can't even say for sure that harry'll end up as a champion this time.”

“Oh, he will.” Sirius sounded somewhere between proud, worried, and just plain amused. “It'll be a big, dangerous mess; of course he'll be in it.”

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

First of all, I'm so sorry that this chapter is a bit shorter than usual. I have a massively important midterm in PDEs this evening, another midterm later this week, and a big coding project needs to be done by Thursday. Suffice to say this past weekend did not give me as much writing time as I would have liked. Anyway, I really need to get back to studying.

Updates are on the first of the month.

Thanks for all the reviews, follows, and favorites! I hope you continue to enjoy (even if this chapter is shorter than usual).

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
In the Courtroom

Chapter Summary

A glimpse at the wizarding legal system in action.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It had become a rather dangerous situation, and her family was hanging precariously close to a catastrophic fall from grace.

And she knew at whose feet the blame lay.

Still, Narcissa Malfoy had saved her husband from a lifetime of imprisonment once before with careful application of deception and a scattering of truth to lend believability to her version of events. The situation this time was different, more difficult to simply sweep aside, but she had still managed to get a message through to him with a simple plan to follow. It would succeed.

She would allow nothing less.

Even so, a dark corner of her mind considered simply cutting all ties with the man—saving the family name at the cost of its current patriarch. But her son cared greatly for his father, of course, so she wouldn't go quite that far.

Unless she had no other choice.

Her heels clacked rhythmically on the marble floor as she strode through the halls of the Ministry, posture tall and proud and somewhat contrary to the fact that her husband was currently imprisoned elsewhere in this very same building.

She arrived at the elevator just as the gate noisily slid open, releasing a small purple paper plane. It was followed by two young witches who were complaining to each other rather loudly about a recent recall of cosmetics potions. A scruffy older wizard that had been waiting there had to hastily get out of their way or risk being smacked by one of their conversational hand gestures. He was oddly dressed in a muggle-style suit and bowtie, and when he glanced her way there was an odd glimmer of recognition in his eyes.

“You’re Narcissa Malfoy, yes?” the wizard asked as they stepped into the lift together. His tone was just barely sharp around the edges—a hint that her family wasn't one he necessarily wanted to be around—but was otherwise perfectly polite.

The gate trundled shut behind them.

“My name is Mark Perkins,” he continued, introducing himself with a small nod. “So I take it you're heading down to old Courtroom Ten, correct?”

She tilted her head slightly, an unspoken question, and he chuckled as he hit the button for the ninth level. The lift slowly began to descend.
“It could be said that I have a… particular interest in that case,” he remarked, and he smiled like he was in on some secret joke, “some friends of mine ended up caught up in the entire fiasco, you see.”

“You are attending as a spectator, then?”

“I understand that it is technically an open hearing, yes?” He had a knowing smile. “It’s just that not many people know it’s going on.”

Narcissa very carefully kept her expression bound to a neutral interest; she had needed to call in a lot of favors and pull a lot of strings to ensure that silence, cutting deals to keep the specifics under wraps. It would be disadvantageous to have an angry and scared public pushing the decisions of the court around, after all.

Before she could reply, however, the feminine voice of the lift announced a stop and the gate folded to the side with a clang.

“Level three,” it said coolly, “Department of Magical Accidents and Catastrophes, including the Accidental Magic Reversal Squad, Obliviator Headquarters, and Muggle-Worthy Excuse Committee.”

A witch hurried on, grumbling under her breath about irresponsible superiors and last-minute summons. “This always happens,” she vehemently griped. “Always saying ‘Everybody’s just so busy, you know how it is!’— I do, actually! I know for a fact that all Janice is doing is getting more ink for her self-inking quill, that little—”

Perkins coughed pointedly, getting her attention. “Which level are you headed to?”

She blinked, then flushed pink with embarrassment. “O-oh sorry, right…” The witch reached out to hit a button, then stopped. “Huh. Looks like we’re all headed to the same floor.”

“To a point, at least,” he replied. “Courtroom Ten, to be specific.”

That came as something of a surprise to her. “Really? Me, too. Apparently they needed a 'Muggle Interests Speaker', or some such bollocks.” Then she sighed, looking a bit grumpy. “Not that they’ll actually have me do any speaking… Merlin knows I’ll just end up watching from the stands and not contributing at all. And, of course, no one else wanted to do it… so here I am.”

“I myself don’t have any special reason to go. Well, beyond my own curiosity.”

Both of them somewhat pointedly did not ask why Narcissa was attending, and she wasn't sure if she appreciated or resented their tact.

The elevator only stopped two more times before reaching its final destination: once to let a slew of paper planes fly in and again for them to depart.

“Department of Mysteries,” chimed the calm voice from the lift, and the door rattled open.

Perkins sighed, and he pressed a hand to his lower back. “And now,” he turned to the left, where there was an opening leading to a flight of steps, “my greatest foe: stairs.”

The younger witch chuckled a little at that, and led the way down.

The staircase led into a lower level the elevator wasn't built to reach, for some reason. Rough stone walls and heavy wooden doors lined the dark corridor, the occasional torch providing only barely
enough light to see general features.

Conversation had long since died away, so the only sound to be heard was their own footsteps: the sharp tap of her own high heels and the softer footfalls from the two walking with her. Narcissa strode ahead of them, more anxious than she cared to admit. The two ministry employees shared glances in her wake and tried to pick up their pace as well.

The courtroom was as she remembered it to be: unwelcoming and cold, dark wooden seating ringing the open floor like menacing sentries. At the center, draped in chains, stood the chair for the accused. Narcissa scowled at it as she took her place in the witness stands. She was a little surprised that Amelia Bones—who was Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement—would be presiding over this hearing, and not the Minister of Magic himself.

But then again, Cornelius Fudge had never been a very brave man. Especially when it came to matters regarding the Dark Lord.

There were a few more minutes until the hearing was set to begin, and she spent them silently reviewing to herself; she had to present her husband as sympathetic, a man who had needed to choose between bad choices. Nobody could fault him for his actions if the alternative would have meant placing his wife and son at risk, after all.

Then, finally, the door swung open and her husband, flanked by Aurors, was led inside. Lucius sat on that horrible chair, and the chains leapt to life with a metallic rattle, binding his wrists and ankles.

After a brief moment of silence, the hearing began.

“Criminal hearing of the second of September regarding the attack after the Quidditch World Cup,” dictated Madam Bones as the court scribe busied himself copying her words down on parchment, “and offenses committed against the Decree for the Peaceful Coexistence of Peoples and the International Statute of Secrecy by one Lucius Abraxas Malfoy of Malfoy Manor, Wiltshire, along with others that, for the purposes of this hearing, need not be listed here.”

Her low voice was strict and controlled, admirably precise; she was the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, after all, and clearly versed in the proper procedures. She continued through the rest of the usual courtroom etiquettes quickly and efficiently.

Then she paused, as if to let the words settle, and flipped open a folder. She pulled out the top packet of papers, quickly thumbed through them, and then folded her hands together.

“You are Lucius Abraxas Malfoy of Malfoy Manor, Wiltshire?”

“That I am, yes,” he agreed, tone as smooth and in control as ever.

“And do you deny that you were present during the attack at the Quidditch World Cup?”

He shook his head. “No, I do not.”

There were murmurs through the watching witches and wizards, no doubt surprised at the easy confession. Even Madam Bones seemed momentarily taken aback, though she quickly gathered herself again.

“Did you, or did you not, participate in the attack at the Quidditch World Cup?”

Lucius frowned ever so slightly, as if his reply was weighed down with guilt; he had always been a
remarkable actor. “Yes.”

With a small frown of her own, Madam Bones leaned forward. “Free of coercion, magical or otherwise?”

He was halfway through a nod, and Narcissa took that as her cue to step in.

“Lucius,” she said sternly, but with a calculated waver to her voice. “I… I can't let you do this.”

“Dear, I have to do this. What I did—”

“I know!” Narcissa cut in with fervor; she didn't even need to fake it. “But it was because of us—”

Madam Bones called for order, and a flick of her wand made a sharp cracking sound to gather attention back to the matter at hand. She regarded Narcissa for a moment, then turned to Lucius. “What does she mean by that?”

He looked to the side and said nothing.

“If I may?” Narcissa asked, and she was waved forward. Still, she made herself hesitate. “Forgive me, I... I must ask that what I say here remain privy only to this court.” After glancing over everyone in attendance, she turned her gaze back to Madam Bones. “For the safety of my family.”

“We can do so,” Madam Bones nodded, considering, “but know that such a decision can only be made after the conclusion of the hearing.”

She closed her eyes for a long moment, as if debating her options, before sighing. “Very well. I only hope that you…” Narcissa let her sentence drift off uncertainly and pressed a hand over her heart, skillfully playing her part. “Very well,” she repeated, more quietly.

“Narcissa,” Lucius said, tone hushed.

“He did it for us,” she said again. “When they summoned him to... to participate, he knew that refusal would mean putting us—Draco and myself—at risk.”

There was another flurry of whispers among the crowd, and Madam Bones—who was looking thoughtful, at least—hushed them with a raised hand. “Is this true, Mr. Malfoy?”

Lucius didn’t look away from his wife, as if he were unable to, and his sober expression was all but inscrutable. Then he closed his eyes and, with the attitude of a man consigning himself to death, said, “It is.”

Madam Bones hummed. “Tell us more.”

He sighed. “You know the circumstances behind my participation in the war, yes?”

She looked skeptical of that—a lot of people did—but she nodded.

“The other Death Eaters did not know that I was a... less-than willing member. The Dark Lord understandably didn’t tell anyone but his most trusted about his use of Imperio; it would weaken the confidence and morale of his troops.”

Narcissa had to admire his skill; everything he had said was strictly the truth. It was in what he had chosen not to say—and how he chose to say what he did—that was where the shape of his story lay. There were lies in the spaces between what he said.
After all, the best lie is one built from the truth.

“So when they came to me a little over a week ago,” Lucius continued, and he took a deep breath, “they expected to find a comrade—an ally—and if I proved to be anything less…” He stopped himself, allowing his apt listeners to fill in their own conclusions.

“I see.” Madam Bones sat back in her chair for a moment, musing over what had been said. Then she carefully flipped through a few of the papers before her.

There was a long moment where the only sound came from those rustled pages, and when she spoke again she had apparently moved on to a new topic.

“Mr. Malfoy,” she said, “at our request, you have willingly provided us with a memory of the incident. For the record, is this true?”

“It is.”

Narcissa didn't let her expression reflect her surprise, keeping the crease of worry on her forehead and allowing only the slightest tug downward on the corners of her lips. It did make sense, in hindsight. Her husband was a skilled Occlumens—he could easily have manipulated the memory to ensure it couldn't be used against him. As such, willingly offering up his memory in exchange for the promise of a lighter sentencing posed no risk to him.

It was a good deal.

After all, the Ministry was very interested in finding who had put a stop to the attack.

---

On the other side of the country, taking a tactical nap in his very first Transfiguration class, Sans stifled a sudden sneeze.

---

Tapping the stack of papers resting on her podium with one finger—presumably a transcript of the memory in question—Madam Bones asked, “Can you confirm the validity of this account?”

There was a strange emotion lining the witch's voice, as if she wanted to hear a denial but was uncomfortably certain that no such response was coming.

“I can, indeed,” Lucius agreed. “Though not with anything more than further testimony.”

So Madam Bones took a deep breath, and asked the question that she had probably been building toward the whole time: “What can you tell us about that night, Mr. Malfoy?”

“I don't know who he was,” he said, taking a very accurate guess at what they would be most interested in hearing about. “I don't even know what he looks like. He was clearly using some sort of illusion spell to mask his features… Well, I suppose you know all this. You saw the memory, of
course.”

She nodded, expression unreadable. “For the court, please describe the events as you remember them. First of all, was this figure a witch or a wizard?”

“A wizard, certainly,” he answered at once. “He had a remarkably low voice even though, from what I could see, he was quite short. And very pale. There was… there was a flickering light around his left eye, which I assume to be part of the illusion to hide his appearance.” For a moment, Lucius actually hesitated. “I couldn't see his face.”

Catching that pause, Madam Bones pressed, “You couldn't?”

He frowned to himself. “You know what I saw.”

“Humor me, Mr. Malfoy.”

“Half of his face looked… skeletal.” Though he remained perfectly still, Narcissa knew her husband well enough to see that it was only because he wouldn't let himself shake. “He had white hair, and was wearing some sort of blue robes. That's all I could see.”

Beside her, the witch from the elevator earlier frowned slightly. Under her breath, she muttered, “White hair… and blue…? Why does that sound so…” Then her eyes went wide and she made a small surprised sort of sound.

One apparently loud enough for Madam Bones to notice. “Miss Nettlebane? It's my understanding you were one of the Obliviators dispatched to the scene, correct?”

“Oh, uh, yes,” she answered. “Yes, I was.”

“Does that description remind you of anyone?”

Miss Nettlebane swallowed, uneasy. “I… well, I do know of one person, maybe…” She shook her head. “But he was just a kid, so it couldn't have been him!”

Quieter, so quiet that even Narcissa only barely caught it, she added, “Right?”

“True,” Madam Bones agreed, and left it at that. “Mr. Malfoy, please continue.”

He took a deep breath. “One of our number cast the Killing Curse at him.” There was honest incredulity in his voice when he finished, “He simply… I don't know how he did it. The curse just… turned away.”

Silence.

“I remember feeling suddenly as if I could barely move, and shortly after that there was a strange light at my chest. I don't know what that was. It didn't seem to do anything at all.” Lucius shook his head slowly. “Then he made a sweeping gesture with his hands, and anybody who wasn't careful enough suddenly found themselves without their wand. Naturally, most of them were taken out at that point.”

He tilted his head back, staring up at the ceiling, and one of his chained hands gave a small gesture upwards. “The next thing I know, that heavy feeling is back and… I don't know how, but I was thrown into the sky. That's all I remember.”

Madam Bones nodded; apparently that matched the memory record he had provided. “Thank you
for your cooperation.” She said nothing else, and the judges began to discuss things among themselves.

After a few long minutes, the whispered debates stopped. Narcissa kept her breathing steady, refusing to acknowledge the nervous tension in her chest, and waited.

“All right then.” Addressing the chamber as a whole, Madam Bones asked, “Those in favor of issuing the accused a fine of one thousand and twenty eight galleons and three knuts, as previously decided, as well as placing the accused under house arrest for the period of one year, please raise your hands.”

A number of hands went up, but there was not enough time for Narcissa to count them.

“All those in favor of pursuing harsher punishment, please raise your hands now.”

Interestingly, Madam Bones had refrained from voting. But even then, it would be close—closer than Narcissa would have liked.

The score was tallied quickly.

“Very well, then.” Madam Bones smiled. It wasn't a pleased smile, or annoyed; just polite. “Auror Williamson will accompany you home, and we will send you an owl with the fine.” She tucked her papers back into the folder and stood up. “Dismissed.”

The chains dropped away.

Her family wasn't out of danger yet—not nearly. It would take a lot more work to pull them completely back from that precarious edge, but she would manage. She would make sure her son was safe.

Narcissa Malfoy would allow nothing less.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Oh geeze, I'm really cutting it close on this one. Sorry it's gotten to be so late, this chapter was really hard to write for whatever reason—none of these character's make puns, how is dialog meant to work without incidental puns?!

Anybody writing for NaNoWriMo this year? I'll be working on an original piece—one I've been messing around with for literal years of my life and making no real progress—so we'll see how that goes!

Just wondering, but what sort of jacket do you picture Sans's blue jacket to be? A big winter coat with a fluffy hood, or perhaps just a blue hoodie? Something else? I've been writing it as a hoodie, but recently I've been considering going back and changing that.

Updates are on the first of the month. It's still technically the first on the month for me right now, still counts! On that note, please tell me if you notice any spelling mistakes or the like. I'm posting this really close to the deadline, and could easily have missed
things in my rush.
Thanks for all the support! It always makes me so happy to see that you all are enjoying the story, so thanks for every comment, kudos, and bookmark! Can you believe that this thing has over 1,000 reviews on ff.net?! And it's getting close to 200,000 views over there too! It's unbelievable!

A couple of people asked this, but PDEs stands for Partial Differential Equations. Fun stuff, I know; the glory of being a math major.

And here's some random fanfiction recommendations, just for the heck of it:
"The Monster Files" by FantasiaWandering
Basically, this nameless government organization is trying to monitor the activities of the newly freed monsters with, shall we say, limited success.
"Before" by AriTheDoggo
This is a Breath of the Wild story, not Undertale… but whatever. I've been enjoying it so far.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
The first time Sans actually got to meet the ghosts up close and personal came during his very first breakfast at Hogwarts, and went about as well as could be expected.

Sirius had—half literally—made sure to drag the sleepy skeleton downstairs in time for food. He'd shoved his friend into a seat and nudged a bowl of dry cereal his way. Then, fairly shortly after eating his own meal, he had skived off somewhere else: probably going to find Harry, actually. Regardless of where the dog had gotten to, he wasn't here.

Which was a real shame, since a quick canine distraction might have come in handy. And, well, he probably would have found the whole scenario to be positively hilarious.

It started with a pun, because of course it did.

"don't look now," he said, leaning over to Luna conspiratorially, "but we've got a spectral spectator. think he might be a bit spooked by me?"

Luna immediately turned to look, as expected if not requested. Sure enough, they were being watched. The ghost of a generously sized monk was floating just past a small group of Hufflepuff students, staring at Sans with a puzzled mix of confusion and amazement. When he noticed them looking back, the grayish-silver color of his face became slightly more opaque in what was probably the ghostly equivalent of an embarrassed blush. The spirit drifted over to join them at the Ravenclaw table, looking a tad sheepish.

“Do pardon but…” The sentence petered off, as the ghost sounded like he wasn't quite sure how to say what he wanted to say. “Did you know that you're positively glowing?”

Sans blinked, glancing down at himself to check that the glamour hadn't shorted out or something equally inconvenient. It just looked the same as usual, pale and white but certainly not luminescent. He gave his fingers an experimental wiggle.

Finding everything to be normal, he gave the ghost a quizzical look. “uhm… no?”

“Indeed you are, young man,” came another ghostly voice from directly behind him.

Close behind him.

Sans, unused to being snuck up on, startled fairly badly. He had been caught off guard before, and, to grossly understate things, it never ended well for him. Or for the rest of the dimension, actually.

Luckily in the instant it took him to get halfway through forming a shortcut and freezing the ghost blue, his mind managed to catch up with his reflexes and reminded him that vanishing in front of
people was not a good plan. As was successfully casting magic on a ghost without even a wand, probably, so he swiftly dropped the blue magic. He was still itching to turn the specter blue—the appearance of his left eye flickered ever so slightly, but thankfully nobody seemed to notice.

Sans took an unneeded breath, fixed his smile in place, and turned around on his seat. “heya. that's no way to great a new pal, sneakin' up on me like that.” He chose to ignore the hypocriticalness of that, given the way he always greeted the kiddo. “i 'bout gave up the ghost there.”

The ghost who had snuck up on him—probably accidentally—had curly hair, a mustache, goatee, and a flamboyant hat decorated with a very large feather. He was also giving Sans a peculiar look, and rubbing at his chest with a small frown.

It was weird seeing ghosts looking like humans, rather than the indistinct hiding-under-a-bedsheet look that he was used too. Honestly, these ghosts weren't at all like the ones he was familiar with from the Underground. For one thing, it would seem that these ghosts wore clothes, and that those clothes were whatever they had happened to have on at the time of their deaths. For another, they weren't alive.

He had learned that only a few moments before, when he whiffed blue magic through the ghost; it had snagged on something, much like it did on moving portraits, but there wasn't a SOUL there. Not even a twisted fraction of one, as Chara had at the end, but not at all like Flowey either. These ghosts were more like... impressions of a SOUL: a record of memory and personality.

For a brief moment, he wondered how the wizarding world would react if he told them that these supposed ghosts didn't really fit the typical definition of a spirit. Probably not well, if he had to guess.

Which wasn't to say that these ghosts didn't have feelings or opinions, because clearly they did. But it did explain why they couldn't interact with the world easily. Napstablook sure hadn't—Napstablook didn't have that problem, having used computers, headphones, and so on with no issue.

Sans firmly reminded himself that his family and friends were still alive, just... somewhere else.

“Hello, Fat Friar,” greeted Luna. “Hello, Sir Nicholas.”

Presumably the significantly stouter of the two was the so-called Fat Friar and, by process of elimination, the second ghost—who had snuck up on him—was Sir Nicholas.

As Luna and the Fat Friar got themselves completely sidetracked, Sir Nicholas scrutinized the individual of interest: a pale but otherwise unremarkable first year. Save, of course, for the apparent glowing. A little belatedly, the ghost noticed that they had just been scrutinizing each other in silence for quite some time.

“Excuse my poor manners,” the ghost apologized, sweeping his feathered hat from his head. “My name is Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington”

Sans blinked, amusement pulling at his illusory lips. “i hope you don't ex-specter me to call you by that whole thing every time i want your attention.”

The pun was either missed or ignored entirely.

Instead of recognizing that comedic genius, Sir Nicholas quirked his head to the side and it wobbled curiously on his neck. “You really are glowing, though.”
Glancing down at his hands again, Sans shrugged. “gotta say, i'm really not pickin' up what you're putting down. maybe you ghosts are just seeing things.” With a grin, he joked, “have you been sleeping well? rest in peace, and all that.”

“I assure you, we are not seeing things.” The ghost floated a bit lower, presumably wanting a closer look at the odd glowing child, and his head did that odd teetering again—it looked like it might not be attached all the way.

“oh, that sounds like a problem.” Sans gave his voice a curve of joking sympathy. “you might need to get your vision checked if you can't see stuff.”

Sir Nicholas, who had been reaching one transparent hand out as if to give him a puzzled (and likely ineffectual) poke, paused. “Do you suppose I should?”

Given that the ghost might notice that his composition was far from a typical human should he permit contact, Sans leaned away from him. Unfortunately, he didn't notice that he was shifting into range of a conversational gesture from the Fat Friar until it was too late. A shortcut would have gotten him out of there, but was off-limits for obvious reasons.

There was a slight bump, and an unfamiliar sensation of cold brushing across the top of his skull; he knew what cold was, but of course, being a skeleton, it wasn't something he felt often. Only when magic was involved, and the chill could touch his SOUL.

Then the Fat Friar jerked back, as if scalded, and stared down at his own hand in blatant shock. “I… felt that.”

So perhaps a puzzled poke wouldn't have been as ineffectual as previously thought.

“What do you mean— woah, no touchie.” Sans dodged a curious ghostly hand, holding up his arms somewhat defensively. “it's ice to meet you, you guys are cool. but i mean that mostly literally, and i tell ya what: freezing is snow joke.”

It took a moment for the Fat Friar to catch the puns, and he chuckled heartily once he did.

Sir Nicholas was not as easily distracted by word play, however. “Friar… What do you mean by that?”

“I meant what I said!” he replied, still sounding like he didn't quite believe himself. “I don't know how, but I actually felt that.”

Which was weird, Sans reminded himself, because ghosts on this side of the void seemed to be stuck as permanently incorporeal. That had to get really boring for the poor schmucks. As far as he could tell, ghosts couldn't even interact with each other very well: they just pushed back like two opposing breezes.

But Sans—a being made of pure magic with a SOUL—was apparently a solid presence to them.

He wasn't too interested in puzzling out how exactly that worked quite yet, though the whole made-of-magic point was probably most of the answer anyway. Still, he was interested in getting out of this conversation as soon as possible.

“welp, uh, i'm done eating, so guess i'll just—”

“But, Sans,” Luna cut in, concerned, “I only saw you eat one spoonful of cereal.”
He stood up, careful to avoid the floating specters, and shoved his hands deep into his pockets. “yep, and now i'm all full, what a shame.” As he was backing away, he gave a relaxed shrug. “gotta go, classes need attending and all that.”

Reaching out again, Sir Nicholas said, “You haven't even gotten your course list—”

The head of Ravenclaw house was passing out schedules near the other end of the table, the papers tidily organized by class year. Sans pretended to reach for something tucked away under his robe, and it was simple enough to shortcut the correct packet from the professor's stack to his hand.

“nah, i'm all set.” He pulled out the newly-arrived paper and waved it as a goodbye salute, swiftly making his escape while trying to make it not look like he was trying to escape. “see thr-you later. bye luna.”

She looked entertained, at least, and returned his wave with one of her own. The pair of ghosts watched him as he walked out, leaning together and whispering to each other so quietly that no living ears would be able to overhear. Just before he stepped out, he saw a third curious ghost drift over to join them.

Sans, somewhere between concerned and amused, had the feeling that this wouldn't be his last run-in with the school's so-called spiritual side.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Happy Thanksgiving!
Yaknow, this chapter probably would have made a better Halloween special. What with the ghosts and such. Welp. Oh well.

Usual updates are on the first of the month. This one's a bonus! I wanted to say an extra special thanks today, it being Thanksgiving and all, so here we are! Thank you so much for every comment, kudos, bookmark, and even just reading through. Your support is amazing, and I'm always so thankful that you seem to be enjoying the story!

Also, I've finally found some time to play some of Deltarune. It's really fun so far, and already had a lot of moments that spooked me or made me laugh!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Morning Classes

Chapter Summary

So begins the first half of his first day.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

According to his schedule, the first class of the day would be History of Magic. Which was all well and good, save for the little issue that he had absolutely no clue where to go. The prefect's advice of asking a ghost probably wasn't a great idea, all things considered, and he had somehow managed to find the one hallway in the entire castle that had no portraits hung up; all the paintings here were landscapes and therefore completely unhelpful.

So things were off to a great start.

Closing his eye sockets to focus, Sans stretched his awareness through the castle walls and floors as far as he could manage. There was enough magic in the air that his first mental impression of the surroundings looked more like blurry watercolors than anything specific, but, as he was well used to the highly magically saturated Underground, it only took a moment for things to shift into focus.

It took another moment to make sense of the shifting castle landscape, as staircases and sometimes even full unoccupied rooms moved about all willy-nilly.

Then he spotted just who he was looking for—two floors above and on the opposite side of the castle, a familiar two-toned orange and purple SOUL strolled alongside a trio of… huh.

One had a bright, pure yellow SOUL—rivaling the intensity of the justice-driven human that had fallen into the Underground. Another was a sort of reddish orange color, brave and determined. The last, however, looked… splotchy. It had a strong red base, but it looked somehow muffled or muted. It was hard to say why though; he was too far away to tell.

A little unnerved, Sans decided to set that matter aside for the moment and check it more closely some other time. A quick shortcut had him standing a few feet behind the quartet of three-students-plus-dog.

“I still don't know about this,” Harry was saying, addressing the golden retriever. “Are you sure it's safe for you to just… I don't know. Be here?”

“Yeah, sure he's sure.”

It was amusing to watch as the three kids competed to see who could spin around the fastest. Sirius, now at least somewhat used to his friend's penchant to pop in unexpectedly, just wagged his tail in greeting and kept walking. He only stopped when he realized his human companions had stumbled to a halt.

Ron had one hand on the wall, having won the fastest-surprised-spin contest but not performed so well on maintaining his balance. “Nearly gave me a bloody heart attack!”
The dog gave an amused snort, which earned him a tepid glare from the redhead. Tail still wagging, Sirius just shrugged; he'd had his fair share of spooks from his skeletal friend, and he had to admit that it was hilarious to watch.

“Do you always feel the need to just pop up out of nowhere like that?” asked Harry, sounding somehow both sarcastic and genuinely curious at the same time.

“you know, a doctor asked me that once too,” Sans said with an easygoing grin.

It had always been easy to startle Alphys, mainly due to her nervous disposition and the fact that she had access to an ever-expanding web of cameras that could—theoretically—tell her if anybody was coming to visit long before they would arrive. In fact, Sans kind of wondered how much of her extensive camera network was really set up to monitor for humans, and how much was just part of a futile attempt to keep tabs on him.

The brief swell of melancholy was kept locked behind a relaxed expression and a cheery wink, and Sans joked, “no recorded heart attacks yet, though.”

“Yet,” stressed Ron. “No heart attacks yet.”

“Recorded,” Harry added, tone humorous. “Just none recorded.”

“what, do you think i’m some sorta cold-blooded killer?” He held his hands out, as if to show his innocence on his palms. “i’ll have you know that there's not a drop of cold blood in my body.”

He kept his thoughts far away from gold and red and broken promises.

Sirius barked, which naturally got everyone's attention back on track. Even if that track hadn't been specified yet.

“good point, paddy,” Sans agreed. “so, i—”

He was cut off by three incredulous stares.

“Do you just—? Did he just—?” Harry stopped, looking over to Hermione with a curious frown. “Are there other animal languages besides Parseltongue?

She looked just as befuddled. “I, well, not that I've ever read about…”

“it's no big deal, just a trick i picked up awhile ago.”

The full trio turned on him: “No big deal—?!”

Sensing that things were getting swiftly sidetracked again, Sans cut them off and pressed on. “look, you can dog me for answers later. that's not the paw-int here.”

“So,” Harry pushed up his glasses to pinch the bridge of his nose, “you can talk to dogs. Okay.” He paused to absorb that information, then he jabbed a warning finger at Sans. “I will be pestering you about that later.”

“i said ya could, didn't i?”

The boy looked rightfully skeptical that he'd actually be given a chance to ask questions, but he did let the matter fall for the moment. Under his breath, he grumbled something about appearing and vanishing and dogs and generally dropping surprises left, right, and center.
Looking very much like he shared that sentiment, Ron nevertheless followed his lead and let the subject drop. Instead, he asked, “What did you need, anyway?”

“do you know where history of magic is?”

“Yeah, of course. We're still stuck with that class for this year and the next, after all.”

“It's not *that* bad, Ron,” Hermione reprimanded. “Though I do admit, I learn most of the material from the textbook rather than Professor Binns's lectures.”

“woah, if even *you're* saying that… it must be a *really* boring class.”

With a quiet hum of still-reluctant agreement, she waved the group forward and turned to lead the way down the hall. “Anyway, if we want to get breakfast before our own classes, we best get going.”

As the trio-plus-dog-plus-disguised-skeleton made their way through the castle, staircase after staircase and sometimes waiting for a staircase to come back, Sans wished he could have just jumped straight to his destination. Especially when he started noticing the transparent stalkers they had picked up.

It seemed that any ghost that caught sight of Sans took note of the supposed glowing, and some of them had clearly already heard about his apparent tangibility. None had tried to swipe at him yet, but at least one looked to be considering it.

At least the trio seemed oblivious to the—Sans took a second to count them up—five ghosts trailing behind them or poking through the walls to stare.

Honestly, getting a description of where to go and trying to teleport there based on that was looking more and more like the better option: he could cut out the walking and stalking in one fell swoop.

“But seriously,” Ron asked, as if he had picked up on what Sans was thinking. “How did you just show up? A hidden passage or something?” The castle has plenty of twisty secret corridors hidden behind hallway décor, after all.

“nothing so fancy,” Sans replied, shrugging. “just took a shortcut.”

Hermione looked suspicious. “A shortcut that *wasn't* a hidden passage?”

For a moment, Sans considered the phrasing. “i suppose, technically speaking, it could *kinda* be considered a hidden passage.”

Sirius sneezed at that.

Looking between the golden retriever and grinning first year, Hermione crossed her arms. “I do wish you'd stop being so purposefully vague, Sans.”

“never.”

She just sighed.

Harry stopped, and turned to point down a hallway to their left. “Anyway, here we are. Mostly. Your classroom is down there at the end of the hall, across from a tapestry of a chair.”

“just a chair?”
“There apparently used to be somebody sitting in it,” Ron answered, “but he left ages ago.”

Sans, deciding to treat that oddity as simply matter-of-fact, just nodded and moved on. “gotcha’. do you have any tips for…” A familiar ghostly presence was drifting their way from down the hall, so it might be best if he made himself scarce. “actually, never mind. i'll see ya later. keep 'em outa trouble, paddy.”

Sirius stuck his nose in the air and huffed, which Sans knew meant that he would do no such thing. Trouble was, after all, something the prankster truly enjoyed stirring up.

With that quick goodbye, Sans turned and hurried off to his classroom. From behind him, he heard the trio strike up conversation with one 'Nearly Headless Nick'—or, as he had been introduced to him not even an hour prior, Sir Nicholas.

Really, it would probably be for the best if he kept clear of the castle ghosts.

To make sure he wouldn't be spotted, Sans went ahead and took a shortcut to directly inside the classroom down the hall. The room was empty—he wouldn't have taken the jump if it hadn't been —so it would seem that he was the first to arrive: even before the professor. Orderly rows of desks faced toward the front, where there was a blackboard and a bookshelf presumably full of history texts.

Claiming a spot at the back, Sans sat and… promptly realized that he had forgotten his bookbag. In his defense, he rarely needed to carry things around. There was no point, given he could shortcut whatever he wanted directly to his hand from wherever it had been left. So, with another cautious check that he was alone, he did just that.

His textbook dropped onto the desk from thin air, landing with a loud thud. Flipping it open to a random page, he settled in to read and wait. Moments like this, unbothered and peaceful (and ghost-free), were always something Sans could appreciate. Especially given the past half hour.

“Oh, hello.”

Sans glanced up from a particularly boring passage about goblins and establishing the wizarding bank system. At the front of the room, a transparent figure had drifted through the blackboard.

“You are… a new first year, yes?” The ghost had a ponderously slow voice, and he floated closer as he spoke.

“yes,” Sans said, shooting a glance toward the classroom door. “yeah, that i am, yep.”

Maybe he could just duck out of this interaction, and by the time he came back for class the ghost would have glided off to somewhere else.

“Ah, good.”

Then the ghost—with one last, long look—turned and took up his place floating at the front of the room, all the while muttering softly under his nonexistent breath about class schedules to remind himself which topics he would be lecturing on first.

So it would seem that Professor Binns was a ghost.

Simply fantastic.

The old ghost paused, partway phased through one of the desks, and looked back at him. “By the
way,” he said, in that same droning voice, “did you know that you are glowing?”

“So I’ve been told,” he replied shortly.

Luckily, after that first question, more students began to arrive and the ghostly professor was quickly distracted. In fact, he seemed largely uninterested in pursuing the topic of his oddly glowing student, once he settled into the rhythm of his slow lecture.

Still, Sans figured that it couldn't hurt to just never go back to that class. Just in case.

=X=X=X=

His next class was Charms, and—thank goodness—the teacher there wasn't spectral. Though the professor was remarkable in his own way, as he was even shorter than Sans.

Slouching farther down in his chair, Sans listened as Professor Flitwick lectured on the importance of precise wand motion and clear incantations. Color and music theory hadn't even been vaguely mentioned: just words and waving and voila.

And sure, it was just day one and the only other class he had been exposed to was reputedly the most boring one on the entire schedule—but that didn't make it any less boring in the moment.

“It's just that easy,” Professor Flitwick was saying, swish and flicking his wand to levitate the books on his podium as a simple demonstration. “Now, as this is your first term, this class will only cover how to cast a wide variety of different charms. In later years, we go into greater detail on the art of creating new spells.”

Sans sighed, wondering if maybe he could find time to sit in on those classes later. It was fascinating how subtle the differences in magic were—how wand motions and incantations served as intermediaries—and learning how to use those differences would be vastly more interesting than just repeating words and waves of a stick.

As the professor directed the books higher into the air, Sans figured he might as well check the spell.

* Wingardium Leviosa — ATK 0
* A charm that can levitate things.

Which was nothing he hadn't expected, really. Though it was interesting to see that it was specifically categorized as a charm; perhaps there was some deeper difference between charms and spells that he just wasn't picking up on.

As the professor lowered the textbooks back to his podium and continued describing the basics behind charms, the disguised skeleton poked thoughtfully at his own book with his bone wand.

This levitation spell—or charm, whatever, he didn't much care what it was called—had, indeed, appeared to be on the blue end of the magical spectrum. However, it lacked the depth of color that would allow for full motion instead of just up and down: closer to the shade of a faded sky than cobalt.

Maybe humans had difficulty handling purer colors of magic, which could explain why most of the
spells he had witnessed were pastel to the point of not even being visible to the non-magical eye. Plus, from what he knew of human mages from his own dimension, even they had relied more heavily on tools and incantations than any monster needed.

In contrast to what might be expected when learning about the vast difference in strength between a human SOUL and a monster one, human magic users were, in general, no stronger magically than the average monster. The strength of their SOUL lay in their determination and physicality, not their magic. Even the seven mages who created the barrier were no exception, though they stood on equal footing with the most magically powerful monsters of the time.

Really, the incredible strength of the barrier was only possible because it was secured through their own, much stronger human SOULs. Sans himself could perform the same magic to create a barrier just as technically impassible, but breaking it would be pitifully easy: his SOUL, while crammed full of magic, had always been weak.

But he was getting off track.

“So, in order for a witch or wizard to preform a spell—” Professor Flitwick was saying, before he was interrupted mid-sentence.

Not that Sans had meant to cut him off. In fact, he hadn't even really been trying to cast the spell, it just sort of… happened.

He blamed his glorified stick.

All Sans had done was lazily mimic the flick and swish motion the professor had used, still musing to himself about the colors and saturations he’d need. And that was all it took, apparently: there was the slightest trickle of his energy drawn through the wand, it took purpose from motion and his vague thoughts, and launched the heavy textbook into the air like a rocket.

Sans was probably the most surprised of everybody, honestly.

The book smacked loudly into the wooden ceiling, then dropped back to the desk with a resounding thud, almost hitting Sans on the way down.

Everyone was looking at him, so he just shrugged.

“ya know,” Sans said into the shocked silence, “given the piano, i shoulda seen this coming.”

His teacher was staring at him, wide-eyed. Probably because Sans had just inadvertently thrown everything the poor man knew about magic and spell casting into question.

“Forgive me,” Professor Flitwick began, glancing between his student, the book, and the ceiling, “but did you just…?”

“my bad, prof. i didn't mean to inter-up ya like that.” Sans pointed up when he said the pun, and kept his tone carefully nonchalant.

The professor looked toward the ceiling, and Sans—a moment too late—noticed that there was a fairly noticeable dent in the wood where the book had hit. Pointing that out, albeit accidentally, probably hadn't been the best choice.

After a long moment, Flitwick stepped off the stack of books he used to be able to see over his podium and walked over. Sans swiftly tucked his so-called wand up his sleeve; he didn't want to risk teleporting it away, not with an experienced wizard standing right there, but allowing a chance
for closer inspection would not serve him well.

“what's up?” Sans asked. Much more quietly, he finished, “well, not the book anymore.”

The professor caught the joke, and he grinned—just a little bit. Then, after another glance toward the ceiling dent, he directly asked, “Did you mean to do that?”

With a wink, Sans replied, “well, it's not so much that i didn't mean to not do that, and more that what i did wasn't completely what i didn't mean to not do.”

Which was a sentence that immediately made every other Ravenclaw in the room want to pull out their quills and try to follow its string of multi-negatives.

Professor Flitwick, however, just frowned ever so slightly at the perfectly innocent look his student was giving him. He'd seen a lot of 'perfectly innocent looks' in his tenure teaching—he'd been exposed to the Weasley twins, after all—but even so, he found the guiltless smile hard to verify.

Before he could come to any decision on the legitimacy of Sans's lackadaisical grin, the loud chime of the school bells signaled the end of class.

“Alright then,” he addressed all of his students, “when we come back together on Tuesday, we'll get started on actually casting some simple charms.” He gave Sans a rather significant look when he said that. “Until then, I hope you all have a splendid first weekend here at Hogwarts!”

As the other students began to noisily gather up their quills and parchments, Professor Flitwick turned his attention back to Sans. He had just one more thing to say: “Do be more careful in the future, Mr. Skelton.”

“yeah, sure thing.”

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Quick real talk here to spread awareness, but Article 13—which you've probably seen memes of by now—could cause a lot of issues in the global internet community of content creators: not just those in the EU. Film Theory has a pretty good video on it, I'd say give it a watch if you're curious. Also, December 10th is a deadline for a last push to restore Net Neutrality. Not sure what we can really do to help, but it bears mentioning. Sorry for getting a bit political, but thought you ought to know.

Anyway, Hogwarts! Classes have begun, and already Sans has tripped over himself a bit. It would seem that his fake wand is not only bone-afide (still a very nice pun, Neutral Zone) but a bit super charged. But then, that's what happens when you work with a 100% magic wand, I suppose.

And look! This story has somehow gotten more fanart! Thank you so much, Agent 3 Novi. It looks awesome!

Note that the previous chapter was a bonus, so you should check it out if you missed
that update.

Updates are on the first of the month.
Thanks for all of the kudos, bookmarks, and comments! I hope that you all continue to enjoy this story as it goes on.

Finished Deltarune! It's amazing, you should definitely go play it if you haven't already.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
An Afternoon Class

Chapter Summary

A chapter in which Sans continues to attend classes.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Sans was having limited success with the whole 'being more careful' thing.

He had skipped lunch to instead spend that time trying to figure out how to keep from overpowering his spells. Which was why he was in this empty classroom, swish-and-flicking his wand while trying to keep whatever it was pointed at from launching itself into the air at top speed. After maybe ten minutes of trying, he could proudly say that at least nothing actually reached the ceiling anymore. Even though the last book he'd tested had still gotten pretty darn close.

For a moment, he toyed with the idea of just heading out to the forest and finding an adequate stick to use instead. Or maybe asking Perkins if he could snag one of the fake wands from that old prank closet. It would be the simplest thing to do, though by now people may have already taken note of his bone wand and would notice a switch.

Plus, conceding defeat to his own summoned creation just sort of rubbed him the wrong way.

So he swished and flicked the wand once more, sending a chair hurling into the air. A moment before it would have crashed into the floor, Sans caught it with a pulse of regular blue magic: it froze for an instant, thereby killing its momentum, and then dropped that last inch.

If fell over gracelessly, making a rather loud clatter. Luckily this empty classroom had stone walls thick enough that an eavesdropper would probably need to be pressing their ear right onto the door to hear anything going on inside. And even then, a shimmer of blue magic in the air around the edges of the room meant no sound would be escaping that way either; sound can't travel if the air can't move, after all.

Sans frowned thoughtfully—and, admittedly, with some annoyance—at the tipped-over chair. This problem was frustrating in a most fascinating way; he could cast the magic and get the desired effect, but not with any sort of real handle over it. He was used to having an incredibly precise control over his magic, and all of that control just vanished as soon as the bone wand came into play.

In his mind, his magic was light. He could reach out from white to the secondary colors—magenta, cyan, and yellow—with barely a second thought. Primary colors were just a step further, as well as being far more difficult and, in one case, exponentially more dangerous. Sans was one of very few monsters who could use all of them.

Blue was easy, his long practice with the color making its use almost as easy as the secondaries. Red was… tricky, and for most monsters it was beyond dangerous to fiddle around with—but Sans was not most, and the color was deep in his very bones. Green, in the end, was the color he had the greatest difficulty using. He could call it up, but he couldn't trust himself enough to actually try
and heal anything. Not unless there was no other choice.

For most monsters, green was the first and only primary color they might learn. Kindness and trust came easily to them, so of course green magic should pose no problems.

Sans carefully did not examine the bitter twist his mind set to that fact. He had a different problem to puzzle through at the moment.

That being, quite simply, that these spells did not feel like light.

Kind of.

At least, when he wasn't using the bone wand, things behaved as he expected them to; if the spell called for a color, he could just reach for that color as usual. Easy. Then, with added intent, the spell would just come together like spotlights on the star of the show. Of course, it wasn't quite that simple—all spells seemed to use multiple colors at multiple intensities—but he could handle that.

As if to prove that to himself, Sans waved his right hand with a swish and a flick. The wandless gesture made the chair lift gently into the air, flip itself the right way around, then settle back to the ground. Even the hand motion was technically unnecessary, he just found it amusing.

He twirled his wand around his fingers, thinking.

Colors.

Red, green, blue. Magenta, cyan, yellow.

It was pretty obvious that colors still dictate the course that the magic would run, be it for a human spell or a monster bullet, regardless of how the colors mix together.

That word—'mix'—tugged at an old memory.

Sans had once found a mostly intact package of acrylic paints in the garbage dump, and of course he brought it home for his baby brother to play with. Not much painting had been done, but Papyrus had loads of fun mixing together the different colors. And just like the entirety of the kitchen after years of passionate pasta preparation, there were still remnants of the paint-play staining the wall behind the couch.

Sans gave his wand another flick, resulting in the book he had targeted suddenly flinging into the air and almost—almost, he was improving—hitting the ceiling.

And he realized something.

This magic was more like mixing paints together, not like light. Or perhaps magic as a whole is really some combination of the two, and he had simply never noticed.

All the colors are still distinct when first beginning to stir, but after a while the paint just swirls together into one solid shade. Waving a wand—which, in this analogy, is essentially a paintbrush—was supposed to help control the color as it is added into the world.

And his paintbrush, so to speak, was more like a paint-roller: built for broad strokes and without much regard for the fine details.

It wasn't a perfect comparison, by any means, but perhaps a new angle could be helpful.

Before he could launch any more unsuspecting furniture in his attempts to figure things out,
however, he noticed a familiar presence approaching the room. Dropping the blue magic that had kept the classroom sound-proofed, he heard a low bark and scratching at the entrance.

So, with a thought and a twist of magic, Sans pulled the door open.

Tail-wagging butt first, his golden retriever friend backed into the room. He was carrying something in his mouth, which somewhat explained the wrong-way arrival, and he plopped the bundle down with a pleased huff. As soon as the door clicked shut once more, Sirius gave himself a good shake and shed his Animagus form.

“I noticed you weren't at—” Sirius paused mid-stretch, blinking at the room in surprise. He was able to see quite a bit more of it when not standing on all fours, including all the tipped-over desks and chairs and scattered books. “What in Merlin’s name happened in here?”

Sans looked over the haphazard mess his practicing had left behind. “ah yes, that would be me. i am what happened.”

“I mean, I sort of guessed that but…” He sighed, shaking his head. “Okay. What did you do?”

To explain, Sans flicked his wand at one of the desks. One end promptly flipped violently into the air, knocking everything in its immediate area all higgledy-piggledy.

The wizard glanced between his friend and the scattered mess, understanding filling his eyes. “Oh, this is hilarious.”

“is it?”

“Trust me, it is.”

“i'll just have to take your word on that.”

Still looking entirely too amused, Sirius sat down on the floor in front of the cloth-wrapped package he had brought. “Anyway, I noticed you weren't at lunch.” He opened the bundle to reveal a small assortment of bread, meat, and cheese, plus a few cookies.

Sans sat down across from him, but didn't take any of the food. With a meaningful nod to the mess he had made, he said, “i had other stuff to deal with.”

“I suppose this is all because of the book incident?”

“you heard?”

“By this point, who hasn't?” replied Sirius, shrugging. “Trust me on this, too: the Hogwarts rumor mill should never be underestimated.”

“brilliant.”

Sirius made himself lunch, frowning slightly when he noticed his companion was not doing the same. Around his first mouthful of sandwich, he commanded, “Rattlesh, ead the food.”

“thanks for the effort and all, but i'm not hungry.”

“I shwear,” he said, then swallowed before continuing. “If you say that 'no stomach for it' line, I'll shove this bread down your throat.”

Sans waved it off. “i try to cook up fresh puns daily, paddy. wouldn't want to feed you the same
ones over and over, that'd just get stale.”

Sirius stared at him for a moment. Then, apparently having nothing to say in response, he just took another bite of his sandwich. The rest of the lunch passed in a companionable silence, though the quiet didn't mean he had stopped trying to get his friend to eat. The pile of food was not-subtly pushed closer and closer to Sans, until he did eventually take something: a single slice of bread.

“You really should eat more.”

“you do realize that i'm a skeleton, right?”

“So?”

“…nevermind.” Sans sighed. “i can see nothing i say will get through to you.”

From somewhere else in the castle, the chiming of bells called an end to lunch.

“I suppose I ought to clean up my mess,” Sirius remarked, twirling his wand to vanish the remains of their meal. Then, with a grin, he looked rather pointedly between Sans and the cluttered wreck filling the rest of the room.

“yeah, yeah, i know.”

Sans stood up, a slight blue glow slipping through his glamour on the left side of his face, and all the disorder he had wrought began effortlessly straightening itself out.

“hey, so if you want to catch your godson,” he began, once things were back in order, “you're gonna need to skedaddle, pronto.”

At that Sirius raised a brow. “You know, I was surprised you had me go with Harry earlier.”

Sans just shrugged. “he's your family,” he said, tone just a bit too carefree. “you can get to being a guide dog later, it's no big deal.”

“If you're sure.”

“sure i'm sure.”

Sirius himself still looked decidedly unsure, though he wasn't going to complain about getting more time with his godson. Even if he did have to stay as a dog the whole time. Still, it was only after a long moment that he shifted back into his disguise as a golden retriever.

“speaking of being a guide, though,” Sans added, earning a curious glance from the dog, “do you think you could lead me to the transfiguration classroom?”

With a snort that sounded distinctly chiding, Sirius stuck his nose in the air and sassily walked away. Until he reached the door, that is, since it was still shut tight. He placed a paw up on the wood, his dramatic exit defeated, and was forced to look back to Sans for help.

Sans grinned. “i'll take that as a 'yes’."

=X=X=X=
Sans decided to sleep through Transfiguration.

It wasn't a plan he really liked—these were lessons on a whole new facet of magic, after all—but given the book incident, unconsciousness might be the safer option. Later, once he figured out how to use his wand with some measure of control, he'd stay awake.

He had strategically chosen one of the desks in the middle of the class, knowing that it was more likely that the professor would keep an eye on students in the back row, and with any luck the students in front of him would block most line-of-sight. Then he settled in to sleep the class away.

In the end, though, his nap only lasted for just under five minutes.

It wasn't even the professor herself that caught him out; Sans had been coasting smoothly under her radar, silently snoozing, when he sneezed himself back into the waking world. It wasn't a loud sneeze—he had actually managed to cut it off—but it was still enough for Professor McGonagall to take note of him and his drowsy just-woken-up expression.

She took five points from Ravenclaw, which earned him a glare from his housemates, then positioned herself so that she could see him during the rest of her lecture.

Apparently she was just as strict as she looked, and didn't see the inherent advantage of teaching a class with a napping student—even if that unconsciousness meant that said student was unable to cause any inadvertent havoc.

Really, Sans was only trying to do her a favor.

So, forced into wakefulness, the best he could do was keep his wand out of reach and resist the temptation to try his hand at any of the demonstrations: no matter how fascinating the swirl of magic dancing through the transformed objects had been.

Unlike other wizarding spells he'd seen, which all used an assortment of colors, it seemed that transfiguration used predominantly white. Which didn't help with his urge to try it out, seeing as white magic was the same sort that all monsters used for summoned bullets. After all, given his familiarity with the color, maybe he would have better luck trying out this type of spell.

But then again, the charm from earlier had been mostly shades of blue and he had still royally messed that up—and he hadn't even been trying to do anything.

Perhaps he could try it out later, in that abandoned classroom. By himself. Without anybody around to witness whatever might happen.

“For the rest of the class period,” Professor McGonagall stated, flicking her wand to lift a box out from behind her desk, “you will all have an opportunity to try a very basic transfiguration.”

Well then.

Perhaps he should try to snooze again and just skip out on the activity as a whole.

As if detecting that thought somehow—sheer teacher instinct, perhaps—the professor sent him a very stern look. He straightened in his seat and tried to look eagerly attentive and not at all apprehensive.

They were to practice what was, apparently, the simplest spell of transfiguration: changing a match into a sewing needle.
This wasn't great news, in part because he wasn't terribly familiar with sewing needles. If it had been a syringe needle or a pine needle, he would be less worried. Or even a knitting needle; Undyne learned how to knit at the end of most peaceful timelines, and she took to that hobby with the same passion as cooking. Which meant that sometimes, if she had been especially enthusiastic, Sans could find her knitting needles sticking out of his ceiling. (She had been at his house because her own was, of course, on fire.)

As for sewing needles, though... well, it's not as though he'd ever bothered to repair any of his own clothing if it got holes. He had only ever seen a sewing needle once, on a particularly long run, when Toriel had insisted on repairing his tattered blue hoodie.

That had been ages ago by now, but hopefully it'd still be enough to go on.

When given his match, Sans looked between it and his wand with distrust. There was no way using the wand would go well: he'd end up accidentally transfiguring the entire desk or something. He just had to hope that everybody was too caught up in their own attempts to notice his wandlessness.

So, as the students around him got to work waving their wands and saying magic words, he picked up his match to look it over more closely.

The match was basically a flat-sided stick just a bit longer than his thumb, with a blob of red at one end that smelled ever so slightly sulfurous. It was easy to leave small dents in the wood with a pinch, but he couldn't bend it at all—not without risking breaking it, anyway.

After turning the match over in his hands a few more times, he decided he'd try a quick test. Before doing anything, though, he positioned himself in a way that should keep any casual glances from seeing whatever might happen to the match. Then, with a small amount of white light glimmering on his fingertips and a very familiar shape in mind, he carefully pushed the magic into the wood.

There was a slight twitch, and then the match appeared to gain a pair of bumps on each end. It wasn't his best work, but it did look vaguely like a cartoonish bone. And, just as importantly, nobody else seemed to have noticed the change.

“okay, so far so good,” he murmured to himself.

Changing his mental image to that of a needle, focusing only on the shape for the moment, he again called up the magic. In his hand, the wood jittered. Then the match nearly doubled in length, one end sharpening into a fine point while the other gained an oval hole.

All in all, it was a passable wooden recreation of one of Toriel's sewing needles.

Next up was switching the material to metal, which he expected would be a bit trickier.

Focusing closely on what he knew of metals—stainless steel, in particular—and contrasting that with the properties of wood, he tried to hold that difference in the white magic; like using a projector to display an image. Holding that idea took most of his attention.

The match grew warm in his hand.

“Mr. Skelton?”

He glanced up, quickly dropping his partially transformed match to the desk, and locked eyes with a very interested Professor McGonagall standing just one row of desks away. It seemed that he had let himself get rather too distracted.
“yes, professor?”

She joined him at his desk, and Sans tried to look completely not-anxious. And then tried not to feel embarrassed about feeling anxious; he might not really be an eleven-year-old kid, but Professor McGonagall had a formidable presence about her, regardless.

“May I see the progress you've made with your match, Mr. Skelton?”

“uh…” He looked down at his desk.

Unfortunately, it would seem that he had successfully changed the wood into metal.

The now-silver needle stood out plainly against the dark wood of his desk and, without any further prompting, the professor plucked up the match-turned-needle. She turned it over in her hands, inspecting it with an unreadable expression.

Then, after a long moment: “Excellent work, Mr. Skelton. Ten points to Ravenclaw.”

Sans swallowed, still uneasy; he didn't know how much she had seen, if she had noticed that his wand remained untouched on his desk. “thank you, professor.”

But she didn't hand back the transfigured needle, and Sans felt something twist worriedly in his non-existent gut. The bell rang, and the other students began to pack up.

“Please stay after class a moment, Mr. Skelton. I have some questions for you.”

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Happy New Year, everybody!
And Happy Second-Day-of-the-New-Year for some of you!

So, what do you think Professor McGonagall wants to say to him?

Updates are on the first of the month.
Thanks again for all of the comments, kudos, and bookmarks! We've just passed 1,000 kudos and have 222 bookmarks, so double thank you!

Here's another random fanfiction recommendation, because it certainly deserves it: "Magicae est Potestas" by SomniumofLight
It's an Undertale crossover with the Artemis Fowl series, and trust me: if you like Artemis Fowl, you should definitely read this.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
While the minute it took for the rest of the class to leave wasn't the most stressful in his life—not by a long shot—it was still pretty darn nerve wracking. As they left, many of the other students sent him looks that were curious, condoling, concerned, or some combination thereof; the ones in blue were likely worried he was going to lose them more house points. Sans didn't bother with any reassurances, caught up as he was with trying to figure out what his teacher may have seen.

The whole while, Professor McGonagall remained by his desk, still turning the transfigured needle over thoughtfully in her hands.

It was making him a tad uneasy, to be perfectly honest.

After the last cluster of students had finally made their way out, the door shut with a thud that nerves made seem much too loud. Sans mentally smacked himself for making such a big deal out of being held after class: it's not even like he'd done anything wrong.

He'd just… maybe accidentally outed himself as a really unusual definitely-not-faux eleven-year-old. For the second—or third—time in the day.

Everything is perfectly fine.

And lying to yourself is definitely a healthy coping mechanism—Sans should know.

“Mr. Skelton?” the professor asked, pulling him from his twisting thoughts. Seeing that she had his attention, she held up the transfigured needle. “Explain to me how you performed this spell.”

With a shrug, he shoved aside any nervousness. He was good at that. It's simple: just grin, maybe crack a joke or two, and pretend like everything is fine. That last step can be tricky sometimes, but that's where practice comes in handy.

“the way you explained, i suppose,” Sans answered, though he had paid more mind to the feel of the spell during her demonstration rather than her actual description of it.

Her expression was just a touch skeptical. Still, she seemed to accept his answer—for the moment—and moved on. “Though successful in transforming the matchstick, you made it much too large.”

To make a point, she held up the needle. It did look big in her hands—had looked bigger in his, but he hadn't even registered that at the time—and even now it took Sans a moment to make the connection. Toriel was his only real reference for sewing needles, and they had always looked sized perfectly for her hands.

Which was, in this case, the whole issue: the needle he had made was too large for the average
human.

Still, he still wasn't super sure where his professor was going with this.

McGonagall continued: “Be aware that rumors of what happened during Charms have already spread to most of the professors.”

“Oh, good,” he said, totally not sarcastic at all.

She seemed amused by that, but did a good job of hiding it. When she continued, she simply pretended not to have heard his remark. “I was not expecting any of my students to perform such a successful transfiguration, and certainly not on their first try.”

That wasn't good news for him. To himself, he quietly mumbled, “well, neither was i.”

With a smile—slight, but there nonetheless—Professor McGonagall said simply, “I believe I can help.”

That was not what he was expecting. Sans stared blankly at his professor for a moment, thrown for a bit of a loop and left to figure out where the conversation might head now.

“What?”

“In brief, Mr. Skelton, you may have something of a control problem.”

His immediate response was an embarrassed annoyance, plus a grumbly frustration that he couldn't really dispute that point. He had to bite back a defensive reply, and instead just nodded.

“Yeah, i've noticed,” he confessed. Well, more like grouched.

“It is not an unusual problem for powerful young wizards to have trouble with their spells, and it is certainly nothing to be ashamed of.”

Nothing to be ashamed of, sure. It's not as though he was actually an adult monster—and literally made of magic—who was used to having precise control over his power at all times.

He sighed. “Yeah, alright.”

The professor just considered him for a moment. Then, almost to herself, she mused, “Professor Flitwick is your Head of House, of course, so we would need to ask him. I'm sure he would want to be a part of it, regardless.”

That made Sans immediately suspicious, though not sure of what. “…ask him?”

“I would like to hold extra lessons for you, to help you learn to better control your magic.”

His eyes went wide—whatever he had been expecting, it hadn't been that. “You wanna what?”

“Only, say, twice a week,” she continued, ignoring his open shock. “In the evenings, of course, once classes have finished for the day.”

That seems like both a very good and very, very bad idea—especially given his own practice earlier during lunch had had rather destructive results. Before he could say anything, though, she had already continued to another unexpected announcement.

“Once you have a firmer control, perhaps we can look into moving you up a year.”
That was one thrown loop too many.

“okay, seriously, what?” Sans held up a hand, needing to pause for a moment, “you’re saying i might be able to move up a grade? why? i mean, i’ve only done the one spell.”

“Indeed.” Professor McGonagall nodded, unbothered, “but you cast that spell nearly perfectly on your first try. It seems plain to me that you have a remarkable gift for transfiguration.”

“one spell,” he emphasized.

“One spell most of my students take several days to learn,” the professor countered. Then, glancing to the clock, she changed the subject before he could argue more. “Your next class will be starting shortly. I’ll speak with your Head of House, and we'll see what we can arrange.”

Sans still very much had other things he wanted to say, but, for the first time in years, he found himself struggling to put words together.

With a wave of her wand, she conjured a slip of parchment from thin air. “This note should excuse your late arrival.”

Right, and the school day wasn't even over yet.

As for where his next class actually was, the tardy slip wasn't much help: the only thing written on the note was just to give him permission to be in the halls. Some of the other students had mentioned something about dungeons, which were usually underground, so he could at least assume it was somewhere below him.

Still, no point guessing when he could just ask.

“hey, prof?”

She frowned at the casual abbreviation of her title. “Do call me 'Professor', please. What do you need, Mr. Skelton?”

“directions would be nice, too.”

The slight upturn to her eyebrows told him that she had forgotten that this was still only the first day of classes; most first year students would only get to the right classrooms by virtue of following the crowd and working it out collectively. She gave him detailed directions to the Potions classroom, even going so far as to include a few alternative routes if a staircase decided to give him trouble.

Odd that that was a possibility.

“Oh, and Mr. Skelton?” she called, just when he had one foot out the door.

“yeah?”

“Prodigy you may be, but you'd do well to remember that sleeping in my class will not be tolerated.” Her tone was stern, and brooked no argument. It was actually a little intimidating.

Just a little.

“heh.” Sans grinned, every bone carefully nonchalant. “gotcha’.”

So, still processing the whole interaction, he walked out of the classroom and the door clicked shut.
behind him. The hall was empty.

Just as he was about to set off, however, Sans abruptly hopped a half-step to the left, foot just an inch shy of the ghostly hand that phased through the ground an instant later. His funny little skip apparently confused the spirit who had just taken a swipe at him, since the transparent hand waved around for a moment as it tried to find where he had gone.

It was simultaneously amusing and annoying.

When one of the gestures got close to his foot again, he did another small hop away. “could you not?”

The hand froze, startled, then quickly pulled back through the floor: like slurping up a noodle, except with an immaterial appendage and a solid stone floor.

Again: amusing, yet annoying.

Deciding it would be in his best interest to just take a shortcut, he aimed below his feet and cast out his magic. He traced out the route he would have taken, cutting a few corners since he didn't need to wait for any uncooperative staircases. The room he ended up at seemed to be the right one, given both the various potions stuff and that he recognized some of the students in there from earlier classes.

His shortcut window actually opened right as Professor Nose—or rather, Professor Snape—swept into the classroom with a whirl of black robes and a chill glare that had most of the students cowering at their seats. Sans frowned to himself, wondering what the apparent hostility was all about, then settled back against the wall to wait for his chance to stealthily pop in.

From the front of the classroom, the teacher cast a disdainful gaze over his students: the expression of somebody who didn't expect much of them, yet already knew he was going to be disappointed. The thin line of his mouth held only scorn, and perhaps a touch of irritation.

And his eyes, as glowering and annoyed as they might seem, told Sans just how much of a half-truth that was. Which is to say that, while it was true that he probably wasn't looking forward to the upcoming semester, it wasn't entirely because of his students.

It helped that his first impression of the man had been at the lakeside, months ago. This clearly purposeful belligerence was an odd disconnect from the grouchy and snarky but still very plainly worried man Sans had seen back then.

Strange.

Still, regardless of expectations or maybe-not-as-bad-as-he-seems possibilities, if the professor was going to act like a jerk to his students, well. That would need correcting.

As the professor began to take roll, Sans turned his attention to the rest of the class. All the uniforms had either blue or yellow crests, split largely by color to each side of the room. Each desk had two students sharing one cauldron, and only one desk had a spare seat.

His name—a little under one tenth pseudonym—was called out: “Skelton, Sans.”

Taking the brief moment when the professor looked down at his parchment to read the name, Sans stepped through his shortcut to the one empty seat in the classroom.

“present.”
His sudden appearance startled a squeak from the girl who had already been sitting at the table. She was the same girl from the boat ride: Laura, if he recalled correctly. She was wearing Hufflepuff colors and a bright smile—if still a bit spooked.

“Hello again!” she quietly greeted. “Sans, right?”

He grinned. “That's my name, don't wear it out.”

Laura looked like she might have had something more to say, but, since roll call had just finished, Professor Snape was already beginning on his lecture.

“You are here to learn the subtle science and exact art of potion-making.” His cadence was deliberately paced, practiced, and held the attention of the whole class with ease. “There will be little foolish wand-waving here.”

“Some good news, at least,” Sans whispered to himself.

Or rather, he whispered to the entire class; the professor timed a dramatic pause right at that moment, so his remark wasn't nearly as quiet as he had expected. Though the sentiment was genuine, Sans winked and played it off as sarcasm.

The gloomy professor shot him a dark look for his trouble, but didn't otherwise respond. “As such, I am sure many of you will not be able to understand the magic in a softly simmering cauldron,” he continued, “nor the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins.”

Sans glanced down at his illusory skin, amused.

“I can teach you to bottle fame, brew glory, and even put a stopper in death.”

He frowned: that's less amusing. Hopefully it just meant 'healed from near-death' and not 'completely unkillable'. Unkillable was dangerous.

Then the professor sneered, and finished, “That is, assuming you have more brains in your skulls than the simpletons I usually have to teach.”

And back to being amused.

“Tell me, Mr. Ackerley,” Snape asked suddenly, causing the boy in question to jolt up in his seat, “what potion can be brewed using powdered moonstone and syrup of hellebore?”

Put on the spot, the student stuttered, “Uhm, well… a… calming draught, maybe?”

“One point to Ravenclaw.” The award sounded somewhat grudging. “The Draught of Peace is, indeed, a variety of potion used to soothe nerves and ease anxiety.”

There was a brief pause as the answer was magically written on the blackboard, and the air was filled with the sound of quills scratching across parchment taking notes.

“Mr. Whitby.” The professor looked to the student in question—it seemed that he had already memorized at least some of his students. “Where would you be able to find the herb dittany?”

This student clearly had no idea, and could only shake his head and mumble, “I don't know, sir.”

As before, Snape provided the answer and it appeared on the board. “Dittany, or *origanum dictamnus*, can only be found in the wild on the mountainsides of Crete. Wild dittany is best for brewing potions, but has become difficult to find in recent years.”
After a few more questions—some answered successfully, others less so—the professor moved on to actual brewing. The notes on the blackboard vanished, replaced by instructions for a potion that could apparently cure boils. All the students were paired with those seated at the same desk.

“I’ve never made a potion,” Laura sounded pretty nervous, “but I’ve burnt hot cocoa before so I doubt that this is going to go well. Just thought I’d warn you.”

As for Sans, he wasn’t expecting much trouble with following a recipe. He had handled his fair share of sequential experiments back in the laboratory, after all, and had even set up some on his own time after having been removed from that position.

Plus, though not nearly as enthusiastic about spending time in the kitchen as his brother, he had tried his hand at baking once or twice with not-catastrophic results so, technically, producing a not-catastrophic potion should be doable.

Hopefully.

His only real concern was that—when it came to cooking, at least—monsters and humans go about things differently. Not to mention what differences there might be between the magic-based cooking techniques he knew and potion brewing methods of human mages. Given that the instructions said nothing about magic infusions (and just to be on the safe side), Sans decided that it might be a good idea to keep his magic from interfering with anything.

“i've cooked before, but it turns out i wasn't ready for the responsibility.” At her puzzled look, he just grinned. “well, it's best not to brew on it.”

Laura waited for the crowd of students bunching up at the ingredients cabinet to clear out, then went to gather the materials listed on the board. At their station, Sans set out the tools they’d need to actually prepare the potion: mortar and pestle, the cauldron itself, and knives.

He didn't like knives.

“It should be easy to split up the work,” she said, returning with her arms full of a variety of jars and small boxes. “All we need to do is each prepare half of the ingredients we need.”

“sounds good to me.”

After divvying up the ingredients so they each had half, Laura began grinding up her three of the six required snake fangs. Sans took his half, dropped them into his mortar, and crushed them into a fine powder.

As they worked their way through the brewing steps, they slowly realized that something was wrong.

He had been carefully keeping his magic separate from the bubbling cauldron, for fear that it might spontaneously vaporize or slowly degrade or corrupt into sludge or something. It would seem that may not have been the correct choice.

Laura poured in the Flobberworm mucus, stirred vigorously, and then frowned when the potion did not change color as the instructions claimed it would. In fact, their potion was looking less like a magical liquid and more like a thick stew of the separate ingredients they had added so far. Compared to the potions simmering in some of the other cauldrons, the color of theirs was only at most half as saturated.

Crossing his arms, Sans considered the bubbling mixture. He knew that he had to be the reason it
wasn't working, but at this point he wasn't sure mingling his magic in the potion would result in any positive change or if it would just undo their work.

“That is the worst attempt at a potion that I have ever seen,” assessed Professor Snape, arms crossed as he looked down on their cauldron.

Laura tensed, clearly nervous about having the menacing professor suddenly right there. Unbothered, Sans added a sprinkle of ginger root and stirred the concoction for a few seconds as specified. There was no noticeable change to the not-very-potion-y potion.

“I was worried you might cause havoc in my class, Mr. Skelton.” With plain contempt, the professor gestured to their pitiful mixture. “It appears I was concerned for the wrong reasons.”

“better a bad potion than a potion splattered on your ceiling though, right?” Sans shrugged, fiddling with the lid for the jar of pickled Shrake spines. “that'd be a little jar-ring, i’d think.”

Not expecting such relaxed humor from one of his students—and from a Ravenclaw, no less—Snape paused: considering whether or not to take points, no doubt. He silently watched him struggle with the jar, eyes narrowed slightly. Then, without another word, he simply turned his attention to the another pair of students whose potion had just started loudly frothing and was threatening to spill its questionable contents all over the floor.

“Sweet Merlin's cane,” Laura breathed, nearly silent and wide-eyed. “I can't believe that didn't just bankrupt Ravenclaw house.”

Sans, frustrated that his bony fingers couldn't get a good grip on the lid, just handed the jar off to her. “a combination of good luck and pity, i'd say.”

“That would make sense.”

She was able to open the jar with enviable ease, of course, given that her hands weren't just bone. The recipe called for two pickled Shrake spines, so she reached in and grabbed one before handing it back to him. Her face was a grimace of disgust, and she carefully dropped it into their cauldron as quickly as possible.

Sans reached for one as well, but paused just as his fingertips touched the slimy ingredient. There was a distinct magic-made-physical sense to the spine, though unmistakably more on the physical side.

Only vaguely, yes… but still enough to be unsettling.

He ignored his discomfort, following his partner's lead and adding it to the cauldron quickly. While he mixed the brew gently—the instructions warned about 'exciting the spines', whatever that meant —Laura set to work measuring out a glug of horned slugs.

“Hey, so,” she began, hesitated, then tried again. “Were you the one who launched that book into the ceiling in Charms? How'd you manage that?”

“ah, well…” Sans gave the side of the cauldron a thoughtful tap, momentarily forgetting that he currently appeared to be a flesh-and-blood human who probably wouldn't touch a scalding metal surface without at least some negative reaction. “that… might have been overkill.”

From behind them, glass shattered on the stone floor as someone—stunned—dropped what they
were holding.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Do you recognize that last line? Because somebody sure did.

Hey guys, guess what? Creator29029, InformalRain01, A voice 0K, and MusicLover190 (and maybe others, or maybe some of those are the same person, I'm inferring from various reviews) are making some fan animation (fanimation?) of this story! Also, if you're interested in helping, I think they might be open to that.
Thank you all so much! If you want to watch, you can find it at the YouTube channel Creator 290 or just click this link. The video starts proper at about 30 seconds in.

I hope all you guys dealing with the icy polar vortex stay safe. I've heard that dripping cold water through your faucets helps keep the pipes from freezing. Don't know if that applies with this level of cold, but thought I'd mention it.

Man, January has felt like such a long month, for some reason. Updates are on the first of the month.
Thanks for all of the comments and kudos! I'm glad you've all been enjoying the story, and I hope you continue to do so as it goes on.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Okay, and back to other people being surprised.

His students never failed to impress, it would seem—though never in any good way. Just how the blundering pair of first years had managed to so thoroughly botch what should have been a simple cure for boils, he had no idea. The frothing, black mess in their cauldron was about as far from the pale reddish-pink of the intended potion as could be conceived by mortal man.

It was truly an astonishing accomplishment.

He withdrew a small glass vial, planning to take some of the noxious concoction to test for any unexpected side effects it might have on the people or furniture onto which it had spilled. Just in case, say, it happened to be incredibly poisonous or acidic.

Before he could collect a sample, however, he heard a strangely familiar sentence: the phrase, the cadence, the voice. He recognized it from one dark night turning blinding white, months ago.

“that… might have been overkill.”

Severus Snape froze.

The small glass vial—thankfully empty—slipped from suddenly slack fingers and cracked loudly against the floor, breaking into pieces. That unexpectedly loud noise quickly jarred him from his shock.

It took a second for him to actually identify the feeling as shock, though, purely because it happened so rarely. He was simply not used to being startled, stunned, spooked, surprised, or any similar sensation.

“Oh snap,” he heard that same impossibly familiar voice remark, recognizable now that he knew what to listen for. “that broke my concentration, how many times have i stirred this?”

“You're up to five, I think,” another voice replied—that girl, Laura Madley. More quietly, she added, “And I don't think now's the time for puns.”

A pause, then: “that was an accidental pun, i swear.”

Snape turned his head very slightly, confirming with his eyes what he had already figured out but couldn't quite accept: the voice belonged to the white-haired first year, Sans Skelton.

“Sure it was.”

The girl then noticed that not only was her professor still standing right behind them, he was looking their way. She poked her partner on the shoulder in warning, then hastily turned back to
measuring out the stewed horned slugs. He gave her a slightly confused glance, realized the nudge had been because the professor was giving them a weird look for some reason… then his eyes widened ever-so-slightly.

Realization.

Some part of Snape took that as confirmation. That it really had been Skelton there, standing by the lake months ago.

Except, of course, that a conclusion like that made absolutely no sense. The boy is only a first year student, for Merlin's sake— and barely one at that!

As much as he wanted to investigate, however, he quickly became aware of a much more pressing issue. That being that the students with the catastrophic potion were looking pretty shocked, too; staring between the bits of glass and their typically-menacing professor in openly stunned astonishment.

Which could not be allowed to continue. He had an image to maintain, after all.

“Congratulations,” Snape said, adding a disdainful sneer for good measure. His tone was positively dripping with sarcasm. “I am frankly astounded by your ability for failure. You have taken an incredibly simple assignment and managed to miss the objective so completely that you have, in fact, brewed an entirely different type of potion.”

Any hint of shock on the students' faces was immediately set aside as their previous mix of terror and anxiety returned.

“Five points from Hufflepuff, each, for your inability to follow basic instructions. I assure you, even if you had been assigned a clumsiness draught, this concoction would still have earned you a failing grade.”

A sharp flick of his wand banished the pitch-black potion: not all of it, of course, since he still needed a sample, but most of it was swallowed up by the spell. The students winced.

“You will be spending the remainder of this period copying down the instructions from the board, seeing as it would seem that I require proof that you do actually know how to read.”

One of the students quickly scrambled to get out quill and parchment, but the other boy scowled. Luckily, before he could say anything he'd be sure to regret, his partner jabbed him in the side and his mouth snapped shut. Good to know his students have some brains, at least.

Another wave of his wand lifted their cauldron into the air with a bubble charm, and it followed along behind him when he swept back to the front of the room. He directed the cauldron—which would never be used for potions again, given what looked to be permanent black stains lining the interior—to sit on his desk.

Students chastised and potentially dangerous potion contained, Snape sent a considering glance over the rest of his classroom, as if checking that the group as a whole was staying focused. The entire time, though, one particular student remained in his peripheries.

And it would seem that Skelton was subtly keeping an eye on him, too, even as he busied himself taking his cauldron of watery potion off the fire.

Snape almost didn't recognize it at first, but the boy was watching him. If he wasn't so paranoid, he probably wouldn't have noticed at all. Unlike most children, the boy didn't jerk away if he was
caught staring. Instead he would roll his eyes at something his partner said, or smoothly glance to the side, or even just squint at the board as if double checking the steps. Sometimes he didn't look away at all, unfocused gaze innocently looking off into the middle distance and only coincidentally pointed in his direction.

And Snape could have sworn that those dark eyes were rimmed with a soft glow, white in the dim light of the Potions classroom.

He shook his head slowly—such a thought was ridiculous. Maybe he really was just imagining things.

It's not as though one sentence and a similar voice made a particularly good case to claim that a short first year student who apparently struggles with potions was secretly some powerful warlock.

There was no way.

He was pulled from his musing as the bell rang, ending class. In that disorganized chaos of children rushing to wrap things up, eager for freedom, students began to quickly gather up their stuff. One member of each pair bottled a sample of their potion and dropped it off at his desk.

As he had noted earlier, Skelton's potion really wasn't very much of a potion at all: just the various ingredients drifting around in slightly pink water.

“it never really seemed to… mesh together,” he remarked, handing over the bottle with an unconcerned shrug and then taking his leave.

The boy seemed generally indifferent to the idea of handing in what is clearly a failed assignment, which is fairly odd for a Ravenclaw. Actually, he didn't seem bothered by much of anything: including the menacing aura the strict potions professor put so much effort into maintaining. Snape couldn't quite decide whether to be impressed or annoyed.

The watery mixture swirled as Snape turned the small bottle around in his hands, thinking.

In his mind, he heard those five words again. It was almost eerie, how perfectly they synced up with his memory of that night. That voice…

Snape wouldn't mention this to the headmaster. Not yet, anyway. He couldn't, given that he didn't even fully believe it himself. It was just too ridiculous, and there had to be some other explanation. The notion that the powerful figure he had seen back then was actually an eleven-year-old student was simply nonsensical. He's only a boy, after all.

Still, perhaps it wouldn't hurt to keep tabs on him.

Just in case.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Woo, a bonus chapter! That's why it's so short.
It just felt odd to have this be a part of the next chapter, so I figured I'd post it separately. Plus, February is a short month so today is actually the 29th and posting
tomorrow isn't technically late… that's my justification and I'm sticking to it!

Updates are on the first of the month. (And in this case, the second.)
Thank you so much for every review, favorite, follow, and even just taking the time to read this.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Finally Done with Day One

Chapter Summary

Glad that's over with.
Should be easier from here on in, right?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

And so ended the last class of his first—first!—day of magic school.

Suffice to say, things hadn't gone as smoothly as he would have liked. By any means, really. At this point, all Sans had to say on the matter was that he was glad it was over with.

For now.

What a pleasant thought.

He hadn't even been to all of his classes—in fact, he hadn't yet read through his full schedule. All he knew was that the class taught by Fake-Eye Moody was still in his future, which he was not looking forward to taking. Hopefully whatever classes he still had went better than this first set.

Or at least better than Potions.

Please.

Sans was moving with the crowd of students through the castle halls, but if he hadn't been surrounded by witnesses he probably would have stopped to bang his head against the wall. Of all the classes he had made dumb mistakes in today, Potions was undoubtedly the one he'd messed up most.

And he hadn't even done anything.

Kinda.

One sentence, that was all it had taken. Five words he'd said once before, and bam—the professor was all suspicious and scowl-y. Repeating lines had been such second nature back in the Underground that it had actually taken Sans a moment to figure out what was worth frowning about.

So great. Most of the secret would probably hold simply because of how implausibly farfetched the truth actually was: dimensional travel into the past likely wouldn't be anyone's first explanation. Yet here he was, having managed to accidentally halfway out himself to the one person in the whole school who had any pieces of the puzzle and therefore might actually have a chance to figure things out.

Good going, Sans.

At which point he had, of course, CHECKED his gloomy professor to get a better read of the man.
What he found was… a bit odd, to be honest.

Professor Snape was at a solid LV4, which certainly wasn't good news; it meant that he had purposefully killed before. But while he had the attack and defense to match, he had only 22 HP. That's quite a bit lower than expected, given the level.

To be very brief, HP represents hope. A bit cheesy and poetic, but true nonetheless. It is how far somebody can push themselves—how far they are willing to go—before breaking. That definition isn't a perfect measure, obviously (as evidenced by, say, Sans himself), but it generally served well enough.

Murder is essentially asserting one's own life over another in the most fundamental way possible, hence why higher LV generally means higher HP. Raising max HP without butchery is tricky, since that's basically finding new strong motivators in life: more reasons to live.

But there are a number of reasons why max HP would drop.

Two of the most effective, Sans knew, were guilt and regret.

Which painted a rather interesting picture of the dour potions professor, to be sure: observant and introspective, yes, but also willing to kill for what he believes is right. With a sigh, Sans realized that he would need to consider future interactions with him very carefully.

But he'd get around to that later.

As for the revelatory mistakes he had made in his other classes, well. Having a misstep in three out of four classes was a rather dismal performance, so it would seem that he was badly out of practice when it came to laying low.

Although, to be fair, he was pretty sure that the skillset needed for this undercover gig differed quite a bit from his last secret-keeping venture in the Underground. Back then he had only ever really needed to fool one person—or perhaps three-ish people, depending on how you counted. Anybody else who might accidentally find out something would eventually un-find-out whatever it had been, after all.

Still, he had always been careful to keep the timeline-reset part of the whole thing completely under wraps. As the saying goes, three people can keep a secret if two of them are dead.

He chuckled to himself, darkly amused at just how fitting that particular idiom was given the situation between a certain child, flower, and phantom. Though in that case, the two dead didn't exactly stay that way.

“Sans?”

He blinked, refocusing on where (and when) he was. “what's up?”

“Are you alright?” Laura, who had been walking with him in companionable silence, seemed worried. “You looked… kinda sad, for some reason. But also angry?”

Not used to being read so easily, Sans didn't reply for a second. Humans tended to have difficulty reading emotion off a skull, and while his was more expressive than most, he still didn't exactly have the most emotive face… A lock of white hair fell into his line of sight.

Oh. Right.
Actually *having* a face now probably made things a bit easier. Shoulda realized that earlier, probably.

“Sorry if I'm prying, I was just—”

He waved it off. “no big, i was just thinking about stuff.”

Laura still looked concerned, but decided not to press for more answers. “I'm so glad today is over,” she said, changing the topic. “But at least it wasn't as bad as I thought it'd be.”

“wasn't it just,” Sans said, tone flat.

She had a funny sort of grimace-grin on her face, as if she was sorry for having brought it up but still amused by it in general. “Right, your day *has* been a bit more exciting than mine, hasn't it? Did you really get in trouble with Professor McGonagall?”

“how—” He cut himself off, choosing a better question. “who even told you that? we've been in class this whole time.”

“I overheard some of the other Ravenclaws talking about how to midy- uh…” Laura was unfamiliar with the word, and looked to him for help. “Minigate?”

“probably 'mitigate',” Sans supplied.

“Yeah, that.” She nodded. “Mitigate your point losses. Which I think means they want to keep you from losing more or something, right?”

“or make those losses matter less.” With a shrug, he added, “but to answer your question—no, i only kinda got in trouble.”

“Kinda?”

He briefly debated if he should tell her at all, then decided that the rumor mill was going to get ahold of it eventually whether he wanted it to or not. “she says she wants to hold extra lessons with me to help with control.”

Her eyes lit up. “Seriously?! That's amazing!”

“it is?”

“Yes!”

Sans gave a noncommittal hum, though he could somewhat understand where she was coming from; if nothing else, it'd give him time to ask more specific questions about magical mechanics. So at least the additional lessons promised to be more interesting than the usual classes.

It was pretty clear that the excitement of the day had significantly more to do with his sudden inability to avoid drawing unwanted attention to himself and very little to do with the content of the lectures he'd sat through. Lectures had never worked well for him anyway; reading through the material just always seemed like a better option.

He'd done a lot of reading over the summer, taking time between naps to learn more about his new reality.

Back in the Underground, reading had helped keep him sane. It was something he could enjoy in spite of resets and undone-time crap, since all he needed to do was remember the page number
where he had left off and he could actually make progress on something.

Besides his reading habits, however, boring course content was honestly to be expected: plopping somebody who essentially has a PhD in a magical engineering field back into starter high school doesn't result in the most engaging learning experience. Especially when the professors generally didn't seem concerned with how the magic worked, just how to make it work; that's the difference between tossing a ball into the air and knowing it would fall back down, and figuring out why.

After that long thoughtful pause, he finally said, “well, at least i’ll get a chance to ask all the questions i could want.”

“You're such a Ravenclaw,” Laura said, chuckling.

“am i?”

She nodded and, somehow managing to not sound at all judge-y, stated simply, “I bet you spent all summer reading books, didn't you.”

Alright, so that's true. Still.

“bold of you to think i'm in this house for any reason beyond how good i look in blue.” He flipped his poorly tied blue tie over his shoulder, as if that was the fashionable thing to do.

That actually got her to laugh out loud and Sans grinned to himself, pleased: there's really nothing better than a well-delivered joke.

As they continued through the halls, sometimes chatting and sometimes just walking together in silence, Sans became aware of just how tired he was. It had been a long day, to say the least, and full of new experiences. He'd had precious few of those before this entire trans-dimensional situation began. Even though the actual material being taught was fairly boring at the moment, just being present and participating was already plenty of excitement—almost too much, really.

He was pretty exhausted.

On that thought, maybe he should just skip dinner altogether. Just duck out of the crowd of students heading for the Great Hall and the promise of food in favor of curling up in a ball of blankets. Then at least he wouldn't need to deal with inconvenient questions or curious ghosts or… well, just people (alive and less-so) in general.

Which wasn't to say that Laura was annoying, or that he didn't want to chat with Luna about whatever topic might take her fancy—not to mention seeing Harry, Ron, Hermione, and dog-mode Sirius… But the past day had been spent around more people than most of the rest of his life, and as such he felt that he was overdue for a nice nap.

It was a good plan, Sans decided.

They became aware of angry-sounding voices up ahead, though they couldn't quite make out what was actually being said. The voices were familiar, though, which was a bit worrying.

The two of them rounded the corner—

Just in time to immediately need to dodge a flare of white-hot spell fire.

Which Sans did, easily.
Laura was not so lucky.

The spell had caught her on the top of her head, and her hair swiftly caught fire. It spread frighteningly quickly, down her braid and onto her robes. She shrieked, a terrible mix of fear and pain, frantically trying to beat out the flames.

The student who had cast the spell—the snooty one from the train yesterday, Malfoy or whatever—had an expression of shocked horror on his pale face.

Sans ignored him.

He needed to do something.

He needed water.

There was a lake outside.

Teleporting there would be impossible to explain.

Going the other direction, however…

Instantly, a hole in reality opened directly over her head and cold water flooded out: the other end of the shortcut was in the lake itself. The fire was completely doused, as was anybody standing in the unexpected splash zone. A few fish flopped about on the floor, completely disoriented, until Sans swiftly sent them back to the lake.

Water would be hard enough to explain as-is.

This all happened within a span of five seconds, leaving Laura grateful but also a very soaked and confused as to what had just happened. Her knees folded under her, and she abruptly sat with a splash.

“How did— What—”

With that dealt with, Sans spun back around to give that reckless jinx-flinging prick a piece of his mind.

And instead he saw Fake-Eye Moody—no idea when he had shown up—magically tossing a white ferret ten feet into the air and letting it fall back against the floor. The snooty boy who had cast the spell was nowhere to be seen, so he had to assume that he had actually been turned into that ferret.

On closer inspection, he could feel the magic keeping the form twisted from boy to animal. He didn't take a shot at undoing it himself for various reasons.

But seriously. Turned into a ferret.

Sans decided that his patience for this day was well and truly bone-dry at the moment.

“—attacking when your opponent's back is turned,” the imposter-professor was saying, voice a low growl. The ferret was tossed higher and higher, squeaking in pain. “Cowardly, scummy thing to do…”

Make no mistake, Sans was no stranger to flinging evil children through the air every now and then. And he did feel that Malfoy needed some serious disciplining: throwing around spells like that definitely warranted a punishment of some kind.
Still, this just seemed… excessive.

Even Laura—singed and missing a good chuck of hair—was watching the flung ferret with wide eyes, wincing with each landing.

“okay, i think that's enough,” Sans said, walking forward.

He noticed three familiar students and a dog standing a little separate from the rest of the spectating crowd, and couldn't help but groan. They must have been the other half to that argument he had heard earlier.

Stars above, he really needed a nap.

“Never— do— that— again—” Moody was still throwing the ferret into the air, punctuating each drop back to the stone floor with a snarled word.

“heya, prof,” he called, drawing attention to himself as he approached. “think you could stop tossing that poor kid around and, oh, i dunno, get my friend to the infirmary?”

Looking past him, Hermione spotted Laura and her burnt clothes and the water and quickly surmised at least some of what must have happened: she'd question where the water came from later. At the moment, though, she immediately rushed over to her, checking her over and even draping her own outer robe over the now lightly shivering girl. Laura was absolutely soaked, and the perpetual chill of the castle air was not doing her any favors.

Sans kept his eyes on Moody. “you have weird priorities, you know that?”

The transfigured student was caught mid-air, dangling like a fluffy limp noodle. Fake-Eye Moody spared Sans a quick glance with that crazy blue eye of his, then froze. Frowned, and then both his natural and magical eye zeroed in on him with intensity.

Whatever the magic eye saw, Moody didn't actually remark on it. Though he didn't really have a chance to remark on it either, as at that moment Professor McGonagall came down the staircase with her arms full of books.

She paused, taking in the chaotic scene.

“What is going on here?”

“Hello, Professor McGonagall,” greeted Moody, and a twitch of his wand gave the floating ferret another harsh shake.

Her eyes tracked the poor animal through the air. “What are you doing?”

“Teaching,” replied Moody, unconcerned.

“could you stop him, please?” Sans asked. “this lesson is in bad taste.”

She processed that for a moment, then gasped. “Moody, is that a student?!?”

With a glance between her and the kid-turned-animal in question, the imposter professor glibly replied, “Technically it's a ferret.”

“No!” She immediately dropped her books, running down the stairs and drawing her wand. A sharp crack of magic later, and a bruised and embarrassed Malfoy reappeared, slumped in a heap on the stone floor. The kid looked more worse for wear than Laura, and she had literally just been
on fire.

Because of Malfoy himself, true, but the point still stands.

As the professors got into a heated debate on the merits of shifting the shape of their students, Sans crouched down in front of the ex-ferret.

“i take it you didn't listen to my advice,” he said. Under his glamour, his eye sockets were completely empty—it made the eyes of the illusion look cold and dead.

Malfoy shivered, but didn't back down. “Who are you to tell me what to do?”

“good point.” Sans closed his eyes for a moment. “i suppose in this situation, i'm a friend to the girl you caught on fire.”

He actually winced at that, and his gaze darted over to her. That was enough to tell Sans that he hadn't meant to hit her—he probably hadn't meant to hit anyone. The kid might be a jerk and a bully, but he hadn't reached the point of willingly setting people on fire. So he's got that going for him, at least.

Sans straightened again, stretched, and then he held out a hand to help the other boy up. When he didn't take the offer—because of course he didn't—the skeleton dropped the blue magic he had used around his hand to temporarily fill-in the glamour.

“anyway, i have another bit of advice for you.”

Malfoy pulled himself to his feet, unsteady, and glared at him. When he replied, it was more statement than question. “Do you now.”

“yeah.” He stuffed his hands into his pockets. “you should apologize to her.”

The Slytherin actually looked stunned for a second, then his expression flashed through a very twisty mix of aversion, affront, and—briefly—agreement.

Sans nodded to himself, then headed back to where Hermione was helping Laura to stand. The golden retriever with them looked like he was trying to help too, but he really wasn't contributing much. Harry and Ron were apparently still explaining their version of events to the professors.

“hey hermione, hey paddy,” he said with a tried yawn.

“Hello,” she greeted. “I'm going to take her to the infirmary.”

Sirius barked.

Sans would have offered to help, but if he was to support somebody as they walked he also would have needed to fill out his whole arm and shoulder with blue magic the whole time in order to do so. Luckily, it seemed that Laura only really needed help getting back upright. She was a little unsteady as she walked, but mostly fine.

So: “if you don't need me…” He yawned again. “i'm gonna go sleep somewhere.”

“What?” Hermione asked, worried. She knew he hadn't had lunch—though she also knew that Sirius had taken it upon himself to deliver his friend some food. Still.

Then, when Sirius growl-barked at him, she rightly interpreted that to mean that he hadn't eaten much.
“Shouldn't you get some dinner first?”

“nah, it's fine.”

He turned and headed toward a random door, opening it to reveal a mostly-empty broom closet. There was nobody inside, so it would work nicely. Not that he was going to sleep there, though it should be mentioned that he wouldn't be above doing that.

“welp. 'night.”

And he stepped inside, closing the door behind him.

Hermione opened it a second later, but he was already gone.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Hey, so, know how I said the chapter yesterday was half of the regular update? Turns out it was a bonus chapter, since this part really got away from me and is a full ~3,000 word update.
I'm sure you don't mind.

Also, more fanart!

A reader named pundertaleundertale drew a picture of Sans, Sirius, and Lupin all standing together being their typical selves. Thank you for drawing it, because it's amazing, and I love it! Sans is so short, it's positively fabulous! The fun gang's in town, so watch out everybody else.
You can see it at this link.

Agent 3 Novi has drawn another great picture too, and it's super adorable! Sans's expression is the best, I swear. It's fantastic, thank you so much!
It's at this link.

Updates are on the first of the month.
Thanks for all of the kudos and comments! We had actually just passed 1,234 reviews over on ff.net, and I've just noticed that here we have 234 bookmarks! What a great coincidence.
Again, thanks for all the comments. I read them all (though I reply unreliably), and hearing how much you've been enjoying the story is amazing. I can't thank you enough for taking the time to read this!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
In which a skeleton naps at all of the most comfortable spots.

After his vanishing act, Sans had slept. Not in his fourposter bed in the Ravenclaw dorm though, that would just be ridiculous. But he did stop by there, very briefly, to do a few things like, say, kicking off his shoes and dropping off his still-kind-of-too-large outer robe. Wearing his much more comfortable hoodie only—instead of both robe and jacket, because that's what he had been doing, naturally—was completely worth the detour.

Of course, he also stuffed a pillow under the blanket as a dummy and summoned up a bone for Sirius. Not as a snack, of course, though the question of whether his magic could be eaten is kinda interesting… but that's beside the point. The bone was meant more as a message for his friend to not wait up for him.

His effort to avoid the dorm isn't to say his bed isn't comfortable—because it really is—but more that he wanted some space.

Literally.

He yawned and stretched, one arm rattling lightly against cold stone while the other ended up dangling over a great deal of empty air. Which is to be expected, given he had chosen to sleep on top of a small piece of decorative masonry that just so happened to be part of the roof of the tallest tower at Hogwarts.

It was peaceful up there, quiet with nothing but the comfort of a wide-open sky overhead.

A sky filled with stars.

There were no entirely familiar constellations, though honestly the fact that most come remarkably close is simultaneously fascinating, strange, and deeply unsettling. Seeing an extra star in an arrangement or noticing that one is just missing… it sparks an abrupt sense of being in the wrong place.

Or maybe dreaming.

He knew he wasn't.

But sometimes, with only the small lights in the sky for company, he let himself forget.

It was kind of like a trick he had used before, underground, when he would sit back in his sentry station and stare up at the glimmering stones. Back then he pretended that rocks were stars.
Now he pretends that stars are the *right* stars.

Go figure.

He was maybe halfway to dozing off again when he became aware of quiet noises—murmuring voices and the sounds of metal on stone.

“I can't believe they've got us up here on our *first day back,*” came one noisy grumble.

“Well…” replied another speaker, “I mean, it's already past midnight, so technically…”

There was a startlingly loud clatter as something was set down none too gently. “I haven’t gone to sleep yet, it still counts as today.”

While he could just ignore whatever was going on and fall back asleep—he had napped in louder places, after all—Sans was curious enough to roll over and crawl to the edge of the roof for more direct eavesdropping.

There were ten or so students on the balcony below, all putting together tripods and adjusting knobs and generally getting ready for the class that gave this tall tower its name: astronomy.

“You chose to be here, Mr. Challock,” the professor pointed out, tone strict but clearly amused. “I hope you realize you'll be expected to be here *every* Friday?”

The student in question groaned, already exhausted by the thought. A majority of the class clearly agreed with that sentiment—students from every house united in shared tiredness—but they pressed on and continued setting up their telescopes anyway.

And one in particular was very familiar.

One Cassius Warrington was getting set up at the far end of the balcony, fiddling with the eyepiece and apparently trying to clean it with the end of his tie. The two other students with green trim on their robes were standing with him.

Then there was a pretty noticeable gap, as the rest of the students—red, yellow, and blue—were clustered together at the opposite side. They were still vaguely grouped by color, but certainly nothing as distinct as the split from the greens.

When class actually started, Sans found it to be an odd mix of boring and interesting. The professor apparently wouldn't be covering anything about what the stars actually were—nothing about nebulae or supernovae or anything cool like that—but it was still kind of neat to hear about their paths through the sky and how that would affect particular magics.

Having lived underground for essentially his entire life, under a sky of stone and false stars, that wasn't something he had ever really considered.

Other than that, though, it would seem that the class was mostly about naming the different celestial bodies and filling out blank star charts. Which he thought sounded incredibly boring, even if stargazing was always enjoyable. It reminded him of something Frisk had mentioned, ages ago, where they would watch a film in class but have to fill out a worksheet about it after; it just sucks out all the fun.

He propped his head up on one hand, briefly sending a contemplative look to the sky above. Out here in the middle of nowhere, with only a few lights from the castle itself and a few specks from what he guessed to be a small village nearby, there were truly an uncountable number of stars.
A noise brought his attention back down to Earth—or more accurately, to the students below—where Cassius was frantically steadying his teetering telescope.

Then the student turned his attention back to the roof, directly where a grinning Sans lay watching.

It seems he had been spotted.

The Slytherin squinted slightly, closed his eyes briefly, shook his head, and squinted at him again. It was as if he wasn't sure if there was actually a first year student peering down at him from the masonry, or if perhaps it was just a peculiar gargoyle.

But there was no gargoyle, there was only Sans.

Who, upon noticing that he'd been caught, naturally gave the poor confounded student a cheeky wave, followed by a pair of finger guns. The second gesture was met with the same kind of confused affront as it had at the sorting the day before, which was very amusing.

It was plain that Cassius had some trouble focusing on his classwork after finding the secret observer on the rooftop.

The professor did notice his wavering attention, though luckily she seemed to attribute it more to the late hour than anything else. An assumption based on the fact that, sure enough, around this time a lot of the students began flagging: genuinely due to exhaustion and not plain distraction. When one basically fell asleep standing up, nearly tipping over and falling off the tower altogether, she decided that it was about time to wrap things up.

“Alright everybody,” the professor finally called, clapping her hands to get their attention. “We'll call it a night here. Go get some sleep, and make sure you've plotted all the planets on your charts by next week.”

Her announcement was met with murmured noises of relief, and clatters as the students began folding away their telescopes. Cassius, however, glanced to the roof and hesitated.

After the rest of the students had already made their escape, he still stood there by his telescope. Even the professor was halfway out the door, one hand holding it open, before pausing to send her student an understanding smile. In fact, assuming Sans was interpreting her expression correctly, she probably had a bit of a soft spot for Cassius; he got the impression that the Slytherin student often stayed behind after this class, or maybe helped her set things up before lessons sometimes.

“You're welcome to stay, Mr. Warrington,” she said, essentially confirming those suspicions.

“Thank you, Professor Sinistra,” Cassius replied, and he—very slightly—returned the smile.

It seemed a tad uncertain, as if he wasn't used to the happy expression and it couldn't quite settle on his face. Even the professor seemed momentarily surprised, though she recovered swiftly. Then, with a nod goodbye and good night, Professor Sinistra left.

Sans took a moment to appreciate the cool-ness of her name. Though it did sound a bit more suited to a super villain or demon lord—like in the anime Alphys obsessed with—rather than somebody in charge of teaching children.

As soon as the door shut behind her, Cassius said, “What do you want?”

Sans stood with a shrug, nonchalantly stuffing in his hands into his pockets. Then he took one step
forward, remaining perfectly upright as he slid down from the steep roof. His feet made soft clack noises against the regularly spaced roof tiles, the blunt sound thankfully muffled slightly by his thick socks.

With a little hop at the gutter and some blue magic to control his speed and trajectory, Sans landed lightly on the stone tiling of the balcony.

“fancy meeting you here.”

His voice was clipped and maybe a little stressed when he repeated, “What do you want?”

“me?” Sans just shrugged again. “i was just sleeping, minding my own business, and it turns out there was gonna be a class up here. who'da thunk?”

“You were sleeping…”

“yep.”

“…On the roof of the Astronomy Tower.”

Sans paused, acting as if he was thoroughly considering his answer, before simply replying, “yep.”

There was a moment of silence. A chill night breeze made the human shiver slightly, though the only effect it had on the disguised skeleton was to gently tousle his illusory white hair. Cassius closed his eyes; letting those one-word answers sink in.

Then he just turned away, carefully distracting himself by taking down his telescope and putting away his other school things.

“so… how’ve you been?”

Cassius didn't reply at first, instead going around his telescope case and flicking the various clasps shut. The last latched with a definitive click, and he pushed himself upright.

“Actually, right now?— I'm tired.” He paused, trying not to yawn and ultimately failing. Then he jabbed his finger at the grinning first-year. “We will continue this conversation tomorrow, when it's not past midnight, and I'm not all but dead on my feet. Got it?”

Sans just shrugged, not particularly bothered. “sounds good to me;” he replied, walking to the edge and hopping up onto the short stone wall that ringed the balcony.

Cassius watched him with a slight frown, concern written across his face. “Could you come—”

“welp, see ya later!” Sans said cheerily, and stepped off into thin air.

He vanished into a shortcut as soon as he fell out of sight, though he did catch a glimpse of a suddenly much more awake Cassius rushing to the edge after him. Maybe choosing that particular exit strategy had been a bit mean, but the mixed expression of relief-annoyance-confusion on the kid's face when he looked over the edge to find nothing was totally worth it.
The following day, as promised, Cassius tracked down the enigmatic definitely-not-an-average-first-year to get some answers. He found him dozing in the middle of one of the upper courtyards, curled up at the base of a decorative statue so worn that it was impossible to make out any distinctive features. Plants had overgrown the base, keeping the snoozing student a bit hidden from view by leafy bushes and vines.

At least it was a better place to nap than the bloody rooftop.

A quick glance assured him that the coast was as clear as it was likely to get—this courtyard might not see a lot of traffic, but there was still some. There was a golden retriever sniffing around at the other side of the courtyard, but a dog wouldn't be a problematic witness.

So Cassius took a breath, and he made his move.

“Don’t do that again,” he hissed.

The mystery boy—named 'Skelton', he reminded himself—cracked open an eye at his approach. “oh, hey. it’s you.” Then he grinned. “don’t do what?”

“Don’t just walk off—” Cassius stopped himself before he finished the sentence, noticing that his voice had gotten louder with each word. He took a breath, reset his volume to less than a whisper, and finished, “Don’t just walk off the edge of a tower and fall to your apparent death, you dolt.”

“aw, i didn't know you cared.”

“I can't ask questions to a dead man,” he hedged.

The cheeky grin that garnered in response—as if Skelton was laughing at some secret joke—made him scowl slightly.

“On that subject,” Cassius pressed on, crossing his arms, “it seems to me that you have some free time right now, and you owe me answers. Humor me for a while.”

That one open eye stared at him for a long moment, unblinking. Then, with a huge yawn, the first-year stretched and sat up. “i guess i could do that.”

Cassius was skeptical, certainly not trusting that easy concession, and his eyes narrowed with suspicion.

Picking up on that, Skelton just grinned. “i have a couple of stand-up acts that are pretty good. what kinda jokes you lookin' for?”

Which was more in line with what he had expected, to be perfectly honest, and he found himself relaxing slightly. “We both know that's not what I meant, Skelton.”

“eh, worth a shot.” He shrugged. “so, questions?”

The Slytherin glanced around, checking the courtyard and finding it lacking in terms of maintaining secrecy. After a look of his own—spotting a few curious students eyeing them as they walked past—Skelton seemed to agree.

This was always the problem when it came to scheming while in school: really, the only issue was that the whole school was full of students and professors and also ghosts and even the paintings, and they all might be inclined to spread rumors. Even the castle walls might be enchanted to report suspicious dealings to the headmaster, which wasn't a risk either of them were willing to take.
Clearly Skelton had more secrets than one can wave a wand at—being the mysterious defender at the Quidditch World Cup, plus who knows what else. Cassius personally wanted his own unwilling actions at that attack, as well as his newfound freedom, buried deep. He couldn't let anybody know what had happened; if word got to his parents that the Imperius was no longer in effect, they would surely trap him under it again.

So, while the courtyard was quiet and didn't get too much traffic, it was not nearly safe enough.

Skelton got up and pushed his way through the plants surrounding the statue he had been napping under, becoming basically covered in leaves in the process.

“let's walk,” he said, dusting himself off but missing most of the stray plant-bits. “i know a great spot for an interrogation.”

“Really.” Cassius was not convinced—while this first year student might be more than he seems, this was still only his third day in the castle. “Where?”

“oh, that info's strictly need-to-know.”

Before he could reply, a dog suddenly joined the conversation. Tail wagging, the golden retriever barked and bounced between the them both, apparently very happy about the idea of going for a walk. Very, very happy about it… too happy, almost.

The Slytherin couldn't quite pin-down why, but all that energy felt like forced cheer. It was as if the dog was specifically keeping himself there in the middle: protectively separating his person from a possible threat, but disguising those actions as excitement for some reason.

Cassius shook his head, chiding himself for being overly paranoid. It’s just a dog, after all.

The dog gave a small woof, ears lopsidedly raised in question.

“calm down, paddy,” Skelton said, waving away the barks as he turned and began leading the way to some unspecified place. “it's fine. you can come too.”

That unspecified place—apparently so secret that its location shouldn't be carelessly shared—turned out to be an abandoned classroom. All the desks and chairs had been shoved to one side in a haphazard mess, and some of them even appeared to be broken or damaged in some way.

Skelton shut the door behind them with an air of finality.

Then, voice heavy with what was probably mock solemnity, he asked, “are you ready?”

“…Ready for what?”

“this is your last chance to turn back,” he continued, answering nothing. “are you ready to go?”

Even though he knew—or was at least fairly sure—that the short student was just pretending to be so serious, he was still somewhat unsettled. The dog wasn't helping, since it had sat down and was now just smugly watching.

“Go where?” Cassius asked, frowning. He glanced around the empty classroom, but the only other door just led into an old unused office space. “Is this not our destination?”

“oh, i had somewhere a bit sunnier in mind.”

“What? Then why did we—”
The golden retriever barked happily, cutting him off, and he shot him a quick glare.

“Alright then, let's go!”

“Wait, honestly, wha—”

And as abruptly as it had happened to him nearly a week and a half ago, Cassius felt the ground drop out from under him and fell through the floor.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own *Harry Potter* or *Undertale*.

So, uh, happy April Fool's Day? I tricked you with this… normal chapter, I guess? It's not super exciting so, uh, gotcha…? Man, I got too much school stuff to think about pranks. Like, c'mon the universe, you used to be cool! Yeah, but seriously, I have essentially five weeks of classes left before graduation. Hoh snap, guys. It's gonna be a wild ride!

Oh, and another shout-out to Creator 290 and company over on YouTube, since they've just posted another fan video for this story! It has some of the panels from DangerPuff's great comic, and some cool animation scenes and stuff. Just, go check it out if you've got a bit of spare time!

Updates are on the first of the month.
As always, I can't thank you all enough for all of the comments and kudos!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
The world had shifted from an empty classroom to an empty field in less time than it took to blink, which was quite dizzying, but Skelton landed neatly on the grass as if nothing had changed at all. Even the dog seemed unbothered by the abrupt scene change, his tail wagging with amusement and ears at an angle that was probably the canine equivalent of honest schadenfreude-based camaraderie.

Basically, the dog looked like it was appreciating how everything's funny as long as it's happening to someone else. Which seemed distinctly not-dog-like, but Cassius had other things to think about at the moment so he just set that oddness aside.

Standing up from the ungainly sprawl his unexpected trip had knocked him into and dusting himself off, Cassius attempted to recover whatever dignity he might have left.

“That's twice you've done that now,” he groused, straightening his green tie and brushing his hair out of his eyes. Whatever 'that' even is: it couldn't have been a Portkey, and it certainly wasn't typical Apparition. That much was blatantly clear.

“You had a better landing this time, good on you.”

“That is not the issue.”

Unrepentant, Skelton stuffed his hands into the pockets of the blue muggle hoodie he was—for some reason—wearing under his school robe. “right, right, the issue is that we have a conversation to continue. whatcha' wanna talk about, anyway?”

The dog sat itself between them, ready to watch over whatever might happen next.

And Cassius paused. He had questions lined up—he'd planned for this, in as much as he could—but right now, the only thing he could think to say was, “…Why is your pet dog wearing a bowtie?”

He could smack himself for that, it was the most useless question he could have possibly asked. It didn't matter that the smug golden retriever did indeed have a small blue bowtie tied neatly around its furry neck, sitting just above its collar; that was still an inane thing to ask about.

“well first of all, he's more of a friend than a pet,” he said with a shrug. “provides emotional support and all that garbage.”

The dog gave a cheery bark, tail thumping once against the dirt in agreement.

Then Skelton got an odd gleam in his eye, as if some spectacular idea (read: crazy tomfoolery) had
just struck. “and second of all, it just matches his hat so well!”

“His—?”

With a flourish, the first-year pulled out an absurdly large floppy hat from behind his back—it couldn't possibly have been there the whole time, what?—and dropped it right onto the dog's unsuspecting head. As all dogs do when suddenly robbed of sight, the golden retriever froze in place for nearly a full three seconds. But then, in a very un-canine move, it lifted a paw to push up the brim of the hat and gave Skelton an annoyed glare.

“yeah? what ya gonna do about it, paddy?”

A huff, and a petulant woof.

“that's why i got you the hat, obviously. i think it'd be fine.”

The dog frowned thoughtfully—he hadn't know dogs could frown, let alone thoughtfully—then sent the stunned Slytherin a considering glance and another peevish bark.

“that's up to you, isn't it?” Skelton shrugged, grin unreadable. “but for what it's worth, i did CHECK him. he's clear.”

Cassius glanced between the apparent conversation going on, becoming progressively more confused with every second. He was trying to appear impassive to the whole situation, but even with all his experience keeping his thoughts off his face, he wasn't sure how well he was managing it.

“What are you even talking about, Skelton?”

The white-haired boy blinked at him. “right, you called me that earlier too…” he mused, half to himself. “i'd rather you call me by my name, ki… cass.”

He had almost said something else there, Cassius was sure of it, even if whatever he was going to say had been cut off so quickly that it was hard to guess what it could have been. So it became just another odd thing to file away for later.

“I am calling you by name.”

There was no quick response to that, and Skelton simply grinned at him.

“…That is your name, isn't it?”

“in a manner of speaking.” He tilted his head to one side, brow raised, and added, “i mean, it's the one on all the paperwork, so…”

With the one thing he had known about first-year thrown into question, his patience didn't so much run thin as run off. Cassius stuttered, “Then, so, wait— Who even are you?”

Apparently-not-Skelton feigned affront with a dramatic gasp. “we've already done introductions, didja forget my name already?”

“But you literally just said—”

“it's just sans,” he cut in, and shrugged as if what he was saying wasn't unbelievable. “i didn't have a last name, so i made it up.”
“You… don't have a family name?”

Skelton—or rather, 'just' Sans—looked oddly thoughtful, dark eyes focused on nothing in particular in a way that probably meant he was going through old memories. “eh, not really. i guess, technically speaking, i coulda used his last name…” He shook his head slightly, and his expression was hard to describe: like regret and relief and guilt and so much more rolled into one. “nah. just doesn't feel right.”

Cassius would have tried to figure out what that was supposed to mean, but his mind had sort of stuttered to a halt and fixated on how apparently Sans had just given up his family name. He actually had to briefly turn away to catch a second to think because… well, family is important: through prestige, power, and bloodline, the family name ties people together with chains heavier than iron could ever be.

One does not simply give up their name.

If only it were that easy.

Because not having a name—or giving it up—meant having a family that no longer claimed you. It meant leaving family behind, even if they still cared. Even if he still cared.

It meant being left behind, and being the only one his little sister could go to for help.

It meant losing a brother, who had been the only person he could go to.

Cassius shook his head, trying to throw off thoughts of his older sibling and not quite being able to. Across from him, Sans was still lost in thought—still looking sad and guilty.

And something clicked.

He didn't know why he said it: “You left someone behind.”

Sans immediately refocused on him, and for a split second it was as if his eyes had inverted: glowing white pupils in an expanse of black. Then he blinked, and it was gone.

But he was still glaring. “there was nothing i could do.”

His hand instinctively twitched toward his wand, remembering flashes of spell fire and deadly green streaking away at an abrupt angle. The Imperio had left most of his memories of the attack on the Quidditch World Cup oddly washed out and distant, almost like watching one of those muggle films, but he knew what had happened that night.

Before he could say anything, the dog asserted itself between them. It was awkwardly waddling on its hind legs, which was already ridiculous enough to completely derail any budding argument, but the dog also had its front paws held up in a placating gesture.

Cassius was about to chastise himself again for projecting a human-like attitude on the admittedly not very dog-like golden retriever, when he noticed that the dog was… suddenly not a dog. Instead there was now a man standing there, curly brown hair poking out from under his huge floppy hat and overall dressed in outrageously clashing colorful robes.

And he still had on the blue bowtie he had been wearing as a dog.

Cassius all but felt his brain flatline.
“Let's calm down, everyone,” the man said, hands raised just as the dog's paws had been. “Don't be hasty, you know what they say about assumptions: when you assume, you make an—”

“okay, yeah, i've heard that one,” Sans said. Still looking a bit grouchy, but at least he wasn't glaring anymore. “don't make an 'assume' of yourself, pat.”

“Excuse me,” Cassius found his voice, “but what.”

The overly colorful wizard turned to him with a grin and swept into a dramatic bow, though he kept his ridiculous hat on. “Name's Patrick Pawdy,” he introduced himself. “You can call me Mr. Pawdy.”

“…And you were the dog.”

“I was the dog,” he confirmed, sounding annoyingly pleased—amused at all the confusion he had just set loose, no doubt. His expression was easy to read.

Cassius took a deep breath, scrubbing a hand through his blond hair and not even caring if the action mussed it up entirely. Now was clearly not a time to worry about his appearance, and more a time to focus on retaining at least some semblance of understanding for the whole situation.

Honestly, going into this he had very little idea what to expect, and yet somehow his expectations had still been entirely flipped around and around in mere minutes.

“He was the dog,” he repeated to himself quietly, thinking through the ramifications of the fact that there was an undercover canine at school. “Who else knows?”

The two shared a look, which clearly meant that more people were aware.

“I bet it's Potter,” Cassius grumbled to himself, waiting for them to decide what to tell him. “He seems to be in the middle of every catastrophe on campus, and you two probably qualify.”

“a cat-astrophe?” Sans gasped, and his earlier anger seemed to have been entirely set aside in favor of joking disbelief. “i'm shocked you'd say that, he's clearly a dog.”

The no-longer-a-dog Mr. Pawdy shook his head. “No, no, he does have a point. We're—” The man paused, only just processing all of what had been said. Before he could think better of it he blurted out, “Wait a second, you know Harry?”

Which essentially confirmed his intended-to-be-sarcastic remark, and made Cassius just about throw his hands into the air in disbelief.

“I know of Harry,” he answered. “Mostly through rumors and seeing him across the Quidditch pitch. It's not as though I'm in any kind of position that would enable us to have actually met, obviously.”

The colorful wizard looked interested in spite of himself. “So you like Quidditch?”

“I play Quidditch. 'Like' has little to do with it.”

“speaking of,” Sans stepped in, “how's freedom been treatin' ya?”

“…Freedom?”

Cassius frowned slightly, looking between the two in slight confusion that slowly turned to realization as Sans remained silent. “You… didn't tell him?”
He shrugged, unbothered even by his colorful companion's increasingly interested stare. “we made a deal, didn't we?”

“What didn't you tell me?”

The attack had only been a week ago, of course Cassius remembered the deal: mutual silence. He wasn't sure why, but he had just sort of automatically assumed that it had been an empty promise. After all, it's not as though being found out as the person who stopped a terrorist attack and saved dozens of lives would have the same level of repercussions as being outed as a Death Eater. Willing or not.

“What does he know?” Cassius asked.

Starting to sound a bit ticked, the man exclaimed, “What don't I know?!”

“he knows that i ran into you during the whole quidditch fiasco.”

The colorful wizard was puffed up like some kind of affronted peacock, peeved at being ignored. “Sans, are you doing that thing where you pretend something isn't a big deal, but it really is?”

Hands still in his pockets, Sans hummed noncommittally.

“You are!” Mr. Pawdy smacked a hand to his forehead, sighed, then turned to Cassius. “What's Rattles not telling me?”

What an odd nickname.

But that's beside the point.

Glancing between the two very different looking people—short and pale, tall and too colorful—Cassius decided he might as well tell him. It was a risk, but at least he might gain a bit more control over the conversation by doing so.

He closed his eyes, careful not to look too closely at the memories of that dark night, and answered, “When he stopped them,” he hesitated, bitter as gall, and corrected, “stopped us, he saved me.”

“Us?” the man repeated, then his eyes went wide. “You're a Death Eater.”

Cassius grimaced.

Sans, as glib as ever, just shrugged again. “conscripted, i'd say. and quite forcefully.”

“Forcefully?”

A glance back at him to silently ask permission, and the Slytherin sighed. “He means that I had been under an Imperio.”

“An Imperio?”

“geeze, pat, use your words,” Sans snarked, grinning. “are you just gonna keep repeating what we say, or ask an actual question?”

Mr. Pawdy crossed his arms, regarding the two people before him with raised brows. “Okay then. I take it you broke him from the spell?”

“pulled out the puppet strings,” he replied with a small nod.
“Good to know that's just something you can do,” the colorful wizard remarked under his breath.

Apparently Cassius was the only one here who had been terribly surprised when he had figured out that the white-haired boy had indeed freed him from the supposedly unshakable Imperius Curse. Though startled to learn that the unbreakable spell had been broken, it seemed Mr. Pawdy was not at all shocked that it was Sans who had done it. Although given that this was the same person who had easily deflected the unstoppable Killing Curse, perhaps it was not truly so astonishing.

He must have said some part of that musing aloud, because Mr. Pawdy chuckled. “You get used to his oddness, since he doesn't really follow our common sense in most things.”

“gotta take the path less traveled and all that.”

“It's more like you blaze a new trail and ignore the path entirely.”

Sans just grinned, amused at that description.

For some reason, that tweaked at one of the questions he had been stuck on about this whole situation. One he hadn't actually planned on asking, at least not directly, but it just slipped out: “Why did you save me, anyway?”

The white-haired student sobered, and didn't answer right away; he had to find the right words. “i… knew somebody who was in a similar sort of situation. harder to fix, though.”

From his grim expression, Mr. Pawdy had at least some idea of who and what he was talking about. And from that last sentence, Cassius couldn't help but morbidly wonder just what control could be harder to break than that of an Unforgivable.

As if in response to that unspoken question, Sans continued.

“their SOUL was… possessed by another.” The word had a hard twist in it, as if he was making some dark joke to himself, and Sans actually grimaced. “i don't know how much control they had over anything, there at the end. i'd guess none at all.”

Cassius knew the horror of feeling trapped in his own body. If that loss of control had extended into his mind, or to his soul… he could barely imagine what that might be like. “Why are you telling me this?”

For another moment, Sans said nothing. One of his hands traced the edge of the zipper on his blue hoodie, stopping at a tear—a cut—were a few of the plastic teeth were missing.

“They're a determined person, so i'm sure they can recover,” he said, by way of an answer.

Though unspoken, Cassius could tell what was meant by that.

He could recover, too. If he was determined to see it through.

“Well, at least you're no longer Imperiused,” Mr. Pawdy interrupted, tone falsely bright. “It's a start, and a darn good one. What will you do now?”

Cassius almost replied immediately with a resounding 'I have no idea', but he stopped himself. This whole conversation had been wildly out of his control, but now a lifetime of experience dealing with pureblood aristocracy was telling him to consider what he said here carefully. It would matter.

That said, it hadn’t been a loaded question. Or at least, he didn't think it was.
After a brief internal debate, he replied, “Whose side are you on?”

Mr. Pawdy looked mildly amused. “That’s not what I asked.”

“not to sound cliché,” Sans answered, unbothered by the switch-up. “but i’m on my own side.”

Because of course he was. Honestly Cassius should have seen that coming; Sans had, after all, busted up the Death Eater attack and yet he seemingly did not want the Ministry to know about it. Plus he had apparently smuggled in a wizard disguised as a dog right under the Headmaster's nose, so there was that too.

Regardless, it didn't really answer the core of his question.

Cassius reconsidered his wording, and clarified, “I was wondering more about your views of the current sides, actually. Not just who you answer to.”

“well in that case…” Tone frank, Sans stated, “dumbles seems like a good man but not somebody i’d want in charge, and voldie is just straight-up evil as far as i can tell.”

Sweet Merlin, that was… That was one way to put it, he supposed.

The colorful wizard snorted in amusement, likely used to Sans's particular brand of either incredibly vague or directly-to-the-point explanations. “Also,” the man added, “I should mention that Sans doesn't really answer to anyone. Our little group is, uh… little.”

“as in, like, four people.”

Cassius shook his head slowly, flabbergasted. “Is that why you're fine with trying to recruit… somebody like me? Desperate for more members?”

“We're not trying to recruit you,” said Mr. Pawdy confidently. But then he frowned. “Are we?”

Sans looked thoughtful, which was a little worrying. “i suppose we kinda are.” He winked at him. “and no judgement about your situation, by the way. my best friend here is an alleged criminal, too.”

He must have misheard. “Sorry?” Unable to picture anyone seriously thinking that the fabulously colorful wizard walking with them was felonious, Cassius had to check. “Do you mean him?”

They both nodded.

“Also, he really does mean that 'alleged' bit,” Mr. Pawdy provided, though somewhat reluctantly. “I was framed by my supposed victim, and it never went to trial. Just, BAM—convicted.”

These two were really just one surprise after another.

And there was something about that brief description that niggled at the back of his mind, as if he had already been told of a case like his. He just couldn't recall where.

“You never got a trial?” he asked.

The man frowned: sullen and still a little angry, perhaps, but as though he'd long ago come to peace with what had happened. “It's been fourteen years.”

Sans nudged him, giving him a meaningful look.
He blinked, briefly confused, then murmured, “Oh, right.”

“eh, it’s probably for the best.”

“With no trial, I doubt they just let you go,” Cassius mused to himself, still trying to put a finger on why it all sounded so familiar. “…Where were you imprisoned?”

“nice day,” Sans suddenly commented, the non sequitur immediately knocking the conversation off track and pushing that sense of familiarity out of mind.

It would probably be best to just go with it.

“I suppose?” Cassius said, uncertain where this was headed now.

The boy’s dark eyes settled on the Slytherin with a peculiar weight, and he seemed to consider something for just a moment longer. Then, apparently finding what he was looking for—whatever that might be—he nodded to himself. “i have some people i want you to meet.”

Another unexpected change in subject, and immediately after the first at that: Sans really seems to suddenly be in a mood for jumping topics.

What was a bit odd, however, was that even Mr. Pawdy looked surprised by that news. “Who?”

“Oh, just some friends.” Sans pulled out a scrap of paper and a muggle pencil from his pockets, scrawled something down, and wrapped it up around a thin white stick that had just… appeared. Then the scroll of paper simply vanished from his hand.

Cassius turned to the older wizard. “You really don’t know them?”

“Nope.”

“He wouldn't have had a chance to,” said Sans, matter-of-fact. “It was pretty busy that night.”

Glancing around the field they were still standing in—the empty event ground—he could make a guess at just who Sans was talking about.

Apparently following that same train of thought, Mr. Pawdy said, “You wouldn't happen to mean —”

Sans held up a hand, looking distant in an oddly not thoughtful way: as if he was watching and listening to a scene the rest of them couldn’t see. After a moment he smiled, fished around in his pocket for another slip of paper to jot something down on, and then he vanished that note too.

“That was quick,” Sans remarked. “Looks like it's all clear to go, guys.”

And with that, he turned and headed off across the field. To be perfectly honest, Cassius had half expected to just be dropped through another not-Apparition.

After a few minutes of walking in silence, they crested a low hill and spotted a quaint stone cottage in the distance. A young boy was running their way, waving, though he stopped that to focus on not tripping over himself when he stumbled over something.

When he reached them, he had to pause and catch his breath.

“Hey, Sans!”
“hey’ to you too, will!” Sans greeted. “how's miles?”

“He's fine,” Will replied, still breathing a bit heavily from his run. “But Mom’s still a bit worried, so we didn't go to school yesterday. He’s a lot steadier now though!”

Cassius felt guilt curl in his stomach. He hadn't been in control—he'd been nothing more than a bystander within his own mind—but he had still just stood idly by while the Death Eaters had tortured a family of innocent people. Even if they were just muggles, that didn't matter.

He felt like he should have done something, even if he literally could have done nothing.

The boy fell into step with them, and though he was clearly curious about both Cassius and the colorful wizard beside him, he didn't ask. Instead, he stuck close to Sans and—after it happened to be mentioned in passing—pestered him about magic school.

Cassius nearly protested the nonchalant disregard for the Statute of Secrecy. Nearly… but he didn't. The family deserved to know what had happened to them, even if those memories were terrible. It was better than being left in the dark with nightmares they couldn't explain.

They made quick time to the house.

An older boy, probably the aforementioned Miles, was standing in the doorway. He waved too, and called something into the house before walking over to meet them. But, while Miles was standing and walking and generally acting as though everything was just fine, Cassius noticed a slight tremor in his shoulders that belied the effort those simple actions took.

Apparently Sans noticed that, too.

“hey, do ya think your mom'd mind if i borrowed your kitchen chairs for a minute?”

Miles blinked, then shrugged. “Don't think so. Why?”

“Well, what do you usually use them for?” he asked, taking a seat on the chair that had suddenly appeared behind him. It was one of four, all sitting on the front lawn as if they'd been there all along.

“That is so wicked,” Will declared, plopping down cross-legged on one of the other chairs, and his older brother followed suit.

“So, uh…” Miles scratched the back of his head. “Sans, who are these guys?”

Mr. Pawdy took that as his cue to step forward and bow, though once again he kept his floppy hat firmly on his head. A bit odd that, given dramatically sweeping off his hat seemed like it would have fit right in with the man's personality.

“Patrick Pawdy, at your service,” he said grandly, and he set a hand on the back of Sans’s chair. “I'm this one's minder, so to speak.”

“I'd say it's the other way around,” he shrugged, “but whatever you say, pat.”

Then the two boys looked to him, and Cassius wondered what he'd tell them. If he should apologize, or simply say nothing.

“My name is Cassius Warrington,” he introduced himself, and though he still felt he should say more, the words didn't come.
Nobody said anything for a moment.

“and,” Sans filled in before the conversational gap could become awkward, “as you likely guessed, they're both wizards.”

At that, Will looked about ready to launch into a flurry of questions. Miles, however, was watching them with an almost wary expression. Wise of him, Cassius thought, given what had happened during the boy's last interaction with wizardkind.

“So you're wizards,” began Will, more cautiously than his eagerness had seemed to indicate, “but you're with Sans… That means you're not gonna mess with our heads, right?”

Miles not-so-subtly shifted in the chair so he was closer to his sibling, and Cassius tried to ignore how that protectiveness hit too near to old memories of his own older brother.

“yeah, they're cool,” Sans reassured. “in fact, the system kinda screwed them over too.”

The boy looked skeptical, but he did relax slightly. “Really?”

“Mind controlled and wrongfully imprisoned,” Mr. Pawdy replied, pointing out who was which between the two of them.

Though technically the mind control had very little to do with 'the system', Cassius thought to himself, and everything to do with his insane parents assuring their control over him.

But then again, he highly suspected that he wasn't the only child in a pureblood family held under an Imperius chain. Though technically declared an Unforgivable, its use was almost an unspoken expectation among the upper echelon of their society; used to keep quiet those who might challenge the status quo, taking the voices of anyone who might protest.

That was one of the major reasons why supporters of the Dark Lord had been able to so effectively use the Imperius as an excuse after the end of the war; the claim had a basis in truth, after all, though they were not the true victims.

“so don't worry. if you end up in trouble, they'd be trying to help.”

The Slytherin blinked, and turned incredulously to see if Sans was actually serious about that. He couldn't possibly be, they'd only met three times so far, and the first impression Cassius had likely given him couldn't have been helpful or kind… yet from that expression, Sans had meant every word.

Why?

It must have been written on his face, because the white-haired boy grinned and leaned over to him conspiratorially.

“you do know i've seen your SOUL, right?” he whispered. “and besides, i'm a pretty good judge about this sort of thing.”

Cassius didn't know what he was going to say, but he felt like he should say something.

“So this is where the chairs went,” called a new voice, cutting him off before he could figure out where to start. A woman—certainly the boys' mother—leaned against the porch railing and smiled at them. “I was wondering.”
“Hello, Mrs. Roberts,” Sans said with a small wave. After another round of introductions, he tapped his chair and added, “I’ll have these back where they belong soon, ’fraid we can’t stick around too long.”

Which was certainly true: the more time they spent here, the more likely it was that their absence would be noticed. That little fact had somewhat skipped his mind, given everything else.

Plainly disappointed, Will asked, “You can’t?”

“Nope, don’t want them to know we were sneaking out.”

Mrs. Roberts shook her head, but she was smiling. “You’re really not a very good influence on my boys, are you Sans?”

“Au contraire, he’s a great influence,” Mr. Pawdy interjected. “Just not not in a conventional sense.”

“That reminds me…” Sans held up one empty hand, and a moment later an arch of bone was floating gently over his palm.

He handed it to her, and the mother gave it a curious look. “A wishbone?”

“If you need help of a magical sort, break it.” He grinned, standing up from his chair. “I’ll know.”

“What if we just want to visit?” Miles asked cheekily.

“Do you call the police just to hang out?”

“No,” he conceded with a sigh. “Still, can we write you letters or something?”

“Letters? Why wouldn’t you just—” He made as if to take something from his pocket, then stopped. Under his breath, Sans muttered, “Oh right, I don’t have my cell.” Shook his head ruefully, apparently recalling another sticking point. “Actually, they might not even exist yet. Probably still at the old brick ones.”

Cassius, puzzled, quietly echoed, “Doesn’t exist yet?”

“I’ve an idea!” interrupted the colorful wizard, clapping his hands for attention. “You can send mail to Moony’s place, and then I—” He frowned suddenly, tone shifting from excited to discouraged in the span of a single syllable, “—have no idea what his address is. Drat.”

Stepping over to him, Sans clapped him on the shoulder: more like the elbow, really, given the height difference. “We can just write him later, since we’d need to ask if we can use his house like that anyway.”

Mrs. Roberts looked intrigued. “How would you send him a letter if you don’t know where he lives?”

Miles shifted to look at his mother over the back of his chair. “Probably just make it appear out of nowhere, like Sans did with his note.”

“Oh, no. Not at all,” Mr. Pawdy said, hat flopping as he shook his head. “You really can’t judge wizards by what Sans does. We, of course, use owls.”

“Owls?” Will sounded positively delighted.
Taking his chance when the colorful wizard went into greater detail—too much, really—on how the owl post worked, Cassius moved closer to Sans and asked, “What did you mean by that?”

“What?”

“Your ‘cell’ not existing yet.” He waved a hand, as if gesturing to the strangeness of that comment. “And something about bricks. Whatever any of that means.”

If he hadn't been keeping a close eye on Sans, he would have missed that split-second reaction; a slight widening of the eyes, just for a brief moment, that meant he hadn't expected those offhand remarks to have been overheard.

“It's nothing.”

Cassius gave him a deadpan look, not believing that for a second.

“Well, it is,” Sans defended, grinning like he knew some secret nobody else did. “For the moment, anyway, but give it half a decade and they'll start to get popular.”

They way he said that—so certain of the future—made him wonder if perhaps Sans was some kind of seer. It would explain why the white-haired boy acted so much older than he looked (sometimes, at least).

Cassius sighed, and slowly shook his head. “Honestly, what even are you?”

His grin looked more like a smirk now, and semi-pleasantly surprised. “You catch on quick.”

That was not a response he had expected.

But before he could even think about asking what that latest odd remark was supposed to mean, Sans had already moved on and was saying his goodbyes to the muggle family. The brothers stood up—Miles needed a little help from his mother to stay steady—and with a gesture Sans returned the four chairs to whence they came.

It was time for them to be off.

Mr. Pawdy did his silly bow thing again. “It was a pleasure meeting you.”

“Same!” Will replied, smiling.

“I'll send a note about the whole letter thing,” said Sans, waving. “Later, Roberts-es!”

Purely for show, the white-haired boy snapped. It made an unnaturally sharp click.

The world blinked around them.

And they were back in the abandoned classroom.

Cassius didn't stumble this time, as he'd braced himself for an abrupt change in scenery ever since Sans had mentioned leaving. Him actually taking the time to say goodbye just before vanishing was actually more warning than he had been expecting.

“You know,” Mr. Pawdy remarked, dusting non-existent dust from his colorful robes, “I think I might finally be getting used to those shortcuts of yours.”

“Is that a challenge?”
With a very unconvincing tone of voice, he corrected, “Stop with the teleporting me randomly, Rattles, it's too disorienting…?”

Sans snorted, amused. “Shortcuts aren't that bad.”

“I mean, that's true, but—” Mr. Pawdy rounded on Cassius. “You agree with me, right? He dropped you through the floor earlier and, while hilarious, I know from experience that it can be a bit dizzying.”

“It wasn't the first time he did that,” he replied with a shrug. Then a thought struck, and he frowned at the colorful wizard. “Actually, is it fine for you to be… you, right now?”

“You have a point,” the man agreed.

So without further ado, he promptly dropped to all fours as he returned to being a golden retriever. Blue bowtie and all.

If it hadn't been for that ridiculous floppy hat, the transformation would have been graceful and impressively quick. As it was, however, the first thing the newly-changed dog did was trip over it and faceplant into one of the dustier old desks.

He sneezed, then sneezed again.

Chuckling a bit at his friend's expense, Sans shook his head. “What happens in this classroom, stays in this classroom. I've made sure of it,” he reassured, resting one hand on the stone wall and causing a hint of blue light to shine from around his fingers. The glow vanished when he stepped back. “I wouldn't have ever set foot in here with intent to scheme if it wasn't.”

Mr. Pawdy—or Paddy, since he was once more a golden retriever—cocked his head to the side and gave an inquisitive bark.

“Well duh, of course I checked it before breaking you out.”

Cassius, for one, decided not to even bother wondering how or why Sans could apparently still understand him even as a dog. Their interactions flowed to well to just be one-sided.

The dog looked somewhere between impressed and doubtful, which is not really an expression suited for canine features.

“What, you really think I'd be that careless?”

A grudging grumbly huff.

“I think,” Cassius found himself saying, deadpan but internally amused, “that it's more that he hadn't considered the risk himself. Dogs are not known for forethought, after all.”

Sans seemed momentarily startled by the remark, and then he burst out laughing. There was a peculiar quality to the sound, like branches hitting together in a breeze.

“Cass the sass master,” he quipped, amused.

The golden retriever turned his nose up at them with another huff, and turned to excuse himself from their company. Though he didn't get very far, seeing as he was a dog and the door was currently shut. One paw scratched at the wood, defeated.

Sans nodded. “Yeah, we should get going.” He walked to the door and pulled it open, before briefly
looking back with a grin. “talk to ya later.”

Just like that, the door swung shut and they were gone.

Cassius stood there for a moment longer, taking the time to sort out some things now that he was alone with only his thoughts for company. And though he had quite a lot to think about, he found himself turning back to one question. It had been nagging at him ever since he'd thoughtlessly blurted it out.

Perhaps it wasn't the most pressing point, but he couldn't help but wonder…

Who had Sans left behind?

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

I am not dead, and neither is this story!

So this chapter is both the May and June updates (ludicrously late, of course), which was surprisingly difficult to write and just didn't want to stop or break into a smaller chapter. Plus sickness and finals and graduating university… well, that's why it's so late, anyway.

Still, better late than never, right?

Anyway, can you believe these guys actually had a decent clear-the-air conversation? And not, like, super cryptically! Kinda!

Generally updates on the first of the month, and will return to that from hence forth. Sorry for dropping the ball like that.

Thanks for the comments and kudos, and special thanks for the messages I got after missing that May update. I didn't want to reply until I had the chapter out, in an attempt to guilt the writers block (with some success, actually). So yeah, thanks!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Call Me

Chapter Summary

A glimpse back into the Underground.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Snowdin felt empty.

For all that it was only missing a single resident, the absence was a palpable hole. Even Flowey—who had only ever barely tolerated Sans, and vice versa—could still tell that something was just off now that he was gone. He could feel it.

(That couldn't be possible, he hadn't felt anything since… forever.)

Papyrus was in the kitchen, but he wasn't cooking. He was just standing at the stove, one hand on a spoon sticking out from the pot of now-basically-solidified spaghetti. Listless in a way that just didn't suit the tall skeleton.

In the living room, Frisk was curled up at one corner of the sofa with a pillow clutched to their chest. They were shivering in an unfelt chill, simply breathing and trying to feel alive. Since it had become pretty evident that the spaghetti would never be edible, Toriel had left around a minute ago to get them something they could actually eat.

And… she had told Flowey that he, of all beings present, would be in charge while she was out.

He was still kind of reeling at that. It's not like she trusted him.

But then, given the alternatives were either an emotional wreck of a skeleton or an emotional wreck of a human child, perhaps the possibly-psycho plant really was the best choice.

Which was kind of sad, to be honest.

He had been moved into an old empty container meant for leftovers, set on the end table by the couch, and told to keep the shaking child company. Flowey wasn't very pleased with the setup, especially since his new 'flower pot' smelled strongly of tomatoes. At least is was better than M-… Toriel's pockets.

It was still annoying, though. Nobody could look properly threatening while trapped in a sauce-stained tupperware tub.

“Psst, Frisk,” Flowey hissed, sick of the grim quiet. He kept one eye on the kitchen to make sure the skeleton wasn't eavesdropping on them. “What're you going to do about this?”

The kid uncurled enough to squint at him.

“You know what I mean, idiot.” He huffed, stem curling back on himself in a gesture of annoyance.
When Frisk finally replied, their voice still had that fragile edge… but they were determined. “We have to get him back.”

“Why am I not surprised,” Flowey sighed, looking every inch as petulant as a flower could be. “You don't think he's dead?”

Their head shot up, gaze as fierce as he'd ever seen. “He has to be alive.”

“Fine. Say I believe you—”

“He's not dead.”

Flowey rolled his eyes. “Yeah, sure, whatever you say.”

“He's not.”

“That's not the point.” A leaf waved the issue away, then settled on the brim of his tupperware. “How are you even going to bring him back?”

Because as determined as Frisk was and still is, this was the Void they were talking about. As far as he knew, the resets were—or rather, had been—the only not-one-way way to get there.

Well, kind of not-one-way. The time travel aspect did make it sort of one-way.

Regardless, they had no way of getting in there and Frisk knew it. They buried their face back into the pillow for a few minutes, thinking or brooding or (most likely) some combination of the two. Then, very slowly, they glanced up to the door at the end of the upstairs hall. The one that had always been shut tight and warded by harmless flickering flames.

The one that today had been left open, and now led to an empty room.

*His* room.

“Do you think… maybe…?”

“His bedroom's full of socks and trash.” Flowey said, rolling his eyes and crossing a pair of leaves. “Not exactly helpful, Frisk.”

But clearly they had latched on to something in that idea. Frisk fully lifted their head, and though they were still clinging to the pillow, they looked more confident. “It might still be in his room.”

His brows drew low, not catching their train of thought. “What?”

They blinked at him then, surprised that he couldn't guess it immediately. “The key.” At his blank look, they very quietly added, “To his basement lab-workshop place? He has a weird machine in there, I don't know what it does. But… maybe it could help.”

Flowey glanced to the bedroom door and then to the floor, in the general direction of what was apparently a 'basement lab-workshop'. He had never actually been in the basement, though he had known there was *something* down there. Getting in had been one of his missed objectives, so to speak, since Smiley Trashbag had set up defensive barriers over both of his rooms. Even if he stole the keys—and he had, once or twice—he still couldn't get in if Sans didn't want him to.

The barrier on the basement, in particular, had been surprisingly strong.

Well, less surprising if one knew just how powerful the supposedly 'weakest enemy' actually was.
And Flowey, for one, was well aware.

If flowers actually had spines, those memories might have ran a shiver down his. But they don't, and instead his yellow petals curled up somewhat defensively around himself. Sans had handed him more than his fair share of resets, after all.

He shook off the memories. “Don't know about that,” he admitted reluctantly. “I never got that far.”

Frisk gave him an incredulous look. “How?”

“I just told you, idiot.” Flowey scowled at them. “I never got inside.”

At that they simply gave him a look, silently asking him to share more and explain how he—despite however much not-really-time he was in control of the resets—had never managed to bypass a single door.

His return glare clearly wasn't very effective, and he fully blamed the context of him being stuck in a tupperware bin. After a long stare-off, he sighed. “My guess is, Smiley could tell I was… missing something. You know how he was—er, ’is’.”

Frisk frowned slightly: probably because of his trip-up, because they unfortunately did know what he meant, and, most significantly, because they are a compassionate sap. They made half a motion of reaching out to him, before rightly realizing such comfort would not be appreciated.

He didn't need it.

He didn't want it.

(He didn't deserve it.)

Flowey twitched, unsettled as that rouge thought drifted through his mind like an errant breeze. It ached in him, like a bone set to start healing, and he didn't know what it even was.

“Yeah.” Frisk's voice was always soft, but now it was nearly inaudible. Their eyes flicked down to their clean hands for an instant. “I know.”

He smirked, petals relaxed again. “Well, at least we know for sure now.”

Blinking at him in confusion, Frisk asked, “We know something?”

Though Papyrus seemed way too out of it to pay any attention to what they were saying, Flowey still shot the kitchen another glance before replying. Better safe than busted.

“That he remembered.”

Flowey had always suspected as much. In his earliest runs, Sans had just been too unpredictable compared to everyone else; maybe he would simply be somewhere he shouldn't, or he wouldn't be somewhere he should, or he might say something that was a little too sharp to be only a coincidence. The flower had never had proof, though, and had actually spent some of his later resets trying to find some.

All he'd found were notes on some kind of research into the timelines. Which could explain it, but had never settled quite right.

Like how Sans had become more predictable as the resets continued. Though Flowey was only just
realizing that that was the case, comparing his own early runs to Frisk's.

And now he knew why.

Smiley Trashbag was even more tricky than he'd thought.

“He knew…” Frisk barely finished the word, eyes wide and staring at nothing.

“You can't believe he… did what you said he did, just based on vague 'data reports' and mysterious 'readings', right?” Flowey bobbed side to side, a floral shrug. “Trust me, if he didn't remember, he wouldn't care. No idea how he managed to remember anything, but—”

“He remembered everything, the whole time,” said Frisk, finally realizing the full ramifications of a single name. “He knew Chara was there.”

Flowey froze. When he spoke again, his voice was quiet for a new reason. “What?”

“He said their name, and I-I… I only ever learned it… They only ever said their name, that first time… after Asgore, after everyone was…” They couldn't bring themselves to finish that sentence, starting to shiver again.

Somehow, it wasn't hard for Flowey to fill in that blank.

*Dead. After everyone was dead.*

But they hadn't *gotten* to the end. Not really. Flowey knew that in the past run—the last run, ever—Frisk had been stopped in the golden hallway. He had been watching, after all, so he *knew* they had never gotten to Asgore. It made no sense—

'They only ever said their name, that first time…'

And he realized something else.

“How many times?”

Frisk turned away, whole body trembling again, and they said nothing.

He could remember the resets.

He *could.*

Yet he only remembered *one* attempt at a complete massacre. Only *one* run where Frisk was actually trying to kill everybody in the Underground. There had been a lot of deaths in runs before that last, sure; the fallen child had toyed with different fatal scenarios just as he had done when he had control of the timeline.

Flowey only remembered a single genocide run.

Frisk had implied more.

“How many times, Frisk?”

Their voice sounded rough, like just speaking the words was painful. “…I don't know.”

“Oh.”
And Flowey remembered none of them, save the last.

“Did I…?” He didn't even know what he was asking.

They shook their head, mute.

Before he could say anything else—whatever else it might have been—there came a buzzing from the cushion Frisk was holding. They yelped, startled by the unexpected vibration, and instinctively launched the pillow away from themselves. Directly at Flowey's face.

Luckily he ducked.

“Hey, watch it!”

The cushion smacked against the wall with an only mostly soft sound: there was something in the pillow case that hit with a distinctly solid thunk.

They both blinked at that, sharing a curious glance.

“You heard that, too?”

And apparently they had finally made enough noise to drag Papyrus's attention from the pasta cement. It was strange hearing his usually energetic voice so empty, even as he still half shouted everything. “WHAT WAS THAT?”

“Don't know.” Frisk actually got up, walking to the pillow and fishing around in it for a moment. Then they made a small sound of victory, and pulled out… a cell phone.

Flowey craned his stem over to get a closer look. “Do you think it's Sans's?”

“Must be,” they mused, turning it over in their hands. “Papyrus wouldn't leave his in a pillow.”

“I WOULDN'T LEAVE WHAT… OH.” Papyrus had joined them, and was looking down at the small device with hollow eye sockets. Hollow in an emotional way, that is. Well, and in a literal sense, technically, but mostly emotional.

Frisk flipped it open. “It's locked.”

“Of course it is,” Flowey muttered, unsurprised but still kind of annoyed.

“Oh. He got a text, looks like…” They read the notification on the locked screen. “…It's from Alphys.”

“WHO?”

“No one important.” Flowey scowled. “What's it say?”

Frisk was staring at the phone still, as if trying to figure that out for themselves. “Are you okay?”

=\text{=X=X=X=}

Birds were singing, flowers were blooming, and the thin sunlight shining through the barrier
warmed the king’s broad shoulders as he knelt to work in his garden.

It was a beautiful day outside.

Asgore pulled a weed, carefully setting it into his basket to be replanted elsewhere. Plants weren't really rare underground, not anymore, but it was a habit from when monsterkind had first been sealed away. Back when the only plants in the whole cave system had been the occasional bit of moss or struggling grass.

And the golden flowers, of course.

It had taken such a long time for magic to take root, so to speak, and coax life from peculiar notches in reality. As it had done with the way stalagmites sprout up from the ground and grow into the tall pines outside Snowdin, or how sounds echoed off the cavernous walls became reflected in the luminous blue flowers of Waterfall.

It was a good thing monster food was made of magic itself, and so the continued existence of monsterkind didn't depend on their ability to cultivate crops underground.

Asgore sat back on his heels, one paw lifting to brush his fringe of blond hair out of his eyes. It was very quiet, save for the gentle sound of birdsong.

Too quiet. He sent a concerned glance to the door of his throne room with a small frown.

How unusual. Sans may present himself as a lazy layabout, but he was very rarely late to one of their meetings. And never without calling in first.

Today was usually the day when Sans would drop by to report in, passing on tidbits and anecdotes of various goings on from very nearly anywhere in the entire Underground. Heavens knows how the skeleton heard half the stuff he would relay, but the King trusted his Judge to speak only the truth to him. If, perhaps, not all of it.

He knew something serious had been bothering his friend for quite some time now, though he hadn't the faintest idea what it could be. Sans was always evasive about such things, and the most he had gotten him to say about it was a more-than-cryptic warning that he should be cautious around flowers.

Asgore looked down at his paws, stained slightly green and brown from his gardening, and then to the patch of golden flowers he had been tending to.

Perhaps he should give Sans a call. To check and make sure he's alright.

Just in case.

He pushed himself to his feet, taking a moment to dust off the dirt from his pants with a few pats and pick up his basket of pulled weeds.

Sans is fine. He probably just overslept, that's all.

Reassured, but only very slightly, he left his throne room garden.

And very nearly tripped over the pacing yellow monster just outside. The young scientist yelped and backpedaled and almost tripped over herself, her round glasses staying on only by virtue of the small piece of tape sticking the bridge of her eyewear to her snout.
“K-King A-A-Asgore! I-I don't mean to bother you, but, uh,” she stuttered, nervously straightening her white lab coat. “I h-have something you really need to see.”

He smiled gently, hiding his worry, and set a careful paw on one of her shoulders in reassurance. “It's no bother, Dr. Alphys. What is it?”

She had her phone out, and she was fiddling with it. “I-I, uh, it'd probably be easier to see on my computer, b-but I obviously c-couldn't b-bring that so—” Claws shaking, she held up her phone for him to see. “I-it's from yesterday morning.”

The screen was tiny, and he had to lean close to have a chance at making out any of it, but there was enough white and green that he guessed the video was from somewhere near Snowdin. After a second, a small figure walked into view: Sans, from the coloring and lazy stride.

And then— Gone.

“No…” he whispered, a worried frown creasing his furry forehead as the video looped. “He can't have just… vanished.”

“I-I don't know, your Majesty,” Dr. Alphys stammered, turning the phone so she could watch it again. “I-it looks like he just… H-he just fades away. It's much clearer on m-my computer, but—”

“Then we shall go see it on your computer,” he commanded, setting the basket of weeds down by the door and heading for the labs. “I need to see it for myself.”

“O-oh, alright.” That prospect seemed to make her very nervous. “I-I'll go on ahead, and, uh, get it all, you know, set up—”

She bolted, nearly tripping over her lab coat.

He followed after her, purposefully slowing his pace so as to give her a few minutes to get her space prepared for a visitor. She lived in the lab, after all, but her computer was probably even more personal to her than her bedroom. It was only polite to give her a chance to tidy up, so to speak.

Though apparently he hadn't walked quite slow enough, as after he arrived he did still catch a glimpse of her desktop background—a dynamic screenshot of one of those 'anime' shows she loves—before she very embarrassedly opened up the video to cover it up.

Asgore graciously did not comment on it.

“S-s-s-o here's the clip again,” Dr. Alphys said. “I-it was from Camera 82 out past Snowdin.”

She hit a button on her keyboard, and the snowy scene began to play out on the big screen.

White drifted across the screen, peaceful, and after a moment Sans walked into view from the right. There was a split second when he might have glanced to the hidden camera. It was hard to tell. He kicked at the snow on the ground, pink slipper almost falling off, and then…

Mid-step, he just faded away. No reaction at all.

“I-I tried texting him earlier, as soon as I found it, but he hasn't—” She swallowed dryly. “He hasn't replied yet. Usually h-he's really good at that, too…”

Asgore crossed his arms, watching the video loop once more with an unreadable expression. After
a long moment, he asked, “Did you try calling him?”

Freezing like GYftrot faced with strings of decorative lights, the scientist stared at him wide-eyed. “C-c-c-call him?” she squeaked. “O-oh, no, no I-I didn't, I couldn't, I-I…”

He held out his hand, and she numbly handed over her phone.

And then took it back a second later to type in the phone number for him. There was a reason why he stuck with his trusty landline and its reasonably sized buttons.

The phone rang one. Twice. Thrice.

And then somebody answered.

It wasn't Sans.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

I feel pretty guilty for ending it there, but by golly, I wasn't gonna delay a chapter again. I need to get back on schedule, it just makes me feel better about life as a whole.

Updates are on the first of the month. It's close to the deadline, but we're back on the first! Seems like a victory to me.

Thanks for all the comments, kudos, and bookmarks!

Agent 3 Novi drew an adorable little comic strip sketch from the events of Chapter 39! You should go check it out!

Also, Soda-fiedPsycho (or Arcane Warlock on YouTube) has posted videos reading some of the chapters! Go give it a watch if you're interested!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
“I think I'll try '7267' next,” Frisk mused, leaning back against the front of the couch and resting their head on the seat cushions. They flipped open the phone, checking to see how long they had to wait before their next password attempt.

Papyrus shook his head. “I KNOW MY BROTHER IS LAZY—” He stopped, took a steadying breath. “BUT I DO NOT THINK HE WOULD LOCK HIS PHONE WITH HIS OWN NAME.”

Frisk shrugged. “Maybe, but—”

The phone in their hand buzzed once, cutting them off, and they glanced at it in surprise. Surprise which became somehow more surprised once they read the screen.

“It's a phone call!”

“REALLY?”

It buzzed again.

“Uh—”

Seeing both human and monster doing nothing but stare at the phone in dumb surprise, Flowey seriously considered smacking them. “Well answer it, you idiot!”

A third buzz.

Frisk glanced between the phone and the flower, then over to Papyrus. “But shouldn't—”

“Oh, for—” Flowey flicked out a thin vine, red thorns growing from smooth green to snatch the phone from their hand and flip it open, then held it up to his petals to listen. His voice dripped with well-faked friendliness when he greeted, “Howdy, Doctor!”

“Who is this?” The voice was low and rumbly, and definitely not who he had been expecting. “You're certainly not Sans.”

“Yeah, well you're not Alphys,” he muttered under his breath.

It was King Asgore.

Flowey immediately regretted answering.

“I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch—”
“Oh, well of course I’m not,” he chirped louder, hiding his uncomfortable surprise behind false cheer. “My name's Flowey. Flowey the flower, though I guess you can't tell that over the phone.”

The voice became colder, more guarded. “A flower—?”

There was an alarmed squeak and the king was interrupted by a clatter of claws on plastic. Flowey had the distinct impression that the doctor may have just tried to grab for the phone.

“Goodness, Dr. Alphys! What’s wrong?”

“T-that's— he's not— Sans vanished, a-and—” She was stuttering so badly that it made it sound like the call had a poor connection. “And if he has his phone, I-I don’t—”

There was more racket on the other end of the call, and then suddenly the line fell silent. Evidently her second attempt to hang up on them was successful.

Flowey scowled down at the phone, held carefully in one twirled vine. It was back to being useless, numpad disabled because of their earlier failed attempts at guessing the password. The clock that was usually displayed on the lock screen had been replaced by a vaguely threatening message: 'if you try that again, you're gonna have a bad', which was followed immediately by a digital countdown timer.

He hated it, and definitely didn't think it was funny or clever.

“That could have gone better.” He flipped the phone shut and tossed it back toward Frisk, who almost fumbled the catch.

“What?”

“She ended the call as soon as she realized it was me,” Flowey huffed, annoyed both with Alphys and, more importantly, with himself.

Honestly, he probably should have expected that reaction from the ever-anxious doctor. If he had forced the human to answer—or even Papyrus, even though he didn't really know what's going on—the call wouldn't have been cut so short. They could have learned something, maybe.

Plus now Alphys probably thought he had something to do with Sans's self-sacrificial vanishing act, which she was at least somewhat aware had happened. So that's just great.

“WELL, THAT'S RUDE OF HER.”

Flowey sighed, pressing a leaf against what was technically his forehead. “I should have seen it coming. We... don't really get along.”

Finally realizing what Flowey had already guessed, Frisk gave him an alarmed look. “Wait a sec, won't she assume you had something to do with Sans... you know. Vanishing?”

The skeleton seemed to crumple slightly, despite how delicate the human had tried to be.

Still, 'vanishing' was an apt way to put it, even if Flowey was annoyed at how Frisk had just unknowingly echoed the doctor. Despite how cynical he had been earlier, being in the void is not the same as being dead. Though it's still not exactly a prime example of existence either.

Part of him couldn't help but wonder what it would be like to spend more time in that darkness—to spend minutes, hours, days more than the few seconds he ever had needed to reset.
In as much as one can spend time in a timeless place, that is.

Flowey shook himself from his musings.

“Probably,” he replied, bitter in spite of himself. One would think Alphys—of all monsters, after *what she had done*—would be the type to hesitate when laying blame. And in most cases, she was.

Just not when it came to him.

Although, to be fair, in most cases she would be right to be so paranoid. But he hadn't *had anything* to do with it this time. Even if he had been involved, though he hated to admit it, past experience made it pretty clear that *vanishing* the annoying (and deceptively powerful) short skeleton wasn't exactly as easy as one might think.

“What?” Eye sockets wide, Papyrus turned to the flower he had always so naively called his friend. “WHY WOULD SHE ASSUME THAT?”

“Think about it.” Leaves twisting in what would have been a palms-up shrug if he’d had hands, Flowey spelled it out for him. “If you were the one to call his phone, only for it to be answered by someone you didn't trust… you'd be suspicious, right?”

Thoughtful reflection was not something that suited the tall skeleton.

“I… I SUPPOSE I WOULD WORRY…” Then some of the light returned to his eyes (metaphorically, since he had neither eyes nor lights where they would have been). “BUT! THAT WOULD BE JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS! AND YOU SHOULD ALWAYS LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP!”

“A lot of people only figure that out after they're already falling,” said Frisk softly, staring down at their hands with an unreadable expression.

“And plenty hit the ground first,” Flowey tacked on, ever the pessimist.

As a natural optimist—even now, after his world had been yanked out from under him—Papyrus refused to give in. “THAT JUST MEANS WE NEED TO CATCH HER, THEN.”

“Catch her.” His tone was so deadpan, it bordered on heartless.

Frisk echoed the words, too—so quietly that they were nearly inaudible—but from what he could hear their voice had an edge of realization and a newfound core of steel. Unfortunately, that probably meant that they had just decided to take it upon themselves to try and clear the air between flower and doctor.

He didn't know why they always had to be like that, honestly; it got pretty exhausting just watching the human always be so motivated.

Urg, he was starting to sound like Smiley Trashbag. That can't be a good sign.

“DR. ALPHYS IS VERY SMART, AFTER ALL,” continued Papyrus, nodding to himself as if the matter was already settled. “I’M SURE SHE CAN DO BETTER.”

Frisk winced.

“You sound real sure of that for a skeleton who forgot who she was earlier,” Flowey cut in, smile more like a sharp sneer.
“I WAS JUST… SURPRISED.” He shifted in place, looking vaguely embarrassed, before trying to cover it up with a broad waving gesture. It was a good attempt, to be sure, but it still lacked much of the energy of his usual bravado. “HOW DOES THE ROYAL SCIENTIST EVEN KNOW MY BROTHER?”

“Doesn't everybody?” Frisk quoted quietly.

The group fell silent at that, all simply staring at the phone on the floor between them. It was true that Sans seemed to know everyone in the entire Underground, even as he simultaneously gave off the air of a monster who considered leaving the house to be a great chore.

“IN FACT,” Papyrus started again, slowly, and he gave the human a curious look, “THAT THOUGHT HAS RAISED AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION.”

“Yeah?”

“I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW YOU KNOW MY BROTHER.”

Frisk didn't so much as twitch, but the light seemed to drain from their eyes as their face settled into a practiced neutral expression. But Flowey had known them for longer than was temporally possible, and he could tell that they seemed torn between speaking and staying silent.

Still, proving he was more observant than most give him credit for, the skeleton picked up on it too.

“YOU DON'T NEED TO TELL ME,” he quickly continued. “I KNOW MY BROTHER KEPT THINGS TO HIMSELF, AND IF YOU'D LIKE TO AS WELL THEN—”

“Sans saved my life.”

Papyrus went silent.

“Even after I…” Shaking and struggling to find the words, Frisk tried to explain. “I made… the worst mistake you could possibly, and I… He still…”

“That's enough,” Flowey snapped, not wanting to have to tackle the whole twisty story. Especially with emotions so wound up at the moment. “You can tell him your whole sob story later, idiot. We have other things to deal with right now.”

“RIGHT.” Papyrus looked disappointed, yet oddly relieved; he'd probably been getting worried, seeing the child so distressed. “AND I HAVE AN IDEA.”

One leaf tapped at the plastic rim of his container. “What is it?”

“IT'S QUITE SIMPLE. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS CALL HER BACK.”

“Oh, come on. That's…” Flowey paused, then frowned slightly, “actually not a bad idea. Though I think a text would be better.”

With a shrug, Frisk replied, “I can't text, but I guess we could use Papyrus's phone.”

“YOU CAN'T TEXT?”

Fishing their phone out from the surprisingly-pocket-like waistband of their overly large sweater, the human held it out to him so he could see just how old the thing was. It had a numpad—without the letters—and two buttons for answering or hanging up. Nothing else.
“And besides,” they added, somewhat apologetic, “I don't even have her number.”

To prove their point, they hit the little green telephone button and showed both skeleton and flower their contacts list. Toriel's number was the only one there.

And Flowey had known that, of course, he just hadn't thought it would be an issue.

“Yes,” the flower said slowly, as if talking to a child. Which he was doing, technically—though Frisk hadn't really been a child for a long time. “But don't you know her number?”

A mute shake of their head.

“And after all of those— How do you not have it memorized by now?”

Frisk glowered at him. Or at least tried to, anyway; their pudgy child features weren't doing any favors for their intimidation ability. “I never saw her number, she always put it in herself.”

With the human plainly unable to help, Flowey threw his leaves into the air in exasperation and turned to the skeleton. “Alright, then you call Undyne.”

Papyrus, who had been watching their back and forth with growing confusion, didn't quite follow his reasoning. “I DOUBT THAT UNDYNE KNOWS MY BROTHER’S PASSWORD.”

“But not for the phone,” he cut himself off, shaking his head. “Whatever. I don't care about the phone, but Fish-face… er, Undyne knows Alphys.”

“REALLY?”

“Yes, really. Call her.”

Papyrus glanced back to the kitchen, where presumably he had left his phone. “I… I SHOULD. I SHOULD CALL A LOT OF PEOPLE. TELL THEM ABOUT…” He swallowed dryly, which was always odd for a skeleton. “ABOUT SANS.”

Ever the sympathetic nice guy—except when they had gone time-loop mad and went on a murder spree, of course—Frisk set a comforting hand on the skeleton's booted foot.

Annoyed by all the sappy crap going on, Flowey decided to distract himself by picking up the phone and checking the unlock countdown timer. There was still five minutes on the clock.

In the curl of his vine, the phone buzzed.

He hadn't seen that coming; the doctor actually called them back. Or, well… it was more likely that she hadn't, but the king had.

“Is that her?” Frisk asked, sounding as surprised as he felt.

“Apparently.” Flowey nodded, and then shoved the phone into their hands. “You'd better answer it this time.”

“No,” Frisk replied. “We'll answer it.”

“What does that even—”

The human flipped the phone open, answered the call, and immediately switched it to speakerphone.
“Yeah sure,” Flowey said, voice dripping sarcasm. “That's a *great* plan.”

“Hello?”

“HELLO!”

“O-oh, uhm, s-sorry.” Alphys sounded mortified. “I-I must have c-called the wrong number. Er, somehow.”

“No, you got the right phone,” chirped Flowey, flipping tones with frightening ease. “But why'd you go and hang up on us like that, Doc?”

“I must apologize for our caution,” Asgore replied in her stead, though his voice still had the same cool edge it had gained when he learned that Flowey was… well, a flower. “She felt she had to tell me some of what she knows of you, and I suspect I have been warned about you by a friend of mine.”

That must have been Sans, there was nobody else who could have known enough to do so.

Which was just… “Fantastic.”

As if this wouldn't have been tricky enough with the paranoid, guilt-ridden royal scientist there.

“Still,” the king continued, “I wish to judge you myself.”

“FLOWEY IS A GOOD FRIEND,” Papyrus asserted. “…THOUGH HE DOES GET CARRIED AWAY SOMETIMES.”

Flowey rolled his eyes, and ignored the definitely-not warm feeling in his non-existent heart. “Yes, sure, thank you, Papyrus. Can we refocus here?”

At least Frisk seemed to agree, since they immediately jumped at the chance to ask: “How did you know to call? Or, well, how did you know that Sans is missing?”

“Bet she saw something on her voyeuristic cameras,”

“W-WHAT!” Alphys shrieked, and he could all but hear the blush in her voice. “I-I-I— No! It's n-not like that, you know that! They're for security!”

“Sure,” Flowey said, smug in her embarrassment.

Papyrus and Frisk shared a confused look, clearly not catching the insult.

On the other end of the call, Asgore cleared his throat and put the conversation back on track. “We called because Dr. Alphys did, indeed, see something worrisome on her *surveillance* cameras.”

“What was it?”

“Sans, he… He just vanished, I don't know, j-just…” Alphys audibly swallowed, clearly trying to hold her nerves steady with both hands—or claws, as it were. “D-do you think he's…”

“He's not—” Frisk couldn't bear to consider the prospect either, so they cut that sentence short and tried to start again. “Sans is just, well…”

Flowey rolled his eyes, stepping in (metaphorically) to answer in their place. “He's reality-challenged at the moment, as far as I know.”
That quip got virtually everyone's attention.

“What do you mean by that?”

Before he could clarify—which was fine, since he wasn't actually sure how to do that—the front door handle jiggled a few times, but refused to become unlatched.

“Goodness.” Still stuck outside for the moment, Toriel called, “Could someone please get the door for me? I'm afraid these groceries are making this quiet difficult.”

There was a quiet gasp from the phone, sharp with surprise and recognition.

“Oh, fine, just put this whole call on hold,” Flowey grumbled. “Not like it's important or anything.”

But despite his snark, since they're such goody two-shoes, Frisk and Papyrus leapt to their feet to help. After getting Toriel inside, they both grabbed as many grocery bags from her as they could carry before waddling off to the kitchen to put it all away.

As a flower confined to an old tupperware bin, Flowey did nothing but watch the interaction with an odd mix of annoyance and detached amusement.

“Thank you, dears,” Toriel said, giving the two of them a gentle smile, before turning a slightly cooler look on a certain sentient plant. “And hello, Flowey.”

Seeing as it had never worked on her before, he didn't bother puffing up his greeting with his usual false cheer. “Howdy.”

Toriel paused. And slowly—for absolutely no reason, in his opinion, it's just a greeting—her expression softened into a curiously nostalgic melancholy.

He curled up on his stem slightly, almost defensive. “What're you lookin' at?”

The moment passed, and she refocused on the human child shoving aside boxes of pasta and oatmeal to make room in the pantry for a bag of sugar.

“It is good to see you up.” Joining Frisk in their pasta relocation effort, Toriel took a package of rigatoni noodles—not spaghetti, what a shock—and moved it to one of the overhead cabinets. “How are you feeling, my child?”

Frisk shrugged, and they managed to give her a reassuring expression. Barely. It was still a sad smile, and that was answer enough really.

“Don't mind us,” Flowey said, pointedly loud. “We were just in the middle of a call, no big deal.”

“Oh dear, my apologies. I didn't know you were on the phone.”

“Is that really you, Toriel?”

Toriel put her hand to her heart, surprised. “Asgore?”

“ASGORE?” Papyrus held his chin, thoughtful. “ISN'T THE KING'S NAME 'ASGORE', TOO?”

Leaf, meet face.

The skeleton blinked at him, then looked back at the phone with dawning shock. His voice had some of it's usual shrill edge back when he exclaimed, “WAIT— ARE YOU ACTUALLY THE
Her shock had passed quickly, and now she was scowling fiercely at the phone. “Yes,” she said, voice clipped. “He is.”

Asgore’s voice had gone soft. Fragile, almost. “Tori, I—”

“Don’t you ‘Tori’ me, Dreemurr!” she snapped back.

“It’s okay!” Frisk tried to defuse the budding rant before anything—namely the phone itself—could be damaged by rising tempers (and, more to the point, rising temperatures). “I’m sure he’s sorry, and he won’t hurt me, and we really need his help, so…”

“I am quite sure that we will be fine without his help, my child.”

“But he—”

Flowey was reaching the end of his patience for this. “Everybody, shut up!”

Surprisingly, everybody did.

“Good.” He straightened his stem, looking very much in control despite the stupid tupperware he was still stuck in. “Here’s the deal. Sans is stuck outside of reality, and Frisk isn’t going to stop until they get him back.”

“HE’S WHAT?!” Papyrus squawked, sockets impossibly wide.

Ignoring him for the moment, Flowey continued, “I’m just saying, having state funding could probably help. Like, a lot.”

“And Dr. Alphys would be a great help,” Frisk added, deciding that charging straight ahead is the best way to get results. “He has this machine thing, down in the basement. And blueprints. I don’t know what it’s all for, but I think it might help.”

“A machine?” Alphys said, hesitantly rejoining the conversation now that it had shifted back to more familiar territory.

Frisk nodded, remembered this was a phone call that didn’t include video, and said, “Yeah. He’s alive, and he’s out there somewhere.” They looked to the door at the end of the second floor hall, hanging open when it never had before. “We will bring him back.”

Their hands clenched into fists, eyes bright with determination.

“I promised.”

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

HELLO! IT’S ME!

I tell you what, writing dialog for a conversation including more than three people can really run away from you. Like, I know where the conversation is going, but these
buggers just want to bicker for a few paragraphs. Thank you, Flowey, for keeping them in line. Some.

Another reader drew some nice fanart of this story! You can find it here. Thank you so much, depressedtrashcant! I love it!

Updates on the first of the month. Thanks for all the comments and kudos! And extra thanks for putting up with all the delays and crap these past few months. The break has got me back on track, so we're all set!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
He hadn’t promised he’d visit—of course not—but Sans wouldn’t be much of an acquaintance-friend if he didn’t at least stop by the Hospital Wing to check that Laura was alright. She had been set on fire the previous evening, after all, and he knew that could be rather stressful.

Not that he had ever caught himself on fire, of course, but he also hadn’t always been as good with his blasters as he is currently. It had taken practice, and there had been a few notable (and destructive) mistakes way back when he had first been learning.

And that wasn’t even considering some more mundane fire accidents he’d witnessed, typically whenever Undyne was set loose in a kitchen.

Sirius—currently a dog, of course—pulled him from his thoughts with a barked question. From the considering look his friend was giving the hallway they were in, and the snarky way he had phrased his woof, he clearly knew where they were going and was just checking.

“if you think we're headed to the hospital wing, then you'd be correct,” Sans replied, nodding. “gotta check up on somebody there.”

The golden retriever huffed.

Sans couldn’t help but roll his eyes at the canine sass. “c'mon, i have loads of friends other than you and moon-moon. you met some just a few hours ago.”

He made sure to say it like it was natural—because it was, technically—and to never let on that he was actually a bit unsettled by the idea. Sure, he had known a lot of monsters back in the Underground, but most of his genuine friendships had… withered, after the resets. It just got hard to put in the effort for small talk and hanging out and little things like that. Not when time might roll back at any moment.

Slightly annoyed by all these melancholy thoughts—stirred up by all the socializing he'd been doing, no doubt—Sans shook his head. They’d just arrived at the doors to the Hospital Wing, after all, and he didn't need these bittersweet memories vying for his attention right now.

(Or ever. It was generally best to ignore them.)

With a touch of blue magic to hold open the heavy door, Sans—followed closely by Sirius—ducked into the clinic.

Though, now that he was actually seeing the place, calling it a hospital really was more suitable.

The large space was a far cry from the small nurse's office he remembered at the school Frisk had
attended on the surface. That elementary school clinic had just one bed, and took up maybe the same amount of space as a particularly nice bathroom.

In contrast, this clinic was clearly equipped with everything one could need to tend to nearly any ill or injury a student might stumble in with: there were six beds with curtain dividers, cabinets with cloths and bandages, as well as potions and tinctures of all sorts.

Toriel would have probably loved it.

Of course, she also would have put in a lot of work to update the décor to something a bit more modern and less… antique vintage. But that's beside the point, since literally everything in the wizarding world had a serious case of the drafty-medieval and needed a thorough revamp.

Anyway, for a guy who'd only been inside the castle for less than two full days, Sans had spent a remarkable amount of time exploring. That said, though, he hadn't dropped by the infirmary at all before now. This was for a variety of mostly obvious reasons: say, for example, the fact that he wasn't actually human.

To be perfectly honest, he probably would have continued to avoid the place like the plague (hah!) if circumstances and common decency hadn't prompted this visit.

“anyone alive in here?” he called, glancing between the different curtained hospital beds. “if you've died, speak now or forever hold your peace.”

A reply came from the second bed on the left. “I'm just a tad singed, Sans, not dead.”

“that sounds like something a zombie would say,” he replied, adopting a falsely accusatory tone as he walked over.

Laura smiled when he pushed aside the curtain, wryly glad for a distraction. “Who's to say I'm not undead?”

Sans pretended to consider that. “well, takes one to know one.”

She snorted, though she didn't quite get the joke.

Save for the damp-looking cloth she was holding to her temple—probably soaked in some kind of potion—Laura looked mostly fine. Though he could see the edge of a burn under her compress, whatever was left of her hair had been mostly hidden under a striped knit cap.

The hat was actually fairly interesting in itself; it was yellow and black, topped with a pom-pom, but Sans had reason to suspect that it hadn't always been those colors. Or that shape, given the magical new-ness of the tuft on the top.

He smiled to himself, already having guessed at why those changes had been made. Last minute gifts could be tricky, after all.

Sirius seemed to notice the cap, too, as he gave it a curious sniff. This was followed swiftly by a surprised sneeze. Somewhat incredulous, the dog glanced between the hat, the girl, and Sans; he had a very distinct 'no way' kind of expression.

Well, Sans had told Malfoy to apologize. Granted, this wasn't quite what he had meant by that, but he'd accept it for now.

“new hat?”
Nodding, Laura looked vaguely embarrassed. “Somebody must have stopped by earlier, but I fell asleep at some point and, uhm…”

“That boring here, is it?”

“Madam Pomfrey won’t let me leave yet, which basically means I’m stuck in this bed or pacing around an empty room.” She shrugged. “What do you think?”

Flopping bonelessly (somehow) into a nearby chair, he stretched and yawned. “That sounds fantastic. You get to stay in bed, and nobody can even judge you for it.”

That earned him a chuckle.

“Anyway, I guess they couldn't swish and make it better, huh?” Sans asked, pantomiming a waved wand from his slumped position.

He knew green magic could restore burnt hair, given a deft enough practitioner; otherwise a certain monster prince would have spent a lot of time with goofy-looking scorched patches on his furry ears. Still, given he had read about a potion that could completely regrow bones, hair repair seemed an odd place to draw the line.

“They can fix it, but it's easier and safer to wait a few days first.” Laura reached up and tucked a few more blackened strands under the knit cap. “Madam Pomfrey said that jinx is usually used in pranks, like for a candle that keeps lighting up again after you blow it out. But that means if you're not really careful, you risk starting up again or something.”

“Huh.”

He knew that humans on his side of the void had birthday candles like that, and those hadn’t needed magic to work. They probably had them here, too, assuming they'd been invented by now.

“Also,” she continued, side-eyeing him for a moment, “she said that getting soaked by all that water was really lucky, because trying to put it out with a charm could’ve gotten bad.”

Having successfully avoided any questions about that so far, he just gave a noncommittal hum and changed the subject. “So when will the nurse let you go?”

Or at least attempted to change the subject. Laura looked set on following her previous topic, but she didn't get the chance to.

Because somebody else beat her to the punch.

“I have to wonder where that water came from,” remarked an unfamiliar voice, “since I could have sworn there were fish in it, too.”

The newcomer was an older student, probably a sixth or seventh year. And, from the colors on his robe, he was a member of Hufflepuff house, like Laura. He had a small loosely-wrapped paper parcel, and didn't look injured or sick or anything, so it seemed a safe bet that he was here to visit her.

Laura smiled and gave him a small wave. “Hello again, Mr. Diggory.”

“Really? ’Mr. Diggory’?” the student repeated, chuckling lightly as he walked over to join them. “It's just Cedric. I'm a prefect, not a professor!”
Sirius tilted his head to the side, trying to place where he'd heard that name before. From the scowl on his furry forehead, he didn't have much luck.

“What're you doing here?” asked Laura, shooting a glance to a door at the other end of the hall that Sans hadn't noticed earlier. “Madam Pomfrey isn't in her office right now.”

He waved that point away, holding up his small paper bundle. “I brought biscuits.”

“Say no more,” Laura said, smiling.

Sans was briefly confused as to why it was biscuits, of all the food he could have brought, before remembering that actually meant cookies. Which made a bit more sense.

Cedric handed out the treats, one for each of them with a few left over.

“So you must be Sans,” he said, handing him his cookie.

“that's me.” Not particularly enthused about the food, Sans still ended up taking it: felt like it'd be rude not to, even if he didn't plan on eating.

The older student—at least going on current appearance—gave him a friendly smile. “You know,” he began, tone perfectly innocuous, “I saw what you did in the hallway back then.”

Sirius sneezed.

What a shame, and here Sans had been hopeful that that topic had been overshadowed by the arrival of cookies.

“saw what?” he tried, though it was a fairly half-hearted attempt.

“So that was you.” Laura crossed her arms, nodding to herself. “I thought it might have been accidental magic, but looking back, I really didn't think it was mine.”

“It was very… directed for accidental magic,” Cedric mused aloud, looking somewhat skeptical.

(Sans blamed the fish for that.)

Briefly rocking his chair to what should have been a nearly impossible angle to keep steady with just two legs on the floor, the disguised skeleton thought about what he should say. His illusory eyes wandered a bit, as if the perfect reply was written on the wall.

And then—since reality apparently still wanted to mess with him, even after yesterday—he noticed a transparent figure had just drifted through the stone above them.

That's not good.

The ghost blinked at him, then her eyes grew wide. “Oh!” She clapped transparent hands together, clearly excited. “It's you! We've all been wondering where you were, you know. Now stay there. I'll be right back!”

“What?” Cedric asked, intelligently.

“crap.”

And, with a transparent smile, she immediately swept back through the wall.
“no no no— wait!” Sans half stood from his seat, instinctively reaching out after her with more than just his hands. Nearly invisible strands of blue caught nothing but wisps, thankfully, and the magic was canceled out an instant after his mind caught up to his reflexes.

Freezing untouchable non-entities with magic would probably raise some questions.

Laura peered between him and the patch of wall through which the ghost had departed, puzzling over the odd interaction. “You know each other or something?”

“uh…” Returning his attention to her, Sans shrugged and tried to wave away his previous nerves. “no, not really.”

She squinted at him, wisely not taking his nonchalance at face value. “Well, she seemed to know you.”

“did she? i hadn't noticed.”

“Ghosts…” Cedric frowned slightly, thinking that over, before making the connection and giving Sans a curious look. “I heard a rumor going about that the ghosts were all worked up over some first year. That was you, then?”

Both unsurprised and unhappy that the ghosts' chatter had reached living ears, Sans sighed. “yeah, that was me. but—” he was quick to add, “it's not really a big deal, just annoying.”

Laura snorted, unconvinced. “That one just said they've all been looking for you. And I'm pretty sure a good portion of the school heard them at breakfast yesterday.”

Of course they did; as if having all that second-hand gossip floating around wasn't bad enough, he had forgotten to take into account all the students that had first-hand gossip. Just great.

Sans shrugged, his forced nonchalance looking as genuine as ever. “yeah, they're apparently convinced that they can touch me. they've been haunting me since.” He paused. “or maybe 'hunting' would be a better word…”

Tail wagging, Sirius gave a suspiciously laugh-like huff.

“anyway…” He edged toward the door, senses already registering ghostly activity coming his way. “it was good seeing you, laura. hope you get better soon and all that jazz.”

“Why not just let them catch you?” asked Cedric, brow raised.

And there it is: the question he was hoping nobody would think to ask. Luckily he had an excuse ready—or at least the framework of one, even if he wasn't sure it could stand too much scrutiny. Still, delivering a lie with full confidence usually did wonders for its believability.

“i have a skin condition, though it's really more of a full-body deal.”

That thin edge between truth and lie apparently jammed right into Sirius's funny bone, as the golden retriever nearly doubled over as he desperately tried not to laugh.

“basically,” Sans continued, stealthily nudging his canine friend with his foot to get him to focus, “it means i'm very sensitive to magic, so stuff like that is very uncomfortable and thoroughly unsettling.”

There was a bit of truth to that as well: ghosts were cold in a way Sans, as a skeleton, hardly ever
had to deal with. And he had decided that he didn't like it.

“Is that why your hair is…” Laura drifted off, gesturing to the white strands.

Taking another step back toward the door, Sans just shrugged. “I guess you could say that's kinda related.”

Sirius wheezed.

Before Sans could get any closer to the door, however, he had to jerk to the left to avoid stepping on the spectral man rising up through the floor—feathered hat and all. Nearly Headless Nick's head turned to face him, smiling triumphantly.

“Oh!” The ghost swept his hat from his head to bow in greeting, and Sans took a step back to make sure he remained outside its feathered range. “It's been difficult to catch up to you, young man, but I am glad we have another chance to talk now.”

“Yeah, super glad.”

It was too late to escape now: a few more ghosts had already drifted in, including the one he'd actually interacted with. The Fat Friar was eyeing him with open curiosity, though he did look a tad chastised when Sans leveled his annoyed gaze on him.

Surprisingly—or perhaps unsurprisingly, since he is a Hufflepuff—Cedric stood up and positioned himself squarely between Sans and the nearest ghost, hands held up in a gesture that was both placating and defensive. The move was appreciated, even if he wouldn’t really be able to do much if the specter chose to just glide right through him.

…Which gave Sans an idea.

The ghosts thought that they might actually be able to touch him, true, but they didn't know for sure. So all he needed to do was show them that he was just as intangible to them as everybody else.

Or rather, he needed to convince them of that.

Maybe this plan was a little dumb, and very much a gamble on how the ghosts would react, but he didn’t have much choice; he couldn’t very well take a shortcut with all these witnesses. No matter how tempting the idea might be.

Thankfully Cedric had the ghosts distracted at the moment, busy explaining the situation behind the definitely real ‘skin condition’ and trying to get them all to back off. Sans doubted that it would work, but it at least gave him a chance to prepare.

And a chance to test something real quick.

Stuffing his hands deep into the pockets of his school robe, he made a thin shell of blue magic over his pinky finger. Double checking that it was as tight to the bone as possible—and as solid as he could make it without a noticeable shine—Sans then carefully popped the finger off, keeping the blue shell in place.

Surreptitiously glancing down, he counted up his apparent fingers.

Dang.
The glamour didn’t include the finger he’d removed, despite the ephemeral outline of blue magic still filling in for his pinky. That would have been convenient, but alas, it was not to be. He made a mental note to ask Sirius if he could perhaps update that: being able to shed body parts to become apparently intangible could be a handy skill to have.

Not least of all for the possibility of being able to leave decoy Sans-es lying around if he needed too. Seems like that’d be useful.

Anyway, his plan could still work. It just had to be a bit more… old-school.

Still keeping an eye on the ghosts, who were still arguing with the Hufflepuff prefect, Sans tapped his pinky finger back into place and let his arm hang relaxed by his side. The sleeve was long enough to cover his hand, which was very important. Then, being very careful to keep his clothes still, he performed a very tricky (and uncomfortable) teleport.

Little known fact about his shortcuts: he can be very selective with what does and does not get carried through. Up to and including his individual bones.

So, when he teleported, he didn't move all of himself.

Just his right arm, actually, which reappeared all the way back on his floor-mattress in Grimmauld Place: it was a bit far, but he figured his limb would be safest there.

And by removing his arm, he had just emptied out his sleeve.

Well, empty save for the magic spent to keep it looking as if his arm was still there. Which shouldn't interact with the ghost-pseudo-SOUL unless he actively willed it to do so. Hopefully.

That was the gamble part.

Well, time to get the show on the road before he started second (or third) guessing himself.

“Alright, fine,” he said loudly, gaining everyone's attention as he strode forward into the group of ghosts, “I'm not gonna like it, but if it'll make you all stop…”

Turning to the transparent figure on his right—the Fat Friar, what a coincidence—Sans braced himself, then whiffed his 'arm' through the ghost's body. He exaggerated his grimace, but it wasn't really faked: a sense of cold made its way through the blue magic filling out the empty sleeve, settling a chill in his ribcage before fading.

While the friar—as well as the rest of the ghosts present—stared down at his untouched gut, Sans took advantage of their surprise to simply walk past them to the door. He didn't want to risk hanging around and having some still-curious ghost take a wack at him.

“Hopefully that clears things up,” he stated simply.

Not giving anyone a chance to try and ask further questions, he quickly opened the door and stepped out. Though before it shut behind him all the way, Sans did notice something that made him just a bit worried: the Fat Friar patting his belly, looking much too thoughtful for comfort. Hopefully the ghost hadn't noticed anything odd.

And then he was out, and he could teleport his arm back to its proper place. Doing stuff like that always felt so weird.

Sirius barked once, and gave him a canine grin.
“we'll just have to wait and see,” Sans replied, sighing.

Stars, he just hoped things started going smoothly from here on. Or at least more smoothly than his first set of classes and this latest ghost fiasco.

At all smoothly.

It would be a nice change.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

I was planning on posting after I got home from work yesterday, but my brother dropped by for dinner and by the time I was free again it was time to sleep. And the wasn't my choice, by the way; I sat down to do more edits and sorta… stopped being awake.

Sans, with your perpetual exhaustion: how do you do it, man? Share with me your wisdom, oh tired one.

Anyway, usual updates are on the first of the month. I'm clearly just crap sometimes. Thanks for all the comments, kudos, and bookmarks!

Also, and I'm not sure how stupid of an idea this is, but I've been considering making a Discord thing. Not really sure how, at this point, but would anyone be interested?

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Get a Grip!

Chapter Summary

Spooky scary skeletons… can't hold stuff easily.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

He had somehow made it through one and a half weeks of classes, was now halfway through his second Wednesday, and Sans decided that it had been going simultaneously better than he had feared and worse than he had wanted. After the series of unfortunate mishaps that had been his first day, Sans had done his absolute best to remain unobtrusive, unremarkable, and generally as perfectly average as possible.

A plan that he was only able to somewhat deliver on, unfortunately.

He would have gotten away with it, too, if it weren't for those meddling professors: all trying to do their jobs and such, not letting him peacefully snooze through troublesome practical bits. Barely a class went by without any kind of wand waving, and since his wand skills remained only marginally ahead of his knitting talents—that is to say, near zero—this meant that first book incident in Charms was not the last.

Though at least some of the rest were a bit less… inexplicable. Sure, he had damn near blinded the entire class the first time he twitched his wand toward casting 'Lumos', but at least it had happened after the class had technically been taught the spell, not before.

He didn't end up doing anything outrageous in Transfiguration, which was largely because the rest of the class was still working on the matchstick thing. Professor McGonagall instead lent him an introductory book on magical theory, which he found undeniably useful if vaguely embarrassing.

Sans was a a fully grown monster, after all—and one that had devoted a good portion of his life to researching the SOUL, magic, and all of their fascinating technicalities. Having to read an intro book felt just a tad demeaning.

But it was a good book and he did have fun reading it… so whatever.

Defense Against the Dark Arts was an odd one, for a variety of reasons. First of all, Sirius—as a dog—didn't bother to hide his dislike of the imposter teacher, which made for some toothy interactions. Secondly, during class Moody always seemed to have his magical eye trained on Sans.

Not exactly ideal, but at least the fake wasn't doing anything other than watching.

Ignoring those non-school-related tensions, the class was interesting; its flavor of hocus-pocus was different compared to transfigurations or charms. In fact, these spells felt like they were shaded a bit closer to the magic Sans was familiar with, though a little sideways and watered down: affecting the SOUL through the body, rather than the other way around.

Last class, they had been going over some kind of 'Riddikulus' spell—despite complaints from one
of the snootier Ravenclaws, claiming they shouldn't get to that spell until third year. Sans didn't

know why, it was a simple enough concept; basically, it just made whoever was hit burst out

laughing. Easy.

Well, easy without his wand. With it, he had accidentally set the whole class hooting and hollering.
The look on Fake-Eye's face while even he tried not to giggle had been hilarious.

Anyway, things went a fair bit better in the non-wand-heavy classes. Kind of. Herbology was a
delight, even though he couldn't claim much interest in it subject-wise, and History of Magic
remained as boring as he had expected. Potions, however, was something of a mixed bag.

On the one hand, no wands: right now, that's a major plus. But on the other hand, he was still
working through the kinks of how much magic should be added to the slurry of ingredients. The
long brewing lessons were useful for that, at least, as it was a chance for him to futz around with
the potion and his imaginary measuring cup of magic.

When he had tried adding in quite a bit—about as much as Napstablook would use to make a ghost
sandwich—the result bubbled and seethed and very much looked like it was going to explode:
clearly the 'heat' had been turned up too high. But if he kept entirely out of it, as he had done that
first day, then no mixing happened at all.

It was an interesting bit of magical chemistry, and thankfully a problem he could easily work on
without, say, wrecking all the furniture in a classroom while practicing.

All that aside, there was also a metaphorical third (and most worrisome) hand: Professor Nose—
that is, Snape—was still keeping a watchful eye on him during class. Sans could handle a little
scrutiny, of course, but it meant he had to be that much more cautious.

Oh well.

Overall though, he'd thought that things were going well. Until, that is, he learned that the school
had a full hour block set aside for flying lessons. On broomsticks.

Clinging to a stick a few meters off the ground, Sans decided that perhaps reality just had some
kind of grudge against him; he would much rather deal with nosey professors and setting off semi-
accidental light shows any day of the week.

Skeletons were so not designed for gripping things, least of all branches, and especially not ones
that could fly. The entire experience has been a lot of scrabbling for purchase on smooth wood,
plus trying not to accidentally fry the darn thing with anxiety-driven blue magic.

Stars, man, at least Buckbeak had feathers to hold onto.

On the ground beneath them, Madam Hooch—the instructor—called for the class to fly up a few
more meters, then back down to their previous height. Given his boney grip, Sans was quite
(un)happy with the height he'd already reached, thanks, and was not keen on adding to it.

Still, the instructor was sure to call him out on it if he just did nothing. Which meant that,
reluctantly, he shifted to angle the broom slightly upward.

Laura, who seemed to be annoyingly competent at flying, drifted over to him as he slowly started
to float up higher. She had already been back in classes after that first weekend, hair restored, but
she had taken to wearing her new beanie anyway.

“I think you need to relax, Sans,” she said, eyes worried.
“oh yeah, easier said than done,” he grumbled, clutching his broomstick with all the strength his muscleless hand could bring to bear.

The grip he had with his legs and feet was better, given the additional friction from his clothes and shoes, but he was still left feeling far from secure. If anything, it made him feel like he was about to flip right around until he was left dangling upside down by his crossed ankles.

“Trust the broom a little bit more, it's not going to fall.” Laura was trying to reassure him, but it wasn’t really helping that much. “It’s magic, after all.”

“i trust the magic just fine, thanks,” he replied, feeling a bit snippy.

And he did; he absolutely trusted that the broomstick had enough enchantments on it to lift itself plus the weight of whatever person might be riding. What he wasn't so sure of was his own pitifully weak, slippery grip.

For the record, he wasn't actually bothered overly much by the height—he’d freely jumped from the tallest tower of the castle, after all, not to mention having lived around the sheer cliffs of Snowdin for non-literal years. This few-meters-high hover really wasn't too bad by comparison. However, he was finding that he wasn't keen on flight via secondary sources, like broomsticks (or hippogriffs even, for that matter).

Plus, he usually had an easy out if he found himself plummeting to the unforgiving ground: shortcuts, gravity magic, suspended bones or even blasters—he had options.

The problem was, of course, that not many of those could be used here without a lot of questions heading his way. He might—might—be able to play blue magic off as accidental, but he’d really rather not risk it. There was a limit to how much attention he could garner safely, after all, and he had the feeling that he was already running low.

Laura gave him a few more pointers as they practiced together—pretty helpful ones, even, but he didn't exactly have enough control to put them into effect. They both floated up to the bare minimum height the instructor had asked for, hovered there for a moment, then began to lower back down. Descending involved leaning forward quite a bit, so Sans took things even slower than before.

From the castle, the bell signaling the end of the class period rang.

“thank the stars,” he grumbled, hands aching.

Madam Hooch paced the field as the class began their descent, double checking that everyone was landing safely. A young Hufflepuff boy yelped as his broom suddenly jerked, dropping the last few feet too quickly, and she held out a hand to keep him steady.

Sans wasn't doing much better, bone tired from having to maintain his death grip on the broomstick. He just didn't have the energy for it any more.

“oh, that's not good—”

“Sans?”

Feeling himself begin to slip—and still too high up to stick the landing without any magical assist—Sans scrambled to find purchase on the wood again. As one might expect, it didn't quite work out; he ended up overbalancing, sliding even farther forward on the broom, then teetering suddenly sideways.
Or he would have, if Laura hadn't snagged his shoulder and pushed him back upright. She drew her broom closer, trying to further stabilize the wobbling, but they still ended up in a comedically slow tumble the rest of the way to the ground.

“Oof,” she grunted, pushing herself upright and shooting a worried Madam Hooch a thumbs up.

The instructor was too caught up to come over and help them—the Hufflepuff boy was clinging to her, the jerky drop apparently having spooked him quite a bit—and, seeing that the two of them were okay, she simply nodded back.

“thanks for the assist.” Sans kicked the broomstick away from his legs. “and, uh, sorry for dragging you down with me.”

After picking up her hat from where it had fallen and dusting off a few bits of grass, Laura smiled back. “It's no problem, landings can be tricky.”

“any crash you can walk away from is a success,” he mused, half to himself.

Sirius had been watching the entire show from the side, tail wagging in amusement through most of it, though he had been a tad worried there at the end. He barked, head cocked to the side in question.

“i'm working on it,” Sans said, standing up and taking a few testing steps. “there, see? success.”

Laura was still sitting on the grass, but now her smile faded away into a rather concerned look.

“…what is it?”

“Are you eating enough?”

Sans blinked at the non sequitur. “what?”

She glanced to her hand, then back up at him. “You're really thin, Sans.” Her voice was quiet, worried. “Like you're just skin and bones under all those layers.”

Sirius snorted.

Sans had to set aside his own amusement at the unintentional joke, rubbing the shoulder she'd grabbed to try and steady him when he'd nearly tipped over. “yeah, that's fair.” He shrugged. “but i've just always been that way. it's no big deal.”

She let the topic lie for the moment, but even after they both finished putting away the broomsticks and gathered up their things, Laura still looked fairly unconvinced.

Following that, lunch turned out to be rather more interesting than usual. When they walked into the Great Hall, Laura sent half a glance to her fellow Hufflepuffs, half a glance at the rest of the school, then took a deep breath. Stride more confident than she probably felt, she walked with Sans all the way to his table and took a seat beside him.

Nearby students paused, chatter dying away as they all gave curious looks to the odd spot of yellow mixed in with their blues. Laura held firm, though now she was blushing a bit in embarrassment.

Luna, who was seated across from them, gave her a serene smile. “You seem very bright today.”

“Huh?” Still a little nervous, Laura twitched when a new plate appeared on the table before her. “Er, I mean, hello. I'm Laura Madley.”
“Luna Lovegood.”

“It's nice to meet you,” Laura replied, settling as the conversations around them restarted. “Are you Sans's friend, too?”

Sans didn't so much as twitch at the statement, but he feels something in him twist a little; warm and guilty at the same time. It was an unfortunately familiar sensation, given how much he had kept from his own brother over the years and non-years of his life.

Luna nodded.

“Oh good.” Taking some bread and meat to make herself a sandwich, Laura glanced pointedly to Sans and his plate. He had seen fit to grab a handful of chips, but not much else. “Is he eating okay?”

“geeze,” he sighed, tone a shade too nonchalant. “who do ya think you are, my brother?”

“Well, I don't imagine Sans eats much,” Luna replied, tilting her head as if considering the idea. “That he can at all is already pretty interesting.”

Laura plainly didn't know how to react to that, and turned a questioning look on Sans.

He just shrugged. “i think luna sees the world a few step to the left of the rest of us.”

“Okay…?”

Luna took a spoonful of cubed cheeses from a dish on her side of the table, reached across, and plopped them onto Sans's mostly-empty plate. “Dairy is good for bones, isn't it?”

Sans rolled his eyes, but gamely stabbed one of the tidbits with his fork.

By the end of lunch, the combined efforts of Luna and Laura (and the occasional nudge from Sirius, even) had gotten Sans to eat what amounted to perhaps half a sandwich, plus some chips. It had been entertaining, if occasionally just mildly annoying, and Sans was certain he wouldn't be able to eat anything come dinnertime.

He was a skeleton, after all. Even if he did have any appetite, he wouldn't ever need to eat a lot. Certainly not as much as a typical growing eleven-year-old boy would need.

Which could become something of an issue, if too many people got nosy.

For now, though, he was pretty sure he could handle it.

Laura dusted the bread crumbs off her hands and onto his plate, took one last gulp of pumpkin juice—a drink Sans thoroughly disliked—and stood up. First year Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws share a lot of classes on Wednesdays, so the two of them were headed the same way.

“I overheard some Gryffindors saying that Professor Moody has something special planned for today,” Laura said, looking a little apprehensive as they got closer and closer to his classroom. Defense was certainly not her favorite subject.

“special?”

“You don't think it's, like, fighting a troll or something, do you?” she asked. Just the thought made her grip on the strap of her bookbag tighten. “I heard that happened a few years ago.”
Sirius gave a small bark, and Sans resisted the urge to roll his eyes—of course *Harry* would somehow end up fighting a troll mere months after learning that magic even exists.

“don't be *riddikulus*, laura,” Sans replied, the joke earning him a small grin. “it'll probably be nothing.”

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own *Harry Potter* or *Undertale*.

I hope you all have had a happy Halloween, and welcome to November! Are any of you guys planning on participating in NaNoWriMo this year? I am. It's probably gonna involve a lot of seat-of-my-pants flying when it comes to the story I've got planned (and it already has been), so we'll see how that goes.

This story has gotten more fanart, too! I forgot to mention last chapter, it skipped my mind since I was unexpectedly running late. Super thanks to WelpHi1212 and RTNightmare, for your amazing works! You can find WelpHi's [here](#) (or [here](#) in color) and RTNightmare's [here](#). They're both great, so go take a look!

Updates are on the first of the month.
Thanks for all the support—for every kudos, bookmark, and especially every comment! It's been over three years now, and I'm happy so many have stuck around to see where the story's going.

Still looking into Discord stuff. Like, uh, figuring out what I'd call my server.
Talk about getting stuck at the gate, amiright?

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Crap, okay, so it's definitely not nothing.

“a boggart does what?” he (definitely didn't) yelp, staring wide-eyed at the slightly shaking luggage set at the middle of the classroom. Center stage, so to speak: right where everyone could easily see everything.

Oh, geeze—that thought definitely did not help.

Laura didn't look too happy about the setup either. “Well, like the professor said: it takes the form of whatever you're most scared of.”

Sans wanted to curse, but he managed to hold his non-existent tongue. Not that it really mattered, since Sirius managed to swear enough for both of them—huffing a series of canine snuffles that should never be translated while in polite company.

At least nobody else could tell what he had said. Though, given the amused glance she shot him, Laura could at least guess the dog wasn't pleased.

“Professor Moody,” spoke up that Ravenclaw who had, in the last class, complained about having to learn too-advanced spells. “I really don't think this material is suitable for first years.”

Sans nodded in wholehearted agreement (if perhaps for his own reasons), and took back any snide internal comments he'd made about the snootiness of his fellow housemate.

Fake-Eye Moody, naturally, remained unswayed. “It's a dangerous world beyond these castle walls,” he said, rough voice strict. “You'd best learn that quickly.”

For a long moment, his eerie gaze swept over the class. Or at least, half of it did—the blue artificial eye remained trained in one direction.

Sans schooled his expression, putting on a relaxed grin to cover his briefly alarmed slip up. He was not panicked; he was admittedly a little interested in what might happen, and certainly worried, but most of all he was just really against displaying whatever his greatest fear might be to a class of eleven-year-olds. And Fake-Eye, of course.

Well then, he would just have to sneak out before it got to that point.

Unfortunately, the imposter's stupid blue eyeball wouldn't stop looking at him. He needed a distraction of some kind, ideally something that could be blamed on the boggart, and take that chance to slip out.
The imposter-professor refocused (one eye only, of course) on the protesting Ravenclaw.

“You learned Riddikulus last class,” he said. “What I didn't tell you, was that this spell is for more than just laughter—if you want that in a duel, best stick to the Tickling Charm. Less effort.” He turned to the luggage, a flick of his wand setting it upright on its end. “No, the Riddikulus spell is for banishing boggarts.”

Under his breath, Sans muttered, “I guess that makes sense.”

Laura frowned at him, then hesitantly raised her hand.

“Question, Madley?”

Sparing a moment for a quick glance to Sans, she nodded. “Uhm, how does a spell that makes you laugh get rid of a boggart?”

“Skelton.” Apparently, rather than answer, the professor had followed her look. “Do you have an idea of why that's the case?”

“It's how it makes you laugh,” Sans answered, before he could process that it might be better to just claim ignorance. “Picture something funny, and it puts it in whoever—or whatever—is hit.”

“Correct.” With a pointed look and a nod, Fake-Eye limped his way around to stand to the left side of the luggage. “The trick is picturing what you fear as something humorous. Let's begin.”

Then the imposter-professor began calling students to the front one by one, having them face the boggart with the whole class watching. Considering how public speaking is generally accepted to be at the top of the greatest-fear leaderboards, Sans thought the setup was kind of ironic. Not to mention dumb.

But that was probably just his own anxiety talking.

A Hufflepuff boy was called down—the same one who had nearly fallen off during the flying lesson earlier—and when the boggart was released, it took the form of a twisted broomstick. It creaked and groaned, wood shedding splinters.

“Riddikulus!” he called, voice only a little shaky.

With a jerk and a loud whip-crack noise, the broom sprouted two thin wooden arms with spindly hands. A bucket of sudsy water popped into existence, branch-like fingers grabbing its handle, and the once-flying broom flipped bristles-down.

It was enough of a change that the boy—along with several other students—laughed in the ‘face’ of the shape-changer. It swooshed back into the trunk.

“Madley,” the professor called, “you're up next.”

Laura took a deep breath, bracing herself, and stepped forward.

The lid of the luggage swung open, and tall orange flames leapt to the ceiling.

Crackling and spitting sparks, the false fire brought with it a wave of heat as it surged toward her. Laura took a few hurried steps back, instinctively wanting to get some distance, but still managed to keep her wand held steady.

“Riddikulus,” she said, tone a bit quiet but not shaking.
The fire almost seemed to burn brighter as the spell didn't catch.

“*Rid*...” She swallowed dryly, looking confused and alarmed. “*Riddikulus*.”

The fire flared, and she took another step back. Her wand hand shook as she tried the banishing spell again. Once more, to no effect.

Sans stood up.

The not-snooty-anymore student raised a hand, unnecessarily. “Professor—”

Fake-Eye shook his head, and while most probably saw trust in his grim frown—as a surety that his student could handle it—Sans recognized the darker glint in his mismatched eyes. He was *enjoying* this. More than that, the fake professor was probably actively undermining her; Sans had seen his wand twitch, purposefully, just after she had finished casting.

Sans slipped past the desks and chairs, ignoring Sirius's surprised bark, and hurried for the front of the room.

Oh, this is a *bad* idea.

After all, he still had a chance to just duck out. He could even use this blaze to cover his escape, to disguise a touch of blue magic to trip-up the fake professor or something. Without his interference, Laura could probably handle the boggart just fine.

 Probably.

Stars save him from this new-found actively-saving-people thing. He blamed his brother's long delayed influence.

Sans stepped between her and the illusory flames.

There was a moment of what seemed almost to be indecision on the boggart’s part, as it shifted rapidly between a number of things almost too quickly to see. For a moment it was a swirl of dust and a scrap of red, then the red became a slash, followed by a twist of black touched with orange, pulling back together into one word.

But in the end, it shivered into glass: a massive window. It loomed tall in the classroom, tip reaching all the way to the ceiling, and it was as broad as his armspan twice over.

The landscape on the other side of the pane was snowy and peaceful, panning past tall evergreens trimmed in white, following along the edges of a narrow path. A sentry post slid into view from the right of the window, and just as swiftly slid back out the left. Soon enough, the image had changed entirely to that of a quaint—yet empty—town.

*Empty.*

Sans knew the sight well enough to recognize that a lot of the shimmering silver on the ground was *not* snow.

Shocked and unable to help himself, he took a step back.

“it’s not true,” he whispered to himself. “frisk wouldn’t have—”

Would they?
And therein lay the terrible trick, because Sans couldn’t be sure; his sacrifice had been a gamble, if a calculated one, and he had no clues as to what might have happened after. It’s possible that the kid had just… kept killing.

He knew, of course, that the boggart was just imitating his greatest fear. The images weren’t actually real. But that didn't matter, because he wasn't scared of that reality—he'd lived that reality, more times than he could count.

No, he was scared of the possibility.

Because there’s the possibility that his last-ditch effort to save the Underground had instead doomed it, with nobody standing as a deterrent to the end of everything.

The image changed, becoming a massive hall. Light streamed though tall lancet windows, glinting gold off the tiled floor and casting rows of columns in stark relief. It was a beautiful scene—as it always had been—but now it stood empty.

There would be no judgement within its walls anymore.

No justice for Snowdin, or Waterfall, or Hotland. However temporary it might have been, between death and being reset.

Nobody to stand in its way—in their way.

And, stars—Sans knew he hadn't made that much of a difference. Not really. He may have fought with every trick he had, lasted longer, made his death cost over hundreds of theirs… but he'd still died, in the end.

But some of those times, he'd won.

Some of those times, they’d turned back.

If Frisk chose genocide now, even without the ability to reset… if they made it all the way to that golden hallway, and he wasn't there…

Chara may be gone, but Frisk had always been able to choose for themselves.

They could still choose to erase everything.

Now, it would be permanent.

“Sans?”

Laura, standing behind him, looking between him and the massive window. Her wand was still drawn, and she looked just about ready to forcibly swap places with him. Like he had done for her, making it all into some kind of boggart-based leap-frog.

The thought had him raising his own wand. “riddikulus.”

He hadn't properly come up with a way to make a giant window humorous, though, so while the spell did take hold and shook the boggart from its form, it didn't give it any new shape to change into. As such, with a crack and a swirl of formless shades, the window shrank and settled into what was presumably another one of his fears.

A mirror.
It wasn't funny, but he wasn't exactly scared of it either. He didn't immediately recast his spell, and just frowned slightly at his reflection.

His reflection smiled back at him, all teeth and bone.

Oh.

Right.

It was a mirror, but his boggart-reflection didn’t have the glamour. Instead it showed him as he was, a skeleton in a school uniform, and most certainty not a human child. Which, again, not exactly scary or anything, so he wasn't sure what it was supposed to mean.

Before his reflection could have a chance to do or say anything—if it even would or could—Sans raised his wand again.

“*riddikulus.*”

This time, he was sure to have a suitably funny idea in mind. The boggart bent into a large carnival mirror, reflecting the entire class with goofily incorrect proportions: tall and short and fat and thin, and every combination in between.

He snorted, amused, and any student behind him with a clear view of their reflection busted out laughing. The boggart beat a hasty retreat.

Fake-Eye set a hand on the now-closed luggage, both eyes pinned on Sans. With a reluctance in his tone that likely went unnoticed by the rest of the class, he complemented, “Quick thinking, Skelton.”

“Thanks, I try.”

The imposter-professor then yelled something about vigilance to the whole class, which jerked the students back to paying full attention, and Sans turned to head back to his seat. Sirius, waiting under the desk, gave him a worried look that he shrugged off.

Laura quietly pointed out, “That's twice now.”

“Hm?”

“You've helped me out twice,” she clarified, taking her seat beside him. “So, thanks. Though I do appreciate not being drenched this time.” She glanced to the luggage as it opened for the next student, then back to him. “Are you—?”

“Oh, I'm fine,” he half-lied, and subtly dodged a paw that tried for a pointed smack. “You?”

“I... I'll be okay. Just really don't want to try that again.”

Sans agreed with her on that one; he didn't care how much attention he'd get by ditching the rest of class, he was not dealing with that boggart again. And since it's an easy bet that Fake-Eye Moody would start repeating students soon, he's leaving.

No more waiting for a conveniently shaped boggart he could twist into a justifiable distraction, he'd just have to make do with an unexplainable one. And for that, a touch of blue magic would be more than enough.

“That's for sure,” he said. “First chance I get, I'm out.”
Then, with a flick, Sans made his own chance by forcibly spinning the enchanted eyeball to look away from them.

As amusing as it would be to stay and watch the imposter stagger after the unwanted shift in perspective—and from the gleeful wagging by his feet, Sirius certainly enjoyed it—Sans just wanted to leave. He quickly slipped out the door.

It was for times like this that he sat near the exit whenever possible.

Laura, the little rebel, followed him out. She gave him a worried look as they walked down the hall, but said nothing more about the class, the boggart, or even their current truancy.

“Have you already started on the Potions essay?” she asked instead. “I’m absolutely stuck trying to find books on pewter cauldrons.”

Sans actually hadn’t spent much time at the school library—or any library, really—and his prior experience didn't quite stand up to the truly impressive collection of books here. He'd only visited long enough to add one little detail by the door, and hadn't even gone in at the time.

On this visit, since they weren't exactly supposed to be out of class, the two of them had to sneak in. It wasn't too hard, luckily; all Sans had to do was knock over a convenient stack of books before they even got to the door, and the librarian was too busy tidying up to pay attention to them. A few students glanced their way, but either didn't register that they were skipping class or (more likely) simply didn't care.

They managed to find and claim a secluded table—with enough space for two students and a dog, which was a big bonus—back near the potions section. Or at least near the section with the most potions books, since there were still a few odd ones mixed in on the shelf: but that's just wizard organization, he supposed.

What he guessed to be one of the more boring out-of-place options was titled *An Anthology of Eighteenth Century Charms*, which couldn't sound any less interesting to him if it tried. In contrast, *Charm Your Own Cheese* looked particularly compelling.

“i wonder if they have an anti-freezing charm in there.”

“What did you say?”

He waved the thought away, returning to their table after grabbing a thick book that looked promising only in the context of the essay they were working on.

After maybe fifteen minutes of skimming through the driest text imaginable, Sans leaned back in his chair.

“it’s like a watermelon,” he mused. On the table in front of him, a few pages of the open book flopped backwards: falling from the thicker left side to the right. “the more you peel…”

“The more you—” Laura echoed, for a moment sounding as if she was going to finish with another half to the phrase. Then, naturally, she realized that the sentence made no sense and just shook her
head in confusion. “Sans, do you know what a watermelon is?”

He shrugged, watching as another page of the thick book flipped itself. “don't think i've ever even seen one, no.”

She didn’t say anything for a moment, staring at her oddball friend. “You don’t... you don’t peel a watermelon, Sans.”

“But it’s an a-peeling offer, right?”

“Actually, out of literally any fruit you could have chosen, a watermelon is probably one of the single-most un-peel-able.” Laura couldn't help but sound kind of impressed. “Like, at all.”

“Oh well. ya win some, ya lose some.”

Sirius gave him a look from under the table, clearly asking what the heck this 'some' being won or lost even was. Naturally, Sans didn't give him an answer.

Laura just shook her head at that point, turning back to her own book. Then she huffed, and pushed it aside. “Maybe I should just ask Cedric for help. Or...” she drifted off, thoughtful. “Hey, you know Hermione Granger, right?”

“Who knows— Oh.” Hermione had just rounded the corner, a significant stack of books levitating in the air over her shoulder. “Hello, Sans.”

“man. you've got great timing.”

She blinked. “Thanks, I suppose. I haven't seen you in the library before.”

“You mean 'librarby',” he said, grinning to himself.

“No, it's... You know what, never mind.” She dropped the matter, deciding he was probably just being contrary for the sake of it. A smart guess, on her part. “Anyway, do you need help with anything?”

“You got any recommendations for stuff on pewter cauldrons?”

She did. She really, really did.

It was a bit ridiculous just how many books she pulled down for them, most of them with just a single passage or two that was actually useful.

“Wait, shouldn't you two be in class?” Hermione realized, after having set them up with enough material to last literal hours. “I don’t think first years have free periods.”

At least Laura had the studious decency to look a tad chagrined at that. “We, uhm, left partway through Defense.”

Hermione almost started in on a lecture, but seemed to think better of it at the last second. Probably because Sirius cut her off preemptively by setting a paw up on her chair.

After giving the dog-that-wasn't a long look, she instead asked, “Why?”

“boggart.”

“Oh.”
It was answer enough, really.

“anyway,” Sans said, changing the subject. “are you and the gang free saturday? i have some questions about some things and may need to cauldron you for more help.”

Laura snorted.

From under the table, Sirius looked suddenly much more interested—he could guess just what questions Sans was talking about. After all, before they could nail down a plan of action, Harry and his friends deserved to have a chance to chip in.

Hermione blinked. “What… 'cauldron'?"

“like, cauld-ron. call on.” He could see the pun wasn't clicking. Shame. “whatever. got time?”

“I'll ask them next class.” She glanced down at Sirius, who was giving her as serious a look as a golden retriever could in an attempt to silently impart the importance of meeting up.

But, seeing as he was a dog at the moment, the effectiveness was debatable.

Laura had been watching the goings on with a curious expression, incomplete potions essay set aside. “What sort of help, anyway?”

“oh, nothing major.” he shrugged, as if it wasn't a big deal. “just advice on organizing things for the semester.”

At her still-puzzled look, Sans just grinned.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

I hope you all had a happy Thanksgiving! Or, if you don't celebrate it, I hope you ate well this past week! It's essentially the same thing.

Yo, so using the Riddikulus spell last chapter was definitely purposeful. I felt that, since they're first years, they'd need to have some practice with casting before facing the real deal. But casting with nothing happening felt boring, so I went ahead and came up with a sort of side effect for it. Sorry if that was confusing.

As for the boggart itself… man. That was a tricky one. There were so many options, and I only really started feeling confident in the one I chose after writing most of the scene.
I hope you think it's an interesting take, even if you might not agree.

As a conversation starter, what do you think the boggart would become for some other folk in the Underground?

And speaking of conversation…

The Discord! Which, by the way, I totally wrote as 'Dircerd' just then. That would've been embarrassing, good thing I caught that. And then went and told you about it anyway. I'm still not fully sure how some things work, and still working on some bits, but I suppose I've delayed enough by this point. If you're interested, stop on by!
Here's the Discord link: INVITE
(I trust you know better than I how to use it. Tell me if something's wrong with it.)

Updates on the first of the month.
In the spirit of the holiday that just flew by this past week, I wanna thank everyone who has read this far! Of course, thanks for the reviews, favorites, and follows—but just the fact that you've stuck around this far really means a lot to me.

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Chapter Summary

It's time to lay out some plans, and get some things sorted out.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A flick and swish of his wand—though still without the spoken incantation—sent one of the desks lurching into the air with a sudden jerk. It did not fly all the way to the ceiling, though, or even all that much farther than he had been aiming for. Good progress, even if it wasn't as much as he would've wanted after two weeks practicing.

Adjusting his mental grip on his magic, Sans selected another target.

Swoosh, into the air a few feet. Thud, back to the floor.

Sirius lazily twirled a piece of chalk between his fingers, clearly thrilled to have opposable thumbs again. “Nice, I didn't have to duck that time.”

“i'll be sure to aim more toward you next time,” Sans quipped back.

“Well, I'll chew up your slippers if you do.” The sound of rasping chalk accompanied his scheming, as Sirius scribbled something else onto the blackboard. “Not much, of course, just a little nibble.”

“Oh, ha-ha.”

Not that he even got to wear his slippers all that much anymore, given how often it seemed to rain here. He did have quite a bit of experience navigating watery terrain while still preserving his fluffy footwear—Waterfall was aptly named, after all—but shortcuts had always been a big help with that. In Hogwarts, with ghosts and students and animate portraits almost literally everywhere, that wasn't really an easy option for class-to-class transport.

Oh, and technically the school uniform only allowed plain black shoes; Sans could get away with wearing his blue hoodie under his robes, but he was fairly certain that the line would be drawn at pink slippers.

Though maybe…

“When did Hermione say they'd come 'round?” Sirius asked suddenly, now tossing the bit of chalk thoughtfully from one hand to the other. Then he paused. “…Did we ever actually set a time? Other than it being today, I mean.”

Setting aside his wand—just to be sure he wouldn't accidentally set it off—Sans considered. “uh… no, not really.”

“Oh, fabulous.”
“i, um, now that i’m thinking about it…” Sans added, mentally kicking himself, “i don't think i told her where we'd be, either…”

Sirius blinked at him, honestly surprised. “And I thought I was the bad-plans guy.”

“my plan was fine,” Sans defended. “my execution was lacking.”

“So… opposite to mine, is it?”

Even if he couldn't really argue the point—and was, admittedly, amused by the quick comeback—Sans gave him a narrow look.

So sue him, he's not used to the finer points of setting up planning meetings with other people anymore. No big deal. For obvious reasons, his schemes up to this point had tended to be solo plots based on generalities—the who, why, and how long—rather than specific dates or times.

Sans'd had a few other schedule near-misses in the past two weeks, and frankly he considered it a victory that he'd managed to show up even vaguely on time to his classes so far (thanks, friend-alarm-clock Sirius).

“At least Harry's got the map by now, if I'm remembering rightly,” Sirius murmured to himself. “We won't have to go find them.”

Seeing as Sans had just started turning his more magical senses out toward the rest of the castle, intending to do just that, that statement gave him pause. Shooting his friend a questioning look, he asked, “a map?”

“A map that keeps track of everyone in Hogwarts,” he said, smiling at nostalgic memories. “Harry'll be able to use it to see where we are.”

“…i'll still see if i can find them.” And he tried to ignore the spark of paranoia that yelped at the fact that a map was tracking him.

Reaching out through the floors was still very much like looking through patterned glass, as enchantments refracted his senses. He'd scanned for the kids before, though, so he'd gotten somewhat used to it.

Plus, as always, Hermione's bright yellow SOUL shone like a clear beacon. Which was very useful in times like this, since she was almost always with the burnished orange and muddled red of Ron and Harry respectively.

Like right now, in fact, just down the hall.

So that was easy.

Sans frowned slightly, once more noting that weirdly dark splotchy-ness on Harry's SOUL. The feel of it reminded him vaguely of the black residue from those demon cloak things… but worse somehow. Now that he was seeing it from a bit closer, it looked almost—

“Well?” Sirius sounded like he was trying his best to be patient, and it just wasn't enough. “What're they up to? Are they on their way yet?”

Distracted from his distance-viewing (though it was not-so-distant, this time), Sans took a moment to refocus. “oh, i'm sure they'll be here soon.” Then smiled, and timed his sentence: “while we wait, d'ya know any good—”
Two knocks at the door.

“—jokes.” he finished. “who's there?”

“It's me, Harry.”

Sans grinned. “it's me, harry' who?”

This time it was Hermione who spoke up, though she unfortunately didn't finish the joke. “What?”

Oh well, he'd just have to handle it himself. “it's me, harry up and open the door!”

He was rewarded with a laugh from Sirius, a few muffled chuckles from the other side of the door, and one voice that sounded a little confused for a moment more before getting a muffled explanation from her friends. Lifting the blue magic he'd had keeping the door shut, the kids went ahead and pushed it open.

“Harry!” Sirius basically lit up at the sight of his godson, even if he still stayed clear of the door. No point risking some unexpected passerby catching a glimpse of him, after all, unlikely though that was. “Glad you found us, even despite Rattles dropping the ball on the arrangements.”

“I thought he did that on purpose,” Harry said. It may still be a little bit fragile around the edges—as if he still couldn’t quite believe the man was real—but his smile back was just as bright. “So that nobody else would know where to find you.”

“uhm, yeah.” Sans nodded. “yes, it was definitely a thing done purposely and not at all just me forgetting basic stuff.”

“What're you two doing in here, anyway?” asked Ron, taking in the artistic off-kilter rearrangement of the desks.

“déjà vu, apparently,” Sans remarked to himself, thinking back to the first time Sirius had joined him while he practiced. The classroom then had been in true chaos, this time it was just messy. “studying.”

Hermione looked skeptical. “Studying what?”

He swish and flicked his bone wand toward the nearest chair. “wingar-”

Not even getting a chance to finish the word, Sans quickly switched to blue magic and caught the chair before it could slam full-force into the ceiling. Two weeks of practice had improved a lot of things—he was better at casting spells only when he fully meant to, for one—but wand motion plus incantation was still a bit much.

For some reason.

His working theory was that incantation and hand movement were like globs of paint added onto the spell; his wand was his brush (broad-strokes paint roller, in this case), and he could handle it more precisely with a smaller amount of paint. Add too much and things get, well… messy.

The trio all stared at him and the suspended furniture, gobsmacked.

“Anyway,” Sirius called for attention, “it’s good to see you all in full color!”

“It’s good to see you on two legs,” Harry retorted with a grin.
“Have to stay in practice, you know.”

As everyone got settled down, pulling over chairs and generally making a space for themselves, Hermione very pointedly set a small rattly box right on the center of the desk they had gathered beside.

“Oh no, not this again,” muttered Ron.

Looking at the box curiously, Sirius couldn't help but ask, “What's that?”

With a proud smile, Hermione lifted the lid to reveal over forty colorful badges. She even had a red one pinned to her clothes. All of them appeared to have the same word—acronym, rather—printed on the front.

“Oh. Does that…” The wizard squinted at the lettering on the badges in the box, as well as the one she had pinned to her robes, “Do they all say 'spew’?”

Ron groaned. “Oh, don't get her started…”


With a glance to Sirius, who just grimaced slightly, Sans asked, “so, house-elves… that's what kreacher is, right?”

Eyes widening, she gaped at him: “Sirius, you— you have a house-elf?”

Her voice got pretty shrill at the end, and Sans was very glad he’d set up the same blue-magic-based sound proofing on the room as before: the whole castle would have heard that otherwise.

Sirius nodded, looking a bit confused and worried by where the conversation had suddenly veered (even if it was partly his own fault). “Kreacher's served the Black family for, hmm… Well, he's been around since before I was born, so a really long time.”

Harry looked suddenly very uncomfortable, clearly able to see where this was headed but unable to do anything about it.

Hermione sounded positively incredulous. “How can you support enslaving people for their entire life?”

“Enslaving?!” Sirius looked kind of like he'd just been slapped. “I didn't… He's not… Kreacher's a house-elf, he's a fanatic about cleaning and stuff—”

Cutting in before she could, Sans asked, “aren't house-elves big on the whole servitude thing? it's weird, but…”

“They've been living like that for centuries,” she said hotly. “What if they can't even imagine a better life for themselves?”

Sans blinked. “that's a kinda… rude assumption.”

“What?”

“well, i can't say for sure they don't want things to change from… uh, whatever it is right now,” he began, choosing his words carefully, “but their culture could just be very different from yours.”
Just look at the woshua monsters, he thought to himself. They're basically washing machines, and everything they want in life revolves around cleaning stuff. Sans couldn't really understand that urge, but if they wanted to wash his slippers whenever they spotted him, he saw no reason to stop them.

Plainly digging in her metaphorical heels as she braced to defend her side, Hermione got a very stubborn look on her face.

“i'm not telling you not to do this campaign thing,” he said. At that, there was a disappointed sigh—probably Ron. “just… maybe talk to them about it first?”

“But…”

Sirius nodded, having taken a chance to think things over while Sans presented his little argument. “It would be good to have more regulations, but the house-elves should have some say. Otherwise you might be the one forcing them into something they didn't want at all.”

She scowled, but her eyes did widen just a touch; she hadn't thought of it like that.

“Still, are you actually calling your humanitarian…?” Sans paused, then corrected: “or, your elf-anitarian movement spew?”

“It's not spew. It's S-P-E-W,” she insisted again, pronouncing each letter separately.

Ron snorted, earning himself a sharp glare.

“people are gonna call it spew.” Still in shock that somebody could be so blind to the wonders of twisting around words into jokes, Sans shook his head. “you gotta consider those things, kid. especially if you want to be taken seriously.”

Not that the wizarding world had a great record on that front, but still.

“Kid?” Harry muttered.

“if people can make it an insult, they will.” Sans continued on, before there could be further remarks on that slip-up. Not that it was much of one, given that everyone in the room already knew him as a secretive weirdo. “especially if they're against the idea in the first place.” He scoffed. “spew.”

“S-P-E-W!” she repeated with a huff. “What would you call it then?”

Before he could get a chance, Sirius suggested, “How about S-P-E-L-L: Society for the Promotion of Elfish Life and Liberty?”

Harry nodded—his expression was that of someone who didn't really know whose side to take on the matter of elfish rights, but at least he knew that calling it 'spew' was silly. Of course, Hermione still looked a little miffed at the prospect of changing the name.

“or s-p-a-r-e,” Sans added, after a second. “society promoting the advancement of rights for elves.”

“People Interested in Elfish, uh, Support?” chimed in Ron, whose half-joke was still surprisingly useable.

At least compared to spew.

After looking between them all for a long moment, plainly wavering, Hermione glanced at her
badge. “I… I'll think about it. Maybe.”

“that's all i'd ask for.”

Harry seemed to relax, as if a storm had just passed through without zapping him. As for Ron, though he still looked unconvinced by the whole spew (S.P.E.W.) idea, he at least decided to stay quiet for now.

Sirius returned his attention to the blackboard, getting back to the reason for meeting up in the first place. Spinning it so the notes on the other side were visible, he looked over to Sans and the trio with the put-upon air of a snobbish professor.

Time to get down to business.

“Now then, class, let's refocus.” He flicked his wand to the chalk sketch, treating it like the most overqualified pointer ever. “What can you tell me about this?”

Ron tilted his head to one side, then the other. “Uh, is it… a teapot?”

“Close enough!” Sirius quickly added a few more details—mostly curly lines that only resembled fire if you really squinted. “This is the Goblet of Fire, and it's what'll be choosing the champions for the Triwizard Tournament.”

“old magic, and it's literally on fire,” Sans chipped in. “burn a name on a bit of paper to enter them for a chance to compete.”

Hermione settled the lid back on her box of badges. “What does this have to do with us? We're all too young to put our names in.”

“yes,” Sans said, finishing with precise emphasis, “you are.”

Ron figured it out first. “Wait, are you saying… you don't need to put in your own name? You could put in someone else's?”

“yep.”

“I'm not going to say how we got this info.” Sirius drew a small rectangle in the doodled goblet, and carefully added the initials 'HP'. “The important thing is, we have reason to suspect somebody's going to put Harry's name in.”

Harry swallowed drily; he had been hoping this would be a peaceful school year, for once. “Voldemort.”

“one of his goons, technically.”

Taking the two steps over to his godson, Sirius rested a reassuring hand on his shoulder. Then he somewhat ruined the effect by adding: “But here's where it gets tricky.”

“see, vuldy-whatsit's somehow gonna use the fact that you're in the tournament to bring himself back to life.” Sans shook his head. “rude jerk. if you're dead, you should stay that way.”

With a worried glance to her friend, Hermione asked, “All we need to do is keep Harry's name from being put in the goblet, right?”

“Well, maybe.”
“Maybe?”

“we have something vaguely resembling a plan.”

Sirius straightened, and flicked his wand to the chalkboard. With a thunk, the board flipped to reveal a pie chart of steadily decreasing sections beside what was probably supposed to be a drawing of Voldemort.

“Is that—”

“yes, paddy-paws is an artistic genius.”

“Thank you,” Sirius said, with a sweeping bow. “But that's not really the point. The point is that You-Know-Who has got a bunch of anchors to life, and we need to get all of them.”

Harry didn't know how that was the conclusion of a pie chart and a doodle, but he nodded along anyway. “What do you mean 'anchors'?”

“basically, voldie chopped up his SOUL so he could come back if he died.” Pointing to the blackboard, he added, “split whatever he had left in half for each anchor, but we don't know how many times he did it.”

Sirius drew some unneeded arrows pointing toward the different segments of the pie chart. “Which is a problem, obviously.”

“yep again.”

“If you miss even one…” Hermione shivered.

“Yeah, that's the trickiness.” He took a deep breath, and finished, “But if we let him come back, Sans can figure out how many anchors he has.” A pause, letting that sink in. “It's not a good choice — Merlin, it's not even a decent one, really. Might be the only one we have, though.”

Sans resisted the urge to scowl at that; a different world, a different threat, and the best chance at victory still hinged on a child. This time, though, he could actually keep his long since shattered promise to Toriel.

He'd keep Harry safe.

“You mean…” Ron took a breath, trying to think past the disgust and fear from the thought of shearing a soul in half. “Your plan, it's like… a reverse Wronski Feint. Pretend to be caught, go along with it, right until the last moment.” He glanced to his best friend. “Then shoot off after the snitch, with all the speed from the dive.”

“I'd need to go along with it first though,” Harry agreed, and he couldn't help but think of the grim consequences of not pulling up fast enough.

Watching his godson think it over, Sirius set down the chalk with a sigh. “To be honest, I'd rather you not be in the tournament at all. It's dangerous. And you're just a kid, you shouldn't need to deal with that.”

“but a danger we know is coming might be safer than anything else.”

He agreed, though still a bit reluctantly. “And Harry, you don't need to decide right now whether you—”
“I'll do it.”

“Harry—” started Hermione and Ron both, more than a little alarmed.

“are you sure?”

“I mean, not really. But if you have an idea of what they might be planning…” Harry drifted off, trying to find the right words. “With chess, sometimes it's like Ron already knows what I'm trying to do.” He smiled. “That's hard to win against.”

For the compliment, Ron punched him on the shoulder.

“Students,” Sirius said sternly, re-adopting the professor persona. “No roughhousing in class.” Then he smiled, proud and worried all at once. “In all seriousness, though, if we're doing this—”

“we all need to know the plan,” Sans cut in.

“Precisely. Though I make no promises on how long it'll be able to last without massive revisions.” A wave of his wand cleared the board, and Sirius handed out what few bits of chalk he had. “Let's get this meeting started.”

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own *Harry Potter* or *Undertale*.

Welcome to 2020! Here's hoping we make it a great year, everyone.
Happy New Year! And Joyous Whatever-Other-Holidays-You-May-Have-Celebrated!

Note, I still think Hermione's acronym is wack—I mean, spew?—but as it turns out, she might have been modeling it off the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women. The fact that an actual real-life group went with the acronym SPEW just boggles the mind.

What acronym would you use instead of S.P.E.W.?

Updates on the first of the month.
(Still technically before midnight right as I post this, I'm in the clear!)
Thanks for all the kudos, comments, and just taking the time to read this!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
The Teachers

Chapter Summary

If Sans had ears, they'd be burning!
(Because, you know, there's that saying where if somebody talks about you… do people even still use that idiom?)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

On every Saturday throughout the course of the semester, at least an hour or so is set aside for one of the most dreaded weekly events for the Hogwarts faculty: staff meetings. Although, while they are called 'staff' meetings, and everyone on-staff does have a standing invitation to attend, the professors tend to be the only ones who ever actually bother to show up.

This is understandable, given that the meetings are usually quite boring and, by nearly all accounts, a complete waste of time.

At least this particular meeting promised to be a bit more interesting than usual.

Minerva McGonagall claimed one of the tall chairs by the fireplace, flipping through a small folder of homework as she waited for the others to arrive. It hadn't been a terribly difficult assignment: just a few sentences from first year students on how they picture the transfiguration process, now that most have been able to induce at least some change to the matchstick.

She turned over a few assignments, jotting occasional notes on the margins, and finally came to one in particular. Sans Skelton had perhaps the tidiest handwriting she had ever seen, but also plainly put only the bare minimum amount of effort into his work.

Well. Exasperating though it might be, McGonagall had long since realized that often her most gifted students were also those who cared the least about their regular assignments. It was just one of the many reasons she would like to hold the additional classes for him; to make sure he was challenged according to his ability.

As she was scribbling a request for more detailed work in the future—as well as notes correcting the boy's odd tendency to never use capital letters—more professors began to arrive, no few of them pulling out grading work of their own.

“Good morning, Minerva!” With a flick and swish of his wand, Filius Flitwick levitated one of the shorter chairs over next to her own. “You'll never guess, but I've just been accosted by Madam Pomfrey in the hall!”

“Accosted?”

He glanced around briefly, looking for a step stool, and frowned ever so slightly when he found that it had already been commandeered by another professor for use as a lap desk. “She was rather insistent about having a chat, and very much didn’t want to join us for the full meeting.”

“And who can blame her?” McGonagall quietly quipped, earning a soft chuckle.
“Quite right!” Filius agreed. “So, it seems that she's come across yet another oddity concerning our favorite fair-haired first year.”

“Mr. Skelton?”

He nodded. “Indeed! Apparently one of the kitchen house-elves has brought to her attention that he has not been eating properly. And with him being so… well, small, they're worried young Skelton might become naught but skin and bones soon enough!”

She raised a brow, in silent question.

“Madam Pomfrey simply wanted a chance to speak with the boy, and I told her that I'd tell him to pay her a visit after class.” Filius finally climbed into his chair—making use of a nearby plant pot as a step stool—and settled in for the long meeting. “All that aside, are we ready to present our case?”

She set aside her folder with a sigh. “I should hope so. In all honesty, it should have been brought up last week.”

It had been abundantly clear, even after just a few days, that Skelton was going to need the additional classes; everyone had heard about several incidents in Charms, including once when he had accidentally blinded his entire class. McGonagall herself had taken to giving him more theoretical work for the time being, just in case.

To be frank, though his first attempt to change a match to a needle had been phenomenal, she had still decided to err on the side of safety. A charm gone astray could be problematic, but a transfiguration spell could become downright dangerous.

Skelton's case was not that unusual, though. Accidentally using too much power is a common problem among students, especially when learning new spells. One of the fourth years—Seamus Finnigan—still has trouble keeping his charms from occasionally catching fire in overloaded bursts of magic.

That said, Skelton seemed to have a remarkable level of control.

From what Filius had told her last week, when the boy had attempted to cast ‘Lumos’ the tip of his wand lit up beautifully, and with no flickering whatsoever… but it had the strength of a small sun rather than a torch. A far cry from the magic exploding in his face, which is the most common outcome of overloaded spellwork.

“It is a shame, of course, but we've only lost the one week,” Filius allowed, but it was plain that he found the delay as frustrating as she did.

Inconvenient though it might be, they did need to get the headmaster to sign-off on the altered schedule; any student wanting to take additional classes had to, regardless of if it was five extra blocks or just one. She and Filius had been planning on bringing the matter up during the previous weekly meeting, but instead Professor Moody had cut in with his shocking decision to demonstrate the Unforgivables in his classes—even if just on spiders—and the entire discussion had been quite thoroughly derailed from there.

At least they had managed to convince the former Auror to limit that plan to older students, fourth years and up only. Such dark magic was no way to introduce younger witches and wizards to the magical world.

“Here we are, then.” Dumbledore stood at the head of the table, and he looked over his gathered
professors with a gentle smile. “Shall we get this meeting underway?”

A few of the teachers nodded, though many also bit back complaints as they moved to put away stacks of grading. There was no point in waiting any longer, as most everyone who could be expected to be at the weekly meeting had already arrived—even if many of them looked none too pleased to have to be there. Of course, Dumbledore was well used to such a reception, and simply continued on.

“I am proud to say that we have made it through the second week unscathed—though you may have noticed the, ah,” he coughed gently, with a slight smile, “the colorful explosion outside the Great Hall just this morning.”

“Impressive charmswork, that,” Filius noted, appreciatively.

Somewhere between resigned and proud, she just sighed. “Perhaps, but I think I still need to have a chat with a certain pair of red-haired ruffians about appropriate behavior.”

Though such a talk would likely make no difference, as per usual.

There was a distinctly mischievous twinkle in Dumbledore's eyes as he nodded. “Oh, not to worry, my dear. The mess will have sorted itself out come Monday. No harm done, in the end.”

At that, Severus, who may or may not have traces of rainbow colors all along the bottom hem of his black robes, scowled. The potions professor said nothing, though, so the meeting simply continued on to other topics.

Not wanting to lose another week, Filius made sure to speak up first. “Minerva and I have a slight scheduling change for one of my Ravenclaws.”

“As you may be aware, one of the first year students has been having some... difficulties, in many of his classes,” McGonagall added, and she couldn’t help but grin slightly. 'Difficulties' was putting it somewhat lightly.

Moody nodded, looking somehow even grouchier than usual. “That Skelton boy, is it?”

“We believe Mr. Skelton should be given additional lessons,” continued Filius, “just an extra hour, twice a week. It should help him get his magic under control.”

“He needs it,” remarked one of the other professors, to a round of muttered agreement.

It was a tad amusing that everyone was so very much on the same page. The Hogwarts rumor mill had been as swift as ever in spreading the tales of launched textbooks, blinded students, and uncontrollable laughter: for better or worse, there was no one in the entire castle who hadn't heard of the accident-prone first year.

McGonagall handed over a sheet of parchment with the proposed change in schedule, which the headmaster took with a thoughtful hum. After scanning through the details, he pulled out a quill and wrote his signature along the bottom.

“He certainly has a great gift,” he said, handing back the form. “I'm glad that you have taken it unto yourselves to look out for the boy. Goodness knows we can't simply leave such a bright young mind to his own devices!”

“I should say so,” remarked Pomona, with an amused smile. “We've seen how well that works with those precocious Weasley twins.”
Everyone had a chuckle at that.

Or, almost everyone.

“Oh, the twins,” came an overly dramatic whisper. Behind the large lenses of her glasses, Trelawney tried to look like she was peering into the distance. “Their future will be heavy with sorrow… yes… as their remaining time among us will be cut short. I see them caught in the pandemonium of a great storm to come…”

Their prior amusement and lighthearted laughter was smothered under her dour predictions, and for a long minute, everyone sat in awkward silence.

“The Great Hall looks lovely with all those colors, though,” Filius piped up, in an effort to lift the mood.

Moody stomped forward, steps loud and uneven. “Enough of this nonsense.” He dropped a thick stack of paperwork in front of the headmaster. “I need you to sign these.”

After quickly skimming through the papers, Dumbledore took off his half-moon spectacles, folding them shut with calm, deliberate movements. “We've already spoken about this.”

“So we have.”

“Alastor,” he sighed, moving to slide the packet aside, “I know that—”

The former Auror struck out his cane to pin the parchment in place, the sharp crack of wood on wood cutting off the headmaster. “I've already gotten the damn Ministry to sign on it—bloody hard, that was. This here's just a formality.”

The corners of his lips turned down ever so slightly, in clear disagreement. “Even so, I cannot see how such an… activity is appropriate.”

“They need to know what it's like, Albus. Especially these days.” Moody glanced over the rest of the professors, though his spinning eye remained locked on the headmaster. “The world is a dangerous place.”

McGonagall—disliking how they were both talking around the issue, whatever it might be—strode forward, forced aside the end of the cane, and read from the top sheet.

And then, bluntly, said, “You can't possibly be serious.”

“I am,” the former Auror growled.

“Moody, you cannot put our students under the Imperius Curse!”

And thus the meeting devolved into argument.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

This chapter was fighting me all the way, sorry for the delay (and shortness).
You know, I always thought writer's block was being too tired to write or having no idea what to write. As it turns out, though, it's also wanting to write and knowing what scenes to write, but finding that everything you put down just sounds wrong.

So… anyone got advice for dealing with writer's block?

NOTICE:
I've decided to post chapter 48 (which really just needs to be tidied up right now) in April, and I've been writing on chapter 49 in advance.
Stay safe out there, and wash your hands! (And go vote!)

Thanks for the kudos and comments!
See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Defense Against the Dark Arts had never been Cassius's favorite subject—not even remotely, ever since his very first class in first year—and his opinion had thoroughly solidified into dislike as time went on, especially with the professors never lasting more than two semesters. By now, as a sixth year still locked into the courses his parents had forced upon him, that feeling may very well have crystallized into pure loathing.

It certainly didn't help that here was something… off about Professor Moody. Cassius couldn't quite put his finger on it, but his instincts were always on edge when he was in class: it felt like smelling smoke in a dry field, with no other sign of fire. Something was wrong, but he couldn't begin to figure out why or how.

Regardless, this period was shaping up to be especially bad.

Because the professor had just declared that he would be putting everyone in the class under the Imperius Curse—for the experience, to learn what it feels like to be placed under its control. *The Imperius Curse.*

Please, no.

He knew how it felt well enough, he didn't need to be here—he didn't want to be here.

“Professor?” called out one of his fellow Slytherin, though not one he knew personally. “How could you get permission to use and illegal spell on students?”

“Would you rather be left in the dark?” the former Auror growled. “To not know how to fight for control of your own self, up until the moment it becomes life or death?” His blue eye pinned the student in place, even as he turned his head to look over the rest of class. “Alright then. Any of you that think so, the exit's right over there.”

He gestured to the door, as if issuing a challenge.

Nobody moved.

Even though Cassius desperately wanted to leave, he stayed in place.

“Come to the front when I call for you,” Professor Moody ordered, drawing his wand. “Steel your will, and try to throw it off.”

One after another, his classmates bent under the Imperius Curse. With a grimace, Cassius watched
as a Hufflepuff was sent dancing around the classroom. Another student was made to sing a slow lullaby—quite badly, though it was unclear if that was intentional—and the performance had the rest of the class laughing at him once the curse was released.

Cassius felt rather more like screaming.

“Warrington.”

At his name, he forced himself to step forward. He walked, one foot after the other, and felt a frozen weight settle in his gut: stress building with each step. Sheer force of will was the only thing that kept him from shaking, that kept his breathing steady, standing there at the center of the classroom.

It would be temporary, Cassius told himself. There was no reason to freak out like this.

He could handle it.

Everything would be fine.

Then Professor Moody jabbed his wand forward.

No.

For a split second, it was as if he was seeing his mother there—her cold smile was overlapping with the professor's grizzled face, a glint of cruelty mirrored in those mismatched eyes.

No, no, no.

“Imperio,” the professor intoned.

No!

The instant the Imperius connected, that horribly familiar calm was reaching for him, enveloping him, muting the bite of puppet threads sliding into his chest. It was quiet and peaceful and suffocating, even as it coaxed him toward just letting choice drift away on addled comfort.

His soul shivered, almost turning, almost giving in—

But it refused.

Not anymore, not ever again—Cassius was unwilling to bend, and the smothering control snapped before any commands could even whisper into his mind.

The curse hadn't pulled him under.

Professor Moody's blue eye was perfectly still, staring at him with something faintly like surprise: or perhaps annoyance, and frustration. He had seen something he hadn't expected, and under the gruff act, the former Auror was not pleased.

Cassius blinked, briefly confused as to what had just happened.

Then it clicked.

Oh.

Oh, no.
He had to do something.

He had to do anything—because if he remained unaffected by the Imperius Curse…

If that information somehow made it back to his family, his parents, then they would know. They would know he had broken free; somebody under one Imperius doesn't have the willpower to throw off another.

Then they would try to regain control.

And if they couldn't—

Oh, Merlin, he couldn't breathe.  

*Do something!*

So…

He ran.

And he ran.

He wasn't sure where he was running, just that he needed to get away. To get somewhere safe, somewhere he could breathe again.

Corridors and stairs blurred together into a mess of stone.

So many stairs, and then he flung open a familiar door.

The Astronomy Tower was empty and quiet.

Safe.

Cassius slumped against the back of the door, slowly sliding down until he was sprawled limply on the floor. Staring out toward the balcony, at a narrow patch of sky, he focused on the wispy white clouds inching by on the chilly autumn breeze.

He could actually see a day moon, full and touched hazy blue.

Merlin, that had been dumb.

“I mean, *really*?” he muttered under his breath. “Running away?”

Now that he had space to think, he could at least admit that much. Not that he could come up with any better course of action, even after having some time to calm down.

Perhaps he could have faked being under control, but, since he didn't even know what command to fake, that probably wouldn't have worked at all anyway. Pretending to throw off the curse—as that might be better than apparently being wholly unaffected—would still have the same outcome he wanted to avoid.

By the time he was standing before Professor Moody, waiting to be cursed, it was too late for any better options.

So really, he should have just skipped class.
Not that he had any way of knowing what was going to happen—or rather, not happen.

“Ugh.” He thumped his head back into the door behind him, staring up at the ceiling. “There's no point in wondering about what-ifs.”

Alright then.

He needed a plan.

Obviously.

In that first week at home after the Imperius had been broken, before leaving for Hogwarts, Cassius had meticulously tailored his behavior to make sure his parents would think that nothing had changed. Making sure they stayed in the dark was his top priority.

If his parents learned about what had happened, that he had broken loose, he would be…

Well, actually, perhaps they wouldn't be able to regain control over him. Given how little effect the curse had had in class, he could guess that his parents wouldn't be able to reattach their puppet strings.

But even that thought struck an uncomfortable chord in his chest.

Because while he was thankful to remain himself, to be able to make his own choices, he also knew how his parents would react. If they couldn't keep him in chains, they would turn their attention to someone else, to find another tool.

His little sister.

He couldn't let that happen—he refused to let that happen—which meant he had to make sure his parents didn't learn about everything that had changed.

So, first of all, he needed to learn about everything that had changed: how and why the Imperius Curse had been unable to control him.

And he knew just the pink-slipper-wearing odd-ball to question.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

Sorry to come back after a month of delay with such a short chapter, but that's just how things worked out unfortunately. On the upside, the next chapter is basically ready to go! I am definitely excited about the reduction in self-inflicted deadline stress (writing while stressed is hard).

Thanks for the support!

See ya on the flipside, everyone!
Chapter Summary

Long time no see, Neville.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Neville always enjoyed spending his free periods helping out at the greenhouses, even if Professor Sprout was busy with another class. There was always something to do, plants to tend to or supplies to organize, and he always felt like he knew his place among the greenery.

That said, at this moment, he really wished he'd chosen to go to the library or the common room or anywhere other than here, working with a tank of gillyweed and perfectly positioned to overhear the upperclassmen talk.

Because Neville really didn't need another reason to dread Defense Against the Dark Arts.

After what had happened in the last class—having to watch that spell being used to torture a living creature, even if just a spider—he could honestly say it was his absolute least favorite subject. He had thought that it couldn't get any worse.

“I can't believe Professor Moody got permission for that!” exclaimed one of the sixth year Hufflepuffs, fuming while he pulled on his gloves and other protective gear. “I mean, they're called Unforgivables, aren't they?”

It seems Neville had been wrong: Defense Against the Dark Arts certainly could get worse.

“Absolutely,” another agreed. “He shouldn't have been allowed—”

One of their Gryffindor workmates snorted. “Come off it, Anthony. You're just embarrassed that he made you pirouette around the classroom, aren't you?”

“Yeah, well, he made you sing a lullaby to the whole class!”

A third Hufflepuff—one Neville actually recognized, Cedric Diggory, a prefect—jokingly added, “And what a lullaby it was, I don't think I'll ever fall asleep again!”

The group chuckled.

“Besides, you should count yourself lucky,” he continued. “I heard he Imperiused one of the fourth years to dance and sing.”

“Yeah! I heard about that, too. Abbot, right?”

Neville twitched, almost dropping the entire bag of fish scales into the gillyweed tank. It wasn't just a lesson for the upperclassmen, something that would probably be off the class schedule by the time he would be a sixth year. Even the fourth years—meaning later this semester—would be put under the Imperius curse.
So, great, a new reason not to look forward to that class.

“Well, at least he only made me jump up on the desk.”

“Oh, good for you,” snarked the one who had apparently been made to dance.

“Why couldn't I have gotten the same as that snake?” another person grumbled, plainly jealous about something. “He got to ditch the rest of class!”

“Wait a second…” Looking around, Diggory asked, “Doesn't he take Herbology with us, too?”

The Gryffindor had a mean smile on his face. “I bet the slimy snake didn't even get hit with the Imperius, and he just ran for it 'cause he was too scared.”

Before Neville could hear any more, his eavesdropping was interrupted by a gentle nudge on his shoulder. Startled and not quite fast enough to catch himself this time, he accidentally spilled a lot of scales into the water; it's a good thing that gillyweed can't really be overfed.

Professor Sprout smiled, shifting her grip on the box with which she had poked him. “Can I ask you to run a quick errand for me, Neville?”

“Oh, yes, let me just…” He folded up the bag of fish scales and re-covered the tank. “How can I help, Professor?”

“Here.”

Taking the offered box from her—it was not as heavy as he had expected—he noticed that it had three jars filled with shining beans and six bottles of some sort of glittery powder.

Though pretty sure he knew what they were, Neville asked, “Are those Puffapod beans?”

“And spores, quite right!” The professor dusted off her hands, sparing a glance at the class to check on her students. “Poppy… rather, Madam Pomfrey was asking for some. Could you take these over to the Hospital Wing?”

“Of course!”

“Thank you, dear. You're such a great help to have around.”

He flushed with pride, plus a little bit of embarrassment from the compliment. Still, it was always nice to know he wasn't being a bother by spending his free periods here. Neville immediately turned to leave, sliding past the rows of students and plants before pushing through the greenhouse doors to head for the castle.

Though he didn't make it very far, as he had to double back to put away his gloves and gardening apron. This was also embarrassing, even if he was fairly sure that nobody really noticed him, and Neville quickly ducked back out.

And then he was off again, following along the very familiar route to the Hospital Wing: a few stairs, a couple of hallways, left, right, and he's there. When he actually arrived, however, he found that no one else was in the infirmary at the moment. This was, in his not-inconsiderable experience, a fairly rare turn of events.

Gently setting the box down on one of the beds, he called, “Madam Pomfrey?”

From the closed office door, he heard a somewhat harried, “Emergency?”
“Uh…” Neville glanced at the jars and bottles he'd brought. “No, ma'am. I don't think so.”

He didn't get an answer, which he just assumed meant he should wait. As his eyes wandered around the room, looking for something to pass the time, he noticed the door to the hall looked a bit more… blue than usual.

Before he could consider getting up to investigate more closely, the door swung open just barely enough for a small figure to slip through.

“Sans?”

“Oh, hey,” the first year greeted. “What's up, Neville?”

“Just running an errand for Professor Sprout.”

“Huh.”

The conversation petered away as quickly as it had begun, and the two of them stood in awkward silence for a little while.

“So… what's in the box?”

It was essentially the same ice breaker that Sans had used back on the train, but… well, it had worked then, hadn't it?

“Puffapod beans, mostly, and some bottles of the spores.” Neville eagerly—but carefully—pulled out one of the bottles. “Did you know that the spores can make you dizzy? And trolls are actually allergic! I don't know why Madam Pomfrey wants them, but I guess maybe they… can be…” He realized he was rambling, and drifted off.

Apparently unbothered, Sans just grinned. “Sounds neat. Think Pomfrey wants to make something with them?”

Neville, though still hesitant at first, took that as an invitation to wax on about the properties of the Puffapod plant. Then the topic shifted, becoming a discussion about how some magical flora can produce completely unexpected effects simply by combining or even just preparing different components of the same plant.

“Like, take the Mandrake,” he said. “Its cry can knock you out, or even kill you, but stewed Mandrake is a pretty decent general antidote to other potions.”

Sans hummed. “Poisons can be all 'bout the preparation, I suppose.” Then he smiled, already pleased with himself even before getting to the pun. “A pinch is medicine, buttercup-ple of spoonfuls is deadly.”

“Oh, because… buttercups are poisonous and…” he paused, thinking his sentence through, and then finished, “Aconite eat it…? Like, er, 'I can not'…”

Neville was decidedly not practiced with pun delivery.

But it would seem that the first year didn't mind, as he chuckled appreciatively. “Nice. so aconite's another poisonous plant?”

“Oh, yes, extremely!”

It looked like Sans was going to say something else—and, by his grin, it probably involved a pun
or two—but at that moment, the office door swung open.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Longbottom, Mr. Skelton,” said Madam Pomfrey, stepping from her office.

Neville returned the greeting, and noticed that Sans very pointedly did not.

She spotted the box. “Would that happen to be the Puffapods I asked for?”

“Yes, ma'am.”

The nurse strode over, pulling out a jar of beans and two bottles of the spores. “Very good timing, then. Although…” She glanced at Sans, whose crooked grin looked suddenly nervous, and then back to Neville. “Could I have you prepare them for me, Mr. Longbottom?”

“Prepare?”

“Yes, grind them together.” She flicked her wand toward her office, which opened to let a cart wheel out. “It's quite easy: one part bean, two parts spores.” Another gesture pulled open a drawer and withdrew a mortar and pestle. “They'll clump up into a paste after a minute or so, but I'm pressed for time at the moment, I'm afraid.”

“I can do that, I think.” Neville was fairly certain he could handle that much, though as always a niggling doubt whispered misgivings.

“Excellent, thank you.” Madam Pomfrey then turned her attention to the pale first year—more pale than normal, in fact, and looking very much like he wanted to be elsewhere. She said, “Mr. Skelton, if you could please step into my office for a moment?”

“Oh, gee, I don't think—”

“Mr. Skelton,” she said, tone both patient and scolding all at once.

“Oh, okay, fine.” Sans begrudgingly headed for her door, and they both vanished into the office.

Now alone, Neville turned his attention to the Puffapod beans and spores. Simple preparations like this were really hard to mess up, even for him, but he still made sure to triple check his measurements before doing anything. Pulling the heavy mortar a little closer, he poured in a cup of the spores and half as many beans, then set to grinding them together.

It was easy work, methodical and repetitive. After a few minutes, he had to pause briefly to go rifflle through the cabinets for an empty bowl to put the mash in when he finished. And even that extra bowl was starting to look quite full by the time Madam Pomfrey stepped back out.

“—telling you, I'm fine,” Sans said, following her. He still had his usual grin, but there was a tilt to his eyebrows that made the smile look just a bit strained. “it's not really a big deal.”

The nurse gave him a hard look, unwavering. “I'm the mediwitch here, young man,” she said, as if that would shut down the argument that had probably been going on the whole time they had been in the office. “Neville, have you finished making the paste?”

He startled, not expecting the quick shift of attention to himself, and he tripped over his reply. “Wha— oh, uh… Yes, ma'am.”

Neville held up the mortar, filled with the colorful and thoroughly mashed Puffapod bean-spore mixture. Madam Pomfrey looked it over closely, even going so far as to scrape a little bit onto one
finger for a taste test.

Watching her critical examination made him nervous. “So… uhm, did I do it right? Is it fine?”

“Hm.”

“I-is… So I did something wrong?”

“No, not at all,” she reassured, to his immense relief. “I was just thinking. You've done a wonderful job, Mr. Longbottom, thank you.”

With a flick of her wand, the paste obligingly rolled itself into a dozen knut-sized pellets. A muttered incantation dried them out, making them looked vaguely like a collection of shiny pebbles, and Madam Pomfrey gathered them up into a small tin.

“What're those?” Sans asked.

“These will help to whet your appetite,” she said, holding out the small container. “Eat one before lunch and dinner.”

Looking like he'd rather do almost anything than take the pills, he took a step toward the door. “Look, I told you, I just don't need to eat all that much.”

Madam Pomfrey remained unconvinced. “You are a growing boy, Mr. Skelton—”

That got a peculiarly amused-annoyed expression from the first year.

“—and as such,” she continued, “you need to eat more than ketchup and toast! If you find you lack the appetite to eat, for your own health, something must be done.” Gesturing to her office with the tin of pills, the nurse added, “Or would you rather take all of your meals here, with me, so that I know you won't keel over from malnutrition?”

“No,” came the near-instant reply.

“That's what I thought.”

Though plainly still reluctant, Sans took the tin of pills.

Neville blinked at him, wide-eyed. “Ketchup and toast?”

“And milk,” he defended, inching toward the exit. “But I'll have you know that I have eaten other things.”

“I should hope so!”

“Well, anyway…” The door opened behind him, and Sans stepped back all the way into the hall. “Bye, Neville.”

And the large door swung shut again.

“That boy…” Madam Pomfrey sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose as she shook her head. “I can already tell he's going to be trouble.”

Neville was still partly boggling at the idea that the first year had been surviving off essentially only bread and condiments. They may not be friends, exactly—they'd really only talked on the train—but he couldn't help but worry. “Can I… help? At all?”
The nurse gave him a thoughtful look. “You two are friends, aren't you?”

“…Yes?” He wasn't sure he could claim that, actually, but he did want to be friends.

“It would be best if you—and the rest of his friends, of course—make sure to look out for him,” she said, as she worked with him to tidy up the mortar, pestle, and various empty jars. “Somebody has to make sure he's eating enough.”

Given they were both in different houses and sat at different tables, Neville wasn't sure how he could do that. But maybe… Well, he was pretty sure he'd seen a Hufflepuff sitting with Sans at the Ravenclaw table. Maybe he could join them, too.

Maybe.

Since he wasn't sure if he could work up the courage to leave his House table, Neville made a mental note to at least buy him something from the candy shop in Hogsmeade on the next weekend trip. It would be something, though candy was no substitute for a good meal.

“I'll try,” he said.

The nurse smiled at him, before quickly shooing him out into the hallway.

It was a bit abrupt, but he was used to it: Madam Pomfrey was very particular about healthy people wasting time in her Hospital Wing.

Balancing the box of now-empty jars and bottles, he turned to head back toward the greenhouses. After he finished with this, if he still had some time before his free period ended, perhaps he would stop by the library and—

“Oof!”

He had just rounded the corner, and straight into another student. Neville stumbled and tripped over himself, falling back less because of the crash and more due to his own clumsy footwork. The box spilled with a clatter of glass, though thankfully he didn't hear anything shatter.

“Sorry,” the other student said, offering him a hand. “I was… kind of distracted.”

“I probably should have been paying more attention, too.” Neville accepted the help, standing and dusting himself off. Then he looked up.

It was a Slytherin.

And an upperclassman, no less.

At a loss for how he should react to that—a Slytherin, and no snide insults?—Neville turned to the mess he’d accidentally made and hurriedly began gathering up the scattered items.

The older student also turned to the spilled jars and bottles, then (honest to Merlin) he picked some of them up and put them back in the box. He even gave a flick of his wand to vanish the traces of spores that had spilled.

“Uhm…” Even if his brain was still lost by this turn of events, Neville at least managed to remember his manners. “Thanks.”

The Slytherin had the strangest expression: as if he wanted to smile back, but the only line his mouth could take on was a worried grimace. “Don't mention it.”
Neville was fairly certain he meant that literally.

He began to walk away, clearly planning to leave it at that, but the older student only made it a few steps before turning back around. “You… hang out with Potter sometimes, don't you?”

Neville swallowed drily, suddenly nervous again. “Y-yeah, so?”

“Do you know Sans Skelton?”

That question took him by surprise, and he found himself answering before he could really think it through. “Yeah, I know him. Why?” His mind caught up with his tongue, and he added, “W-what do you want with him? I-if you try anything—”

“I just want to know where he might be.” The Slytherin carded a hand through his hair, and Neville suddenly realized that the older student looked somewhat out of sorts. “I need to ask him about… something.”

“…Oh.”

“So do you know where he is?”

Neville shook his head, still somewhat marveling that the conversation hadn't devolved into insults yet. “No, though he was just in the Hospital Wing. I imagine he's gone back to class now.”

“If you see him—” He cut himself short, as if second guessing himself.

“I… I guess I could tell him you were looking for him…?” Shrugging, and consequently almost dropping the box again, Neville added. “If you want, I mean.”

“That would be helpful.”

And then the weird Slytherin was gone.

“That was… odd,” Neville muttered to himself. Then he groaned, annoyed with himself. “Ugh, I didn't even get his name, dang it.”

Still, he had never seen a Slytherin act so… non-Slytherin-y.

“I wonder what he wanted with Sans, anyway.”

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or Undertale.

AH-HAH! Consider yourself bamboozeled, readers, for the last chapter was just a bonus chapter!
Happy April Fools!

(Actually, I think I already pulled this same twist back in, what, 2017? Oh well.)

Also, wow, I really chose a bad time to miss an update.

I hope you are all staying inside, and washing your hands regularly. Maybe watching
YouTube or playing games, right? I recommend Hermitcraft, if you enjoy watching people play Minecraft—days worth of good content there. For those of you who still need to go out and face the world right now, good luck and godspeed! I appreciate all that you're doing to keep the cogs turning. Don't forget to look out for yourself too.

Thanks for the kudos and comments! And additional thanks for putting up with my having tripped over my own update schedule for a while.

Stay safe out there, and I'll see ya on the flipside, everyone!

End Notes

Join the Discord if you're interested! Here's the link: INVITE

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