Patchwork Family

by kisxsleeep

Summary

Jo Newmore is a woman of few simple ambitions and routine. She's not the best person around, but she's far from the worst. She thinks it's all of the "big sis" training she's had growing up. Still, she always expected her family life to be what it was: strained. She never expected for certain tiny creatures to wriggle their way into her life. Or her heart for that matter.
“Sisssyyyy!” The door to my apartment muffled more of Olivia’s voice than the thin walls did, “Are you in there? Sisssyyyy!? Come on! Answer me!”

My eyes stuck together as I raised my throbbing head from my arms. My three computer monitors mocked me with work undone. I had e-mails to answer, logos to finish, code to write, missed calls to call back, and so much more. My cramped “office” (which was technically just the second “bedroom” in my “two bedroom” apartment) looked like a mini tornado had ripped through it, and I suppose- in a way- one did. The sheer amount of work that needed to be done slammed down on my waking mind like a tidal wave.

“Sis! SISSY!??!” I could hear the frantic edge beginning to coat Olivia’s words. After saving my work, I stood up with a weary sigh and tied my dirty blonde hair back into a sweaty, oily, ink stained bun. I found some old flip flops in the narrow hallway that separated the “office” from my “bedroom”. For a moment, I looked to my left at the bathroom. I really needed to shower and brush my teeth, “Sissy! It’s Sunday! We always have lunch together on Sundays remember?”

“Yeah, yeah,” I grumbled turning to my right into the fused living room and kitchen. Unlike my “office” the rest of my apartment was rather clean, but that was more like due to my lack of items. Most of my money was placed into various savings accounts. If things go according to plan, I should be able to retire around 60 and buy a nice little cottage on a lake to die in.

“Sis-“ I opened the door and painted on a lazy grin for Olivia. My tall, willowy little sister pouted at me while crossing her arms. I could never figure out how she got mom’s platinum blonde hair and baby blue eyes while I got a dirty mix of our parents’ hair colors and grandma’s brown eyes. She looked more like a super model than an aspiring chef in all honesty. Well, I supposed I looked more like a drug addict than a web designer who dabbled in graphic design for extra cash.

“Heya.” I slurred scotching her out of the way to exit my apartment. I triple checked to make sure the door was locked. In this neighborhood, it was better to be paranoid than come home to find your expensive shit “missing” from their resting place, “Sorry about that. I was asleep.”

“It’s 12:23!” Olivia huffed looking at my ratty sweatpants and stained hoodie, “When’s the last time you left your office?”

“Err....15 hours ago....I think?” I struggled to remember what time I passed out. “JOJO!” Olivia
stamped her foot. I growled at the old nickname, “UGH! Josephie Ophelia Arietta Newmore! You need to quit holing yourself up in that tiny ass office of yours!”

“SH!” I grabbed her wrist and began tugging her towards the dingy elevators, “You keep yelling and I’ll have my neighbors ready to slit my throat.”

“That didn’t seem to bother you earlier!” “Because you weren’t being a little brat!” I shoved her into the elevator right as an angry looking man exited his apartment. I hurriedly pressed the close door button before he turned around, “See what I mean? That guy’s an ex-con who went to prison for beating a guy who sneezed on him!”

That was a total lie. I didn’t even really know the bastard, but I was half certain he dealt crack downtown.

“What?” Olivia gasped, “How can you live in a place like this?”

“Because it’s cheap as fuck.” I nodded sagely just to annoy her, “Mother dearest and father don’t love me as much as they love you or Nadia, so I don’t get fancy high rise apartments or mini mansions for Christmas.”

“They’ve offered to help you many times!” Olivia protested as we exited the elevator on the ground floor, “You’ve just been a prideful butt-head!”

It was partially pride’s fault. My entire childhood my parents shoved it down my throat that they “made” me with their money. Needless to say, when I got high school I busted my ass until I got a perfect 4.0 GPA and a full ride scholarship to one of the best art schools in the states. From then to now, I made myself the self-made woman I was. I hadn’t seen a single penny from my parents in over 12 years.

“Whatever.” I really didn’t want to waste our meet up day arguing, “Where we eating at?”

“We’re eating at this cute little bistro that opened up recently!” Olivia’s face lit up and she forgot the argument immediately. Getting her to talk about food was the best way to get her off my back, “It’s so precious! I’ve eaten there with Kelly, so I know they’ll have things you like!”

I smiled as she began to babble on about the bistro’s atmosphere and food. It was true that Olivia rode my ass on a lot of things: my apartment, my appearance, my workaholic tendencies, etc. In the end though, she was still my little sister. Seeing her practically bouncing on her heels made all of the stress from my week bleed off of my shoulders. Hearing the enthusiasm and optimism untainted by the realities of adulthood warmed my chilling heart. Really. These little meet and greets were one of the only two things that kept me going most days. We went about our usual day. The bistro she found was decent. It was a little too frufru for my tastes, but she seemed to really enjoy frilly menu and attractive waiters. Afterwards, she practically dragged me by my unwashed hair into a coffee shop to get some overly complicated drink.

“I’m covering Miranda’s shift tonight, so we can’t go see a movie like usual.” Olivia explained as we began to walk towards the park. Her eyes flickered across the stores before stopping on something, “Oh. My. GOD! LOOK JOJO!”

I cringed at how loud her voice was. A dark red blush covered my face as people turned to look at me and my puppy of a little sister.

“Yeah Liv?” I followed her finger.

“A Bitty Care Center!”
Bitty Care Centers were places where tiny creatures called “bitties” were treated for illnesses/injuries and held until they were adopted. Bitties had surfaced with their few larger monster caretakers after the Mt. Ebbot excavation crew finally broke the barrier separating the long forgotten kingdom from the human world. The little monsters were quickly becoming the new cat or dog in most households. It was easy to see why. Why have a cat or dog when you could look after a creature that could actually talk back? I knew our city was moderately sized, but I never expected to see one pop up here. It seemed…odd.

“Huh. Cool.” I shrugged, “Is that really something to get so worked up about?”

“ ‘Is it really’- Jojo!” Olivia stamped her foot reminding me of when she was nine, “Bitties are so cute and adorable! I think it’d be really nice to have one!”

“Didn’t you kill 10 goldfish when we were younger?” I asked tugging her towards and empty bench to get out of the bustling crowd’s way.

“That’s not fair,” Olivia protested taking a quick sip of her drink, “A goldfish can’t tell me if they’re hungry or sick. A bitty can! That’s why they’re so amazing.”

“Uh huh.” I raised a brow.

“You just don’t have any faith in me do you!?”

“None at all.” I dodged her manicured fist when it swung towards my face, “No need for violence now.”

“You’re so mean. I don’t know why I even drag you out of that little hell hole sometimes.” Olivia looked away from me.

“Hey now. I’m just being honest.” I patted her shoulder, “Maybe do some research and make sure you can actually handle the responsibility first…then….you could think about getting one. ONE.”

“You think I could?” The hope brimming in those eyes stung.

“Yeah. You could. You’ve got a big enough heart.” That was the honest truth.

“Thanks sissy.” Olivia hugged me, “I need to get going though. Miranda’s shift starts in twenty.”

“Okay. Do you need me to walk you to work?”

“No. I’m fine. That creepy guy was arrested a couple of weeks ago.” Olivia smiled and put on her best ‘I’m brave’ face.

“If you’re certain…” I didn’t want my baby sister to be strolling the streets alone even if it was midday….

“I’m sure.”

…but I also didn’t want to hover over her too much if I could avoid it. The last thing she needed was me looking over her shoulder as well.

“Text me when you get there okay?” I stood up stretching slightly.

“Yes mother.” Olivia glowered at me.

“Please don’t compare me to that harpy if you can avoid it.” I patted her hair.
“HEY! You say I look like her all the time!”

I ran like hell laughing my ass off. Luckily, she was wearing stilettos. I ran like the wind stumbling over my flip flops every once in a while. The crowd around me shoved me back sometimes, but I didn’t really care. It was fun to act younger again. I was taking a short cut through the mostly brown “park” near my apartment complex. The building was set right where the gang turfs began, so the entire neighborhood looked…well…like shit. Some of the graffiti was breath taking though. A couple of kids played on worn down play sets in old mulch with a stray parent or two watching over them. Everything was fine.

With one exception.

An arguing couple was tugging back and forth on a jar in one of the darker, secluded areas of the park.

Normally, I’d have said they were fighting over moonshine and be done with it. The jar didn’t have booze in it though.

It had something tiny being tossed back and forth.

I edged closer and eventually saw it was a disoriented tiny little skeleton creature wearing a faded hoodie, black track shorts, and black and red sneakers. He was panting against the glass as the momentum from each pull sent him flying back and forth. Unbridled rage seeped into my veins. Fury guiding my footsteps I approached the couple with my head held high.

“I won’t just let you leave my cherry behind!”

“Did you not see that vet’s price bitch? It’s bad enough this thing is so clingy and whiny, but I draw the line at it draining my bank account.”

“We are not giving him to some stranger! Do you know how that would like make me look? We have to kill it if you want to get rid of it!”

My hand shot out like a bullet and ripped the jar away from the bickering duo. They gawked at me for a few seconds while I hurriedly spun the top off of the lid. The bitty gasped as air flooded the suffocating jar. I quickly tilted the jar over my palm and caught the little guy. He was so small he fit easily onto my hand. He had to only be around 2 ¾ an inch tall. He was a ball of fire in my palm though, and fat tears began to spill from the corner of his eyes.

“I’ll be taking this.” I shoved the jar in between the woman’s fake tits. They actually managed to hold the jar, “Have a pleasant evening.”

I turned on one heel and bolted away. I ignored the faint protests from the couple and hurried on. The bitty in my palm desperately needed medical attention. After realizing he had been removed from the couple, the bitty began to whimper and cry in earnest.

“w-w-why….” His voice was paper thin.

“Little guy?” I asked bringing him closer to my chest as I forced my way through the after lunch crowd.

“m-ma-mama…she…doesn’t l-l-love me….” He looked up at me with wet, red eyes. Misery glowed across his pale, drawn face. He trembled in my warm hands. An arrow might as well have ripped through my heart. I pulled the tiny guy up under my chip and gently began to rub circles on his back.
“I’m sorry little guy.” I murmured, “I’m sorry.”

“…a….” He mumbled something against my neck through his tears. There was nothing else I could say to the heartbroken monster sobbing against my neck. He shook with fever and pain alike as I navigated my way back to the Bitty CC. The pastel green building was a bit off putting to those who weren’t comfortable with monsters, but I held to hatred for anyone. I also had a mission.

“This bitty needs some help.” I told the short rabbit monster behind the counter after rushing inside, “He’s sick, and his owners had him in a sealed jar for who knows how long.”

“Oh my goodness.” The rabbit monster stood up and took the little guy from me, “This poor thing. I’ll get him back right away, but…oh dear….we…we can’t do anymore free work.”

I could feel the anxiety rolling off of her. I knew business had to be hard on monsters. The bitties were the only market they had, so the price tag was rather lofty. I took out the roll of $100 bills I was supposed to be taking to my bank. I laid them on the counter.

“I’ll cover it.” The relief in her eyes made the expensive wad of cash I just handed over seem insignificant. She asked me to wait in the lobby before whisking the tiny creature into back. I sat quietly in the lobby because it was asked of me. I didn’t know why she wanted me to stay. True I had paid the bill, but the bitty wasn’t mine.

“Are you the woman who came in with this little guy?” A taller, female rabbit monster approached cradling a sobbing bitty in his palm. I glanced over his fingers and saw it was indeed the little bitty I had brought in. The instant those little eyes locked on me, tiny hands shot towards me.

“m-mama.” His voice was pleading. His color looked better, and he didn’t seem to be as lightheaded as earlier.

“Uhh…no,” The rabbit monster frowned and new tears welled up in the bitty’s eyes, “Er…Jojo. Jojo. That’s what we’ll go with. M’Kay?”

“j-jo…j-jojo.” The cherry tried it out before reaching for me again, “Jojo!”

“He’s been rather frantic.” The rabbit monster explained as I carefully took the bitty into my hands, “We managed to treat him though. He’s quite lucky. He had ‘speck’. It’s a bitty disease that can completely dust a bitty if they aren’t treated in time. He…was pretty bad off. Thank you for bringing him in.”

“Y-Yeah. It’s no problem, but um…he’s not mine.” I explained awkwardly letting the cherry cry into my hoodie, “I just grabbed him from some shitty owners.”

“Well…he seems quite attached to you.” The rabbit monster observed, “Have you thought of owning a bitty before?”

“Uh…Not really…um…I’m not exactly certain I like where you’re going with this…”

“Listen,” The rabbit monster crouched down to my height, “We’ve had more than a few bitties returned. Normally that’s fine, but lately poor owners are coming out of the woodwork to abandon bitties on our doorstep. I usually wouldn’t try to press someone into adopting a bitty. This little guy seems quite attached however, and I don’t know how he’d respond to returning to the adoption agency.”

“Umm…” Uncertainty coiled in my chest. I knew monsters were having a hard time. I knew having a Bitty CC in town wouldn’t be good. I knew a lot of things about this situation. What I
didn’t know was how to counter her logic. I worked from home, so I couldn’t say I wasn’t home enough. I had tons of cash saved up, so I couldn’t use money as an excuse.

“j-jojo?” That quiet, gentle stammer from my hands made me look down. The cherry looked up at me with hope in his eyes, “p-please…? i…d-don’t wa-want another bad h-h-human…”

“Well shit.” I groaned curling around the bitty, “Fine ya little idjit. Why don’t you just bury yourself in my heart while you’re at it?”

“Oh thank goodness.” The rabbit monster sighed in relief, “I’ll go collect the paperwork.”

“You’re seriously okay with letting some random person walk out of here with him?” I asked one final time.

“Someone who rescues a bitty and pays the expensive hospital bill isn’t random.” The rabbit monster seemed to smile at me, “I’m certain he’ll be in good hands.”

With that, she practically pranced to the back to gather the paperwork.

"...m..." The bitty shifted in my hands slightly.
"Yes?" I raised a brow.

“m-my..ma…n-no..” The little bitty shook his head before looking up at me, “My Jojo?”

“Yes.” I sighed reluctantly trying not to blush, “Your Jojo, and you’re my little Idjit. I think that’s a good little name for a tiny guy like you.”

“i-idjit?” New tears welled up in his eyes.

“Oh shit. Do you not like that?” Panic flooded my chest.

“i…i…h-have a n-na-name?”

“Oh my god.” I gently squeezed the guy close, “Yes, you have a name. You’re important to me.”

It wasn’t exactly a truth…yet anyways. I held Idjit as he cried again. Motherly concern and affection born from years of looking after my little sister guided my hands and fingers to his back and skull. I never realized how much having a name could really mean to someone. All I could hope in that moment was one thing: I hope to whatever deity or karmic force is listening that this little guy will be happy from now on.

And I damn well made it my personal vow to see to it if a higher power couldn’t.
If someone asked me what the hardest part of owning a bitty was, I’d say it was finding a decent sleep schedule. I worked a lot and rarely got more than five hours of sleep, but Idjit had a slightly more routine schedule. Normally, this wouldn’t be an issue. Normally a bitty has spent their life in a Bitty CC and never had shitty owners, so they don’t panic as often if they’re alone for a period of time. Idjit wasn’t so lucky. I found him curled into a ball sobbing his eyes out the first time I left him on a pillow in the living room to sleep. It took a lot of experimentation to find a way that worked. I tried getting on a schedule myself, but I couldn’t ever get any sleep. He tried sleeping further away, but he panicked every time he woke up. We figured something out after a few weeks of experimentation.

“Idjit?” I reached back into the hood of my hoodie. Idjit’s soft snores began to stutter a bit, “It’s time for breakfast.”

“…mmm..” I felt him stir and unwrap himself from the scarf mattress/blanket he slept on, “j-jojo?”

“Hey there little guy.” I chuckled extending my hand down into my hood. He clung to my hand as I pulled him over my shoulder, “Still sleepy?”

“a little…” Idjit blushed and avoided my amused stare, “s-s-sorry.”

“You’ve done nothing wrong sweetie.” I stretched slightly, “Want some mini pancakes for breakfast?”

“ye-y-yes please.” He smiled timidly and blushed.

“Then mini pancakes we shall have.” I pressed a light kiss to the top of his skull. Idjit squeezed me closer, and I felt happy tears drip onto my fingers, “Leo invited us over by the way.”

“h-he has a curly l-li-living with him right?” Idjit tried to subtly rub his tears away.

“Yup. Cyan. He’s a real quiet bitty though, so I think you guys will get along.”

I had been a bit worried when Nagihiko- my precious Leon S. Kennedy wanna be, thus Leo- adopted him. For as long as I could remember, the Japanese immigrant had been part of my life. He endured a lot of bullying, but I showed his abusers the errors of their ways with my fists. Some part of me was terrified that he’d pick up some vicious hobgoblin that would bully him relentlessly. Luckily, he found Cyan. Cyan- bless him- was one of the most peaceful souls I had ever met. The little water elemental had been a perfect match for my shy friend.
“i-i hope we do.” Idjit shifted into a more comfortable position on my hand.

“I promise.” I swore solemnly, “I shall swear on my precious mini pancakes.”

Luckily, he laughed like I wanted him to. He started afterwards though, so I had to pat him on the head to calm him down a bit. He was so scared of being sent back to the Bitty CC or abandoned on the streets. My little bitty roommate had relaxed some, but he was still anxious about being too loud or too lively. Our life together was a slow- slow- work in progress.

Totally worth it though.

“Ready?” I gently shifted Idjit onto one palm. Leo’s small family cottage sat in the middle of cookie cutter suburban hell, but it was a massive upgrade compared to my little shit hole.

“mhmm.” Idjit was trembling in my hands.

“Idjit. Don’t be nervous sweetie.” I sighed holding him to my chest, “I’m right here if anything goes wrong- which it won’t. I promise.”

The somber look he gave me read “I do not believe you”. I scowled and poked his cheek with my right index finger. He blinked out of surprise, but slowly began to giggle when I started to tickle him. Once he seemed a little more relaxed, I pulled him in for a simple kiss on the skull and knocked on Leo’s door.

The door opened to reveal my neon pink haired best friend. He wore a cheesy chemistry t-shirt. He lamented the fact that his school had a uniform, but I’m certain his students were probably overjoyed that his lame sense of humor didn’t infect their classroom too much.

“Joan.” Leo’s grin fell when he glanced down at Idjit, “And who is this?”

“Idjit. Shit. I forgot to tell you. He’s a cherry, so he won’t be bad I swear.” I pinched the bridge of my nose, “I’ve had him a couple of weeks.”

“You are a total bitch you know that.” Leo huffed dramatically, “I told you ten seconds after I got Cyan, but I find out weeks after you adopt a cherry?”

“I’ve been busy.” I whined.

“No excuse. I disown you as my friend. Good-bye.” Leo shut the door in my face. I could hear him snickering behind the door.

“Leo!” I laughed knocking on the door quietly. Didn’t want to scare Cyan if he was close to the door after all, “Lemme in you bastard.”

“Hmm…nope.” I heard him lock the door.

“Nagihiko Watanabe! Don’t make me use my key!”

“j-jojo…?” Idjit sniffled, “is…is it…m-my fault…?”

“Oh fuck.” I was ready to shoot myself in the face when I saw big tears pouring down Idjit’s face, “No! No sweetie. This is what we always do I swear! Leo! Idjit thinks you’re mad at me because of him.”

“Oh shit! I am so sorry little guy.” The door swung open immediately, “Jeez, I’m the one who knows about bitties. I was going to adopt a cherry at first you know. I’m sorry. We’re just
Idjit looked like he didn’t believe us.

“Listen buddy,” I tugged Leo close by his shoulders, “This guy right here has had my back for almost twenty years. Trust me when I promise we’re just screwing with each other.”

“She did not tell me about you though,” Leo huffed, “So I’m very glad to meet you Idjit.”

“r-really…?” Idjit began to wipe away his tears.

“Really.” Leo smiled, “I’m glad that Joan has someone to look after her.”

“Excuse me?” I growled, “What am I five?”

“I’ve found her collapsed on more than one occasion, but now I know she’ll have someone to help her if it happens again.” Leo ignored my glare, “Please take very good care of her.”

“i-i’ll try.” Idjit sat up a little bit straighter.

“Great. Why not make him think I’m going to keel over any second while you’re at it.” I shoved Leo playfully with my shoulder.

“Don’t give me ideas now.” Leo flicked my forehead instead of shoving me like he usually would. I’m glad he was attentive. He might be shorter than me, but he can shove someone out of the way when he wants to.

“Papa?” The soft voice that interrupted our usual dick assery belonged to the 4 inch tall curly standing in the doorway. He was also dressed in a lame chemistry t-shirt, but he wore slacks and dress shoes instead of jeans and sneakers, “Miss Josie? It’s nice to see you again. Who is that you’ve brought with you?”

“Hey there Cyan.” I lowered my voice slightly. Like my sisters, I had a tendency to be loud. I crouched down- thanking god sweatpants were stretchy enough to not rip- to show Cyan Idjit, “Idjit. This is Cyan. Cyan this is my bitty Idjit.”

“You’ve adopted a bitty Miss Josie? That is good. Papa worries about you.” Cyan’s water shifted to a brighter blue out of happiness, “Hello Idjit.”

“h-hi…” Idjit blushed and curled against my fingers.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you.” Cyan extended a watery hand up to Idjit. Reluctantly, Idjit reached out his own hand, “Welcome.”

“t-t-than-k-s.” Idjit buried himself in my fingers blushing like mad.

“Oh my god he’s so cute.” Leo laughed.

“I know right?” I grinned, “He’s precious.”

“Well come on. You’re probably scaring the neighbors. When’s the last time you did laundry?” Leo asked nudging me slightly.

“Umm…for myself…? Three months ago. I had to wash Idjits new clothes a couple of times to make them more comfortable for the little guy to wear though.” I scooped Cyan up with my free hand to avoid squishing him when entering the doorway.
“No wonder you smell like mold. Thank god I have air freshener.” Leo coughed, “This place can fit two people you know. It-“

“I’m. Living. On. My. Own. Besides, you can use the spare bedroom for Annie’s kid when she finally moves in.” I carefully made sure I didn’t yell or make my words too aggressive, “Anyways, we’re watching a musical right? I vote Rent.”

“You are so stubborn.” Leo sighed locking his front door behind him as I walked through his monochrome house. It was filled with letters and art from students, pictures, awards, and other knickknacks he picked up from his job, “Cyan and I haven’t seen that one yet though.”

“Great. Sound good to you Cyan?” I asked the bitty balancing himself carefully on my palm.

“That sounds wonderful Miss Josie.”

“Joan? Do you want regular popcorn or cara-“

“If you bring any of those caramel covered popcorn abominations near me, you will die.” I growled over my shoulder.

“Caramel corn isn’t that bad.” Leo laughed entering his kitchen, “Dig up Rent while I pop some plain popcorn then.”

“Perfect.” I hurried to the rather plain living room. I gently placed the two bitties on the couch before rifling through Leo’s musical collection, “I know it’s here somewhere. I borrowed and returned it a few months ago.”

“y-you like m-musicals?” Idjit asked from where he was curled up on the couch. Cyan was more relax and gently curled up next to the cherry, but Idjit was practically trying to attach his femurs to his ribcage.

“Yeah. Somewhat. Cyan doesn’t do too well with more…thriller and/or action based films, and Leo is a total drama nerd. I’ve adapted to my friend’s inherit nerdiness!” I called out to Leo in the kitchen.

“Beats being a scumbag bitch anyday!” Leo called back.

Idjit’s eyes widened, but Cyan merely chuckled softly. Idjit turned to the bitty confused. The curly cocked its head at him. I watched the two have a silent conversation- somehow- in my peripheral. I didn’t turn my full attention to them though. Eventually, Idjit seemed to relax somewhat.

“Hallelujah!” I declared holding Leo’s copy of Rent up like it was the holy book itself, “Found it!”

“Good.” Leo walked in to the living room with a bowl of popcorn and sat down beside Cyan. I popped the movie in and scooped Idjit up before sitting down. He seemed to relax even more, “Well, cherries tend to be very clingy…”

“What’s that you’re muttering?” I said grabbing some popcorn, “If you got something to say about my bitty, grow a pair and tell me to my face.”

“I wasn’t trying to be rude or anything.” Leo shrugged and helped Cyan onto a pillow, “I was just thinking that all those years of having Olivia clinging to you blessed you with eternal patience.”
“She didn’t do that for years.”

“I thought you said she did Miss Josie.” Cyan looked up at me curiously.

“I did…? When?” I struggled to remember when I could’ve possibly said something like that to Cyan.

“He’s referring to that time a date went poorly.”

“Oooohhh…” I blushed as the main menu appeared on the screen, “I was shitfaced drunk, so I don’t remember that very well.”

“y-you drink?” Idjit squeaked. I looked down at the trembling bitty. He was shaking, “…a-ar…are you…m-mean when you…?”

“No sweetie.” Puzzle pieces clicked in my mind, “Nonononononono. NO. I don’t drink very often to begin with. When I do get drunk, I tend to spend most of my time crying in a corner than anything else.”

“o-o…oh.” Idjit practically melted in relief on my leg. I felt fury rise in my once more. I really needed to find those old humans of his and run them over a couple of hundred times.

“Welp. No more booze for me.” I sighed bringing a shocked Idjit up for a kiss, “No more liquor shall pass these lips. Swear it on my soul sugar.”

“Oh. My. God.” Leo had the movie paused, “The local alcoholic just swore off alcohol? Bitties must be able to work magic with their humans!”

“Hey! I wasn’t that bad.” I growled burying myself into his couch and resting my feet on his coffee table. Idjit rested on my chest, “Wanna cuddle with me too Cyan? You’re like a little water heater.”

“Can I Miss Josie?” The blue bitty looked up at me.

“Ya mind sharing Idjit?” The bitty shook his head, “Great.”

“Heyy.” Leo whined, “Cyan’s my bitty.”

“Well I don’t see you cuddling him.” I said reaching for the bitty. Leo reached down and tugged Cyan on his lap before I could reach him, “LEOOOO.”

“He’s mine to cuddle with.” Leo growled protectively.

“Meanie.” I flung popcorn at his head. This time he actually caught some with his mouth.

“Perhaps next time Miss Josie?” Cyan said as he struggled to reach the remote. Leo chuckled and pressed play for the bitty.

“Sure. Sure.” I huffed pouting, “I’ve still got my little Idjit though, so for once I don’t feel like a third wheel.”

And so, Idjit and Cyan’s first interaction didn’t end in disaster. I knew it wouldn’t. The two were fairly- okay somewhat/a little bit- similar. They didn’t become best buddies overnight. Olivia was out of town with her new “super awesome and cool boyfriend”, so I spent more time with Leo than usual. What started off a mutual pleasant disinterest slowly turned into an adorable little friendship. It was nice for Idjit to have a friend his size, and Cyan seemed to enjoy my anxious little
cherry’s company. Leo jokingly said that Idjit should move in with them and just be Cyan’s brother. To this day, Idjit’s response warms my heart.

“n-no! I’m st-s-staying with Jojo!” The defiant little pout to his lip and fat tears in the corner of his eyes spoke larger volumes of resolve. Leo and I had shared a look of shock before I began to simply snuggle the ever loving shit out of my little Idjit.

However…looking back on it…some part of me wonders if Leo knew what would be coming.

“Um…what?” I blinked at my best friend. Leo sat somberly across from my on my couch. Cyan was curled around his fingers and crying quietly. Idjit hesitated between curling closer to me and hurrying to his bitty friend’s side.

“Annie…she lied to me. Her son is 4 not 8, and he’s loud. Cyan can’t get any sleep or even sit down. Her son just chases him around and screams so much.” Leo sighed rubbing his water bitty’s head gently, “It’s not a good place for him to be. I really want to make this work with Annie—even if she lied to me. Cyan can’t stay in the house anymore though. It’s too much for him, so…will you take him? Please?”

“Why not just boot the bitch?” I did not like the idea of him dating someone who would lie over something like the age of her kid, “She lied once. What’s stopping her from doing it again?”

“The only reason she lied was because she was worried I’d break it off early on for Cyan’s sake. Now… I care about her, but I care about Cyan too. I want him to be somewhere safe and peaceful.” Leo explained.

“I see…Idjit? Do you mind?”

The little skeleton looked up at me before shaking his head rapidly. Timidly he approached Cyan’s feet that were hanging off of Leo’s leg.

“c-cyan…?” Idjit tugged lightly on his friend’s foot. The curly removed himself from Leo’s leg to look at Idjit, “d-do…yo..you need a h-hug?”

For a moment Cyan was perfectly still. Then, he flung himself at Idjit’s smaller frame. My heart swelled with pride seeing my Idjit calmly hold his taller friend as best he could.

“Thank god.” Leo sighed in relief, “I really didn’t want to have to take him back to the Bitty CC.”

“Well…I guess I have another new roommate.” I laughed, “I’ve got a few words for that little bitch of yours though.”

“I figured you would.” Leo’s smile was humorless, “Maybe later though. Things are still rocky after all of this.”

“Fine. Only because I love you.” I flicked Leo’s forehead, “Did you bring Cyan’s things?”

“Yes.” Leo handed me a small backpack, “I put a couple of his favorite movies in there too. He’s used to staying up late, and he can sleep alone. I know you have a hectic schedule.”

“You don’t know the half of it bud.” I snorted placing the backpack, “Well…you need to get back to Annie don’t you?”
“I do.” Leo didn’t move to stand however. He simply stared at his upset curly, “I’m so sorry Cyan. I really am.”

“I-It’s okay Papa.” Cyan hiccupped, “I…understand.”

“Ugh.” Leo groaned gently taking Cyan from Idjit’s grasp, “You mean a lot to me. That’s why I want to make sure you have a stable home.”

“I know.” Cyan sighed.

“Take superb care of him Joan. I mean it.” Leo’s eyes narrowed in warning.

“Hey, Idjit’s fine isn’t he? Right bud?” I gently poked my cherry. The little bitty blushed from the sudden attention and nodded. Idjit then looked up at Cyan and began to tear up a little, “Aww buddy. Cyan’s crying enough for everyone baby.”

Apparently he wasn’t because for the next fifteen minutes I had to help Cyan and Leo through their painful good-bye and comfort the two bitties alone. I was ready to saunter over to Leo’s house and clock a bitch for forcing Leo’s hand in this matter. BUT…well…Leo probably would’ve disowned me as a friend if I did.

Thus, Idjit and I had a new roommate. Cyan- like Leo said- was okay sleeping alone, but that didn’t stop the little bitty from trying to find me at random times in the night. Finding a good way for all parties to get some sleep became more hectic. Until Cyan curled up with Idjit in my hood of course.

“Boys?” Fatigue slurred my words slightly. I yawned saving my work, “You guys asleep?”

Idjit’s soft snores were answer enough.

“Well then.” I rolled my shoulders carefully before standing up, “Time to shift this little sleepover to an actual bed. Gotta hope I don’t squish the cuties though.”

I shuffled through my apartment to the sounds of my two little bitties snoozing away. It was odd having to think about not waking other people up. I kind of felt it with Idjit, but it was even more important to me now.

I kind of liked it. It was nice…to have people to care about.

And have people who cared about me.
“They are so adorable.” Olivia looked at my bitties in awe, “It’s not fair that you went off and got two bitties without telling me! Well…got one and took in another.”

“I didn’t exactly plan it or anything.” I grumbled. It was seven in the morning…SEVEN IN THE MORNING AFTER I HAD WORKED FOR 19 HOURS STRAIGHT. I should be in bed not sitting in some beige colored coffee shop being interrogated. Sometimes I wondered if I loved her too much.

“Hello Miss Olivia.” Cyan politely nodded.

“Hey there Cyan. I’m sorry Leo had to re-home you.” Olivia sighed, “Is it bad some part of me hopes Annie’s a total bitch? That way I can hate her and not feel guilty about it?”

“Hmph.” I snorted, “I’ll hate the bitch for breathing no matter how sweet and honorable she is.”

“Please do not feel any extra hatred for my sake Miss Josie.” Cyan patted my hand.

“I hate all the women Leo dates.” I yawned, “But I do hate her even more for ruining what you two had.”

“Thank you Miss Josie.” Cyan’s face flushed a deep blue (not dark enough to signal distress or sorrow though).

“So? Who are you little man?” Olivia asked leaning her chin against the table to be at Idjit’s level.

“i-idjit…” The little bitty hid behind my coffee cup.

“He’s shy.” I sighed holding my hand out. Idjit quickly climbed on it, “He’s really sweet though.”

“…jojo…” Idjit whined softly burying his face into fingers.

“Jojo?” The smug smirk and cock of her brow tempted me to fling some sugar on her face, “I thought you hated that name.”

“It’s better than “mama”.” I looked over at the sugar packets longingly.

“It is rather odd.” Cyan sat down in between Olivia and me on the table, “Most people want their bitty to call them some variant of mother or father.”

“Oh…it’s because of…?” Olivia’s face melted into sorrow.

“Hmm?” Cyan cocked his head. I thought curly’s were supposed to be very quiet and timid.
I guess Leo’s narcissistic and inquisitive personality has rubbed off on him.

“j-jojo…? you’re sq-s-squeezing me…” Idjit complained gently.

“Sorry little one.” I sat Idjit down next to Cyan, “When we were little, our mom wasn’t around very much. Thus, the kids would tell their parents that if they needed to speak with Olivia’s “mama” they should speak to me. They also had some stupid rhyme they’d chant when I came to pick Olivia up.”

“Both of our parents were rather busy,” Olivia added, “Jojo had to take care of me often, so she had to deal with that stuff a lot. Didn’t parents actually begin to call you anytime a kid had an issue with me?”

“Why the hell do you think you were grounded so often?” I could remember the shrill anger from upset mothers shrieking false accusations through their phones. It was way too much for a kid to handle, but I dealt with it. I always had to make up for my parent’s failings, “I distinctly remember them saying I had “been too hard on” you when they finally decided to pop back up again.”

“And Nadia agreed with them because of course she did.” Olivia sighed, “You know her birth-“

“I know when my twin sister was born thank you.” I held up my palm, “I will be eating cupcakes and watching movies with my bitties, so my schedule is booked on that particular day.”

“Jojo.” Olivia’s eyes pleaded with me, “I know thing have been rocky in the past, but could you please try to make things work?”

“I’ve tried before Livvy.” I cringed at my slip up, “I’m not going, and they can take any problems they have with that to my barren field of “fucks” and “damns”. I’m done being the black sheep they can blame their misery on.”

“…y-you had a s-sa-ad ch-childho-o-od?” Idjit was beginning to tear up.

“It’s okay bud,” I said gently rubbing the forming tears away, “I’m over it now. Quite frankly, they’re the ones who keep bringing everything up again.”

“Because they miss-“

“Because they hate not looking like a perfect family.” I cut Oliva off with a glare, “I’m quite content with my life.”

No you aren’t.

“If you says so.” Olivia sighed, “Please take care of her guys?”

“i-i will.” Idjit sniffled.

“Of course Miss Olivia.” Cyan reached over and patted her hand.

“What is it with everyone and thinking I need to be looked after?” I sulked back into my chair, “Anyways. Family drama aside- where it shall stay and burn little miss- what did you call me out here for? It’s not Sunday.”

“Well, I’ve got a stable job now, so I have a schedule.” Olivia began slowly.

“Uh-huh?” I sighed bringing coffee up to my lips.
“I want to adopt a bitty.”

I choked.

“Miss Josie?” Cyan stood up looking around for something to help.

“j-j-jojo!” Idjit reached for my hand.

“Oh quit being so dramatic you meanie!” Olivia whined petulantly.

It took me a couple of seconds to get the tepid liquid down my throat properly. I carefully coughed away from the two bitties sitting in front of me.

“I’m fine.” I waved away Cyan and Idjt’s concerns, “Promise. Jesus.”

“jojo?” Idjit clung to my hand, “a-are you r-re-real-ly okay?”

“Peachy.” I forced a smile.

“You didn’t burn yourself too bad did you Miss Josie?” Cyan asked patting my hand. He flinched when someone dropped a plate in the back, so I opened my palm for him to curl into it.


“I’ve also done some research!” Olivia protested. She quickly lowered her volume after seeing Cyan curl up closer to me, “Sorry. I’ve done a lot of stuff to prepare for this you know. I even have a vague idea of what kind of bitty I’d like to adopt! You said-“

“I know what I said.” I sighed leaning my head down near my bitties, “Ugh. Lemme guess…you want me to go to the Bitty CC with you don’t you?”

“Yes please.” Olivia beamed.

“Be so glad I love you.” I stood, “Well. Come on. They close early on Fridays.”

“Okay.” Olivia practically bounced out of her seat.

“Well boys, looks like we’ll have to put off grocery shopping for a couple of hours.” I gently lowered the two bitties into my hood, “That okay?”

“Yes Miss Josie.”

“mhhmm.”

“Great.”

By the time I managed to get out of the beige coffee shop from hell, Olivia was practically three blocks down the road. My headache was made worse by the cloying perfumes, strong colognes, and other various scents flooding the cramped sidewalks. Still, I told Olivia she could get one if she felt she was ready.

The familiar building with large a large sign in cursive proclaiming “Bitty Care Center” looked brighter than usual given my headache. Olivia was impatiently tapping her foot as I slowly shuffled next to her.
“I’m so excited!” She whisper-yelled right into my ear.

“I can tell.” I rolled my eyes and held the door open for her. “After you brat.”

“Yay!” Olivia was too excited to notice the jab.

“Hello.” The tall monster who had treated Idjit stood behind the counter for once, “Ah. You’re the kind Samaritan who adopted that cherry right?”

“Yup. He’s right here.” I reached back and helped Idjit and Cyan out of my hood, “I’ve also taken in a curly that used to belong to a friend of mine.”

“I see. Who is this?” The monster pointed towards my sister who was already cooing over some bitties in little segregated playpens.

“My little sister. She’s decided to adopt a bitty for herself. Is it okay if I set these two here?” I asked. No one else was in the Bitty CC for once.

“That’s fine. Hello.” The monster waved at Idjit and Cyan, “It’s good to see you both again. Does your sister need any help?”

“Nah. I mostly want an edgy to bite her at least once.” Mischief burned in my soul, “Revenge for dragging my out of my apartment at such an ungodly hour.”

“Oh my god he’s so cute!” Olivia exclaimed.

“Olivia,” I chided from where I was leaning on the counter, “Some of the bitties are sensitive to loud noises remember? You’ve scared Cyan and probably any other curly in the place.”

“Sorry.” Olivia blushed and lowered her voice, “Hey there little man. What’s your name?”

“Who the hell is she talking to?” I pondered, “Do you two mind waiting here? Just in case things get a bit nasty?”

“No Miss Josie.”

“nuh-uh.”

“Can they?” I looked towards the monster.

“I’ll keep an eye on them.” The monster promised with a smile.

“Thanks.” I walked over to my sister.

“I am the Marvelous Baby Blue!” The bitty behind the fence exclaimed loudly as I approached.

“Awww…”

“Oh god.” I face palmed looking down at the hyperactive skeleton bitty that bounced around his play pen, “This is either a match made in hell or a covenant made in heaven.”

“I think he’s adorable! And he’s so playful!” Olivia reached a finger down. The baby blue latched onto it and snuggled it close.

“Of course my puppy of a sister would like a puppy like bitty.” I leaned against the
playpen’s walls, “You sure you want one so hyper? Doesn’t work leave you bone tired afterwards?”

“If that was a pun because he’s a skeleton bitty…” Olivia narrowed her eyes at me.

“Huh…? OH.” I began to laugh, “I didn’t even catch that.”

“Oh. The Marvelous Baby Blue should not be subjected to horrendous puns at his expense!” The baby blue turned away from me.

“I agree.” Olivia also pouted and looked away from me.

“Enjoy your little powpow from kindergarten hell then.” I said walking away. The two immediately began to chat once more. It was equally parts endearing and terrifying to see two creatures that could so easily defy fatigue communicating.

“I take it things are going well?” The monster asked. She was holding Cyan in one paw. Idjit immediately clung to my wrist once I leaned back against the counter.

“Yup. She might be adopting a baby blue.” I sighed opening my palm so Idjit could curl into my fingers, “I’m perfectly content with my chill bitties. Even if they get random panic attacks.”

“I’m glad to see you’ve been taking such good care of them.” The monster gently tickled Cyan who giggled a bit, “It’s nice to see some humans can be trusted with them.”

“Glad to help. It’s no skin off my nose.”

“Have they had a checkup?” The monster asked.

“No. I should probably schedule one though.” I sagged against the counter, “When do you guys have an opening?”

“Let me check…” The rabbit monster sat Cyan down and turned to her computer. She answered within a few minutes, “Could you do it sometime next week?”

“Sure. As long as it’s not on Tuesday.” Her brow raised, “I’ve got a client consultation planned.”

“Would 2:30 on Thursday work?”

“Yup.” I nodded.

“Excellent. Idjit hasn’t had any more problems with speck has he?”

“Nope. He’s been a normal cherry.” Idjit raised his head, “An extra adorable little cherry at that.”

Idjit blushed and ducked his head down.

“Miss Josie enjoys teasing him.” Cyan sighed walking over and leaning against the back of my palm.

“I see.” The rabbit monster chuckled, “I never gave you my name now did I? I’m-“

The doorbell chimed as someone entered. Both the monster and I turned to look at the newcomer. It was a homeless man holding something in his palms. He looked tired, hungry, and upset.
“My bitty…he’s…”

“Let me see.” The monster quickly became all business. She walked over and removed the bitty from his hands, “Ah, he’s developing speck.”

“I-I don’t have any money…” The man sighed, “Do I…Do I have to give him up? Er…surrender him?”

“Well….” The monster looked conflicted.

“I’ll cover it.” The words flew from my mouth before I could stop them, “It’s only $875 right? $800 for the treatment and $75 for the recovery meds? I’ve got like $900 on me.”

“That I can most certainly work with. I’ll begin treatment immediately.” The monster gave me a look of thanks.

“It’s no big deal.” It was kind of a problem, but next Tuesday’s client pays very well for my designs. I won’t be having any financial issues any time soon.

“Thank you so much.” Tears began to form in the man’s eyes, “He’s all I got left.”

“I can only imagine.” I pulled out my cash. I handed him any extra cash that wouldn’t go towards treating the bitty, “Here. So you two can have something to eat while he gets better.”

“God bless you.” His hands trembled taking the money from me, “We can eat for about a week off of this.”

“Just take care of your bitty good man.” I said patting his hands comfortingly, “They have a soup kitchen every Saturday at St. John’s Baptist church by the way.”

“You are so kind.” The man actually began to cry, “It’s been so hard since I was laid off. My wife threw me out of the house, and…he’s all I’ve got. Thank you.”

“Hey now.” I put Idjit down and offered the man a hug, “It’s okay. You know, there’s a bulletin outside the church for low wage work. That could help you get back on your feet again.”

The man completely broke down after that. His bitty was fine after treatment. It was a little 3 inch tall sansy with a tattered blue jacket. The little guy was dazed in the rabbit monster’s hands, but the bitty teleported rather sloppily into the man’s arms.

“Waltzer.” The man cradled his bitty close, “I’m so glad you’re okay.”

“hey pops.” The bitty slurred, “i’m glad i’m okay too.”

“Aww…” Olivia cooed into my ear. I bit back a yelp and practically jumped out of my skin. My proud little sister smiled at me. She held the baby blue from earlier. The little thing was staring at me in awe, “I’m glad I have such an amazing older sister.”

“Yeah, yeah.” I grumbled picking up my bitties and holding them close to my chest.

“This is the kind lady who helped us Waltzer.” The man carefully pointed at me.

“thanks.” Waltzer smiled sleepily. Then he closed his eyes and began to sleep.

“He should be fine.” The rabbit monster handed the man the small bottle of monster candy, “Make sure he eats two of these a day.”
“I will. Thank you so much.” The man looked ready to cry again.

“It’s no problem at all. We all love our bitties here.” Cyan and Idjit snuggled closer to me at that.

After the man left with his bitty, Olivia official adopted the baby blue- dubbed Hiro by Olivia. The rabbit monster seemed amused at the two’s antics, but I was ready to strangle my sister for being so loud and scaring Cyan.

“…j-jojo…?” Idjit asked from where I was holding him on my chest.

“Yeah little man?” I sighed shifting even further away from the Olivia and Hiro.

“d-di-did you m-mean it?”

“Hm?” I was trying to figure out what the hell he was talking about.

“Do you really love us Miss Josie?” Cyan added looking up at me.

My heart grew two sizes, and it wasn’t even Christmas yet.

“Of course I do.” I pressed gentle kisses to the tops of their heads, “Do you love me?”

“Yes.” Cyan blushed and buried himself into my stained hoodie.

“o-o-of co-co-urse!” Idjit tugged on my hoodie. Tears fell down his face when he saw traitors tears forming in my eyes, “d-do you…n-no-not belie-eve me?”

“Oh no baby I do.” I held laughed and rubbed my face on my shoulder, “I do. I’ve just never had someone tell me that so earnestly before.”

“Sissy?” Olivia called, “Come on! They’re closing up soon. Remember?”

“Of course I remember dolt.” I growled before turning to look at my bitties, “I don’t have any of our grocery cash though, so we’ll be going shopping tomorrow okay?”

“Yes Miss Josie.”

“o-okay.”

“Bye.” I said to the monster behind the counter before placing my bitties in my hood.

“Have a good evening.” The monster nodded politely.

“You too.” Olivia and I echoed. We exited the building.

“So the heroic human is Mama’s sibling?” Hiro asked excitedly as I struggled to keep pace with Olivia’s longer strides.

“Yup.” Olivia said, “My amazing big sissy.”

“So she is my Amazing Aunt!” Hiro bounced in Olivia’s palms.

“Jesus fucking christ.” A blush crawled off my face, “Why do you two have to be so embarrassing?”

But I really did love it. Just a little bit. Family…family is important I guess. Well some
family at least.
“i-i…” Idjit buried himself deeper into his little cocoon on the couch, “i…”

“Ijdjit.” I sighed, “It’s just a checkup precious. You won’t be staying there. Back me up here Cyan.”

“It is a routine visit to make sure we’re healthy.” Cyan tugged on Idjit’s cocoon, “That way- if we are sick- they can catch it early.”

“i’m..n-not sick though…” Idjit was trembling.

“We don’t stay there unless we’re really ill, and like you said neither of us are.” Cyan pleaded, “We won’t be left there. Miss Josie wouldn’t stand for it.”

“Damn straight.” I nodded from where I was crouched in front of the couch.

“r-really?” A little black and red eye appeared in one of the cracks.

“Cross my heart.” I remembered to not add the “hope to die” or the “stick a needle in my eye” part of that little saying. Idjit practically had a bitty heart attack last time.

“It should only take about half an hour.” Cyan used the crack to tug away some of the blanket to reveal Idjit’s blushing, tearstained face, “Then we’ll be right back home.”

I looked Cyan over carefully after he said that. Having a new home had to be hard on the little bitty, but I didn’t see any overt signs of distress at least. Leo and Annie were- sadly- progressing well in their relationship. I wouldn’t be surprised if Leo asked me to help him pick out a ring at this rate.

“o…o-okay.” Idjit finally crawled out of his safety nest, “please….d-don’t l-lea-ave me. i’ll b-be go-oood.”

“I’m not leaving you anywhere. Either of you.”

With that, Cyan and Idjit crawled onto my hands. After they were safely secure in my hood, I began the simple trek to the Bitty CC. It was a nice summer day for once, so I actually slowed down a bit. Cyan and Idjit poked their heads out of my hood to enjoy the fresh air. They deserved it after how well they behaved during the client consultation. The two pretty much deserved awards for being the best behaved bitties of all time despite the woman’s inherit bitchiness. Welp, as long as she keeps paying me this good, she can be as much of a bitch as she wants.

We reached the Bitty CC in record time. A about half a dozen groups of people- some were
single, others were obviously couples, and there were a few stray families- sat in little clusters in the
medical lobby across from the bitty play pen area. A couple of bitties looked a little out of it- a cold
or something-, so I wisely kept my distance from their little groups.

“Hello.” The smaller rabbit monster from my first visit with Idjit beamed up at me, “How
can I help you today?”

“Josephine Newmore. My bitties have a checkup at 2:30.”

“Ah, you’re a little early. Please wait until a nurse comes to take you all back.” She smiled,
“I’m glad that you kept the cherry.”

“I am too.” I nodded at her politely before finding a seat far away from the sick bitties,
“Here we are boys.”

“There are other bitties here this time.” Cyan commented looking around.

“Well, we aren’t here on a day they close early.” I leaned back, “This may or may not take
longer than expected.”

“o-o-oh..?” Idjit looked up at me concerned.

“I already made sure to set stuff up in case this takes longer. We’ll be home eventually.”

We did end up running behind. One of the bitties in the lobby collapsed and had to be
brought back for emergency care. It was depressing to see how overworked the workers were.
Between sick bitties and the dozens they still needed to adopt out, they were slammed with work.
Our checkup went by very quickly once we were brought back to a pale blue room. Both Cyan and
Idjit were healthy as could be- minus the need for a few extra nutrients. After we were let back out
front, our bitty tech picked out some vitamins for them.

“These should be good for both of them. They only need one a day, so two larger bottles
should hold you for a while.” The tech explained, “It’s just to make sure that they have stronger
immune systems.”

“Sounds good. I’ve got some vitamins of my own actually.” I rarely ever remembered to
take them, but I could easily make sure all of us ate one at breakfast.

“Then it should be easy to work these into your schedule.” The tech smiled, “I would also
recommend keeping some monster candy on hand. They cure most ailments- like colds, rashes, sore
throat, etc. That way you don’t have to come in every time your bitty sneezes.”

“That would be lovely.” I grinned shifting the bitties in my hand, “You guys okay with the
flavoring of these things?”

“I’m fine with anything Miss Josie.”

“t-t-they’re okay.”

“The bitties have spoken. Welp, time to drain my wallet some more.” I laughed. At this
point I set up a different fund just for bitty care. It put a decent bit of my savings into it, and a
percentage of the money I make goes into it as well, “I can’t wait until these guys become more
common and the price drops.”

“We can’t either.” The tech sighed, “It’d make things a lot easier. We’re having hard times
finding people even willing to just foster a bitty. Adoptions are at an all-time low.”

“I’m sorry to hear that.” I winced, “If I was more of a people person, I’d say I could spread the word, but…well…I’m a loner.”

“You’ve already done more than most have done.” The tech looked at me approvingly, “Thank you. From all of us here.”

“Ahh. It’s no big deal.” I looked away blushing. The tech laughed.

Our brief moment exchange died off once a pair of police officers entered the building. One of them held a fatigued and shell-shocked bitty in his hands.

“Excuse me. Is there someone we could speak with?” the free handed officer asked looking around.

“Yes officers?” The smaller rabbit behind the counter waved them over, “Is something wrong?”

“Well…ah…” The officer’s voice lowered to where I couldn’t hear it.

“Oh my stars.” The rabbit monster pressed a delicate paw to her lips, “I see.”

“Hang on a second.” I looked closer at the bitty the officer was holding. A tattered blue coat..., “Waltzer? Doesn’t he belong to that guy from last week?”

“You knew Mr. Jones ma’am?” The officer holding Waltzer asked.

“We briefly met.” I approached. Waltzer sat numbly in officer’s hands. Tearstains crawled across his cheeks, and he looked exhausted, “Waltzer?”

“huh…?” Pained black eyes looked up at me, “oh…you’re that lady from before right?”

“Yeah. I’m glad you remember me. Did something happen?”

“Mr. Jones was…” The officer looked around at the prying eyes and leaned closer to me, “He was murdered two days ago. We thought that maybe we could use something his bitty remembered, but given the controversy around monsters…”

“The court won’t accept any testimony or something?” Frustration burned under my skin, “I take it you guys brought him here to be taken care of?”

“Yes.” The officer sighed, “He’s not looking good.”

“Bitties don’t do well once their humans die.” I learned that when I began researching bitties shortly after adopting Idjit.

“We’re hoping he’ll be safe here, and if we can use his very detailed testimony, he’ll be somewhere we can reach him.”

“Or not.” The other officer approached, “If we leave him here, he can’t be pulled back for testimony. They don’t involve themselves in human law.”

“i want those men behind bars.” Waltzer growled weakly.

“Um…” I looked down at my bitties. Both paused and then nodded in approval, “I’ll take
him in. Er…adopt him that is.”

“You will?”

I yelped. The small rabbit monster apparently was part ninja. I had no idea what it was with this place and jump scares.

“Yeah?” I shifted my bitties to my shoulders, “Sure.”

“Are you a saint?” The bitty tech from before cocked her head.

“No…not that I know of. Why?” Cyan and Idjit were giggling on my shoulders, “What? Am I supposed to just walk on by when there’s someone in need? I’m an asshole, but I’m not that cold blooded.”

“you’d take me in?” Waltzer blinked up at me. My eyes had to be playing tricks on me. How else could those little white specks look more like hearts? He seemed to actually get a little bit of his color back, but it quickly faded, “no…you shouldn’t…I’m just a bad luck charm.”

“Well I am.” I crossed my arms, “You’re with me now. It’s not your fault your human was killed. It’s the fault of the people who killed him.”

Waltzer simply looked away. I pursed my lips before turning to the smaller rabbit monster.

“I’ll adopt him,” I then turned to the officers, “And I’ll give you guys my address in case you need to speak with him again.”

The bitty tech gave Waltzer a quick once over and deemed him healthy. I grabbed the little guy some new clothes too. The police officers were relieved that I was taking him in, and I learned from them that the homeless guy’s wife would be paying to have him cremated. Waltzer wasn’t happy that she’d be getting control of the ashes, but there was little I could really do. By most people’s standards bitties were pets not kids. He had no rights to speak of.

“You okay riding in my hood Waltzer? It’s where Cyan and Idjit chill out.” The two bitties in question had already taken their places in the hood. Their heads were poking over my shoulder though. Waltzer looked up at me from where he sat in somber silent.

“i dunno. i’m not fond of being left hanging.” Waltzer’s eyes twinkled weakly at the lame attempt at a pun, “jeez. that was terrible. guess i’m just not feelin’ it right now.”

“Waltzer.” I lowered myself to his level while the rabbit monster finished the last bit of paperwork, “You don’t have to pretend this okay. A person you cared about is…gone. You’re allowed to mourn.”

“ah, i’m fine er…” Waltzer furrowed his brow.

“Josephine Ophelia Arietta Newmore. Call me any variant of that. Idjit calls me Jojo, and Cyan uses Miss Josie.”

“you don’t wanna be called ‘mama’ or something like that?”

“Preferably not.”

Waltzer fell silent after that. I finished up the paperwork and looked back at him.

“So? Where you wanna ride?” I offered my hand. Waltzer hesitated before ignoring it and
simply teleporting onto my shoulder.

“here okay ophie?”

“’Ophie’? Really?” I sighed.

“ya said any variant.” Waltzer seemed a little panicked.

“I’m fine with it.” I rubbed across his skull with my thumb, “Welcome to the family.”

“thanks.” Waltzer forced a smile, “i’m glad that i’m not stayin’ here. nothing against this place obviously, but…well…yeah.”

“Yeah.” I nodded in agreement before I turned to the rabbit behind the counter, “Thank you.”

“No, thank you. Have a nice day.” She waved energetically.

“You too.”

Waltzer was eerily silent on the walk home. I could feel Idjit and Cyan clinging closer to the shoulder he was sitting on. They more than likely were looking at him. I knew their little hearts were rather sensitive, and- given Idjit’s reactions to any mention of me dying- they probably sympathized with Waltzer’s issues. His human had died, and now he had a substitute. I could give him food, shelter, and water all I wanted. His human could never be replaced. I knew that.

“Home sweet home.” I sighed opening the door to my apartment, “The door to the left is my office, the door straight ahead is the bathroom, and the door to the right is my bedroom.”

“cozy little place.” Waltzer commented hollowly.

“It works.” I caught myself before I could say “better than nothing” like a dumbass.

Waltzer teleported to the ground and began to poke around. I placed my own bitties down and entered the kitchen. I kept my eye on the three of them as I worked to find something for us to eat.

“Waltzer?” Cyan approached quietly.

“yeah?” Waltzer turned and pulled a smile on, “oh. i don’t think i ever caught your names.”

“i-id-idjit.” Idjit edged closer, “h-he’s c-cy-cya-an.”

“Idjit’s stutter is particularly intrusive when he’s nervous.” Cyan tugged the smaller bitty closer, “It’s nice to have another bitty around.”

“thanks. i’m glad you two aren’t the jealous type.” Waltzer chuckled humorlessly, “you two don’t need to tiptoe around me though. i’m a big boy promise.”

“We aren’t tiptoeing.” Cyan protested weakly.

“y-you…lost a h-human…that’s sad.” Idjit cringed seeing Waltzer flinch slightly, “s-s..sorry.”

“It’s okay.” Waltzer’s laugh sounded mad, “it’s not like you’re lying or anything. i couldn’t keep my human safe. i told him i would…but i couldn’t protect him when it counted.”
“Waltzer.” I interrupted stepping back into the living room with a couple of chocolate chip muffins in hand, “You are a three inch tall bitty that doesn’t even weigh one pound. No one expects you to be a hero.”

Waltzer looked away. Idjit hesitated before pulling the larger sans type bitty into a hug. Cyan and I both laughed a little as Waltzer stumbled slightly. Idjit was crying into the sansy’s tattered old jacket.

“uh oh…umm….” Waltzer awkwardly patted Idjit on the back, “help…?”

“He’s trying to cry for you.” Cyan timidly approached and joined in on the hug, “He does that a lot. I’m sorry.”

“uh…” Waltzer looked away from the two, but from my angle I could see them. Small little tears trailed down his face, “thanks i guess.”

“These two are rather emotional. Sorry.” I shrugged and squatted down, “You get used to it eventually.”

“You are rather emotional yourself.” Cyan commented slyly. Again, Leo’s corruptive influence peeks through his timid outer shell.

“I’m impulsive. There’s a difference.” I nudged the curly’s head with the back of my finger, “Now food. Do you like sweet things Waltzer?”

“i don’t dislike them.” Waltzer wiped away his tears subtly.

“Good. I’ve got some chocolate chip muffins- some of the best comfort food out there.” I held my free hand out, “Come on.”

That was how I ended up with a lap full of emotional bitties for two hours. Waltzer tried his best to remain cool and unaffected, but some gentle prodding cracked his tough, chill exterior. Bottling everything up would’ve just hurt him more, so I was glad that he could mourn. I would find a way to get his previous owner’s ashes though. The bitch who tossed the guy out on the streets doesn’t deserve them in the first place.

All of the bittes had fallen asleep on my lap. They were curled together like puppies. I also had a massive tear stain right in between my thighs, but I wasn’t about to throw a fit because their red and blue tears had permanently stained my white sweatpants. Okay maybe I grumbled a bit, but I’m an asshole not a bitch. I awoke- after falling asleep at some point- to my phone vibrating against my stomach.

“Hi?” I whispered after making sure all of the bitties were still comfortable on my lap.

“Sissy? Why are you whispering?” I could imagine Olivia cocking her head.

“I’ve got three- don’t you dare shriek- bitties sleeping on my lap right now. I don’t want them to wake up.” I smiled when I noticed the three of them had shifted to curl around my right hand. They clung desperately to my fingers.

“When did you get another bitty?” Olivia asked excitedly.

“My Amazing Aunt has adopted yet another lucky bitty?” Holy shit how could Hiro be that loud?
“Yes. She did.” I sighed, “You know that sansy that was with that homeless guy?”

“Yes?”

“The guy died.”

“Oh no!” Olivia began to sniffle, “Is the little guy okay?”

“Physically yes. Emotionally? Hell no.” I watched Waltzer twitch in his sleep, “Was there something you needed?

“Nadia’s birthday party is not this Sunday but the next. I was.“

“Nadia is turning 30 not 16.” The image of my taller, well built, big chested, golden blonde haired sister made my fist curl, “She’s too old for a birthday party.”

“She wants one.” I could hear the exasperation in Olivia’s voice, “You know how mom and dad are. If she wants the moon, they’ll buy it for her.”

“I’m not going.” I growled.

“Please don’t make me go alone.” Olivia begged.

“You will never be alone Mama!” Hiro’s declaration was followed by the sound of something crashing, “Whoopsie.”

“Are you okay sweetie?” Noise filtered through the phone as Olivia quickly tended to her bitty.

“Yes!”

“Good,” Olivia sighed in relief, “Now, please don’t make me go with just Hiro. You know how our family is. I need some back up.”

“And you think the problem child would be a good thing for that?” I snorted.

“Please? PleasepleasepleasepleasepleasepleasepleasepleasePRETTYPLEASE!” Olivia’s voice reached glass shattering levels.

“Okay. Okay. Quit breaking my ear drums.” I held my phone away.

“Thank you!” Olivia squealed.

“Yeah, yeah.” I hung up the phone.

I was not looking forward to this. My bitties shifted slightly. Idjit’s snores cut through my tension like a knife. I wouldn’t have to go through it alone at least.

You couldn’t say that a few years ago.
I was drownning in snot. No matter how I sprawled out across my mattress, I couldn’t find a comfortable way to lay down and just breathe. Cyan would occasionally tug the damp rag over my eyes off to wet it again, but my constant tossing and turning hindered his work at times. Idjit watched quietly from the far edge of the bed while Waltzer dug around my bathroom for medicine.

“Miss Josie?” Cyan’s gentle voice practically shattered my snot ridden ear drums, “Your phone is vibrating on the floor.”

Ah, that was the annoying buzzing sound making my headache worse.

“Could one of ya answer it?” I slurred.

“y-yeah.” I heard Idjit shuffle off of my bed. A small buzzing pop sounded close to my head.

“Ophie?” Waltzer lifted the newly wet rag from one of my eyes, “Will a decongestant do anything for you?”

“We can find out.” I sighed and struggled to sit up.

“i-it’s Olivia.” Idjit called from the floor.

“Could one of you bring the phone up?” I asked accepting the decongestant pills from Waltzer. I swallowed them without water like an idiot. Luckily, I had recovered by the time my bitties managed to get my phone into my hand, “Hello?”

“Sissy?” Olivia’s shrill voice hurt more than usual, “Where are you?”

“Dying of a cold in my bedroom.” I sneezed before laying back down.
“Oh really? You get a cold *today* of all days?"

“Yeah? It’s been spreading like wildfire on my floor. One of my neighbors gave it to me.” I furrowed my brow trying to remember the significance of today, “Why?”

“It’s Nadia’s birthday!” Olivia yelled. I flinched and held the phone away from my ear. It’s *your* birthday too.

“Well, I guess I’m not going then. Sorry. I literally can’t walk right now.” My attempt at walking to the medicine cabinet earlier ended with me crashing to the ground.

“Ugh, Sissy!” Olivia whined, “I swear if I find out you’re lying to me…”

“I’m not lying Olivia.” Exhaustion kept my words from sounding too harsh, but I was *very* annoyed by the explicit accusation, “Bye.”

I put my phone on silent and threw it across the room. I didn’t care if the damn thing broke. Of course she’d say it’s Nadia’s birthday. It’s always just Nadia’s birthday despite the fact I was literally born 18 minutes after her. Needless to say, I was the unwanted surprise, and my parents always had to make sure I knew it.

“jojo?” Idjit’s fingers brushed against my neck once I found a semi decent position to sleep in.

“Yeah?” I coughed.

“d-do you nee-ed any-anything else?”

“No. Sorry I’m sick guys.”

“You cannot physically fight off a cold Miss Josie.”

“ya should be more careful ophie. Nearly made me **fall to pieces** when you tumbled this morning.”

Idjit simply curled into my neck. After a few moments, Waltzer and Cyan joined us as well. Cyan continued to monitor my rag’s dampness, and Waltzer occasionally checked my temperature. I struggled to remember a time when someone took care of me when I was sick. Plenty images of me nursing Olivia sprang to mind. I even looked after Leo on more than one occasion, yet I couldn’t remember a single time where I didn’t suffer alone. Well…I supposed this was a first then. It felt nice.

I don’t know how long we just laid there. My tiny little room was filled with the sounds of my mucus laden breaths and my bitties whispering under their breaths. The quiet murmurs didn’t concern me, so I ended up drifting off.

Then Leo burst through my door like an asshole because he’s an **asshole**.

“Josie!” I flinched when I heard my door slam into my wall. Cyan scurried under the blankets, “Why did Cyan have to be the one to tell me you’re sick? You should’ve called me this morning!”

“Hi Leo.” My throat felt like it had been through a blender, “I feel like shit.”

“I believe you.” Leo lifted the rag from my eyes. I blinked once or twice before meeting his
gaze, “Jeez, leave it to you to be laid out with a cold. You need to get out more and build up a better immune system.”

“Like that will help,” I rolled my eyes, “You work in a school- a filthy, germ ridden cesspool of disease. Somehow, you still catch the flu every year.”

Leo smacked my face with the wet rag.

“Bully.” I stuck my tongue out at him.

“Butthead.” Leo poked my nose, “Cyan said you took a decongestant right?”

“Some time ago…Waltzer?”

“about 2 hours ago.” The bitty chimed from somewhere else in the room. I heard something clatter, “shit. well…there went the rest of the decongestants.”

“Waltzer.” I whined.

“sorry ophie.”

“j-jojo has b-be-been sleeping.” Idjit was partially hiding in my hair.

“I’ve attempted to keep Miss Josie’s temperature down as much as possible Papa.” Cyan finally poked his head out from beneath the covers.

“I can tell,” Leo’s voice dripped with paternal pride, “Can I see the bottle Waltzer? I’m going to call up a friend of mine- she’s a doctor- and ask her if Josie can take some of the medicine I brought her.”

“sure thing.”

“By the way Josie.” I felt Leo lean forward, “Happy birthday hag.”

“Thanks jackass.” My fist weakly flew up towards his face, but he stepped back laughing, “Fuck you.”

“Love you too.” With that Leo left the room.

After a few hours of Leo and my bitties caring for me, I found myself curled up in a cozy ball in my living room. Leo sat next to me balancing Cyan and Waltzer on one leg. Idjit was curled under my chin.

“This movie is so…bland.” I huffed. Another brain shaking sneeze followed.

“Bless you.” Leo patted my leg, “That was the twentieth one in the past thirty minutes.”

“I don’t need you keeping count.” I moaned, “Ugh. Today sucks.”

“I suppose one plus side to you being sick is that I don’t have to bail you out of Nadia’s birthday party.” Leo offered, “You also get to finally take a break from working for once.”

“That’s terrible.” The money I knew I was losing lazing around burned in my brain, “I need that cash to retire you know.”

“Knowing you, you’ll make it up in two days.” Leo snorts, “You work more than I do, and I have to teach 90 obnoxious high school students.”
“I sincerely doubt that. I’d probably hang myself if I had to teach brats anything.” The thought of standing in front of twenty to thirty self-entitled little scum bags made my skin crawl. I truly respected Leo’s choice of profession.

“Did you tutor Olivia though? She wasn’t exactly the brightest bulb in the box you know.”

“True enough.” Olivia had struggled throughout high school, but it was mostly because of her ADD and dyslexia. She didn’t want people to judge her though. Thus, it was a secret she’d kill me for ever spilling - even to Leo.

Leo and I fell back into a comfortable silence. There was no need to fill the air with empty chatter or pointless gossip.

“ya starting to feel better?” Waltzer poked at one of my exposed toes, “your breathing sounds like it’s improving.”

“Yeah.” I reached out with my big toe to tickle Waltzer’s face. The bitty chuckled and batted me away, “You still comfortable Idjit?”

“yes jojo.” I felt Idjit nodded sleepily against my chin. He yawned quietly.

“Sorry for worrying you all.” The apology had to practically be ripped from my mouth. I was sorry though. Waltzer had only been living with me for two weeks, and he already had to deal with me sick. I broke a promise I made to Olivia, and Leo more than likely had hours of work to do. I also worried Cyan and Idjit. I had decided on something then and there. I didn’t like being a burden on people. At all. It made my sense of duty hiss. It made my desire to get up and do something burn even brighter.

“Honestly Josie.” Leo tweaked my foot interrupting my thoughts, “You’re my best friend in need. I’d help you more often if you’d just let me know you need assistance.”

“You’ve provided me a home Miss Josie. Being useful pleases me greatly.” I peered down and found Cyan smiling timidly at me, “It’s nice being able to spoil you as much as you spoil me.”

“trust me when i promise you i owe you a lot more than this.” Waltzer teleported in front me, “a lot more than this.”

Idjit’s quiet little dismissal of my apology was the one that moved me the most.

“i l-love you jojo. this…i-isn’t a big deal.” He murmured gently into the blankets.

I thanked everything I could think of that no one was looking at my face in that moment. Especially Leo. He’d probably- knowing how much of an asshole he could be- would take a picture of my blushing face for future blackmail.

“Thanks guys.” I forced a congested laugh out, “Really.”

Fuck Nadia and her pretty little perfect birthday party. This is definitely my favorite birthday so far, and I didn’t have to pay anyone to show up.
Chapter Notes

Now that I no longer feel like my head is going to implode with stress...an extra long chapter to keep my chapter count multiples of seven. (The last one should’ve gone on for another 3 pages, so this one is 3 (okay 2 and a quarter) pages longer).

BTW: I use sans type, papyrus type, and grillbitty kind of like how a person will say dog, cat, or fish. In comparison, I use sansy, edgy, curly, ray, etc. like saying Golden Retriever, Poodle, Calico, Tabby, etc. Sorry if that’s a bit odd.

“Everyone comfy?” I locked the door to my apartment.

“yup.” Waltzer sat on my right shoulder as always.

“Yes Miss Josie.” Cyan was actually sitting on my left shoulder for once.

“m-mmhmm.” Idjit had nightmares all night last night, so he was dozing in my hoodie.

“Then off we go.” I began to whistle a jaunty little tune as I walked to the elevator.

Leo’s new girl had been pretty…well… “upset” to discover that he’d slept over at my- a female’s- apartment, so he’s essentially ben under girlfriend arrest for the past two weeks. Poor guy would send me lame chemistry puns on kik, but I haven’t been invited over like usual. His girlfriends always seemed to get jealous of our relationship no matter how often we insist we’re just best friends. Apparently, men and women can’t just be friends. Which is fucking stupid.

Either way, I hopped back into work the instant I felt up to it. I was down for a day in half which mean money that I was behind schedule. One of the things pushed back had been a consultation with a junkyard owner. He wanted a new logo and some designs to put on novelty items. He wouldn’t pay as much as some of my clients, but every penny counts. It was an added bonus that he let me snoop around the junkyard for halfway decent/sanitary furniture parts for free. I had found most of my living room furniture dumped there. Just had to replace some fabric and wood and bam mostly reliably couch for only about $30 bucks.

The familiar site of the welcoming junkyard put a pep in my step I didn’t expect. As much as Olivia like to claim I chose to stay in my hovel, I really did enjoy getting some fresh air now and then. It relaxed cramped creative muscles and kept me from gaining weight doing nothing (when I remembered to eat that is).

“a junkyard? i know my sweater is big ophie, but i promise i’m not supposed to be here.” Waltzer tugged on my hair teasingly, “or are all three of us destined to sleep with rusty tire irons and chipped china?”

“Hardy har har.” I rolled my eyes, “I’m dying of laughter Waltzer.”

“well, can’t say i don’t try?” Waltzer shrugged.

“Miss Josie,” Cyan murmured into my ear, “There’s someth-“
Years of living in a shitty part of the city helped me recognize the sound of something flying towards my head. Grabbing my loose bitties I quickly ducked out of the way. A glass bottle shattered against a pile of garbage.

“What the actual fuck?” I slid Waltzer and Cyan into my hood. Idjit whimpered upon stirring, but Cyan quietly comforted the confused little one, “Who threw that?!”

Another bottle whizzed towards me. I ducked out of the way, but this time around it *changed fucking direction* forcing me to dodge again. I frantically looked for the brat throwing the damn things. There wasn’t a single shadow out of place. This time a toilet seat charged at me.

“ENOUGH RAZE!”

Cyan flinched at the junkyard owner’s loud voice. The toilet seat hovered slightly before dropping down. I turned and saw the grizzled old man smoking a pipe as he hobbled out of his tiny office. He scowled in the direction of a pile of junk.

“She’s a guest.” He bellowed out. A pile of junk collapsed, “Oh hush up. Or you’ll be finding a new place to live!”

The assailant backed down at the obvious threat.

“Erm…what the hell was that?” I reached back and pulled a trembling Idjit out of my hood. He sobbed quietly against my hand while Cyan shivered in my hood. Waltzer teleported onto my shoulder, but he was facing backwards.

“I’m letting a couple of bitties stay in the junkyard. The surly one runs off any brats making trouble most days, but lately he’s been a bit more aggressive. It’s starting to get bad for business,” The old man sighed, “I don’t want to run them out. I can’t take them in though. My wife’d throw them in the oven if I did.”

“I see.” My mind tried to piece together how the bitties could’ve come to stay here. Runaways maybe? Or were they abandoned? Maybe they got separated from their owners and were lost? Hundreds of possibilities were within the realm of reason, “Maybe I could look around some after we chat? I might be able to get them out of your hair?”

“That’d be mighty kind of you.” The old man stretched, “Oh, I’m sorry. Did my yelling scare the little one?”

“Not this one…at least…I don’t think so. My curly is a bit fidgety though.” I forced a polite smile, “A lower volume in general really helps out.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” He opened the door to his office and gestured for me to enter, “Let’s get down to business.”

Idjit and Cyan finally relaxed while I spoke with my client. As per usual with this guy, everything flowed smoothly, and we wrapped up in decent time. He saw me out with a fond “see you later”, and I quickly got out of his way.

“Well, time to figure out what’s driving Raze up the wall.” I put Idjit and Cyan into my hood for safety. Waltzer stayed perched on my shoulder, “It’d be a shame if he and his pal were kicked out.”

“rude behavior causes bad times ophie.” Waltzer’s voice had the slightest bit of a growl to it, “he could’ve really hurt you throwing stuff around like that.”
“It’ll take more than a few shatter bones and internal bleeding to put me down.” I reached up and rubbed Waltzer’s skull soothingly. It didn’t take too much thought to figure out where his over-protectiveness came from.

“p-pl-plea-ase don’t g-ge-et hurt.” Idjit pleaded from inside my hoodie.

“That would be very worrisome.” Cyan agreed solemnly.

“I’ll keep my head down. Promise.”

After that, we walked through the junkyard silently. I didn’t want to freak Cyan out by yelling, and I had no guarantee that Raze would actually listen to what the old man said. Waltzer pretended to lazily stretch out on my shoulder. While I looked around, I also tried to find anything I could use for myself.

“Miss Josie.” Cyan whispered, “We’re being followed.”

I angled my head ever so slightly to the side while never breaking my stride. A tiny figure of pale yellow flames darted behind a cardboard box. I saw a little face peer around the corner ever so slightly.

“It’s rude to just follow people around you know.” I chuckled. The head whipped around the cardboard box, but I calmly walked over to it, “I’m Josephine. What’s your name?”

There was a moment of silence.

“Sunshine.” The 5 inch tall ray bitty peered around the box and blushed, “Your name is pretty.”

“Thank you. I think yours is cute too.” I slowly inched my hand forward, “The sansy on my shoulder is Waltzer.”

“heya kid.” Waltzer waved lazily.

“Hello.” Cyan crawled out from my hood. He must’ve soaked in a lot of Leo’s manners, “I’m Cyan. Idjit is still in the hood.”

“Hi.” Sunshine blushed more and shuffled on his feet, “You’re the art lady right?”

“Guess you could say that.” I sat down in front of the bitty. Walter stayed on my shoulder, but Cyan clambered down onto my lap. Idjit squeezed in between Waltzer and my neck, “Where’s your friend?”

“I don’t know where he is.” Sunshine sighed, “I’m sorry he almost hurt you earlier. A group of kids has been coming in and knocking down our home. He’s really worried since it’s supposed to start raining a lot soon.”

“Have you thought of staying in the office when it rains?” Cyan cocked his head.

“Raze…he doesn’t like taking charity from people. He wants to be able to take care of both of us without outside help.” Sunshine sat down on the ground as well, “I’m worried he’s going to end up getting hurt.”

“Well….throwing shit at strangers won’t exactly endear him to the masses.” I leaned my chin against my fist, “Maybe I could talk to him about your situation?”
“please don’t tell me…” Waltzer narrowed his eyes at me.

“I’m not going to leave a ray to be drowned Waltzer.” I poked the side of his face with my finger.

“Are you certain you can afford another bitty Miss Josie?” Cyan looked up at me worriedly.

“You guys are only expensive when you get sick, and since I don’t exactly plan on you guys getting sick if I can’t avoid it…..” I shrugged, “You guys aren’t that bad. Worse goes to worse I can hand make your clothes.”

“Do you…” Sunshine approached my hand, “Are you offering…to…adopt us?”

“Yup. If Raze is down.” I opened my hand wide for him to step onto it, “And if you are- of course.”

The bitty looked at me in awe as he got onto my hand. I carefully shifted Cyan onto my shoulder before standing up. I noticed a few areas of Sunshine’s flames seemed dimmer- like scars almost. He was way thinner than he should be, and his clothes were horribly dirty. He was adorable though.

“Let’s go try to find Raze okay?” I smiled. Sunshine blushed and smiled back.

Again, we began a quiet search through the junkyard. The city outside bustled with life, but the junkyard was tranquil. I could see why two bitties might try to live here. They’re small enough to create little homes and could easily hide in the nooks and crannies to avoid danger. Sunshine pointed me in the direction of his and Raze’s current abode. It was a rickety shelter built out of tin, tires, and plastic bottles. Honestly, I was surprised it could hope itself up. Their stuff was still there, but there was no sign of Sunshine’s companion.

“He’s never been away this long.” Sunshine murmured, “I hope he’s okay.”

“We’ll find him.” The promise slid out easily. Waltzer huffed indignantly, “Sunshine, do you know of-“

A bright red ball of light appeared over my wrist. It was similar to Waltzer’s blue teleportation…oh…In less than two heartbeats Sunshine was missing from my hand, and I had a giant ass bite mark on my thumb.

“What the fuc-“ I ducked the instant I heard a bottle coming towards me. I turned.

“gotcha.” Waltzer’s eye glowed bright blue.

“h-huh!?!hey!” A large edgy- around 6 inches tall- hovered over a pile of bottles. Sunshine was clasped in his arms, “put me down asshole!”

“hmmm…” Waltzer raised his other hand. Sunshine was tugged away from the scrambling edgy.

“sunshine!” the edgy- who I assumed to be Raze- flailed desperately to grab onto his floating companion, “give ‘im back jackass!”

“no.” Waltzer flicked his wrist sending the edgy into a nearby car door, “that’s for almost hurting ophie earlier.”
“Raze!” Sunshine reached a hand out pathetically towards the fuming edgy, “Please don’t hurt him Waltzer!”

“Enough Waltzer.” I said quietly.

“he could’ve really hurt you ophie.” Waltzer growled.

“But he didn’t. Now stop. You’re needlessly dragging this on.”

With a reluctant sigh Waltzer plopped Raze and Sunshine onto the ground. Raze had scooped the ray into his arms within seconds of his feet touching the ground. He growled and bared his teeth at us. Sunshine wriggled in his arms trying to calm the furious edgy. Raze’s eye was blood red with fury, but Waltzer’s straight stance made him hesitate.

“You just had to bite me didn’t you?” I sighed holding my hoodie against the bite to stop the bleeding, “Raze I presume?”

“get the fuck out of here.” Raze took a step back.

“Raze-” Sunshine protested, but he fell silent when he realized the sans type bitty wasn’t looking at him.

“Do you want him to end up dead?” I crossed my arms.

“Water and flame elementals do not mix well.” Cyan added, “His health will deteriorate without proper shelter from the rain.”

“ya think i don’t know that assholes!” Raze growled, “fuck off! i meant it!”

“well, he can’t be saved.” Waltzer shrugged, “i vote to grab the grillbitty and leave.”

“Waltzer.” I narrowed my eyes at the sansy.

“fine. fine.” Waltzer crossed his arms and looked away.

“Listen Raze,” I carefully lowered myself down and offered my hands. Raze hissed and took a few more steps back, “I was going to see if you and Sunshine wanted live with us. It’d be a lot safer and stable.”

“not a chance.” Raze finally let Sunshine go to shove the bitty behind him. Surprisingly, Sunshine rushed past the shocked edgy into my open hands, “sunshine?”

I internally winced at the betrayal lacing his words. I had the distinct feeling I just stepped into a lover’s quarrel without meaning to.

“You’re going to end up getting yourself killed Raze.” Sunshine protested timidly from my hands, “You aren’t big enough to keep messing with humans, and we haven’t eaten in days because you won’t accept anything from Mister Tilney.”

“i can provide for us on my own.” Raze looked ready to bite the hell out of me again, but… I’m an asshole.

“You obviously can’t.” I sat back down, “Otherwise you would both be closer to normal weight and wearing decent clothes.”

“shut up bitch!” Raze flung a piece of wood at me. I blocked it with one hand. A large
bruise began to form on my left palm, but it didn’t feel like anything broke.

“you’re really starting to piss me off.” Waltzer uncrossed his arms. He paused for a moment. Even I could hear Idjit’s anxious sobbing, “shit. cyan?”

“On it.” Cyan slid down into my hood.

“Great.” I sighed, “Now Idjit’s upset.”

“give me back my mate!” Raze flung another piece of garbage at me.

“Woah. Mate?” My head feebly tried to wrap my head around bitties actually being able to….ugh…, “I did not need that much information. I assure you I am not bittysexual.”

“yeah right.” Raze growled, “i know humans.”

“you don’t know all humans,” Waltzer yawned, “that’s impossible.”

“Raze,” Sunshine’s voice was thin, “I don’t want to have to keep worrying about whether or not you’ve been killed by some human everyday.”

OH MY GOD I HAD STEPPED INTO A LOVER’S QUARREL. FUCK. ME. Oh my god it’s adorable.

“i can handle anything those brats throw at me.” Raze protested indignantly. If he had veins, one would be bulging out of his forehead right about now, “i’m not getting you put back in a situation like that ever again.”

“She seems nice though.” Sunshine offered.

“so did the last humans.” Raze countered.

“jeez, did we step into a romance fanfic or something?” Waltzer yawned growing disinterested now that Raze seemed less likely to pelt me in the fucking head again.

“I’m honestly wondering that myself.” I whispered to the lazy bitty before turning back to Sunshine and Raze, “Listen, I’ve got the space Raze, and I promise that I won’t get involved in your personal stuff unless you ask me to. The issue is the old man can’t have you attacking random people every day anymore. It’s hurting his business.”

“what the fuck do i care?” Raze snarled.

“he’s gonna kick you out moron.” Waltzer rubbed his temples, “then what are you two gonna do?”

“See?” Sunshine desperately pleaded, “Raze, we…don’t exactly have a lot of options. Her bitties are…nice?”

“I’ve only had bitties for a couple of months, but I promise I won’t treat you like cats or anything. Hell, if you’re so anxious for your personal space, we could build a little home out of shit in the junkyard to put in the living room.” I began planning dimensions and listing necessary items in my head, “If you hate living with me in the end, we can find somewhere else for you to stay. I’m not leaving Sunshine to be drowned or abandoning you to starve on the streets.”

“big talk from such a short human.” Raze snorted disbelievingly.
“that doesn’t mean much from someone under a foot.” Waltzer pointed out.

“put a sock in it jackass.”

“we should buy a lot of soap and a swear jar.” Waltzer looked up at me with a deadpan expression.

“He also needs to not yell in front of Idjit so much.” Cyan called out. Idjit’s sobbing had died down, and I heard soft snores. Poor little guy. Must’ve been exhausted from all the commotion.

“we’re not goin with ya!” Raze yelled. I felt Cyan flinch inside my hoodie.

“So you want Sunshine to die then? It'll either be by rain, starvation, or cruel humans, but you won’t get to pick how he dies because you’ll more than likely be dead as well.” I was slowly growing a bit more frustrated with this thick skulled idiot, “You have an option for a safe place to live happily, but you’re too proud to take the opportunity? Are you really that selfish?”

Raze fell silent. Sunshine wriggled in my hands to get down. I felt a little (a.k.a none towards Raze) guilt about my straight to the point choice of words. Sunshine quietly pulled the edgy into a one-sided hug and whispered something to him. For a moment, it looked like Raze would protest once more. The frustrated bitty just let out a low groan and glowered at me.

“i’m watchin you speck.” He wrapped his arms around Sunshine and growled menacingly, “he ain’t being hurt again.”

“oh, so he does have a brain.” Waltzer said dryly.

“fuck off.” Raze puffed his chest up.

“make me.” Waltzer leaned against my neck and head, “if you can of course.”

“Raze.” Sunshine whimpered softly.

“dammit.” Raze reluctantly backed down, “we will have our own space though.”

“Fine.” I said grateful that this whole mess would soon be somewhat cleared up, “I’ve got a plan already.”

I extended my hands out to Raze and Sunshine. Sunshine smiled at the gentle gesture and tugged on Raze’s hole filled jacket. Grumbling the entire way, Raze reluctantly teleported himself and Sunshine onto my hands. Not once did he let the yellow fire elemental out of his embrace.

For the next hour, we looked around the junkyard and gathered various materials. Raze and Sunshine ended up on my open shoulder, so I could carry the larger bits of metal and cardboard. It took a little while- and we’d still need to get a few things like super glue and plastic wrap from the store- to get all of the major things we needed.

I chatted with Waltzer and Cyan most of the entire trip. Sunshine occasionally chimed in timidly, but his vicious protector just pouted silently. Idjit eventually woke up and seemed nervously happy about Sunshine and Raze moving in. The ray actually got Idjit to curl up with him. To say Raze had been jealous would be an understatement. The cute cuddle session on one arm aside, Idjit moving allowed Cyan to squeeze in between Waltzer and my neck for safety reasons. Waltzer could teleport if he slid, but Cyan had no such protection. I could feel all of the people looking at me with my now five bittes. Some were looks of awe, others were disgust. Most were pure confusion and shock though. I guessed the reactions would be the same if I had around 5 cats or dogs strutting
around me instead. I didn’t care though. The mothers who pulled their fascinated children away amused me however. The looks of total revulsion made me chuckle every time.

“do you actually know how to make shit?” Raze grumbled shifting himself and the two bitties on his lap into a more comfortable position.

“I do. I’m very cheap, so I’ve had to get inventive.” I resisted the urge to shrug.

“j-jojo dr-d-draws pr-e-etty things m-more of-f-ft-ten.” Idjit explained to Sunshine, “but… she c-can build t-things.”

“Miss Josie has always been gifted with her hands.” Cyan added peered around my neck, “Papa would always call her over to have her help in building things around the house.”

“That too.” I sighed fondly. Leo was terrible working with anything but his lab equipment. Even when we were younger, I was the one who had to build our forts and castles. He just broke anything he tried to build.

“I’ve seen a few of your designs.” Sunshine commented quietly, “They were very well done.”

“Thank you.” I felt my ego swell up just a little bit.

After gathering all of the necessary items we’d need, I took my bitties- and new arrivals- back home. It was never a smart idea to walk around my neighborhood after sundown. Suicidal would probably be a better word for it in all honesty. Raze didn’t seem impressed with my little abode, but Sunshine marveled at all of the space he could safely call his own. No more fear of Raze running off and getting dusted. No more worries about the next time it rains. I could practically see his anxieties melt off of him. Idjit had become attached to the soft spoken bitty- to Raze’s annoyance. Cyan watched fondly as shy little Idjit actually showed Sunshine around. I decided then and there I needed to get a camera to take pictures of things like this in the future.

“is he always so clingy?” Raze sulked on the couch while Waltzer and I began to slowly build up a structure in the corner of the living room.

“yup.” Waltzer flicked a paperclip at the edgy, “now get down here and help us put this thing together. Otherwise it won’t hold up as well as it should.”

“You’d hate for it to fall on top of you and Sunshine right?” I pulled a ruler, “Besides, I need to size this properly.”

Raze sat quietly for a few moments before getting down and actually helping. It took the three of us some time to cobble together the cardboard, wood, and tin “windowless” private place for the couple. It didn’t look to shabby in my opinion. Four sturdy walls, a nice roof, and plenty of shit to keep what happens in the box in the goddamn box. I did not want Idjit asking me what certain strange noises were.

While finishing up the last bit of silencing, I noticed a crack on the back of Raze’s skull.

“Raze are yo-“ I extended my hand out to move his head. I needed to see the injury better. Raze whirled around and chomped down hard on my finger, “OUCH!”

“b a d  m o v e f r i e n d.” Waltzer’s eye glowed eerily in the fading sunlight. The edgy was yanked off of my finger.
“Waltzer. No.”

“waltzer yes.”

“pumme down asshole!” Raze bared his blood covered fangs, “you’re gonna pay for this!”

“Raze?” Sunshine hurried into the room. Waltzer dropped the edgy quickly. Sunshine scrambled to his side, “Is your injury bothering you?”

“Information would be nice.” I prodded calmly taking out a box of Band-Aids I had so wisely purchased. I slid one on quickly before picking up a sleepy Djd. The cherry curled into a ball into my hands. Cyan rounded my knee and looked at the new Band-Aid on my hand concerned.

“He got hit by a human child a few days ago.” Sunshine gently turned the cranky and sore bitty’s head.

“a kid?” Waltzer’s brow raised with amused mockery.

“Well, an older one.” Sunshine elaborated.

“it’s nothin.” Raze carefully pulled Sunshine’s examining hands away from his head.

“Cracks aren’t good for skeleton bitties dunce.” I sighed, “Waltzer go grab the monster candy. We can only hope it’ll help.”

“do i have to?”

“YES WALTZER.”

“Perhaps a bath after eating a monster candy could further help the healing process?” Cyan added after Waltzer shuffled away to get the monster candy.

“True.” I nodded solemnly.

“you ain’t gonna watch me like some creeper.” Raze slightly curled in on himself defensively.

“Wasn’t planning on it. These guys bathe on their own fine. Sunshine should stay out of the bathroom though.” I reached over and patted the ray on the head. Raze bit at my fingers again, “A-Ha! Too fast!”

“this time.” Raze threatened, “next t-“

A piece of monster candy flew into his face.

“Waltzer.” I narrowed my eyes at the bitty kicking his feet innocently behind me.

“what?”

“Oh dear. We’ve really signed ourselves up for trouble Miss Josie.” Cyan sighed moving to sit on my lap next to Djd.

“Yup.” I closed my eyes as Raze and Waltzer began to argue over poor Sunshine’s head.

I had no idea how in the hell I was going to keep my bitties from killing each other, but I’d figure something out. Sunshine at least seemed to have some control over his mate- not much, but
some. It was surprising to see how easily Raze got under Waltzer’s bones. Normally, my little sansy was the definition of lazily disinterested. It was interesting to say the least.

“Well.” I sighed opening my eyes once more, “I know one thing they’ll both love.”

“What’s that Miss Josie?”

“Boys.” I stood up carefully picking up Cyan and Idjit, “Time for food.”

Immediately, the two quietly followed me into the kitchen. Raze kept an arm around Sunshine’s waist, but Sunshine seemed quite content and happy to be cuddled up next to the large skeleton.

I guessed the old trick of controlling people by their appetites also worked on bitties. Hoo-fucking-rah for me.
To say things had been explosive would’ve been an understatement. Waltzer and Raze did not get along at all, so we always had to keep an eye on them. Otherwise, they’d have probably torn each other apart otherwise. It was a bit nerve-wracking in all honesty. Sunshine got along with everyone at least. Seeing him curled up with Cyan and Idjit watching a musical became a common sight. Raze would sulk in corners of the house when Sunshine was off with the others, but his mate would drag him out every once in a while. I could work in peace most days as well. My bitties would tug me away from work to eat and sleep by manipulating my heartstrings with small pouts and wide eyes- little bastards. Nothing was perfect, but if this was what imperfection was, then I always wanted something to not go right.

“Holy shit,” I watched in awe as Sunshine actually managed to cook, “You’re a little Gordon Ramsey aren’t you?”

“Who Josephine?” Sunshine looked up at me and cocked his head. He was blushing slightly.

“A chef.” I explained, “Though, you don’t exactly have the personality for it.”

“t-that lo-oo-oks gooo-d.” Idjit watched from the counter top. Cyan was in the living room watching the last few minutes of a musical while Waltzer lazied around somewhere in the house. Raze hadn’t woken up yet.

“Thank you.” Sunshine blushed even more.

“Jeeezzz…” I leaned against the counter, “I’m being out cooked by a bitty.”

“i l-like y-yo-you’re cooking to-oo.” Idjit placed his little palms on the back of my hand.

“Thanks sweetie.” I leaned down and pressed a kiss to Idjit’s head, “Anyways, let’s get breakfast finished.”

In all honesty, things had actually managed to find some kind of…normalcy? Routine? I didn’t know how to describe it. Walking through the house and seeing the bitties either messing around, relaxing, or fiddling with some hobby of their own left a little warm feeling in my chest. I hadn’t felt like this since I moved out of the house after high school. Leo and Olivia had always been around, but it wasn’t the same as having someone in the house with me. This was a whole other ballpark.
“What is it with you an’ mini pancakes?” Raze grumbled rubbing a fist against his eye socket, “you got a addiction or somethin’?”

My bitties and I were gathered in the kitchen for what Cyan called “family bonding” time. He and Leo had always ate at least one meal together, and his insistence that we replicate the practice with our growing family was too adorable to reject. Sunshine was out of ear shot finishing the batch of plain mini pancakes. We had made a variety this morning. There were only a few blackberry ones however, and they had been made for a certain little shit in particular.

“No, they’re cheap and delicious.” I popped another one of Sunshine’s perfectly made mini pancakes into my mouth before leaning down and whispering to the edgy, “Don’t grumble. Sunshine made these for you. He said you liked blackberries, so I figured something out.”

“…” Raze didn’t say a word. He sat down and began eating his food while carefully watching Sunshine move about the kitchen. The edgy only wore a pair of pajama bottoms- hand made by moi. This allowed me to get a closer look at the old poorly healed cracks on his body. He had a few areas that looked similar to a brown recluse bite on a human as well. What concerned me the most were the black edged burn scars and deep claw mark scars edged across his rib cage and arms. Raze didn’t seem to be in any physical pain, but the mystery surrounding the dark markings made me wonder just where Raze and Sunshine had come from.

“Miss Josie?” Cyan called to get my attention, “Do you still plan on going grocery shopping today?”

“Yeah,” I inhaled another mini pancake before continuing, “Leo’s going to come watch you guys.”

“W-w-we’r-re not c-com-i-ing with y-yo-you?” Idjit’s eyes welled with tears. His little hands tore small holes into the chunk of mini pancake he had been eating.

“It’s just a short trip sweetie.” I soothed, “I’m just grabbing a few quit things, so I don’t see much point in dragging everyone along.”

“O-oh…” Idjit began to calm down some.

“Josephine…?” Sunshine motioned me away from the group, “Can…I speak with you?”

“What’s up?” I dropped my voice to a low whisper.

“Are you certain it’s okay to leave Waltzer and Raze here together with a stranger?” Sunshine’s little eyes were crinkled with concern. I knew he had been anxious about Leo coming over, but I hadn’t realized how worried he actually had been, “They might try to pick fights with each other…”

“That’s true…” I tapped my fingers against my lip. I couldn’t just leave Raze here to terrorize the other bitties and Leo if I took Waltzer with me. I also couldn’t have both of them arguing on my shoulders without Sunshine, Cyan, and Idjit to play morality chain either. That left one option, “I’ll take Raze with me. That way he won’t be able to cause too much trouble.”

“Thank goodness.” Sunshine ducked his head down and crossed his arms blushing, “I’m sorry I worry so much.”

“It’s fine lovely.” I gently nuzzled the ray with my nose. Then a bunch of mini pancakes flew into the side of my head. Syrup and other pancake toppings spread through my hair quickly, “Really Raze?”
The angry bitty was snarling at me.

“get off of him speck!” I scowled at his aggressive stance. It was bad enough he nicknamed me after the bitty common cold that could kill, but I would not be pushed around by something smaller than my foot.

“Raze, Sunshine is one of my bitties now.” I explain slowly, trying desperately to remain calm, “If you weren’t so hostile, you might get some cuddles too.”

“Raze.” Sunshine chided, “Look at what you’ve done to Josephine’s hair.”

“the bitch shouldn’ be tou-“ a spoon flew into Raze’s face. Waltzer’s hand and eye glowed with blue magic, “you asshole.”

Waltzer just smirked.

I spent the next ten minutes keeping Waltzer and Raze from killing each other. I’m so glad I don’t eat a lot. I thought to myself while holding the bitties just tight enough to prevent them from teleporting out of my fingers. They needed a smooth transition to teleport properly, so holding them with varying degrees of tightness created enough friction to keep them in place.

“Joan? Josie?” Leo peered into my apartment, “I heard yelling.”

“That would be these two.” I held up the two guilty parties. Sunshine had taken Cyan and Idjit into my room to keep them from hearing all of the loud noises, “Rough morning.”

“I can tell.” Leo walked over and tugged at a glob of syrup in my hair, “Go grab a shower. I’ll keep an eye on these two.”

“Raze bites.” I warned nodding to the new bite marks on my hand.

“Gotcha.” Leo quickly took the two naughty bitties from me. Luckily, neither of them managed to wriggle away in the two seconds it took to transfer them over.

“Papa?” Cyan’s head popped out of my bedroom door, “Papa!”

Cyan flew out of the room and threw himself at Leo’s leg. Sunshine and Idjit quietly followed behind the excited bitty.

“th-t-that’s l-leo.” Idjit whispered to Sunshine.


“pumme down asshole!” Raze sunk his teeth into Leo’s knuckle.

“Holy shit he’s got jaws!” Leo winced gritting his teeth, “How can you stand this?”

“You get used to it.” I shrugged, “Sunshine, please try to keep the moody one under some semblance of control.”

“l’ll try.” Sunshine timidly promised.

After that, I hurried through a quick shower. It took a few minutes to work the various substances out of my hair, but I could eventually run my fingers through it uninterrupted. Bathing had been a bottom list priority for the past…uh…eight months…twelve?...some long period of time while I worked. It was nice to actually be clean for once. Not wanting my house to be torn apart, I
hurriedly changed into a pair of jeans, a bra, and a hoodie.

Leo—thankfully—had been able to release the two cranky sans type bitties. Raze hovered protectively around a curious Sunshine. Cyan and Idjit were listening to Leo say something in Japanese while Waltzer was who knows where.

“you okay ophie?” I bit back a yelp as I felt a little hand touch my foot. I looked down and found a weary Waltzer looking up at me, “raze bit you pretty hard earlier.”

“I’m fine Waltzer. It’ll take more than a few nips to put me down.” I showed Waltzer my heavily Band-Aid ridden hand, “You really need to quit picking as many fights with him.”

“’s not my fault he makes an ass of himself.” Waltzer grumbled with a fatigued sigh, “he should be a bit more grateful that you saved his ass. sunshine’s too.”

“I don’t do things like this for gratitude Waltzer.” I leaned down and scooped the bitty up. I nuzzled his head affectionately, “I do it because it’s the kind thing to do.”

“you’re way too nice.” Waltzer sighed and nuzzled me back, “i heard you tell sunshine you’d be taking raze with you earlier. that still true?”

“Yup. Can’t have you two destroying my house.”

“please be careful.” Waltzer tugged on some of my hair in warning.

“I will.”

After that, I practically had to drag Raze out of the apartment by his skull. He didn’t want to leave Sunshine with “some weird human freak” because “ya can’t trust nobody” in the long run. The lack of faith he had in Cyan and Idjit (I wasn’t stupid enough to think he’d trust Waltzer with anything) made my heart ache for the two gentle bitties.

“why the fuck do i gotta come with ya?” Raze grumbled from my shoulder. I already told him teleporting would end with Sunshine sleeping with me tonight.

“Because I can’t trust you to not pick fights Waltzer or bully Leo.” I explained checking the little list I had prepared for our trip, “If you’d behave more often, you could’ve stayed and cuddled with Sunshine peacefully.”

“…” Raze bit my ear in retaliation. I flicked the skeleton as revenge.

“By the way, do you want to get anything for Sunshine?” I ignored the throbbing in my ear.

“whatdaya mean?” Raze narrowed his eyes at me.

“Something romantic? You guys are mates right? Or is that different for monsters? Humans just date and may or may not marry a preferred partner.” My mind suddenly flooded with a lot of questions I wanted to ask, “Now that I think about it…how did you meet Sunshine?”

Raze was silent for a few moments. I had entered the grocery store when he finally answered.

“originally my first owner dumped me in the park. said he didn’ like my attitude,” Raze’s gruff voice was so quiet I had to strain to hear him over the bustle of shoppers around us, “some kid began lookin’ after me like i was a stray cat or somethin’. wasn’t perfect, but i was fed. then one day
these large humans found me and bring me home.”

I could hear it in his voice. This story didn’t have a happy middle.

“they ran some kind of bitty…streamin’ website…is that what it’s called? i dunno they filmed bitties fighting- like real fightin’ not some staged pussying around- before filming the winner have sex with "prize" bitties like sunshine. they broke the “prize’s” heads. made ‘em think that this was all they had. they’d pump bitty pheromones and aphrodisiacs to keep their little show going on. it was hell. sunshine was just another bitty caught in this hellhole, and anytime i’d lose a match where he was the prize one of the more brutal bitties would leave him lookin’ like a shredded heap. i began to care about ‘im and worked hard to build ‘im back up. i had to win, or he’d pay the price and regress. eventually, i found a way to escape. i had to wait until i could get sunshine out too, but the instant that moment came i grabbed ‘im and ran.... that’s that.”

I had gathered a few things while listening to Raze’s quiet, calm story. My body was practically vibrating with fury.

“That’s like running a fucking brothel.” I muttered loudly. A nearby mother looked at me aghast before covering her child’s ears. I resisted the urge to flip her off. I did lower my volume however, “I’d ask if you knew anything about where they operated or what they looked like, but bitties don’t have rights. Otherwise, the little shits that killed Waltzer’s previous human would be behind bars instead of crawling along alleyways. Listen, I’m never going to let anyone do things like that to you two again. Anyone who tries it will get a foot up their ass.”

“thanks.”

For a moment, I thought the end of the world had come.

“what?” Raze pinched my sore ear.

“OW!” I winced, “Watch the piercings jerk!”

“then quit gawkin’ off into space and hurry the fuck up!” Raze tugged on my hair harshly, “i wanna get back to sunshine!”

“JEEZ.” I huffed, “We’re going. We’re going. Do you want to grab anything for him though?”

“would he even like somethin’ like that?” Raze pondered.

“Most people enjoy receiving little gifts from people they love. They also like giving some to them as well. I mean, Sunshine was happy to make special pancakes just for you this morning. The least you could do is return the favor.” I checked off the last thing on my list, “There are some red tulips over there.”

“yer point?”

“Red tulips mean eternal love idiot. It’d be a sweet gesture.” My sympathy and patience were beginning to run a wee bit thin. His first owner was right in saying he had an attitude.

“pink rose.” Raze sighed, “he likes pink roses more.”

“A pink rose it shall.” I felt a smug smirk crawl across my face.

“don’t make that face asshole.” Raze tugged on my cheek.
“I will if I want to. I’m bigger than you!” *FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE!* I declared triumphantly in my head. I hated being short.

We paid for everything— including a single pink rose. Some part of me had been proud Raze had *mostly* behaved today. He was still a little shit in my mind though.

“Now that I think about it.” One of my questions from earlier sprung back up, “Can bitties breed? I know that bitties aren’t exactly born, but nobody really knows too much about breeding them together.”

“we can.” Raze sounded so done with this conversation already.

“How? Most of you are male right?”

“bitties are small scale variants of monsters dumbass.” Raze reluctantly began to explain on our way home, “i’m gonna try my best to make this as easy for your stupid human brain to understand as i can.”

“Thank you oh so much.” I retorted dryly.

“imagine that the magic that made up monsters is kind of like a liquid. this liquid is constantly on fire blazing with power. monster flames are large and somewhat wild in comparison to bitty flames. we’re a bit more stable because of our smaller size.” Raze used his hands to explain, “when two monsters- of most varieties. skeletons, for example, can’t, but bitties can- breed they kind of mix that liquid. that mixture grows in one of the monsters over a period of time until the host monster-typically female, but bitties can serve as either host or other parent- gives birth. whatever is the stronger of the two will be the most dominant in their magical make up and appearance. once the offspring hits the air their magic goes up in flames and ya have a kid. it’s a lot less complicated than human breeding.”

“Uh-huh…*sure.*” I rolled my eyes, “How did they keep you guys from creating offspring though? If you were mating constantly.”

“both parties gotta feel safe to some extent- secure. we weren’t secure there, so no little things to deal with.” Raze sounded like he was talking to some idiot.

“Well forgive me for not knowing that dear. A staple of humanity is our ability to have children at the worst possible time of our lives.” I was tempted to flick him again, but I had my hands full with grocery bags.

“like i said. human breeding is complicated.” Raze reiterated, “happy bitch? plan on selling a ton of hybrid babies?”

“why the actual fuck would i do that?” I cocked a brow, “you guys are too expensive, and the market is currently a wee bit over-saturated with expensive bitties to begin with. Besides, I’d never do that to Sunshine you little shit.”

“suurree…” Raze fiddled with the rose in his hands, “when whores fly speck.”

“I thought we were having bonding time.” I sighed, “I honestly did. Sunshine is going to be so disappointed.”

“hmph.” Raze chose to ignore that particular comment.

We arrived home to see Leo sprawled out asleep on my couch. Waltzer, Cyan, and Idjit
were curled up on his chest, but Sunshine was pacing slightly on the rickety coffee table. He lit up with excitement when he saw us enter the house. I noticed Raze stealthily hid the rose behind his back.

“Your home.” Sunshine sounded so relieved, “You were taking so long…I was beginning to worry a bit.”

“It took a few extra minutes to find some things,” I explained. Raze teleported off of my shoulder onto the coffee table next to Sunshine, “But Raze has something for you.”

Raze snarled at me for my teasing. A confused Sunshine cocked his head. Shyly, yes the edgelord was shy in this moment, Raze pulled the rose out from behind his back. He had broken off some of the stem to make it easier to hold. Sunshine blinked for a few moments before flushing dark gold. He quietly accepted the small rose and cradled it carefully in his hands.

“For…me?” He cocked his head.

“y-yeah.” Raze looked away. I saw the faintest bit of red on the part of his cheek I could see.

“Thank you.” Sunshine leaned over and pressed a kiss to his cheek. Raze jumped slightly.

“Awww….” I wished I could’ve photographed that.

“shadup!” Raze flung some quarters at me.

“Widdle Raze is swuch a cwutie pieeee~!” I laughed maniacally before sauntering into the kitchen.

“bitch!”

“what’s that?” Waltzer’s eyes were black when he opened them.

“Oh dear.” Cyan sighed sleepily.

I got to watch as a half asleep Leo desperately tried to keep Raze and Waltzer from killing each other. Idjit somehow magically slept through it all curled up with Cyan on the couch. Sunshine still stood in shock on the coffee table gently turning the flower around in his palm.

It was happy time.

Happy times don’t last forever though.
“What is it with Olivia and summoning me to her side at such horrible times?” I rubbed my bleary eyes with my fists, “I even told her a few days ago I was finishing up crunch time.”

‘Crunch time’ was what I called “being way to fucking busy”/ “slammed with so much work I barely get to eat”. It happened whenever projects were overlapping towards the end, and the final due date was on the horizon. It. Sucked. Balls. It did mean I got a surplus of cash at the end though. Most of which went into my savings, some went into daily bills and necessities, and the rest went towards bitty care. It took forever for me to finally lessen the dent bitty care was making in my wallet, and of course Olivia would summon me to lunch after things balanced out at last. She was paying this time dammit.

“I’m nice?” Sunshine called down to Cyan and Idjit who rode in my hood as always.

m-mm-h-hhmm.” Idjit responded.

“She can be a bit pushy at times, but she’s mostly harmless.” Cyan added.

“she’s also pretty loud.” Waltzer chimed in from the top of my head, “got a lot of lung power. luckily, she isn’t just full of hot air.”

“Thanks Waltzer.” My lips turned into a slightly frown. I was trying to figure out exactly how offended for Olivia I needed to be. Another thought turned me away from that line of thinking though, “Raze, no sweets if you bite Olivia. Period.”

“hmph.” Raze curled around Sunshine more.

“Please be nice.” Sunshine pleaded. Raze said nothing. I would make damn sure to keep Olivia out of biting range.

The place Olivia decided to drag me to this time around was some hipster pizza place that looked like a bunch of wanna be graffiti artists sneezed their “art” all over the place. The entire place was too brightly colored and dimly lit for my tastes, but Olivia seemed excited as she waved me over. I saw her baby blue bouncing in anticipation on the table as well.

Oh god.

I FORGOT ABOUT THE HYPERACTIVE BABY BLUE.

Well…shit.

“Sissy!” Olivia pulled me into a hug almost dislodging Raze and Sunshine from my shoulder. I immediately placed one hand between Raze’s mouth and Olivia skin while returning the hug with the other, “It has been like forever since we last saw each other!”
“It’s been a few weeks yeah.” I said gently nudging her off of me. Raze didn’t bite me at least, but I think Waltzer’s glowing glare from on top of my head played into that.

“Come on. I already ordered us some pizza. I remembered the kind you liked.” Olivia winked and sat back down.

“greetings my Amazing Aunt!” Hiro posed dramatically on his plate, “i do so hope this day has found thee well!”

“Heya.” I helped my bitties get situated, “Olivia, Hiro, these two are Raze and Sunshine. My latest additions to the family.”

“You got more bitties?” Was it just me or did Olivia seem a little worried.

“I actually love my little sister.” I quipped leaning back in my chair. My hand was curled into a tight fist. Idjit looked up at me worriedly. He threw himself on top of my hand in a comforting gesture. Sunshine- who had originally edged forward to greet Olivia- took three steps backwards into Raze’s protective embrace. Cyan shifted on his feet anxiously while awkwardly patting my hand. Waltzer was my favorite though. I could see the faintest blue hue around the sugar packets next to Nadia. All it would take is one wrong move, and my sister have a lovely mess on her hands.

“Grow up Josephine.” Nadia sat some paperwork down, “I was merely observing something. We’re too old for such petty arguments.”

“Perfectly fine. He’s travelling the world with his company right now. We’re planning on having children once he returns.”

“Aren’t you worried?” I cocked my head and forced overly sweet innocence into my voice.

“How’s Edgar?” The name felt like acid on my lips.

“Perfectly fine.” Nadia slid into the chair next to Olivia. She was smart enough to not sit directly beside or across from me, “How interesting to discover that you have my number blocked, but you’ll come to a pizza place at 6 in the morning for Olivia.”

“I figured you’d be running behind given your lack of proper employment.” Nadia slid into the chair next to Olivia. She was smart enough to not sit directly beside or across from me, “How interesting to discover that you have my number blocked, but you’ll come to a pizza place at 6 in the morning for Olivia.”

“Idjit looked up at me worriedly. He threw himself on top of my hand in a comforting gesture.”
“What do I have to be concerned about?” Nadia cocked an infuriatingly perfect brow.

“Oh ya know. Given his track record, I’d figure you’d be anxious about not having him on a short leash.” I pulled my bitties closer to me. Their small frames offered a bit of an anchor to keep me from flying off the handle. Cyan’s anxious fidgeting reminded me to keep my voice lower for his sake.

“Ah, you’re still upset that Edgar chose me over you.” Partially correct realization flashed in Nadia’s eyes.

“Not really. You always did like picking up my trash. Old ‘friends’ and ‘boyfriends’ I ditched because they reminded me too much of you.” Nadia had been surrounded by people in high school, but she wouldn’t ever let me have even one person to myself. Leo- luckily- hated her guts as much as I did. Everyone else quickly became her bitch though.

“If that’s how you regard old friends, I’m shaking my heels to find out what you think of me.” Nadia snorted rolling her eyes, “At least I’m the baby they wanted.”

“At least I’m the baby who doesn’t depend on mommy and daddy to help me when I’m in a bind.” I hissed.

“Guys….Please stop.” Olivia’s voice cracked slightly.

“mama?” Hiro tugged on her hand, “oh this most certainly will not do! Amazing Aunt! apologize to mama at once!”

The firm accusation and disapproval in Hiro’s voice cut through my rage. Olivia was white as a sheet and almost crying.

“Shit. I’m sorry Livvy.” I reached out with my hand that didn’t have a bitty on it and grasped hers. Old instincts die hard, “I’m sorry baby. I didn’t mean to make you feel bad.”

“It’s okay.” Olivia sniffled slightly and rubbed the back of her hand.

“Nadia.” I cut a dark look at my twin.

“Hmm?” Nadia cocked her head ever so slightly.

I looked at Olivia and looked back at her. Nadia flashed me a scornful look before plastering on a simple smile.

“I’m sorry I rose to the bait Olivia. Especially after you went through all this trouble to arrange this meeting for me.” Nadia patted Olivia lightly on the shoulder.

“I’m fine.” Olivia forced a chipper smile. She pressed a kiss on her worried bitty’s head, “I’m fine Hiro.”

“if you say so mama.” Hiro frowned slightly.

“jojo?” Idjit whispered. I carefully brought the tiny bitty up to my cheek and rubbed him against my cheek, “th-t-that ti-i-ickles…”

“Miss Josie?” Cyan touched my elbow cautiously.

“I’m fine Cyan.” I placed my hand down and scooped all of my bitties near my chest. Raze puffed up at the snuggling at first, but he relaxed after seeing how relieved Sunshine was, “Now, you
wanted to speak with me about something Nadia?"

“Of course I do. Why else would I bother going through such indirect means to ensure we’d meet?” Nadia clucked her tongue, “I want you to design a logo for a small chain of stores my business is beginning to fund. We also need a website designed.”

“You do realize there’s no family discount right?” I frowned.

“Of course not.”

“Guys.” Olivia warned.

She didn’t need to. Our argument was cut off by the pizza she ordered arriving. For a moment, I wondered why the hell a pizza place would serve pizza at 6 in the morning. Then I realized I really didn’t fucking care. The next few moments were filled with tranquil silence as Olivia and I ate while feeding our bitties torn bits from the pizza.

“Shall we discuss pricing?” Nadia pulled out a pen.

“We shall discuss the details of what you fucking want first.” I narrowed my eyes at her.

Our exchanges from this point on were less hostile but no less cold. Olivia watched with hope in her eyes. I knew she wanted us to be the perfect little band of sisters. She hated being in the middle of arguments, but I could never forgive Nadia for her attitude and behavior. Ever.

“That wraps it up then.” I sighed from where I was leaned back in my chair. My bitties sat in a protective line in front of me, and Hiro practically guarded Olivia. Surprisingly, the baby blue understood the tension in the air didn’t need any hyperactivity stirring anything up.

“So it does. I expect progress reports.” Nadia handed me a business card, “Send them to my secretary.”

“Fine.” I impolitely snatched the card away from her, “I’ll get started on it after I wrap up this last major thing I gotta do.”

“Must you be so vague?” Nadia sighed.

“My clients don’t exactly want me discussing their shit with anyone but them you know.” I tucked the business card away with the napkins that had some sketched designs on them- Olivia had thankfully brought me some colored pencils.

“So...the business aspect is done.” Olivia’s gentle voice cut off any argument on Nadia’s side.

“Yup.” I looked at my sister warily.

“Nadia, what do you think of Sissy’s bitties?” Olivia gestured to my little brood.

“I believe you said she only had three.” Nadia looked at Olivia disapprovingly.

“I did only have three a few weeks ago.” I quickly came to my little sister’s defense, “Raze and Sunshine are the newbies. What do my bitties have to do with anything?”

“Olivia has mentioned how helpful...Hiro has been to her these past few months. I’ve looked into it, and it seems bitties are becoming a bit of a growing trend.” Nadia checked her nauseatingly perfect nails, “I would like to get one for myself.”
“You don’t just adopt a bitty because it’s the popular thing to do.” I growled, “You do it because you want to provide someone with a home.”

“That is what I meant of course.” Nadia waved away my hostility, “They are obviously more sentient than any cat or dog. I figured having one around my office could be of some assistance. Since you have so many, Olivia recommended speaking with you.”

I looked at my guilty little sister. She timidly turned her gaze away and mouthed ‘sorry’.

“Oh really?” I crossed my arms.

“W-Well…umm…I was thinking about adopting a Lil’ Bro to keep Hiro company, and Nadia wanted to adopt one for herself…..I just thought that maybe we could do this together? All of us getting a new bitty?…but you’ve got two new bitties now…” I could practically hear the wheels turning in Olivia’s head as she struggled to figure out a solution.

“She wants us to begin acting like sisters Josephine.” Nadia sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose, “I don’t know how finding me a bitty will cause such a thing to happen, but she was rather insistent.”

I shot Olivia a “You. Are. In. Trouble. Little. Miss.” look before meeting my polar opposite twin’s sharp gaze. Of course Nadia would like to copy me again. If I had something, she wanted a version of it too, and- considering the fact she slept with Edgar the night before I was supposed to marry him- I knew damn well she’d do anything to get it.

“Bitties aren’t cheap you know.” I warned my twin despite the fact I wanted to convince her to adopt the highest maintenance bitty I could think of just to see her suffer.

“I’m far from poor.” Nadia flashed the diamonds on her fingers.

“They also are a lot of work.” I added.

“It’ll be easy for me to adjust. I assure you.” Nadia rolled her eyes.

I looked at Olivia again.

Her wide eyes were filled with hope as she pouted pathetically at me. If she were a puppy, she’d have her tail between her legs.

UGH

“Fine.” I sighed rubbing my palm across my face, “Fine. I’ll join in on this little ‘bonding’ session.”

“you certain about that ophie?” Waltzer asked reading my face for any hesitation.

“Are you sure you’ll be okay?” Sunshine whispered.

“Everything will be fine guys. I’ll make it work. Somehow.” I stretched out slightly, “When are we going to the Bitty CC?”

“Next Thursday.” Nadia answered before Olivia could, “At opening time. Do not be late.”

“I’m not the one who ran ten minutes behind today.” I growled before gently picking my bitties up and placing them on their perches, “Now if you’ll excuse me. I need to get home. I love you Livvy.”
“Love you too Sissy.” Olivia stood up and pressed a kiss against my cheek and gave me a quick hug.

I loved the look of jealousy that briefly crossed Nadia’s face. *Suck it bitch.*

“good-bye my Amazing Aunt!” Hiro waved while hopping around on the table, “i cannot wait for our paths to cross once more!”

“You too little dude.” I said reluctantly. I could tell just being around him wore out Idjit and Cyan, but…well…it’s hard to be mean to a cinnamon roll dammit.

“Good-bye Josephine.” Nadia formally nodded her head.

“Bye-bye cuntsucker!” I beamed at the fury that raced across her face before darting out of the building.

“n-na-adia…” Idjit began from inside the hoodie.

“is a fuckin’ bitch.” Raze growled from where he was cradling Sunshine, “i thought you were pain in the ass, but apparently it’s genetic.”

“Miss Josie and Miss Nadia have very little in common.” Cyan protested, “Miss Nadia is…well…a cruel tyrant undeserving of Miss Olivia’s respect, but she is still Miss Josie and Miss Olivia’s older sister Raze.”

“Please be nice Raze.” Sunshine said weakly before pressing a hand to his head, “Ah…”

“Sunshine.” I paused in my tracks, “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.” Sunshine said quickly, “This whole situation just wore me out I suppose.”

He forced some laughter.

“you should rest.” Raze muttered against Sunshine’s head.

“you haven’t been feeling well for a few days sunshine.” Waltzer commented from the top of my head, “maybe we should schedule an appointment?”

“Long term exposure to extremely humid air could’ve done a number on your body Sunshine.” Cyan pondered in my hood, “It would probably be wise to see a physician.”

“i don’ want some stranger pokin’ around his body.” Raze growled protectively.

“it’ll be better for him in the long run.” Waltzer replied breezily, “unless you want him to end up with some kind of crippling disease later because we didn’t schedule a quick check up.”

Raze hissed at Waltzer. The two began to argue.

“I’m fine with being examined Josephine.” Sunshine told me over the two sans types yelling, “I’d hate to worry you all.”

“It’s better to be safe than sorry.” I could feel Cyan nod in agreement.

“p-plea-ase be o-okay sunshine.” Idjit half pleaded/ half prayed.

“I’ll see if I can schedule a check up on Thursday.” I pulled out my phone as we continued
our walk home.

My little life with my bitties just took a nose dive straight into uncomfortable territory.

_Fucking lovely._
**Brothers and Sisters**

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing. Full disclaimer in Ch1
BTW: Next week I have midterms, so....my inconsistent posting schedule is about to get even weirder.

Nadia and Olivia were late.

I managed to wriggle Sunshine’s check-up into a slot that opened up due to cancellation, so I was there extra early. Forty minutes later, and my sisters were still nowhere to be seen. Sunshine's check-up went smoothly in my eyes, but the bitty tech who did the checkup furrowed her brow and asked if she could run a test with Sunshine privately. Thus, the others and I- grumpy Raze included- were relocated to the lobby.

“a-are w-we act-t-tual-ly getting a n-e-ew bitty?” Idjit carefully maneuvered himself out of my hood onto my open shoulder.

“Yes. I guess.” I sighed rubbing my eyes.

“Hmm…..” Cyan also climbed out of my hood onto my shoulder next to Idjit. Raze-thankfully silent- sat scowling to himself on my other one, “What kind of bitty would do well with umm…”

“raze and i fighting like cats and dogs?” Waltzer supplied from the top of my head. He was sprawled out on his belly.

“Yes.” Cyan blushed faintly.

“no clue.” I felt Waltzer tap his fingers against my skull.

“we don’t need another bitty.” Raze groused, “and yer the one who picks most of th’ fights.”

“oh really?” I didn’t need to see Waltzer to know his eye was glowing blue.

“You both egg each other on.” I interrupted, “Maybe some kind of chill bitty would be good…”

“You’re adopting another bitty?” The bitty tech came out holding Sunshine with one hand, “I thought you mostly handled charity cases.”

“My little sister and my twin are supposed to be coming by to pick out bitties of their own, and my little sis wanted us to get new ones together. Family bonding or something.” I shook my head slightly before holding my hand out to take Sunshine from the delicate looking squirrel monster, “Everything all good?”

“Oh, I have wonderful news.” The bitty tech waved me over to the desk. I furrowed my brows and followed the monster to reclaim my bitty.
“Um…I…uh…” Sunshine tugged at his loose pink sweater. He seemed anxious. I sat my bitties down on the counter and frowned.

“Sunshine…?” I raised a brow.

“Congratulations.” The bitty tech beamed, “I think this is the first time I’ve ever seen a sans type and a grillbitty successfully breed before!”

My brain ceased to work for the next few seconds. Then I raised my hand and flicked the back of Raze’s skull.

“ow! what was tha’ for!” Raze seemed to come out of his own daze.

“This is your fault.” I said bluntly flicking him again, “Dammit. Can I get this one neutered or something? Can you even have a bitty neutered?”

“i’m keepin’ all my parts bitch!” Raze chomped down on my hand.

“THEN PULL THE FUCK OUT DUMBASS.” I said exasperated, “Jesus, I didn’t even think about this happening so soon. I should seriously flick you again.”

“Josephine?” Sunshine looked up at me with worried eyes, “Are you…going to get rid of me?”

“Oh no baby. Of course not.” I carefully slid the bitty closer to nuzzle his head, “We just need to keep this from happening unexpectedly.”

“We have a shot we can give Raze that’ll prevent future offspring for up to a year.” The bitty tech offered.

“Great. You get to keep all your bits after all.” I glowered at the edgy, “Jeez, so…anything I can like…read or look at to kind of figure out what the fuck I’m gonna have to do?”

“We have a few pamphlets.” The bitty tech said, “I’ll grab you a few from the back while getting Raze the shot he needs.”

“Thanks.” I nudged Raze forward.

The bitty tech disappeared into the back with a hissing edgy.

“Are you mad Josephine?” Sunshine shifted on his feet.

“No honey. Shocked, confused, and worried as hell? Yeah. Mad? No. It was an oversight on my part.” I rubbed my temples.

“guess that explains a lot of your fatigue.” Waltzer commented sitting down next to where Sunshine stood.

“Oh my.” Cyan crossed his arms, “Are we anywhere near prepared for something like this?”

“Not yet.” I rested my forehead against the desk, but I raised a finger, “But we will be.”

“Thank you Josephine.” Sunshine walked over and hugged my skull.

“No problem.” I rested my chin on the counter. That way I could smile for Sunshine.
“y-you’re g-go-o-ing to be a papa?” Idjit stared at Sunshine’s torso confused.

“Apparently so.” Sunshine rubbed the back of his neck.

“aww...means we get to be uncles Idjit.” Waltzer grinned.

“It also means a great deal of responsibility.” Cyan coolly interjected, “We’ll be shaping a life Waltzer.”

“true.” Waltzer shrugged.

“Which means you and Raze can’t keep trying to kill one another.” I added pursing my lips.

“Exactly.” Cyan nodded.

“okay…that’s creepy…you two can read each other’s mind? either of you related to professor x by any chance? i’d like to know if you could do more than see right through me.”

“Don’t make me flick you too Waltzer.” I huffed.

“…s-so…are w-we still g-get-ting a new bitty?” Idjit looked slightly confused.

Now that had been a valid question.

“I-

“SISSY!”

“my Amazing Aunt!”

Thin arms wrapped around my waist as Olivia practically slammed into my back. I scrambled to not crush my bitties beneath my chest while she giggled. Hiro slid from her shoulder onto mine laughing as well. I knew I’d have a bruise on my stomach, but my sister’s happy demeanor melted away most of my hostility.

“Hey,” I began gently, “Be a little more careful okay? I could’ve hurt one of my bitties.”

“Oh!” Olivia pulled back and plucked Hiro from my shoulder, “I’m sorry! I should’ve thought of that.”

“It’s fine. No harm, no foul.” I waved it off, “You’re late by the way.”

“We got caught in traffic.” Nadia- sadly- stepped into view, “You surprise me again. I figured you’d blow this off because I was involved.”

“I don’t like abandoning Olivia to your clutches when I can avoid it.” I forced a sickly sweet smile on my face, “What kind of older sister leaves her younger one with a monster after all… oh wait.”

“And you’ve ceased to impress me.” Nadia snorted taking off her expensive shades. Knowing her, she would wear them for about three weeks then buy another $300 dollar pair just because she could, “Will I just be randomly looking around, or do you have a recommendation.”

“A boss would probably work well with your attitude.” I sighed, “They’re also independent, so, when you forget to feed them, they can take care of themselves.”
“That’s a papyrus type!” Olivia added trying her best to take the edge off of my proverbial blade, “Like the Lil’ Bro I want to get!”

“A boss hm? Where are they at?” Nadia intentionally looked at Olivia to answer.

“This way. Sissy? You coming with?” Olivia looked at me anxiously.

“In a sec, gotta wait for Raze to get back.” I gestured to the pastel pink door that led to the back, “Be there soon though. Promise.”

“Okay.” Olivia said reluctantly leading Nadia over to the pens holding the more aggressive bitties- like bosses and edgies.

“Here ya go.” The bitty tech materialized with an annoyed Raze. I could see a neon green Band-Aid poking out from under his sleeve, “He isn’t really a happy camper though.”

“Raze?” Sunshine carefully approached. The edgy just growled softly and tugged Raze into his grasp. Sunshine blushed when Raze buried his face in his neck, “Are you alright?”

“m’ fine.” Raze grumbled against Sunshine’s neck.

I raised a brow at the bitty tech.

“I think he may be a bit concerned since this is the first time different type bitties have ever bred before. In theory, nothing should happen, but…well…you never know.” The bitty tech whispered to me.

“Ah.” I nodded understandingly, “Well, my sisters have finally arrived, so we’re going to go poke around the adoption pens a bit.”

“We actually have a few human bred bitties.” The bitty tech laughed seeing my face scrunch up in confusion, “Humans breed them a bit differently than we monsters do. It adds more variety, so we don’t mind. You have more options than you usually would though.”

“Oooohh….okay.” I grinned politely at the tech before gathering up my bitties and heading over to Olivia and Nadia.

“Why was your bitty taken to the back?” Nadia asked looking up from the pen as I approached.

“None of your goddamn business.” I ignored Nadia’s dark glare, “Did you find the Lil’ Bros Olivia?”

“She’s been doing your job and assisting me.” Nadia answered before Olivia could even open her mouth.

“There isn’t much to do.” I resisted the urge to roll my eyes, “Those are the bosses. See if one likes you. Olivia can’t make a bitty fall head over heels for you.”

“More information regardin-“

“Information you- as a responsible adult- should’ve looked up for yourself.” I held up my hand to cut off her remaining excuses, “I agreed to point you in the right direction, but only your actions and a bitty’s impression of you will seal any deal.”

With that, I left the two of them before Nadia could start a vicious argument. I’d hate to start
yelling a shop filled with curlies. I wandered over to a pen filled with non-aggressive bitties- like rays, cherries, gs, and so on- and more active ones. It looked like a little bitty paradise. Small pillows to curl up on and sleep. Bitty sized play sets to roam across and have fun on. The wall surrounding the pen was thick enough for me to let my bitties stand on top of it. They could only really stand side by side, but it beat carrying them around.

“Anyone catch your eye?” I inquired looking around. None of the bitties really seemed to pay us much mind. They were too busy chatting among themselves and playing around to notice us. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Olivia leave Nadia’s side to look at a pen filled with the “peacekeeper” like bitties (sansys, poppys, Lil’ Bros). Hopefully her baby blue and the new Lil’ Bro would get along.

“we’re already cramped as is.” Raze growled.

“well…we could always toss you out onto the sidewalk.” Waltzer sounded like he was actually putting some real thought to the idea.

“what was that ya bastard?” Raze moved to get in Waltzer’s face. His larger frame bumped against Idjit, who had been standing closer to the edge to see.

My little cherry was tumbling down from a four foot high wall. *He was barely over 2 ½ inches tall.* My heart raced as my hand, Waltzer’s magic, and- surprisingly- Raze’s magic reached out to grab him. None seemed like they would reach him in time, but a fourth party intervened. Calm red magic- tinged with faintest bit of black- slowed Idjit’s descent until he was caught by thin arms.

A 4 inch tall sans type- a human bred one…a blake- smiled at Idjit fondly. He wore tan cargo pants, a black and purple t-shirt, black sneakers, and a dark purple beanie. His black and red eyes were very calm and slightly mischievous.

“hey there little guy.” the bitty carefully sat Idjit on his own two feet, “you should be more careful near edges like that. this story could’ve had a really sad ending if i hadn’t been here.”

“Oh my god…”I sighed in relief sagging against the wall briefly before raising my head to meet the bitty’s gaze, “Thank you so much. My heart stopped for ten seconds.”

“Idjit?” Sunshine carefully approached the edge of the wall. Raze’s magic immediately grabbed him and held him in place to prevent a repeat incident, “Are you okay?”

“He isn’t hurt?” Cyan frantically leaned closer to the edge. Waltzer grabbed him by the back of the shirt before he could tumble.

“i-i-i’m f-fi-fi-i-n-ne.” Idjit trembled slightly. He was definitely scarred by this experience.

“that’s good.” The blake patted Idjit’s head, “let’s get you back up to your human.”

The blake raised Idjit up high enough for me to grab him easily. Idjit was trembling in my hand, so I cradled him close to help him calm down. A tall meek limped over to the blake. He was dressed in clean clothing, but he had bandages around his left leg, a cast on his right arm, and hundreds of smaller chips and cracks across his body. Quite frankly he looked like hell despite the cleanliness of his bright clothing.

“snuggle.” The blake chided gently, “you shouldn’t be moving around so much.”

Then, he helped the meek- Snuggle- carefully sit down on the plush pen floor.
“What happened to him?” I asked reaching down with my spare hand to gently pat an unscathed spot on Snuggle’s head. The bitty flinched at first, but he calmed down once he realized that I was being gentle.

“Well…umm I guess you could say we’re brothers…we used to belong to the same family.” The blake paused for a moment, “Snuggle belong to Lily, my human Tony’s younger sister. Lily was playing in the park with some of her friends, and her ball rolled out into the street. Snuggle went to get it because there wasn’t much traffic. Lily chased after him, and some ass-jerk flew down the road and hit them both. Lily’s still in the hospital too.”

“I see.” It didn’t take too much time for me to piece together the rest of the story. The parents blamed Snuggle for the accident, so they left Snuggle and his brother here. It was sickening.

“man… is the kid… doing well in the hospital?” Waltzer inquired quietly. His human didn’t ever make it a hospital after all.

“we don’t know.” The blake sighed, “we’ve just kind of been… well… here. Not many people want to adopt two bitties at the same time though.”

“Is your brother recovering well?” Cyan cocked his head.

“i really don’t know. he hasn’t really told me much of anything since we arrived here.” The blake shrugged rather pathetically, “it’s been a bit rough, but we’ll deal with it! we’re made of sterner stuff than that.”

His optimism came off extremely forced. I could tell he knew my bitties and I weren’t buying it.

“a-are you here to adopt?” the blake quickly looked around trying to change the subject, “there are some really nice soft bones over-“

“What’s your name?” I interrupted. The blake blinked.

“tony wasn’t exactly original, so he just called me ‘blake’.” Blake tugged on his beanie a little bit.

“Blake and Snuggle.” I pulled my hand out of the pen to rest my chin on it. “yay or nay?”

I got four “yay”s and one silent treatment. Blake blinked confused.

“Sissy!” Olivia approached holding a Lil’ Bro.

“my Amazing Aunt! you must meet my new family member!” Hiro was practically swinging from Olivia’s hair, “this is my new brother Harley!”

“’Sup?” Harley waved.

“Hey man.” I nodded politely, “What about the bitch?”

“She found a boss! I think she’s naming him Cesar.” Olivia pointed over to the desk where Nadia was chatting with a slightly annoyed boss.

“How fitting.” I rolled my eyes.

“What about you?” Olivia peered in to the pen.
“I was thinking about these two.” I pointed to Blake and Snuggle.

“u-us?” Blake’s eyes widened in disbelief.

“Yup. You.” I grinned.

Blake quickly turned to Snuggle and began using ASL. *I thought meeks couldn’t…I guess his previous family helped him learn.* Snuggle actually focused on his brother before looking up at me and my bitties. I smiled and winked. The two new bitties seemed rather dazed as I calmly adopted them.

That was how I ended up with two more bitties living with me. Snuggle needed a lot of medical attention the first few days after he moved in, but Cyan often helped Blake and I with applying medicines and creams. Blake was a little blessing. He could actually stop Waltzer and Raze from ripping each other apart with relative ease.

I could finally leave my bitties at home alone.

*Hallelujah!!*

My apartment was a tad bit cramped with seven- and soon to be in three months eight- little creatures running around living routines of their own. The shithole started to look like someone actually lived in though. My once barely used living room and kitchen were bustling with activity at random times. My bed was thankfully large enough for us all- when Sunshine could drag Raze out of their little love nest to sleep in it.

Olivia noted one day that I looked healthier. Happier too.

I was happier. I really was.

I hoped the peaceful days would last.
I need to reorganize the next two chapters because I changed my mind on how I wanted things to go (in other words: I've gotta delete and rewrite a good chunk of a chapter), and I've got midterms this week. Thus...I dunno when the next chapter is going to be up.

“How does your arm feel?” I deliberately made sure to slow down my mouth movements. I had a tendency to talk too fast for Snuggle to keep up sometimes. The meek experimentally stretched his arm out and moved it around. Nothing seemed to pain him. He quickly picked up a scrap of paper and wrote a response.

‘Better’

“That’s good. You should still eat some monster candy today and tomorrow though.” I sat back in my office chair, “I want to make sure your arm doesn’t regress back.”

Snuggle nodded in quiet agreement. He hesitated for a few minutes before timidly stretching out his arms. In one swift motion, I scooped him off of my desk and onto my lap next to a sleeping Sunshine. Raze was on the floor doing…something with scraps of paper and various bits of office supplies. The rest of the house was quiet as well. Cyan and Idjit were watching *Rent* again, and I was willing to bet money Waltzer had fallen asleep next to the enraptured bitties. The only one really unaccounted for was-

“ari?” I looked down at Blake. He was carefully dragging some papers along, “are these those sketches you were looking for last night?”

“Let me see…” I took the papers from him, “They are. Thank you so much Blake. Waltzer and I practically tore this place apart trying to find them yesterday.”

“happy to help.” Blake grinned at the praise, “is snuggle doing okay?”

“Yup.” I checked on the bitties in my lap. Snuggle had curled up into a ball with his back pressed against Sunshine’s. Sunshine still didn’t look like he was pregnant, but he had been dealing with a lot of morning sickness the past few days, “The monster candy definitely helped speed up the process, so he’s got a clean bill of health now.”

“great.” Blake paused, “can i teleport up to see him?”

“Blake,” I chided gently, “You can use your powers whenever you want to in the house. You don’t need to keep tiptoeing around.”

“sorry.” Blake blushed before disappearing into a ball of black/red energy. He reappeared on my desk in front of my keyboard, “oh, i didn’t realize sunshine was napping here.”

“didn’ wanna just nap with me.” Raze grumbled snapping a paperclip in half.

“jealous man?” Blake teased. Raze threw part of the paperclip at him. Blake laughed and
swatted it away, “maybe if you weren’t always trying to push people around he wouldn’t get so frustrated.”

“excuse me?” Raze whirled around hissing.

I pinched the bridge of my nose in exasperation. I knew Raze’s attitude had been wearing on Blake’s nerves ever since he and Snuggle began living with us. In the beginning, he tried very hard to stay an unbiased mediator between Waltzer and Raze, but he grew more frustrated with Raze’s lone wolf mentality as time passed. What started off as gentle chiding was bordering on aggression nowadays. I knew I never had to worry about Blake physically harming Raze. That didn’t mean he wouldn’t inadvertently hurt him with his words however.

“Enough Blake.” I warned softly. Blake’s semi cocky smirk quickly disappeared and he looked at me with concern, “Raze is allowed to be jealous now and again.”

“i ain’t jealous!” Raze threw the other half of the paperclip at me. I let it thud against my head without paying it much mind.

“hey.” Blake’s eyes glowed with anger.

“He tried to throw a toilet seat at me the first time we met.” I snorted and gently turned Blake’s face towards me, “His little hissy fits aren’t anything to fret over.”

“Raze…?” Sunshine’s sleep laced voice cut off any further outbursts on Raze’s part. The annoyed edgy appeared on my lap within seconds.

“hey sunshine.” Raze stood statue still on my thigh.

“hmph.” Blake rolled his eyes and crossed his arms raising a brow at me. I just smiled and shrugged. I’d long since accepted the fact that my edgy was the definition of tsundere at this point.

“Is it supposed to rain today?” Sunshine said struggling to sit up. Concern flared through me immediately. Rain? It rarely ever rained in my city, and when it did, it stormed.

“i dunno…speck?” Raze glared up at me.

“I’ll go check the news.” Blake offered before quickly teleporting out of my office.

Ironically, Waltzer teleported into my office within in seconds of Blake leaving.

“hey ophie…is it supposed to rain today or something? cyan is practically bouncing all over the place.” Waltzer rubbed the back of his skull, “it’s starting to worry idjit a bit.”

“Blake just went to check.” A sinking feeling settled into my stomach. Storms meant one thing: thunder, “Hey Waltzer?”

“yeah?” Waltzer cocked his head.

“Could you go grab my phone? From where ever it is?”

“sure thing.”

The next few minutes were quiet as Blake checked the news and Waltzer hunted down my cellphone. Snuggle slept soundly on my leg, but Raze held a sickly Sunshine in his arms. He nipped at me when I first moved to rub my thumb up and down Sunshine’s back. In the end, he begrudgingly allowed me to touch his mate.
“got it.” Waltzer reappeared with my cellphone and…Idjit?

“j-jojo…” Idjit held his hands out to me pleadingly. I picked him up and cradled him under my chin, “cyan i-s…ac-c-ting f-funn-n-y…”

“there is a storm heading this way.” Blake announced entering the office, “it looks…rough.”

“I see,” I powered on my phone and quickly pressed my speed dial button for Leo, “We’ll be moving our little group to the bedroom then. It only has one window.”

“the storms around here get pretty bad yeah?” Waltzer asked, “pops and i were only caught in one once…but we almost drowned.”

“The storms are brutal.” I answered honestly, “It was part of the reason why I was concerned about leaving Sunshine in the junkyard. We rarely get bad weather, but when it comes….”

I shuddered slightly. I didn’t put my office in a room with a window for a very good reason. Once, I had to replace my furniture in my living room entirely after one storm threw some shit into my window and shattered the cheap glass. Property damage was the least of my concerns though.

“Joan?” Leo’s voice was slightly panicked, “Hey.”

“Are you coming to my place, or am I making a mad dash for your house?” I cut right to the chase.

“Can I come over there?” Leo sounded relieved.

“Of course. I’ll have the fort ready.” I would need to dig out some old blankets, but it would get done.

“Thank you.” Leo hung up.

“l-leo’s co-c-coming over?” Idjit fidgeted against my neck some.

“He’s not a big fan of thunder.” That was an understatement. I could vividly remember hours spent in a blanket fort singing some shitty popular songs to drown out the sky crashing into itself while Leo clung to me terrified. Things were a bit less dramatic at this point, but he still shook at the sound of thunder. Why? I never asked because I never needed to know.

“Josephine?” Sunshine asked groggily, “Leo…is your friend right?”

“Yup.” I carefully shook Snuggle awake. The sleepy meek resisted consciousness until his brother carefully tugged him off of my lap, “Now, I need to make a fort.”

“h-huh?” Idjit frowned.

“wha’?” Raze made sure he had Sunshine balanced safely in his grasp before teleporting off of my lap. The rest of my bitties looked at me like I had gone mad or declared myself the queen of America.

I grinned at their confusion.

In less than three minutes, I had scrounged up most of my blankets and grabbed a few old books. After a lot of trying, I eventually had a pillow and blanket fort built off of one side of my bed. My bitties just stared at it with faces full of confusion and concern. Cyan wasn’t happy that he
couldn’t stay in the living room to finish his musical, but I couldn’t risk him getting hurt.

“ophie?” Waltzer tugged at the rather sturdy fort curiously, “what’s the point of this?”

“It’s to help Leo.” I replied vaguely while hunting down flashlights. We’d need them when the power cut off, “Makes the thunderstorm not as scary.”

“It doesn’t rain often.” Sunshine observed furrowing his brow, “I don’t think I’ve ever seen in rain before….”

“Some people say it’s because we’re only a 30 minute drive away from Mt. Ebbot.” I vaguely remembered listening to a meteorologist explain the phenomena. “Mt. Ebbot’s magic keeps rain from reaching the cities around it, but over time the weather turns into a nasty storm too strong for the magic to keep back. Then we basically have a mini hurricane on our hands.”

“that’s a bit off putting.” Waltzer headed inside the fort after finding an opening.

“huh,” Blake’s eyes unfocused for a minute before concern filled them, “are you scared of thunder as well ari?”

“Nope. Being everybody’s rock makes stuff like thunder look harmless,” I checked my watch, “Leo should be getting here anytime now.”

“Papa is coming?” Cyan perked up. He looked like hadn’t ever been sick in his life while poor Sunshine looked ready to hurl again.

“He sh-“

Slightly frantic knocking interrupted our conversation. I slid the flashlights into the fort before shuffling to the door. Leo’s face was drawn into a panicked grin. He opened his mouth to speak, but a loud clap of thunder roared over the city. The lights went out. I caught Leo’s thinner frame when he flung himself at me. He was shaking.

“Papa…” Cyan whined slightly racing into the room covering his ears. I forgot about his aversion to loud noises.

“Hey Cyan.” Leo laughed weakly before extending a trembling hand down to grab Cyan. Another clap of thunder made the arm still around my waist tighten. He picked up Cyan and held him close as the next wave practically shook the apartment.

“Got the fort ready. Just let me lock up and grab some drinks.” I gently nudged Leo towards the bedroom, “The others are in there, so please don’t squish them.”

“I won’t.” Leo promised quietly brisk walking to my bedroom.

It was…cozy...no….it was fucking cramped in a tiny blanket and pillow fort with two human adults and seven bitties. The hilarity of trying to figure out how the fuck to get everyone inside uncrushed distracted Leo as the first bit of actual rain thundered down outside. Eventually, I was dozing on my stomach with Raze curled around a sickly Sunshine snoring on my back. Leo rested his head on my shoulder carefully avoiding an anxious Idjit who shivered by my neck. Cyan had curled up under Leo’s chin trying his best to ignore the noises outside. Blake and Snuggle were curled up between Leo and I, and Waltzer was actually on Leo’s head patting Leo’s furrowed brow.

“Thanks Joan.” Leo sighed, “Annie had some family thing this weekend, so I was home alone.”
“It’s not like it’s a bit deal Leo.” In my head, another bright red ‘x’ slammed on his new bitch’s name. She was losing brownie points drastically, “I’m always right here for you.”

“I know.” I could feel Leo smile against my shoulder, “But you don’t have to be, so thank you.”

“Hmph.” I rolled my eyes.

“How long will this last?” Sunshine asked weakly.

“A couple of hours probably. Blake?” I couldn’t move to look at the bitty, but I felt his head raise from my hip.

“until 4 i think.” I heard Blake tap his chin with his finger, “maybe 5 if it lingers.”

“Lovely.” Leo said dryly. It was 2:37 the last time I checked.

“Just try to get some sleep. I’ll protect you from the big bad thunder.” I lifted my head off of my arm to tug at Leo’s hair, “Promise.”

“Asshole.” Leo pouted.

“Don’t you ever forget it.” I rested my head against my arm again. I almost fell asleep in the silence. Everything was okay in the world.

WAS

“Your parents contacted me.” Leo’s voice had gone soft.

“Oh really?” Annoyance and detestation flooded my veins, “They threaten you?”

“No. No.” Leo patted my lower back to try and calm me down, “They were wondering if you got a new number. They said they weren’t getting any answers when they called.”

“I blocked their asses.” I growled. Idjit wiggled against my neck and tried to comfort me with gentle pats, “What the hell do they want?”

“I don’t know.” Leo answered honestly, “They just said they want to speak with you.”

“I’ll call them.” To cuss them out for dragging my best friend into our family drama again. The last time this happened Leo almost got hurt trying to defend me from Edgar, “Why didn’t you tell me sooner?”

“I didn’t think anything of it at first. Then they called me again. They didn’t threaten me or anything, but their insistence kind of freaked me out.” Leo traced odd shapes into my back while he thought, “I think they’ve got something really serious to talk about.”

“No, they don’t.” I knew that for a fact, “It’s some bullshit thing they worry about and get mad over because I don’t worry about it.”

“It could be serious though…” Leo trailed off.

“It won’t be anything that matters to me. Trust me.” I snorted, “Fuckers.”

“Isn’t it about time to let this grudge go Josie?” Leo’s voice became slightly melancholic, “They won’t be around forever.”
Leo’s parents, a drunk driver, and a thunderstorm hadn’t mixed well all those years ago.

“I know.” I reluctantly admitted. The child in me with untreated skin knees was practically starved for affection. I went from big sister to ‘mom’ in a matter of days after Olivia had been born. The resentment of losing my childhood still burned, but growing older made it seem duller and duller. I refused to forgive them that easily. Besides, there was that other thing as well, “Give it a few more years.”

“grudge?” Blake asked cautiously.

“My fiancé banged my twin the night before my wedding. My parents took Nadia’s side and said it was obvious that a real man would like “an actual woman” like Nadia. Leo here decided to confront Edgar about it like an idiot and got his jaw broken, so I had to kick my ex-fiancé’s ass for hurting my best friend which made Nadia get upset and well….it just got crazier and crazier from there.”

“That’s a low blow.” Waltzer huffed, “no wonder you don’t like her.”

“aren’t parents supposed to support all of their children?” I looked down and saw Blake tug his brother a bit closer, “edgar was your fiancé right?”

“They always played favorites.” Cyan noted, “From what I’ve heard at least.”

“I was the unexpected surprise when Nadia was born. That’s why my name doesn’t end in an ‘a’. They wanted me to know I wouldn’t fit in.” Growing up I quickly came to hate that my name ended in ‘e’. It made me an outcast among the people who were supposed to love me unconditionally. The pain still burned every time I was reminded of that fact.

“I’m sorry…” My back tensed when I felt warm tears hit my t-shirt. Sunshine…was crying? “That had to be horrible.”

“Aww…Sunshine.” I fumbled to reach the ray on my back, but Leo quickly rubbed away Sunshine’s orange, molten tears, “It’s no big deal sweetie. I promise.”

“sunny…” Idjit popped his head over my shoulder and quickly scurried over to Sunshine’s side.

“huh…?” Raze snapped awake with a hiss, “wha’ the fuck!?”

“It’s nothing Raze,” Sunshine said rubbing his face and accepting a gentle hug from Idjit, “Just my emotions running away from me again.”

“I’m sorry.” I carefully shifted my bitties off of my back next to Blake and Snuggle. I needed to be able to move, “This is supposed to be a cozy little sanctuary, and I fucked it up. I’m sorry.”

“the fuck did ya do?” Raze snapped at my fingers while cradling Sunshine close to his chest. He snarled at Idjit when the smallest bitty tried to approach Sunshine, but Blake’s magic flicked his head to the side forcing him to turn his attention to the annoyed bitty.

“don’t be an ass man. now’s not the time.” Blake warned his eyes glowing harshly. I could feel his body tremble just ever so slightly against my leg. It was one thing to threaten the largest bitty of the bunch from a distance, but this close Raze could do some serious damage.

“Please calm down everyone.” Cyan sighed exasperatedly. Idjit fixed Sunshine’s sweater
before backing away, “Sunshine needs to rest not play mediator.”

“No need for violence now.” Leo agreed, “We all just nee-“

Thunder slammed down louder than before. This time everyone but me jumped.

“jesus fuckin’ christ that’s loud.” Raze huddled in on himself slightly.

“guess it wants to go out with a bang.” Waltzer tried to play off his anxiety by shrugging, but I could tell he wasn’t fond of it either.

“Jeez.” I sighed, “Are all of the men in my life terrified of a little bad weather?”

I felt something tug at my pants leg. I squinted down and saw a confused Snuggle hold up a piece of paper. I turned on a flashlight to read it.

‘What’s going on? Why are we all cuddling?’

I threw my head back and howled with laughter.

“Well, guess one of you isn’t.” I carefully tugged Snuggle closer and rubbed his chipped skull carefully, “Does it really count if he can’t hear it though…Ah who cares.”

“i-i’m not scared!” Blake protested definitely despite the fact he was still shaking, “i’ll protect people from the thunder!”

“Our valiant little knight.” I cooed playfully tugging his beanie over his eyes, “I swear.”

Like magic, the thunderstorm became insignificant to our banter. The world sounded like it was trying to destroy itself outside of our little protective shelter, but inside we were warm and laughing together. Joy I hadn’t felt in a long time bubbled up in my chest making all of the tension in my neck melt away. I wasn’t alone in helping Leo any more. I had new friends that wanted to take care of me just as much as I wanted to take care of them.

Luckily, I didn’t suffer any property damage this time around. My neighbor across the hall from me had two busted windows, but the winds didn’t hit my side of the building too hard this time around. Leo ended up passing out inside the fort alongside my bitties while I ended up pinned beneath the lot of them. It got hot quickly. I didn’t have the heart to wake them up though, so I ended up just spacing out for twelve hours. Annie was pissed that Leo slept over at my place again. She could go suck off a cactus for all I gave a damn.

“Love you Joan.” Leo hugged me before leaving.

“You too my badass wanna be.” I hugged him back.

Leo left to calm down his irate girlfriend, and I plopped down on the couch to live out my typical Sunday morning. Idjit stumbled out of the bedroom bleary eyed.

“Oh morning sweetie.” I extended my hand down for him to climb up. Within minutes he was curled safely up in my lap. I sighed happily before groaning, “Family dinner….lovely.”

“h-huh?” Idjit looked up at me curiously.

“Pure hell.” I prodded his cheek gently, “But I’ll be okay. I’ve got you guys after all.”

Idjit looked confused for a moment then he gave me a kind smile.
I knew I’d be okay
Family Dinner from Hell

Chapter Notes

The chapter everyone's been looking forward too *sarcasm meter breaks*.

I'll be honest, I planned and replanned this chapter about five times, and I'm still iffy about it. I'm sorry if it's not the grand thing you expected it to be, but my brain is fried from midterms.

The next few chapters are mostly going to be about Josie Jo (I've noticed most people either call her Jo or Josie, and I ended up combining the two nicknames) and her family anyways, so think of this as the introduction to this miniarc of the series. (Which it technically is because Ch10 was the end of the first miniarc in this major arc)

Again, sorry. (Sorry I apologize a lot too)

My bitties glared at me then glared a Leo before glaring at me once more.

“you aren’t going alone.” Waltzer broke the tense silence and stepped forward, “capiche?”

“I am going alone.” I wanted to pinch the bridge of my nose, but it took me 45 minutes to flat iron my hair and do some basic make up. I needed to look presentable. My parents would nag me all evening otherwise, “My folks aren’t exactly the nicest people guys. I don’t want them putting any ideas in your heads.”

Knowing my parents, they try to convince my bitties to run away from me for my own good. Owning bitties was still controversial, and my new nickname of “The Bitty Lady” had to have been grating on their nerves. The black sheep wasn’t supposed to draw attention to itself after all.

“Will you be alright Miss Josie?” Cyan clung to one of the charms on the dingy silver bracelet I wore, “You’ve never left an altercation with them….unscathed.”

“jojo…” Idjit hopped up and tugged on my bracelet as well, “i-i’m…s-sc-scared…”

“won’t you need back up if they’re that bad ari?” Blake crossed his arms in thought, “i’d hate for you to be alone if things go bad.”

“I’m 30 not 13.” I carefully tugged Cyan and Idjit off of my bracelet, “It wouldn’t be the first time they push my buttons, and it sure as hell won’t be the last. I’ll be home by 10.”

“We’ll be calling at 9:30 to check on you.” Leo warned. He sulked in the shadows, “I’d feel better if-“

“No.” I held up a hand to ward off further protests, “I’m-“

“Please take Raze.” Sunshine blurted out, “Please Josephine? I don’t want you to be hurt tonight.”

Raze growled softly at the idea, but he- surprisingly- didn’t protest. Sunshine looked
panicked, and the last thing he needed was to have a miscarriage with only two months to go. I couldn’t bring Idjit, Cyan, or Sunshine because of their more gentle natures. Waltzer and Blake were too protective, and Snuggle would have no idea what was going on which vetoed him immediately. Would bringing Raze really affect anything? He didn’t like me enough to protective, and his past trauma made his skin very thick.

“Fine. You’re not going dressed like that though.” I acquiesced to their demands, “We need to look somewhat presentable.”

“Thank you.” Sunshine sighed in relief, “Please be nice Raze.”

“Hmph.” Raze growled.

It took less than ten minutes for Raze to pull on a blood red button up, black slacks, dark shoes, and a white tie. He looked more like mafia leader instead of his usual thuggish self, but his ever permanent scowl persisted. I noticed a few people crane their heads out of curiosity. A few people who I knew had seen me with all of my bitties more than once seemed to wonder where the rest of them were. It would’ve been hard to fit them in the simple teal dress I wore after all. I walked closer to the buildings to avoid being shoved into traffic, but my eerie resemblance to Nadia kept my eyes forward.

“where the fuck are we eatin’ anyways?” Raze grumbled.

“Some fancy place in the inner city.” I had never eaten there before because I didn’t see much point in doing so. It wasn’t a particularly good restaurant. It was just expensive. Another way for the people with money in their pockets to flaunt what they had. I- more concerned with budgeting to retire and leaving a cozy middle class life- never worried about appearing rich. In fact, appearing rich in my neighborhood would’ve been the stupidest thing I could’ve ever done, “Don’t break their shit. Their champagne glasses are probably worth $100 or more dollars apiece.”

“who the fuck needs champagne glasses that expensive?” Genuine shock covered his face.

“Rich tits who thing a fat wallet is the only thing worth having.” I snorted, “If you don’t like any of the food on the menu, we can pick some stuff up on our way home.”

“aren’t you the one who said you’ve got a lot of cash?” Raze raised a brow, “it’s a bit off hearing ya complain about other people with money.”

“The difference is most of my money is the bank to be used in the future.” I explained, “I’m not buying a jet or a small island to feed my vanity. We live in a shitty ass apartment for a reason Raze. My parents and Nadia just throw their money at the next fad without thinking about the future. It pisses me off.”

“soo…you hate people who don’ budget?” The incredulous look crossing his face made me laugh, “wha’? what’d i say?”

“No, I just never thought of it like that before.” Luckily, I didn’t tear up and ruin my mascara, “I guess that’s the best way to put it though.”

“yer weird.” Raze crossed his arms, “i dunno why sunshine likes you so much.”

“Me either. I’m an asshole.” I shrugged the shoulder he wasn’t sitting on.

“a jackass too.” Raze agreed. Some part of me was offended, but the larger part understood.
The fancy restaurant - the name of which I couldn’t bother to remember - looked like something out of a dystopian novel. The place where the rich elite go to sit on blush white chairs surrounded by glass sculptures and dull “art” while they eat ridiculously expensive food. The dim lighting hurt my eyes, and the floor was uneven in some attempt to be “modern”. I almost tripped while approaching the stern looking woman behind a glass podium. She narrowed her eyes at me.

“Who are you?” She pursed her cupid’s bow lips and looked me up and down. I wore a simple teal dress with 2 inch nude heels. No fancy jewelry on my appendages or flashy statement piece for people to ogle could be found on me anywhere. I really stuck out, “We are very expensive ma’am, and we do not take walk ins. Dinners must be scheduled weeks in advance. Not that I’m certain you could afford our food to begin with. Please vacate-“

“Newmore.” I interrupted bluntly.

“What?”

“I’m a Newmore. Specifically, Josephine Ophelia Arietta Newmore the second daughter of Clara and Daniel Newmore. Those two are also known as the owners of Arietta Newmore Trade, Stock, and Business. You know…the new company that owns fifteen smaller brand names and has headquarters in ten different countries. I actually think you’re wearing something from the fashion brand my sister Nadia started up now that I look at it…” I watched as the realization slowly sank in as I flashed my driver’s license, “But you’re also wearing something from my family’s competitor? What a lovely way to show loyalty despite the fact if you’re wearing that-“ I pointed the small emerald and sapphire brooch on her chest, “You must be a platinum standard customer. Perhaps I should have your account revoked. They’re in limited supply, and I’m pretty sure there are thousands who would kill for those kinds of discounts…”

“I’m so sorry ma’am!” The woman’s tone immediately changed to that of a timid, bashful schoolgirl fearing a higher authority’s wrath, “Your family is already here and seated. Please right this way. Your appetizer will be one me ma’am.”

Her sudden ass-kissing because of the name drop made my skin crawl. Throwing my last name around like it was something that made me better than others never sat well with me. Despite my rolling stomach, I knew revealing who I was had been the only option available. Threatening her platinum customer account- something given to high paying customers that bought from all of our brands frequently- might’ve been a low blow, but her snobby attitude really pissed me off. Also…she didn’t have to know that I technically had to power over the customer packages at ANTSB anyways.

“huh…yer kind of intimidating when people piss you off.” Raze observed unmoved by my little scene, “ya do that often?”

“I try to avoid it.” I murmured back, “Makes me feel gross.”

“hmph.”

“Josephine.” My mother’s voice was cold and sharp as I approached the pristine table. She had the same blonde hair and blue eyes as Olivia, but she had viciousness in her gaze that even Nadia lacked. Clara Newmore - formerly Clara Arietta - cut an imposing figure. Tall, fit, with no gray hairs in sight, she was an older woman known to get her way no matter who she had to crush under foot. Accompanying her was my father Daniel Newmore, a shrewd business man with sharp, rat like features and thinning brown hair. His dark gray eyes could cut through most people’s bullshit and had forced the truth out of more than one would be traitor to the company. Together, my parents became the powerhouse couple of the middle class business world that ruled everything within a certain price range with an iron fist. They didn’t stand for much completion, and their monopoly on
the market kept their pockets filled, “You’re late.”

“My bitties were reluctant to see me go without being accompanied.” I ignored Edgar's- a tall, muscular man with a handsome face and bright red hair- cocky grin and halfhearted wave. Arrogance radiated off of him as he kept one arm around Nadia’s chair, “Thus, Raze was selected to be my date for this evening.”

“excuse me?” Raze puffed up.

“Figure of speech. I know you’re in love with Sunshine.” I calmly picked him up from my shoulder. Raze bit my left hand brutally for the semi-joke, but I just poked his head until he released me while I sat down. He snarled from where he sat on the table grumbling in some other language beneath his breath, “Raze, those two are Clara and Daniel Newmore, my parents. Edgar is the man sitting in between Nadia and my father, and I told Olivia to stay out of this. She doesn't need to be involved in whatever the hell is about to go down.”

Raze said nothing.

“Say hello Raze. Sunshine asked you to be nice.” I reminded the cranky edgy.

“hi.” He snarled tugging on his tie roughly while he got situated on the table, “nice…to… meet…you.”

“Sunshine would be proud.” I grinned. I quickly noticed that Cesar, Harley, and Hiro were not present. That was good. The fewer bitties exposed to this bullshit the better, “So, I know you didn’t harass my best friend just to buy me dinner. What do you want from me?”

“You need to learn some manners,” My father’s thin voice revealed the age his dyed hair attempted to hide, “It’s not polite to state things so bluntly.”

“I don’t care about being polite.” I almost lowered my voice, but I remembered my more sensitive bitties weren’t present. I could be as loud as I damn well wanted to be.

“To think I almost married you,” Edgar laughed humorlessly, “You haven’t changed at all have you? I bet you still walk around in your hoodies and sweatpants snarling at people who look at you for too long.”

“Yup.” I popped the ‘p’, “And I’m willing to bet your fucking most of your female coworkers in the same bed you share with my sister. Given past experiences.”

“Grow up Josephine,” Nadia chided, “That was almost five years ago. If you acted more like a lady, it wouldn’t have happened like this in the first place.”

“yer supposed to be a lady?” Raze pointed a finger at my twin before laughing, “last time i checked whores aren’t ladies, and i’m pretty damn sure fuckin’ yer twins fiancé the night before their weddin’ makes you a whore of the highest degree.”

“Couldn’t agree more.” I offered my fist towards Raze. He looked at it confusedly before fist bumping me.

“Keep that thing quiet.” Daniel warned, “You should’ve bought a muzzle for it. Look at what it has done to your hands.”

He was referring to the various old scars from when Raze and Sunshine first moved into the apartment and the new injury I had covered with a band-aid (produced from the small beige clutch I
used to hold my cash and cellphone).

“He’s allowed to speak his mind.” I rubbed Raze’s skull affectionately. He blinked at me confused, “He’s not some dog you can just beat silent father. If he wants to agree with my opinion of Nadia allowed, he can scream it from the roof tops for all I give a damn.”

“I’ll silence him if you don’t.” My father’s eyes narrowed.

“Try it,” I curled a hand around Raze protectively, “I dare you. I’ll use one of these fancy steak knives to remove your royal scepter if you do.”

“Josephine!” My mother scolded sneering down at me, “Such crude language-“

“Is unacceptable for a Newmore woman.” I parroted the old saying she threw in my face many times when I was younger, “Don’t you think threatening something the size of your foot is unacceptable for a Newmore man? Or is it just when it’s my branch of the family that it matters?”

“family…” Raze questioned quietly under his breath.

“Family,” I repeated calmly, “Threaten Raze again, and I swear to god we will both fuck right off back to my apartment and snuggle with my other bitties.”

“So you actually have more than one?” Edgar snorted, “Guess I always new you’d die a crazy old cat lady.”

“Bitty lady,” I corrected despite the jab stinging. Some part of me did hope to find a husband someday, but he didn't need to know that, “I’m going to die a crazy, happy as hell bitty lady.”

“Enough.” Nadia tersely interrupted, “Are we done trading useless jabs? We’re here to discuss business.”

“Fine,” I shrugged, “Guess we’re not eating then.”

“We already ordered.” Clara nodded to the approaching food.

An elaborate variety of food was placed on the table. There was one issue with my plate however.

“You guys do remember that I share Nadia’s allergies right?” I poked at one of the roasted nuts on the over cooked meat, “I eat a bite of this, and I’ll be heading to the ER.”

“Don’t be so dramatic.” My mother snorted, “We all know you faked those nut incidents for attention. The therapist-“

“The therapist yes man you hired said it was,” I shoved the plate to the side, “Raze? You want any? I don’t feel like dying tonight.”

Raze sniffed the plate and hissed.

“who the fuck eats burnt meat?” He stuck his tongue out at the thought.

“I know right?” I shrugged, “Well, since I’m not eating, what the fuck did you call me here for?”

“We’re trying to eat Josephine.” Nadia rolled her eyes, “If you would quit being such a
child and eat, we could have this night end peacefully.”

“Fuck peace.” I forced a smile, “What’s ruining your perfect little life?”

I sat impatiently in the resulting silence. My anger grew with each clatter of metal against porcelain, and Edgar’s cocky smirk begged to knocked right off of his face. I noticed them all deliberately slow down just to annoy me further.

“Your grandmother.” My father answered, “Has decided to leave most of her fortune- 5 billion dollars- to you. The company needs that money more so than you do. Contact your grandmother and tell her to-”

“Money?” My sound of my last nerve snapping resounded in my mind. I didn't give a fuck about the fortune. I'd more than likely give most of it to Olivia anyways. That wasn't what got to me. They contacted me after years of radio silence- rarely interrupted for painful arguments and harsh criticisms- because my grandmother decided to leave me a few billion dollars, “That’s it? Money I won’t even have access to until she dies? You interrupted my nice life and brought all of this shit up over money?”

“Don’t act so surprised. You ruined this family year ago,” My father wiped his mouth with a napkin, “Until you apologize for running to that ridiculous art school and jeapordizing our companies future, you are a Newmore in name only.”

“Father-” was that actual concern I saw flicker across Nadia’s face?

“Hush Nadia,” My mother interrupted, “I know you and Olivia have this idea of bringing Josephine back into the fold, but it isn’t happening.”

Anger burned in my gut, but it seemed weak in comparison to the crushing depression that slammed down on me. How in the hell did my hopes climb up to insane expectations? Because you want to be loved Thinking that things would change always bit me in the ass in the past, so why the hell would I point a loaded gun at my own heart? You want to be their daughter not their shame.

**DAMMIT**

"You need to contact my mother and tell her to change her will,” My mother pulled out her cellphone, "I can provide the number for you if you didn't bother to keep it yourself. Do this, and we'll simply go away. Goodness knows you've never been asset to begin with.”

"We should've just sent her to live with your sister." My dad sighed to my mother, "Leaving her with reign over Olivia made her arrogant."

"I don't believe that this is necessary.” Nadia said quietly. They had actually crossed a line even Nadia didn't want crossed.

I should've fucking known this would happen.

I knew my family life was shit. I knew that. I knew that my parents only saw me as a waste of space. I knew that I wore the black cloak. I knew I was nothing to those I loved. I knew that my little rebellions was pathetic and alienated the only kin I had. I knew that the life I was living was a pale shadow compared to what it could've been. I knew. I knew. I knew.

I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew...

="shut tha fuck up!” my parents’ champagne glasses whizzed by their heads. Raze stood at his full height with a single eye glowing bright red, “yer fuckin’ assholes! no! that’s an insult to
assholes like speck here. you mother fuckers are the scum of the earth that don’t even deserve to be shat out by the worst criminals in history!” the table rattled with his anger, “why the fuck would you treat anyone- let alone yer daughter- like this!? she’s a helluva lot more successful than that bitch if you think about it! that little cunt road on yer coattails to where she is now, but my mama worked her ass off to get where she is! she still works hard to provide for others. hell, she’s practically killin’ herself to prepare for my future kid! so fuck you!”

Raze had cracked most of the plates on the table. He had also flung the nut covered meat at my dad’s head, but it sailed right over and slapped against my mother’s peach colored dress.

“we’re leavin’.” Raze tugged on my hand, “fuck these assholes. i wanna go home and cuddle with sunshine. w- ah fuck yer cryin’.”

Stunned I reached up and realized that I was crying. Embarrassed I wiped my face only to smudge all of my makeup.

“let’s go home.” Raze tugged on my hand again, “i’m not good at calmin’ you down like the others are.”

“Yeah.” I sniffled and gathered Raze into my arms. The entire restaurant was gawking at the display, but I paid them no mind as I slapped a couple hundred dollar bills on the table and left. My heart ached with the reopened wound, but in that moment it felt like a chain had been snapped.

The walk back was silent as Raze fidgeted angrily in my arms. Tears continued to trail down my face despite my best efforts.

“hey speck,” Raze grabbed some of my stray hair and tugged, “don’t cry over those assholes.”

“I’m not.” Damn that lie wouldn’t have fooled a four year old.

“sure…” Raze tugged on my hair harder, “c’mon. quit it. the others are going to have royal fits otherwise. calm down a little at least.”

I managed to quit crying before I entered my apartment. My face must’ve looked like a train wreck considering all of my bitties and Leo practically glomped me on to the ground. The drilled me with questions as I cleaned myself up and changed into my familiar faded hoodie and ratty sweat pants. Idjit cried along with me as Cyan, Sunshine, and Snuggle all tried to see who could cuddle me the most. Leo plotted revenge against my parents with an eager Waltzer and infuriated Blake. Raze stood silently on the sidelines, but I could’ve sworn I saw him relax once I started to look better.

My night had been as bad as I expected it to be, but these guys made it better.

The ache in my chest persisted, but their soothing touch and concerned words seemed to dull each agonizing throb. Eventually, I fell asleep on the couch curled up with Leo and seven bitties who now despised my parents. If dying an old bitty lady meant I could keep friends like this...

It wasn’t such a bad thing after all.
Since our flaming skelebaby (who still has 4-6 chapters til he's born) is a creation from my own head, I tried to draw him....I suck at drawing though....sorry Tinsel.

The post I originally used in this chapter is now buried under new posts I've made. My drawing was shit anyways, and there is a much better version of Tinsel drawn by someone else down in the comments below. Go check that one out- It's way better than the one I did.
Rainbow after the Storm

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing. Full disclaimer can be found in Ch1.

Thank you guys so much for the positive reaction to chapter 11! :D I really love reading all of your comments, and they really make my day. Also, big thanks to Keitai who actually drew (I'm still marveling that someone made a fanart for something I wrote.) a much better version of Tinsel than I did! You can find a link to it in the comments on Ch12, and it's so adorable.

My hands ached from hours of work, and I was rocking a head ache. My overloaded brain could barely make sense of the work I was completed in a sleepy haze. Despite my stomach rumbling, I continued to work. I needed to get as much work as done possible. It kept me busy. You need a distraction from the pain My parents hadn’t spoken to me at all after the failed dinner. Olivia had pestered me about it for a few days, but I- and Leo- kept quiet about it all. She didn’t need to be involved in this.

“ophie.” Waltzer tugged on my bare right foot, “it’s time for dinner.”

“I’m good.” I responded absentmindedly continuing the logo on my screen.

“ophie.” Waltzer poked me, “you’re not good. we haven’t seen you in six hours.”

“I’m fine Waltzer.” I absentmindedly reached down in an attempt to pat him. I almost fell out of my chair given my lack of sleep, “Whoops.”

“ophie.” Waltzer growled in warning.

“Hush Waltzer.” I nudged him with my foot, “I gotta work.”

Waltzer clicked his teeth together and glowered at me for a few moments. I just forced a sleepy smile his way before quickly returning to my work. Silently, he shuffled out of the room. Some part of me stung at the fact he actually left, but the rational side of my brain retorted with a “that’s what you asked for” that made me feel worse than I already did.

“ari?” I flinched at the new voice popping out of nowhere. I looked down and saw Blake standing by my chair with snuggle, “it’s time for dinner. you missed already missed dinner yesterday.”

“Sorry Blake.” I managed to quickly pat his head without almost falling this time, “I’m bus-“

Snuggle tugged on my pants leg forcing me to look down at him. He held a scrap of paper that read ‘Please come eat with us’. Gentle eyes blinked up at me innocently over the piece of paper. Blake crossed his arms confidently and shot me a “are you really going to turn him down?” look. I saved my work and carefully stood up. My legs felt like jelly, and the world spun for a couple of seconds. The sensation of two pairs of bone hands on my feet gave me something to focus on besides my fatigue.
“Waltzer plays dirty.” I grumbled bending down to pick them up, “But you guys are too cute to get mad at.”

“he’s just worried about you.” Blake untangled a knot in my hair while I shuffled into the kitchen, “we all are, you’ve been holing up in your room for the past week not speaking to any of us.”

“Sorry,” I cuddled them close briefly, “I just don’t want my sour mood dragging everyone else down with me.”

Snuggle watched my lips carefully as I spoke. Then he suddenly wrapped his arms around my neck as much as he could and squeezed.

“Snuggle.” I laughed.

“yer finally outta the pits?”

I looked down and saw Raze constructing…something out of various materials he collected outside of the apartment building. He’d always been a little busy body, but he’s been even more active ever since I decided to let him come and go as he pleased.

I worried about him coming and going so much, but I wasn’t going to cage him up in the apartment. The same went for the others. Occasionally, Waltzer would disappear for a few hours and return with wild berries, and sometimes he’d take Idjit and Cyan with him. These trips usually ended with me getting a new flower crown to wear until it withered away. Sunshine wouldn’t- well couldn’t- accompany Raze. His pregnancy was causing severe bouts of nausea and plain feeling like shit. I could tell it bothered the ray, but Raze’s anxiety about his health matched my own concerns.

“My office is not a pit.” I nudged him with my big toe.

“i wasn talkin about yer office.” Raze threw a…bent staple?- Why the fuck did he pick up a ton of tossed out staples?- at my leg, “yer attitude is starting to worry sunshine, so start being yerself again already.”

“raze.” Blake chided, “her family just-“

“i was there dumbass.” The next staple went in Blake’s direction, “that’s why i say she just needs to move on. those bastards aren’t worth this much.”

“Raze?” Sunshine’s thin voice echoed through the apartment from the door couple’s private shelter- that had been heavily upgraded under Raze’s care.

Raze spat at us once before hurrying off to take care of Sunshine. The ray’s flames were looking rather pale today, and his smile wasn’t as full or glowing as it usually was.

“Sunshine?” I walked over and squatted down next to the house. I almost lost my balance, but I managed to stay upright, “Are you doing okay baby?”

“Josephine?” Sunshine’s smile widened and his eyes softened as they focused on my face, “You finally came out of your office.”

“Yeah little guy. I did.” I shifted Blake’s weight onto my shoulder to pat Sunshine’s head, “Is it rougher than usual today?”

“Yes, I don’t know why. This isn’t matching any of things Waltzer and Blake looked up,”
Sunshine’s brows furrowed in thought, “If it wasn’t for the fact it takes at least three months for any bitty to fully formed, we wouldn’t even know how long this is supposed to take.”

“Well, The bitty tech did say you guys were the first to breed across types. I wonder if your kid will end up like a liger.” I pursed my lips.

“a wha’? don’t start makin’ shit up now.” Raze rolled his eyes.

“A liger. It’s what happens when you breed a tiger and a lion together. The resulting offspring is usually sterile.” I explained patiently. It had gotten harder for me to get mad at Raze after the failed family dinner, but Blake flicked his wrist and smacked Raze upside the head with a burst of magic, “I don’t think the pregnancy itself is any different though.”

“It’s a curio-“ Sunshine sagged against Raze suddenly.

“Sunshine.” I immediately sat down Blake and Snuggle. The worried meek looked between all of us and gently pressed a hand on Sunshine’s shoulder. Sunshine stood still, “Sunny? Baby?”

“Sorry. I got dizzy for a second,” Sunshine patted Snuggle’s hand, “I’m fine.”

“my ass.” Raze grumbled pulling Sunshine close and wrapping his arms around Sunshine’s swelling belly, “hmph.”

“ophie.” Waltzer pelted my back with a flipflop before walking around to see what I was doing, “oh, you’re talking with sunshine.”

“Why did you hit me with a flip flop?” I rubbed the stinging spot on my back. It stung even worse because I was literally only wearing a bra at that moment.

“wanted to make sure you hadn’t fallen asleep crouching.” Waltzer shrugged innocently, “just wanted to make sure you wouldn’t crush their minihouse.”

“I can’t even fall asleep st....” I cut myself off with a sigh, “Whatever floats your boat Waltzer.”

“j-jojo…?” Idjit peered out from the kitchen, “jojo!”

“Miss Josie,” Cyan sighed in relief as he exited the kitchen as well, “I was beginning to wonder if I’d need to contact Papa about this.”

“Jeez, I’ve just be making everyone ancy haven’t I?” I laughed weakly, “Sorry boys.”

“y-you’re f-fee-el-ling better?” Idjit asked tears forming his in his eyes as he added, “a-are y-y-o-ou?”

“A little bit.” I didn’t have the heart to tell him ‘no’, but I couldn’t just lie and say ‘yes’ either. I picked the sobbing cherry up with one hand and began to press kisses into his skull, “Shh… Idjit it’s okay.”

“Locking yourself away for a week is mostly certainly not okay.” Cyan stood up straighter. Oh god, Leo’s influence raised its ugly head once more, “Do you have any idea how worried we have been about you? We want to help you when you’re feeling upset Miss Josie. Please let us in next time.”

“right on the money blue.” Waltzer flashed the curly a grin of approval, “c’mon ophie.
you’ve seen us get cranky, cry our eyes out, and laugh like idiots. I think it’s about time we saw the same from you.”

“you can count on us Ari.” Blake agreed nuzzling his head into my calf as he hugged my leg.

“Please don’t hide away again.” Sunshine added.

My fatigue and sorrow quickly caught up with me. I flopped down on the ground between the couch and the mini house to think.

My mind raced with a thousand different thoughts trying to take priority. The big sister in me wanted to deflect all of their concerns and plaster on a kind, disarming smile to ease away their worries. The stubborn bitter teenager in me wanted to feel insulted that they thought me so fragile. The part I decided to listen to was the bleeding woman begging for someone to help.

I carefully picked up all of my bitties one by one and pulled them into my lap before curling my legs up towards my chest. I cradled them all close, and they chuckled at my case of cuddle bug. Their tiny bodies felt so fragile in between my arms. All it would take is a high fall to shatter the skeletons’ bones, or a drop of water to permanently mar Sunshine’s flames. They needed me to be strong, but in this moment, I could tell they wanted me to be honest.

So I ended up crying again because I’m a big baby who never got to cry much as a kid. I was careful to keep Sunshine away from the arm I was crying into, but Raze helped by making damn sure the flame elemental was away from my waterworks. The chains I felt snap after the dinner final dislodged from my soul as all of my shields crumbled to dust.

I didn’t have to be strong, dependable older sister. I didn’t have to be the loyal, fierce best friend. I didn’t have to be the black sheep that never fit in. I didn’t have to be the CEO’s perfect daughter. I didn’t have to be the cranky lady who lived in apartment 84. I didn’t have to be the eccentric artists who worked her ass off to save for the future.

I could be Josephine Ophelia Arietta Newmore, and damn did it feel freeing to not have to put on a mask for ten minutes.

Then my stomach rumbled and kind of killed the bubbly, freeing moment.

Dammit stomach I had been having a moment with my bitties!

“someone’s hungry.” Waltzer laughed untangling a few knots in my hair as I blushed.

“Dinner’s ready Miss Josie.” Cyan wiggled against my arms, “Though it might’ve gotten cold by now.”

“i-it w-wa-as too ho-ot to eat ea-e-earlier.” Idjit reminded his constant companion through his sniffling.

‘Hungry’ Snuggle signed to his brother.

“my bro’s spoken.” Blake smiled up at me before frowning, “you aren’t going back into your office after dinner. I’ll break all of your computers if you try.”

I raised a brow at Blake’s defiant gaze. My “good kid” was now threatening to break my shit. I must’ve really done a number on his anxieties to make him so worried, so I nodded. The tension drained from his small shoulders.
“oh fer the love of the stars.” Raze chomped down on my arm, “quit being so fluffy and let us go so we can fuckin’ eat dammit!”

“Raze.” Sunshine scolded pressing a warm kiss to the new bite mark, “Be patient. We’re bonding with everyone.”

“i don’ wanna bond with anyone!” Raze protested, “these fuckers are all so squishy and fragile.”

“What was that?” Waltzer’s eye flashed blue.

“You heard me shithead.” Raze snapped at him with a hiss.

“guys...” Blake eyes glowed he plastered on an irritated smile, “quit dicking around or i swear-“

‘Hungry’ Snuggle signed towards me this time.

My stomach agreed with him postponing all future fights.

After we all untangled ourselves from the group hug, we entered the kitchen. The bitties had worked together- minus Raze and Sunshine for obvious reasons- to make lasagna. It was a bit bland, but some spices helped. Honestly, their work was much better than anything I could’ve done. We all sat on the counter with paper plates eating in silence. I had to duck down to avoid hitting the cabinets (and sit cross legged to not fall off the damn counter), but I was too lazy to go sit in the living room.

“You’re going to hurt yourself.” Cyan warned at my cramped position.

“I’M fine Cyan.” I laughed and patted the top of his head affectionately. I finished my last bite of food. I sat my plate aside and began the process of removing myself from my position, “It’ll be a piece of-“

Cake was what I meant to say.

Sadly what I got was my kitchen’s cold tile floor in my face. Some of the bitties went crazy with laughter while Cyan just sighed in frustration.

“j-jojo?” Idjit quietly teleported to my side. He wasn’t as fond of teleporting as the other sans types were, but he could do it when he so pleased, “a-a-are you o-ok-a-ay?”

“I’M gonna have a massive bruise on my face.” I groaned sitting up, “But I’ll be fine.”

“Maybe eat some monster candy?” Sunshine said from where he watched me worriedly.

“I’ll be fine. It’s nothing compared to being punched in the face by every guy on the football team twice.” I rubbed my sore cheek. It took my middle school years for my talent in fighting to develop. Before the eighth grade started, I had the jocks who tried to pick on Leo kicking my ass every day. Then, I clocked a guy so hard he went down in two heartbeats, and they quit bothering us so much. That didn’t mean I didn’t have my scuffles in high school. The coach almost tried to get me on the football team after he saw the bruises I left on his star quarter back once, but I didn’t like sweating if I could avoid it.

“do we wanna know how you have that comparison?” Waltzer raised a brow and tossed me a few ice cubes wrapped in a dishcloth. I held them against my bruised face to minimize the swelling.
“Eh. It’s kind of a boring story.” I shrugged.

“some part of me doesn’t believe you ari.” Blake crossed his arms. His eyes twinkled with some mischief, “tell us.”

I spent the next three hours on the couch regaling my bitties with stories from my Leo Protector years. Technically, those years hadn’t ended, but Leo rarely called me if someone beat him up anymore. Really the stories mostly consisted of me either getting my ass beat, or me kicking someone’s ass so hard I could turn them into house slippers. There wasn’t much to them at all. The bitties seemed fascinated though and listened to every word I said. It felt odd to have people pay close attention to me. Years of being the shadow made me used to being ignored. I wondered if this was how Nadia felt.

“-and that is how I pummeled the every loving shit out of Edgar for breaking Leo’s jaw.” I finished the discussion of my last fight simply. I just broke a chair over the guy’s back and gave him two black eyes. It wasn’t anything particularly epic or grandiose. I did end up spending a couple of weeks dealing with the assault charge he tried to level at me, but once he and Nadia realized my lawyer would work for free (the guy had been my client and somewhat of a friend for three years, and loved my work) if he had to, they dropped them quickly. I was usually against touting my name and money, but Edgar broke my Leon S. Kennedy wanna be best friend’s jaw. The motherfucker deserved it, and I made sure to not permanently harm him. Even the chair I broke over his back was old enough that it shattered easily and only cracked two ribs.

“No wonder Papa loves you so much.” Cyan said from where he was curled up against my neck.

“jeez ophie.” Waltzer shook his head and laughed, “i expected maybe a handful of stories, but jeez…we’ve been here awhile.”

“Snuggle and Idjit have actually fallen asleep.” Sunshine observed from where Raze and he sat on my legs.

“you’re so cool ari.” Blake’s eyes were wide with awe.

“I prefer to avoid getting into scrapes if I can avoid it. It’s not worth the lawyers and potential lawsuits most of the time.” I reiterated for them. I had already mentioned that once or twice, but I felt like it needed to be said again, “So don’t expect me to go chasing down robbers or run off gangbangers.”

My phone began to ring from…somewhere in the apartment. I looked at Waltzer pitifully.

The sansy narrowed his eyes at me

“i’m three "hunt my phone down"s away from taping it to you.” He warned as he teleported off to find it.

“I love you Waltzer.” I called out.

"sure." His voice was filled to the brim with salt.

“do you love me?” Blake asked quietly avoiding my eyes.

“Yup. I love you. I love Snuggle, Cyan, Sunshine, Idjit, Waltzer, and Raze too.” I rubbed his cheek with my thumb. Raze had startled at that while Sunshine blushed a deep gold.

“i love you too.” Blake grinned stumbling over my bra strap in an attempt to hug my neck,
“a lot! i promise!”

“I can tell.” I laughed.

“found it.” Waltzer popped on top of my head and dangled my silent phone in front of my face.

“Thanks.” I accepted it from him and paused, “Oh. It’s just Granny.”

I had a missed call and a text. The text was simple.

Meet me at Café Dubois tomorrow at 12:30 sharp.

“Well. I know where we’re having lunch tomorrow.” I laughed.

Unlike the family dinner from hell, I actually looked forward to this one. It had been a while since I had last seen Granny Arietta. She had been in…South Korea? Australia? Somewhere in that vicinity….for the past year and a half. It would be good to see her again, and I did have a lot questions about her will I needed answers to.

It would also be nice to see a family member- besides Olivia- who loved me for once.
Granny Arietta

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing. Full disclaimer in Ch1

I decided to reorganize a few things while writing this chapter. I also didn't expect to double post today, but I felt like it. I hope you guys like Granny at the very least!

“I honestly expected something fancier.” Cyan looked around at the café we were sitting in. It was relatively small and filled with pastel colors.

The atmosphere was relaxed and low key. There wasn’t any hurry or impatience vibrating in the air. It also wasn’t the overly girly or neon hipster kind of establishment that Olivia would drag me to for our Sunday lunch. Since it was Sunday, I had invited Olivia along to see Granny, but she said that she was busy herself for once. It was nice seeing Olivia take her responsibilities seriously. Thus, I had no complaints about going with just my bitties.

“You sure you’re feeling alright Sunshine?” I asked the dozing ray. Sunshine was snuggled up in Raze’s lap wavering in and out of consciousness. He looked up at me for a few minutes to process what I asked before responding.

“I’m fine. I’m sleepy because of all the kicking last night, but I don’t feel horrible.” Sunshine’s blurry voice continued to say halfhearted calming phrases, but it became muffled after he buried his face in Raze’s old black jacket. He was snoring shortly afterwards. Raze actually smiled and ran his fingers across the top of Sunshine’s head affectionately. He blushed and hissed at us when he remembered he had an audience though.

“g-granny…sh-she’s…” Idjit paused to think. His wrung his small hands as he tried to figure out how to continue his question.

‘Is she nice?’ Snuggle had taken advantage of the napkin dispenser on the table to write messages. Blake and he communicated in sign language- I was still learning- easily, but the others couldn’t understand him otherwise.

“Depends on whether or not she likes you.” I shrugged.

“i’m picturing an old lady in a faded floral dress with a quick tongue.” Waltzer commented from where he was trying to balance a salt shaker on his head. Blake was struggling to do the same with the pepper shaker.

“The quick tongue part is right.” I grinned thinking of my grandmother. This was going to be fun.

Imagine your stereotypical rich grandmother. A woman wearing fancy dresses and gaudy jewelry with a stern face that never smiled. Now imagine your stereotypical sweet grandmother wearing her Sunday best with ruddy cheeks and basket of cookies. Then, take both images and throw them into the depths of hell because neither of them fit Granny at all.

“Joey.” A low, slightly hoarse voice ceased all banter. My bittes looked behind me with
dropped jaws. Waltzer even dropped his salt shaker.

My grandmother was an intimidating woman at 6’0- she had been 6’3 in her prime before years of being bent over working caused her to slouch slightly. Her bone white hair was in a rugged short hairstyle to accommodate her motorcycle helmet, and her dark brown eyes were as sharp as ever behind her glasses. She wore a business suit beneath a black leather jacket. Every inch of her screamed biker gang grandma instead of CEO of one of the most successful independent companies in the West.

“Granny.” I stood up and hugged her. As always, it was awkward because I was the shortest of the bunch, but she just tugged me as close as she could. Two decades ago she would’ve swooped me up into her arms and spun me around. Age catches up with everyone eventually though, “It’s good to see you.”

“It’s good to see you too.” She pressed a kiss against my cheek. I knew her lipstick had more than likely left a dark purple stain, but I didn’t want to be a brat and wipe it off.

“So, these must be your bitties.” Granny sat down across from me, “I’m Persephone Arietta-Joey’s grandmother on her mother’s side. It’s a pleasure to meet you at last. Olivia has told me all about you.”

“Oh has she?” I raised a brow.

“All good things I promise.” Granny waved away my accusation, “I also had her go over their names with me to avoid overly long introductions. She was happy that we’re meeting today.”

“She would be. I’ve been kind of distant lately.” I wanted to keep Granny out of the mess that had been last week, but Waltzer apparently had other ideas.

“she came home crying after a shitty dinner with her parents.” Waltzer explained, “it’s been a bad week so far.”

“What happened?” Granny’s voice became steely as she sat up a little straighter. I could practically hear her teeth grind together in frustration.

“They wanted me to convince you to change your will. They weren’t happy you decided to leave a good chunk of the money to me.” I explained while trying my damndest to not cry again, “Things got heated towards the end of the argument.”

“fuckers said some shit no one should say to anybody.” Raze grumbled from where he cradled a still sleeping Sunshine in his arms, “should’ve thrown their plates at them instead of just their food.”

“You threw food at them?” Granny’s eyes twinkled with amusement.

“yup.” Raze didn’t even look at her, “almost broke their chairs just because i wanted too.”

“you should’ve man.” Blake’s face was warped with fury. He still wanted a shot at protecting me from my parents, “they would’ve deserved it.”

“Miss Josie came home…distressed.” Cyan sighed.

“sh-she was c-cry-y-ying.” Tears welled up in Idjit’s eyes at the memory, “it w-wa-was so..so…s-s-ad..”
“Idjit baby.” I brushed away his tears, “I’m sorry sweetie.”

“It appears I shall need to speak with your mother about this.” Granny pulled out her cellphone and made a note, “If she continues to behave in such matters, I may have to take drastic action.”

“It’s fine Granny.” I blinked when I realized I was being honest. I was fine. Sure, I still felt like shit about it all, but it didn’t bite as bad as it did in the past. There were also other reasons to avoid hurting the company, “Really. There’s no need to inadvertently hurt Olivia because my parents were dicks.”

“I should’ve known they would’ve tried to convince you to ask me to change my will.” Granny sighed and ran a hand across the top her head, “They always need money to cover their losses lately. Their extravagant lifestyle and tendency to do half assed jobs themselves is starting catch up with them.”

“Is the company in danger?” Alarm flashed through me. Olivia was working there while she earned enough money to start her own restaurant. She was taking a page out of my book by deciding to not take money from my parents, “Do they actually need the 5 billion dollars?”

“What?” Granny’s eyes blinked, “Your parents must’ve mixed up the numbers. You’re inheriting 10 billion dollars from me after I die. I’m giving you 5 billion of it now as a birthday present.”

“Wait…what!” My brain turned off for a few seconds as I began to do the math.

“I wanted to give some money to all of you girls this year, but I know how my daughter is.” Distaste flooded Granny’s face, “I want you to give 2 billion to Olivia. That way she can get out of the company and start her restaurant like she wants to. I do wish for you to give 1 billion to Nadia to help fund one of her charity projects I’m particularly fond of. The rest is so you will finally move out of that shit hole you call an apartment. I should be enjoying other countries without having to worry about whether or not one of my grandbabies has been shot because she lives in the ghetto.”

“Still…WHAT?!” I threw my hands up in confused exasperation, “Why are you giving me of all people that kind of money? I’m not going to have anything to really use it on!”

“I’m giving it to you because I know you’ll be the most responsible with it. Save some for your children and grandchildren. Donate large portions to charity. I don’t care really, but I know you won’t waste it on mansions and expensive cars. I also decided to give it the most successful of my grandchildren.”

“Olivia hasn’t even-“ I tried to protest.

“That’s another reason why I’m giving it to you. I know you’ll give large portions of it to Olivia. You’ll also more than likely give some of it to Leo as well.” Granny pulled out a couple of debit cards and slid them my way, “I know you can be trusted with the responsibility.”

I sat in silence for the new few minutes while my brain tried to process what she said. After the horrible dinner, I had thought it odd they called 5 billion dollars a large sum of her money when she was worth about 20 billion on average. She was a good business woman who –like me- didn’t waste funds on frivolities very often. Her motorcycle was pretty much the only luxury she owned.

“well…guess you can’t excuse your workaholic tendencies anymore.” Waltzer laughed, “you’ll still bury yourself in paperwork though.”
“She wouldn’t be Miss Josie if she didn’t.” Cyan chuckled. Idjit hummed in agreement.

“I’m glad my Joey has such a good work ethic.” Granny laughed, “Even if it means she forgets to bathe every now and then.”

“or eat.” Blake added poking my hand.

“or sleep.” Waltzer’s burning gaze made me wilt slightly.

“w-we’re a-al-w-way’s wor-rr-ried.” Idjit fiddled with his jacket.

“Why do you guys insist on reminding people about how little fucks I give about myself?” I sighed.

“we’re hoping maybe someone can get through that thick skull of yours.” Waltzer elbowed my hand teasingly, “right snuggle? ophie needs to quit worrying us all so much.”

‘Yes’ was his simple response.

“You guys.” I groaned while my Granny laughed.

“You lot really are adorable.” Granny patted Waltzer on the skull, “I’m glad. You’re the closest thing this one has given me to great-grandchildren.”

“I’m only 30!” I did want kids at some point. At that point in time though, they weren’t really an option, “Forgive me for wanting to have some freedom.”

“The clock is ticking my dear. Please don’t leave me with the little brats that your aunt’s children are calling my “grandchildren”. They’re worse than Nadia.” Granny sighed, “I honestly wonder where I went wrong. Perhaps I should’ve strived to make their childhoods more normal.”

“I think mother would’ve turned out the way she did either way.” I patted Granny’s hand comfortingly, “She’s too manipulative for it to be anything but in her genes.”

“Well, she was a daddy’s girl growing up.” Granny scowled the idea of her ex-husband, “Wherever the bastard is right now. Goodness knows he never wants to tell me anything despite the fact we still both own the company.”

“Sorry Granny.” I replied honestly. I’d never met my grandfather on my mother’s side. The only connection I had to him was the Arietta in my name.

“Well enough business talk.” Granny placed her hand over my own and squeezed it, “One of your bitties is expecting yes?”

“That would be the sleeping ball of yellow in Raze’s arms.” I pointed to a dozing Sunshine, “It’s been…rough.”

“he shouldn’t be….” Raze paused, “nothin’ about this is goin’ like it should.”

“It’s concerning.” Cyan agreed.

“I see.” Granny looked Sunshine up and down, “He does look rather haggard. The poor thing. How much longer does he have?”

“It should be sometime around Thanksgiving.” I responded after counting the days in my head, “Given the way things are going, I’m starting to think the little guy might come sooner rather
than later. I’m almost willing to bet money he’s going to be early.”

“That isn’t good.” Granny’s eyes narrowed, “Being premature is…well….far from a good thing.”

“ya think i dun know that!” Raze hissed.

“Raze…?” Sunshine’s voice cleared when he removed his face from Raze’s jacket. Sleepily he looked around. His eyes widened once they settled on my grandmother. He scrambled to get up stumbling slightly, “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s alright little one.” My grandmother soothed catching him before he could hurt himself. Raze bit down on her finger, but she didn’t have any reaction at all. She simply tugged him off of her hand and helped Sunshine stand.

“Raze.” Sunshine chided once he saw the blood coming from Granny’s skin, “You can’t just bite the elderly!”

“i’ll do what i wanna.” Raze grumbled mostly to himself.

“What was that?” Sunshine threw a heated look over his shoulder. Some part of me still marveled every time the sweet, shy Sunshine turned into an angry spouse. It was good he could keep Raze in line though. Despite the…terrifying personality change.

“nothin’ honey.” Raze threw is hood up over his head.

“I thought so.” Sunshine turned away from his mate.

“He’s well trained.” Granny laughed accepting a Band-Aid from me.

“Sorry. Should’ve warned you he bites.” I hit myself mentally for not remembering to do that.

“It’s fine Joey.” Granny pinched my cheek, “It was just a nip.”

I didn’t believe her.

From there, our outing became much more peaceful. She discussed her time out of the country working with foreign businesses. She even told old stories about me from when I was a child. I needed to turn to someone to help me take care of Olivia when I was younger. The “nanny” our parents hired was some lazy old friend of my mom’s who never did anything. Thus, I was the one calling my grandmother asking her how to heat a bottle properly at midnight. I was the one who potty trained Olivia. I was the one who helped her with homework. I was the one who handled discipline. I was the one who taught her how to drive. I still needed guidance myself, and Granny was happy to lend me all of her knowledge. I was still grateful to her for her endless patience.

Our lunch ended with Granny giving each of my bitties a kiss and smothering me in a tight embrace once more. She told me to call more often and asked my bitties to look after me. Then she got on her black and gray Harley, and the majestic beast of a motorcycle roared away from the cafe. I left feeling lighter than usual.

Sunshine’s health had deteriorated over lunch, but he still forced his shy optimism.

Once we got back to the apartment, I contacted the Bitty CC and asked to schedule an appointment for Sunshine. I couldn’t let his promises of health be enough anymore. Things
obviously were getting worse instead of better, and I didn’t want to know what would happen to Raze’s mental health if things went south. The bitty tech expressed concern for Sunshine’s health and scheduled an appointment relatively quickly. It would still be a week, but it was much better than a month and three weeks of fear.

“You guys aren’t killing each other right?” I called through the bathroom door. I could hear the bitties getting clean inside. I could also hear Raze and Waltzer arguing over something.

“no ma’am!” Blake called back, “i’ve got these two reigned in.”

“dammit blake!” Raze’s rough voice echoed through the door, ”pumme down!”

“quit scaring cyan you ass.” Waltzer’s quiet hiss was almost missed through the wooden door.

“Please don’t hurt each other.” I warned through the door before returning to the living room to sit next to Sunshine. He was gnawing on a monster candy silently, “Feeling better Sunny?”

“Slightly.” Tension made Sunshine sit up straight, “I’m worried Josephine…and scared.”

“It’s okay.” I murmured softly scooping Sunshine into my hands, “We’ll make sure everything goes okay.”

Sunshine said nothing, but he force a kind smile.

Then my phone- which had been taped to my chest after Waltzer found some duct tape- went off.

“Hello?” I asked curiously. It was an unfamiliar number.

“Are you happy with yourself?” Nadia’s voice was tight and angry across the line, “Getting in good with Grandmother after what happened? Do you have any idea what she’s done to-”

“Bye.” I hung up the phone and blocked the number. I had mailed the portion of my birthday money Granny gave me to her after getting back, but I was not about to sit there and listen to her bitch.

“Who was that?” Sunshine asked.

“Nadia.” I responded quickly. I grabbed the remote and began flicking through channels on the TV.

“Oh.” His face fell into a frown/scowl, “She has a lot of nerve to call you after what happened.”

“She does. I think she’s just a raw nerve in all honesty. Getting angry at the drop of a pin or gloating after a ‘victory’ are pretty much the only two ways I’ve seen her.” I chuckled, “But I’ve had a damn good day today, and she’s not ruining it.”

Sunshine nodded in agreement.

“Josephine?” Sunshine asked.

“Yup?”

“Can we all watch a movie tonight? Or do you have to get back to work? I…really want to
spend time with you.” Sunshine timidly tugged at my fingers blushing.

“Of course we can Sunny.” I pulled him up and nuzzled him.

I did want to get back to work, but Sunshine really needed something to distract himself right now. Besides, there was no point in ruining a good day by arguing with my bitties. I would enjoy the good times while they lasted dammit. It’s not like I could really do anything else.
I had woken up in an alley way with a killer hang over. I had woken up in my shower after a long night with Edgar. I had woken up with Olivia clinging to me like a sea barnacle. I had woken up with Leo’s ass in my face.

I would never get used to waking up with a bitty sleeping on my face however.

I chuckled to myself as I checked to see who the weight on my eyes was. Sure enough, it was Waltzer. I dropped my hand to my chest and felt around for any other bitties. My hand brushed against a pair of bitties. One of them wrapped their hands around my finger. I sat still for a moment and let the long fingers play with my hand.

I had to get the bitty crotch out of my face eventually though.

Waltzer clung to my face when I began to tug him off. His hands buried in my hair once I managed to break the death grip his feet had on a wad of hair on the other side of my head. Finally able to see, I looked down and saw the bitty playing with my hand was Snuggle. His brother slept peacefully curled up around him. Curled up on one side of me, Idjit fidgeted next to a snoozing Cyan. Raze was awake watching a sleeping Sunshine’s face.

I wriggled my fingers free of Snuggle’s grip to get his attention. His eyes focused on me within moments. He smiled and reached for my hand again. I wrapped my hand around his torso and rubbed my thumb against his cheek.

“Morning Snuggle.” My voice was hoarse from slumber, but it wasn’t like he could hear me anyways.

‘Good morning.’ He signed happily, ‘I’m glad you’re finally awake.’

“How long have you been up?” I asked after I worked out what he had said.

‘A few hours.’ Snuggle admitted, ‘Everyone looked so peaceful, so I didn’t want to wake anyone up.’

“Aww, you should’ve baby.” I gently completed the process of untangling Waltzer from my hair. The little bugger could cling like no other sometimes, “I hate that you’ve been sitting here alone.”

‘I wasn’t lonely.’ Snuggle shook his head before briefly pointing at Raze, ‘Raze talked with me earlier.’

“Oh really?” I cocked a brow and looked at the grumpy edgy. My good mood faded slightly once I saw how tired Raze looked, “Raze?”
“wha’?” His voice was edged with fatigue.

“When was the last time you slept?” I released Snuggle to reach for Raze. He growled weakly, but- scarily- he let me pet him.

“I can’t sleep.” Raze quietly admitted, “when’s his appointment again?”

“Three days.” I looked Sunshine over, “He’s looking better today.”

“he looked like shit this morning, he started lookin’ better after spendin’ sometime with snuggle though.” Raze quietly looked at the confused meek before looking at me, “i think…i think snuggle can heal. Which is something bitties aren’t supposed to be able to do.”

“What?” I blinked sitting up slightly. The sleeping bitties protested by burying themselves into me further.

“bitty magic isn’t supposed to be strong enough to heal.” Raze stroked his hands down Sunshine’s back as he quietly thought, “but sunshine…he looked horrible when I first woke up. then snuggle just swoops in and worriedly pats him on the head a few times and poof all of its gone. all of his fatigue, discomfort, nausea…up in smoke in a flash.”

“Raze that’s-“

“didn’t his last human get hit by a speeding car?” Raze interrupted.

“Yes.” I was confused.

“how in the hell is a kid supposed to survive somethin’ like that huh? unless someone used their magic to heal them before the medics arrived on scene.” Frustration crossed his face once he saw my disbelief, “when we get hurt our magic gets stronger to protect us. it’s why i’m pretty damn strong myself.”

“Blake and Waltzer push you around you know.”

“only ‘cause sunshine would kill me if i actually did anything to them.” Raze snorted turning his head away from me, “snuggle’s body never really fully healed right? he’s got that limp. what if that lets him tap into magic he shouldn’t have otherwise?”

“I don’t know Raze.” I replied honestly, “I don’t know much about you guys to begin with in all honesty- anatomically or physiologically. I’m just a human. I’m struggling to see how this is relevant though. I mean, he can heal. Great?”

“monster magic can’t work on us dumbass.” Raze nipped at my fingers, “our magic just won’t interact with it unless it’s been shrunken down and stabilized like it is in monster candy. in other words, we can’t just be healed by a monster. if snuggle can actually heal other bitties though….”

“He’d be really breaking the mold.” The puzzle pieces clicked into place, “Snuggle?”

‘Yes?’

“Can you heal others?” I inquired softly. Snuggle stared at me for a few minutes confused. He frowned and furrowed his brow.

‘I…don’t know.’ Snuggle finally signed back, ‘Sometimes, when I really want to help
someone feel better, they feel better. Does that count?’

“What’d he say?” Raze asked.

“He says people just feel better when he wants them too.” I shrugged, “Snuggle baby, I don’t know for sure. Raze? It isn’t bad for him to do it though is it? Not bad for his health at least.”

“nah. like i said, my magic is stronger ‘cause of my old wounds. he ain’t gonna drop dead from trying to help other people.” Raze waved away my concern.

“who isn’t going to drop dead?” Waltzer inquired peering over my neck as he slowly woke up.

“Raze thinks Snuggle can heal others.” I explained.

“kind of figured.” Waltzer shrugged, “i mean….how else is a kid going to survive being hit by a speeding car?”

“oh so yer some kinda genius now?” Raze growled, “why didn’t ya say somethin’ sooner!?”

“because i didn’t really think it mattered.” Waltzer yawned.

“sunshine could’ve used his help more often if he can heal dumbass!”

“snuggle already helps sunshine all the time.” Waltzer flashed his middle finger at the snarling edgy, “there isn’t much else he can really do at this point edgelord.”

“What’s going on?” Snuggle looked between the two other bitties confused, ‘They're talking too fast for me to keep up.’

“They’re just fighting Snuggle.” I laughed, “Like always.”

From there, the morning fell into its usual routine. Blake eventually blinked awake, but he stayed cuddled next to his brother once he realized I was in no big rush to move. Idjit and Cyan also awoke after Waltzer and Raze began to whisper yell. Cyan groaned and tried to bury his head under my hip to muffle the sound of them arguing. Idjit just crawled up next to Blake and Snuggle.

“Honestly guys.” I eventually tapped both skeleton bitties on the top of their skulls, “You’re just being little shits at this point. Give it a break.”

“he’s the one being an asshole!” Raze yelled throwing his hands up in the air.

“excuse me?” Waltzer cocked his head to the side, “i’m being the asshole?”

“yeah, ya fuckin are!”

Any remaining levity vanished in the next few seconds.

“Ah!” Sunshine yelped as he awoke clutching his stomach.

“Sunshine?” I sat up quickly causing Blake, Idjit, and Snuggle to slide down my chest onto my lap. Sunshine groaned as he vibrated in pain, “Sunny?”

Snuggle slid down and pressed his hands against Sunshine’s face. Raze worriedly wrapped his arms around his mate’s trembling body. Sunshine’s trembling body shook less, but he still looked
“Shit.” I shifted the bitties off my lap and got dressed, “Waltzer, call the Bitty CC and tell them we’re coming in now. Blake, find me a bra.”

“Sure thing.” Waltzer teleported off of the bed.

“YES MA’AM.” Blake reluctantly left his brother’s side. Cyan watched from the sidelines as Idjit let a pained Sunshine clutch his hand.

I was dressed in a hoodie, bra, pair of sweatpants, and mismatched flip-flops in less than three minutes. I grabbed my cellphone from Waltzer and grabbed my cash. I almost tripped over the boxes in my room. Granny wanted me to move out of my apartment, so I had begun packing up to move into a nicer one inside town. It wasn’t the penthouse she wanted me to get, but it had three actual rooms for us all to use. Needless to say, I almost killed myself a couple of times scrambling over my messy shit trying to get out of my apartment with my bitties in tow.

I was usually a polite person on the sidewalks, but I was the definition of an asshole as I raced in the early morning sunlight towards the Bitty CC. More than a few people yelled obscenities at me as I bolted past. The ones who tried to grab me found themselves being smacked with Blake and Waltzer’s magic.

“Help.” I panted slightly kicking open the door of the Bitty CC. I was surprised the glass didn’t shatter, “We have no idea what’s going on.”

“Waltzer let us know.” The smaller rabbit monster- named Karli- quickly took him from me and looked at the squirrel bitty tech named Velour, “He’s not looking good.”

“Could it be the sans type magic rejecting a grillby type host?” Velour asked.

“It could be.” Karli narrowed her eyes at Sunshine’s chest, “Oh my stars! His HP is so low! We need to get the baby out now. I think it’s killing him.”

“What?” I yelped.

The two monsters seemed to remember I was standing there.

“We have to do an emergency…oh….what do humans call it? c-something….C-SECTION! We have to do one stat.” Karli looked at Velour, “Take him back and get him prepped.”

“Wait, we still have a month and a week before the baby is supposed to be born.” I protested, “It’d be one thing if this was closer to Thanksgiving but-“

“Miss Newmore.” Karli interrupted, “Sunshine is at risk of dying right now. There is a chance we might lose the baby, but at this rate we might lose both of them. Both of them have a better chance of surviving if we do this now.”

“Please speck.” Raze’s pained whisper cut through my mangled thought process. I looked down and saw tears in his eyes, “i can’t…i can’t…”

“Fine.” I reluctantly agreed, “Just please for the love of god try to save them both.”

“Of course we will.” Karli sighed in relief, “We have a room in the back for people waiting on bitties in surgery. Please come this way.”
The next three hours of my life were hell. All of my bitties were silent in the little room. Unlike the rest of the building, this room was a somber gray instead of a cutesy pastel color. The atmosphere surrounding us wasn’t even charged with grief. Everyone was pulled into their own thoughts as we waited.

And waited.
And waited.

“dammit!” Raze stood up and snapped a hand out. The nearby metal coffee table flung into a wall, “it shouldn’t be taking them this long!”

“Raze.” I said quietly.

“he’s gotta be fine right?” Raze turned to look at me, “you promised us we’d be safe!”

“it’s not her fault.” Waltzer snarled whipping up from where he had curled up on one of the chairs, “she’s not the one who got him pregnant in the first place!”

“Oh so it’s my fault now?” Raze growled grabbing Waltzer by his collar.

“you heard what the bitty tech said,” Waltzer shoved Raze off of him with ease despite the edgy’s larger size, “‘could it be the sans type magic rejecting a grillby type host?’ remember?”

“That’s out of everyone’s control Waltzer.” I chided him separating the two bitties, “Blame me if it makes you feel better Raze, but it isn’t going to make Sunshine appear any quicker.”

“sunny…he’s gotta be okay.” Blake said determinedly, “he’s gotta be. he wouldn’t just leave raze behind.”

“He’s fine.” Cyan added, “He’s not as weak as you all seem to think he is. He has been dealing with this for the past month and three weeks after all.”

“s-sunny.” Idjit whimpered through his tears.

“Guys.” I sighed before tugging them all into my arms. Raze hissed and bit me a few times angrily, but I just kept him there. The pain sadly told me this wasn’t a dream, “We’ve got to stick together on this okay? We have to.”

“That means no pointing fingers.” Cyan warned nudging Waltzer’s skull, “At anyone.”

“you all heard what they said.” Waltzer grumbled.

“is it my fault?” Raze whispered quietly.

“No Raze.” I quickly stated, “It’s not. No one’s ever seen a grillbitty and sansbitty combine before. We had no idea this could happen. I thought the little one would be early but…shit…not this early.”

After that brief bout of hostility, we all fell silent once more. My heart and soul ached at the idea that Sunshine or his and Raze’s baby wouldn’t make it out of this situation. Dammit I should’ve paid more attention to the signs. Snuggle must’ve been healing him frequently or else….shit…we might’ve not even gotten to this point. Some part of me actually thanked the fact that Olivia had me go adopt another set of bitties.

“Josephine?” Velour knocked on the door and peered in.
“Velour!” I stretched my legs out and let my bitties hopped off my lap, “How are they? Are they…?”

“Sunshine is recovering fine,” Velour began reading from her clipboard, “He’s improved greatly since we removed the baby from his body, but his magic took a while to stabilize. The baby is…well…not in the best of conditions. He’s alive, but it’s apparent that his magic is unstable and not mixing properly.”

It felt like the star linebacker of my high school slammed into my chest.

“Will he…?” I couldn’t even finish the question.

“We’re uncertain.”

“Whatdaya mean yer ‘uncertain’!?” Raze roared flinging a magazine at Velour, “where’s my kid!”?

“I can take you to them both.” Velour sighed catching the magazine with ease, “Right this way.”

Sunshine did look better in the pastel purple recovery room. He was resting soundly for once. Raze hurried over to his side. Sunshine’s color had returned in full force, and he no longer writhed around in pain. Truly, he looked great compared to how he’s been lately.

The baby bitty on the other hand…

He was in a magical bubble desperately clinging to life. He was a small skeleton made of bright yellow flames, but he actually seemed to sweating some. His left eye was malformed. The black pit wasn’t a perfect circle, and it blazed with bright red energy that cracked the area around his eye. His other eye was clenched shut in pain. A spider web of cracks covered his left leg from hip to ankle. The flames of his ribs were also covered in pale cracks. It was almost like he was red magic engulfed in pale yellow flames with the way red light poured from the painful looking cracks.

“oh my god.” Waltzer’s hands pressed against the bubble, “shit.”

Idjit whimpered and began crying into Cyan’s chest at the sight.

Snuggle hurried over to the bubble and pressed his hands against it worriedly. We all flinched back once the clear bubble distorted with pale blue light. For a moment, I was terrified something had gone wrong. The baby had died in that moment, or the baby was going to die in the next few heartbeats. That didn’t happen though. The baby’s breathing slowed. It’s little body seemed to finally be released from the agony it was in as it fell into a more peaceful sleep.

“holy shit.” Waltzer’s wide eyes stared at a determined looking Snuggle, “you can heal on a large scale.”

“Oh my stars.” Velour’s paw went to her mouth, “How long has he been able to do that?”

“Raze thinks it was triggered by the car accident.” I explained, “He must’ve been healing Sunshine all this time…”

“That would explain how Sunshine was still alive.” Velour commented checking her notes, “The rate at which his HP was dropping…that was alarming. It’s normal for monster HP to fluctuate during a pregnancy, but his health was drastically going down and not coming back up. If Snuggle has been healing him since day one, then he’s been delaying this for as long as he possibly could. I
don’t even think the baby would’ve survived without getting to this stage.”

“hear that bro?” Blake laughed painfully, “you’re a hero.”

Snuggle- who obviously couldn’t hear him- didn’t even flinch as he continued to maintain the healing energy around the slumbering baby bitty.

“He has a chance now.” Cyan sighed in relief, “Thank goodness.”

Idjit finally pulled himself away from Cyan to look at the baby. He still teared up seeing how pained the baby seemed to be, but he didn’t start bawling again.

“We’ll need to keep both of them here for a little while.” Velour leaned in and whispered to me, “Just to make sure that things don’t deteriorate from here.”

“Can…can I stay here?” I asked, “Like…can I even do that?”

“Normally?” Velour cocked her head, “No, but….I think we’re all willing to make an exception for our champion Good Samaritan.”

“Thank you.” I replied honestly catching her hand and giving it a squeeze, “Thank you.”

“Of course Miss Newmore.” Velour smiled and patted my hand, “Fate will decide its course I promise.”

“Uh huh.” I forced a thin smile and let her go.

After she left, I pulled my phone out and called my Granny. My bitties sat either next to Sunshine, the baby, or some place in between. I knew we all must've looked like we had gone five rounds with a cave bear, but I think we were more than allowed to look like shit after the last few hours.

“Hey Granny?” I asked after I heard her answer the phone.

“Yes dear?”

“Could you do me a favor?”
“Stay still Sunshine.” I grumbled checking the magical stitches carefully, “Quit fidgeting so much.”

“Sorry Josephine.” Sunshine wasn’t even looking at me though. He was staring at the still unnamed baby. The poor thing hadn’t even open his eyes yet, but he was slowly starting to stabilize. When I asked Velour about it, she explained what the problem was: size. Two different kinds of monsters can breed with little to no difficulty because there was more of them for the magic together and stabilize. The bitties didn’t have such a luxury. They were so small two different types of magic would struggle to mix properly, and Raze- as he admitted- had stronger magic than a typical edgy. Thus, his magic wasn’t mixing with Sunshine’s well, and the excess (which usually blended into the magic of the host easily) was hurting Sunshine from the inside. Velour equated it to a spiked ball rolling around in Sunshine’s abdomen. Snuggle had been healing the damage, but eventually the ball began to roll too fast which made it impossible for Snuggle to keep up. The workers at the Bitty CC believed that things would go a little bit better a second time around because Sunshine’s body had to partially adapt during this pregnancy. Raze threw a table at the poor guy for even suggesting doing this a second time.

“He’s stabilizing.” I gently turned Sunshine’s face towards my own, “He’ll be fine.”

“he hasn’t woken up yet.” Raze sat staring at his kid, “why hasn’t he woken up yet? doesn’t he need to eat?”

“Not necessarily.” Cyan hesitated before patting Raze on the shoulder, “his magic is still somewhat unstable, so food might not agree with him right now.”

“just give it time raze.” Blake flung an arm around Raze’s shoulder. Surprisingly, Raze didn’t shake it off, “he’ll be up and about soon.”

Raze said nothing.

“Can I be put down now?” Sunshine tugged his sweater down. His stitches were healing quickly because of the monster candy.

“Of course.” I gently placed him down. Idjit shuffled over to him and looked him up and
“I’m fine Idjit.” Sunshine smiled rubbing the cherry’s head, “Really.”

“….” Idjit just tugged him into a gentle hug.

The past four days had been rough to say the least. The kid’s health was slowly getting better, but the waiting game was starting to drive everyone a little crazy. We still didn’t even have a name for him yet.

“Knock knock.” Velour called through the door before peering in, “Everyone doing okay?”

I was very grateful to the workers for letting me crash in the recovery room. They’d been very accommodating and had even brought us some meals when we forgot to leave to get something. As it turned out, most of the workers new me by name and face because of the larger than life exaggerations Karli and Velour came up with. Some part of me was worried they were going to try to saint me or something.

“Well as we can be.” I smiled before noting the confetti and tinsel in her hair, “Erm….Velour?"

“Hmm?” Velour walked over and checked on the baby, “Oh this. A couple of our most frequent human visitors will be out of town for Halloween, so they came by to have a brief celebration. The lobby is covered in Halloween decorations.”

“Oh right, Halloween’s soon.” I didn’t love Halloween, but I didn’t hate it either. I, myself, never got to enjoy it because I was always so busy making sure Olivia had a nice Halloween, “Did they just throw buckets full of tinsel and confetti everywhere?”

“Pretty much.” Velour laughed before leaning in to observe the baby closer, “His magic has stabilized a good bit. He could wake up and time now.”

The bubble didn’t let things in, but its one weakness was apparently hair. Velour’s dark brown braid dangled over the top of the bubble and tickled the baby’s chest. None of us really paid much mind to it until she yelped tugging her hair back.

“Velour?” I approached.

“Did he…?” Velour pulled her braid behind her back and looked closer, “He’s awake!”

There was chaos for the next few minutes as everyone scrambled to the bubble. The red flame of his left eye- which had been small and dark while he slept- was bright red and flared up slightly. His other eye slowly blinked awake as he brought the tinsel to his mouth to gnaw on.

“Jesus fucking Christ.” I laughed humorlessly. I ignored the tears forming in my ears, “Talk about giving us all heart attacks baby bones.”

“guess he liked the shiny thread.” Waltzer pressed a hand against the bubble and smiled, “aw.”

“he’s so pretty…” Idjit breathed looking at the baby in awe.

“The shiny thread is tinsel Waltzer,” Cyan explained tugging on the end of the tinsel that was outside of the bubble. A piece of hair was wrapped around it, so Cyan angled it above the baby’s face. The little flaming skeleton let out a cracking giggle as small hands reached up to play
“Tinsel.” Sunshine quietly said, “That’d be a cute name.”

“we’re seriously namin’ our kid after a bit of plastic?” Raze raised a brow. I was relieved to hear a good bit of the self-loathing and fear replaced with his attitude.

“Yes.” Sunshine watched Tinsel wriggled around the bubble with warm eyes.

“whatever you want.” Raze wrapped an arm around Sunshine’s waist and tugged him close.

“look bro.” Blake nudged a dozing Snuggle. The poor thing had fallen asleep after maintain his healing magic for a few hours straight, so he was more than a little confused. His eyes brightened once he saw that Tinsel was awake.

‘He’s fine?’ Snuggle signed over and over again looking at me and Velour.

“Yes, all thanks to you.” I leaned down and pressed a kiss to his skull, “Good job.”

Tinsel was, and- if Velour’s prediction was right- always will be, physically fragile. The cracks in his ribs and leg made those bones very delicate, and his left eye seemed to pain him under bright lights. Thankfully, he was a very quiet baby. It was bizarre to watch him eerily observe everyone in the room before making broken gargling sounds as he reached for Sunshine and Raze. He seemed creepily intelligent.

“He’s going to grow up quickly.” Velour warned as she finally got him out of the bubble and into a very soft onesie, “We honestly didn’t know bitties existed at first, so only the ones who grew up quickly could survive. I’d estimate this little guy will be mostly grown by Christmas, and he’ll be fully grown in January.”

“Wait, how did you not know bitties existed?” I raised a brow. Velour paused, “Does it have anything to do with that second method of bitty production you can’t talk to me about?”

Velour hesitated before nodding.

“Then I won’t ask.” I dropped the subject.

Sunshine was awed by his little one. Tinsel laughed his shattered little laugh when Sunshine snuggled him close. Raze watched over Sunshine’s shoulder, and he actually smiled. Snuggle tapped Tinsel’s nose affectionately while Idjit and Cyan just stared at him. Blake and Waltzer tickled his right foot playfully to make the baby laugh.

“Can we go home now?” I turned to Velour. She nodded, “Great.”

“thank god.” Waltzer said running his hands over his skull, “thought i was going mad being trapped in this place.”

“I know.” I pressed a kiss to his head, “We’re going home. All of us.”

We were given a formula to use for Tinsel his first few weeks. We also had various vitamins he needed to chew on to improve his bone health. The bitty techs actually made the vitamins especially for him taking into account his hybrid magic. The workers actually seemed sad to see us go, but they waved with grins as we left.

Sunshine, Raze, and Tinsel sat curled up on my left shoulder. Idjit, Cyan, and Snuggle were
dozing in my hood. Waltzer sat perched on my head watching the world for any possible threat, and Blake sat on my right shoulder kicking his legs playfully. Blake was the first to notice we weren’t going in the direction we were supposed to be.

“ari?” Blake tugged on my ear gently, “home is in the other direction.”

“No. It isn’t.” I could feel the shit eating grin crawl across my face.

“did all that time in the bitty cc scramble your brains ophie?” Waltzer dangled in front of my eyes with concern coloring his face, “we live back that way.”

“No, we don’t. Not anymore that is.”

Realization dawned on both of them in the same instant.

The new apartment had three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen with attached dining area, and a spacious living room. I got a discount because I maintained the apartment’s website for the landlord- and designed the logo for the building. Thus, what was usually a $1,800 rent was only $900. The smallest of the bedrooms had been turned into my office with the largest becoming my bedroom. The second one I intended to let the bitties have until it was needed.

I had asked Granny if she could oversee and speed up the move while Sunshine and Tinsel recovered in the Bitty CC. She happily agreed since she was in town to do so after she made sure her “bitty grandbabies” were okay. I only wanted her to move all of my stuff over, but no. Granny Arietta just has to replace everything I fucking own without telling me.

I wanted to surprise the bitties with the new apartment, but all of the new shit ended up leaving me surprised as well. I actually had a furnished home. The living room was nice and spacious with a wall of windows that over looked the city. It had a nice couch with a set of matching chairs, a sleek coffee table, and new television set up. The kitchen already came with most of the larger appliances, but I saw a new coffee machine, microwave, and dining table set up. Some part of me knew there was more than likely a mixture of plates, mugs, platters, bowls, and glasses in the cupboards.

“holy cow.” Blake’s eyes widened, “i thought- we…we weren’t all packed yet…were we?”

“I asked Granny to finish up.” I sighed helping everyone get down onto the ground. I narrowed my eyes at the wood floors I knew didn’t come with the apartment. Granny must’ve changed the obnoxious shag carpet to make it easier for the bitties to get around, “From the looks of it she did more than just get my stuff moved in.”

“She replaced everything.” Cyan observed in awe as he walked around the new apartment, “She kept your work all boxed up though.”

“Thank god.” I practically groaned in relief, “I have a very specific organization method that-“

“ya just leave yer shit everywhere.” Raze scoffed fling a nearby coaster at my leg, “that’s not organizin’ anything.”

“like you’re any better.” Waltzer growled catching the coaster with ease, “you left more than a few nails laying around the living room.”

“Please don’t fight.” Sunshine asked biting back a yawn, “We should be happy.”
“Sleepy Sunny?” I crouched down so he wouldn’t have to crane his neck as far. Tinsel slept soundly in his arms.

“Yes.” Sunshine admitted.

Snuggle weaved on his feet.

“I think it’s time for certain bitties to go to bed.” I laughed standing up straight, “C’mon. You guys will get the second room all to-“

My jaw dropped to the floor again. Dammit Granny.

The second room was filled with bitty sized things. I saw a majority of Raze’s hand crafted stuff tucked next to a doll house that had to be custom made to fit Raze and Sunshine’s larger frame. There were two ipads charging in one wall, various sleeping arrangements strewn about the room, things for the bitties to make stuff out of. The room also contained a crib and a few human baby toys.

I see what you’re getting at Granny. I thought to myself as the bitties began to explore their new digs. I’m not having kids yet. These guys are more than enough for now.

“this stuff is so cool.” Blake hopped on a box, “huh? oh! clothes! come look ari!”

There was a stack of eight drawers in one corner of the room. Each drawer had a bitties name on it- with the sole empty exception for Tinsel- and was filled to the brim with custom fit clothing.

“Well. You guys won’t be needing any new clothes anytime soon.” I laughed as Blake began to try on various beanies.

“We’re going to sleep.” Sunshine interrupted tugging on my hand. I saw Raze disappear into their new shelter with Tinsel in tow, “Good night Josephine.”

“Night Sunny.” I leaned down and nuzzled his head. Sunshine smiled before scampering off to join his mate and offspring. I noticed Snuggle had found a nest of soft scarves to bury himself in. Cyan, Idjit, and Waltzer were messing with the new clothing with Blake.

“ha.” Waltzer laughed once he saw all of the various sized slippers in his drawer, “man, if only my feet weren’t so big huh?”

“I know.” I snorted reaching down to tickle his feet. He yelped and kicked at me slightly with a pout forming on his face, “Such big feet for a small sansy.”

“It seems that Granny has you covered though.” Cyan was trying on a series of ties while checking himself out in a nearby mirror, “She got slippers in all sizes it seems.”

“th-this…is…” Idjit was trying on a new jacket. It was red leather with a hood attached to it that had fur lining on the inside, “i…I like it.”

“Aww.” I leaned down to get a better look at it, “You’re precious.”

dude look at this!” Blake was wearing a cheesy chemistry t-shirt, “i’m cyan now!”

“Don’t knock the shirts.” Cyan chided poking Blake in the forehead.

“but they’re so lame man.” Blake laughed.
“They are not!” Cyan stood akimbo ready to start an argument over how lame his shirts were.

“welp. they’re going to be at it for a while.” Waltzer grinned while finding a pair of slippers that fit comfortably. His hands paused when he saw a new blue jacket. To this day, he still wore the tattered and patched jacket his Pops had given him. His fingers pressed against his old coat affectionately.

“You don’t have to change out of that one if you don’t want to Waltzer.” I smiled at him, “Granny’ll more than understand the sentiment.”

“great. i should have fancier coats for the next time you go on a family dinner though.” Waltzer’s eyes twinkled with mischief, “that way i can look like i gave a damn about the whole thing before breaking your parent’s chairs.”

“ummm…” Idjit held a bow tie with a cherry pattern in his hands, “s-she…she k-knows i’m a b-boy right?”

“That doesn’t go on your head baby.” I giggled taking the bow from his hands, “It goes like this.”

We pretty much spent the next three hours playing dress up. It had been a little after five before we left the Bitty CC, so night quickly over took the sky. Blake had gone off to join his brother sleeping, and Cyan found a nice little cot near his CD player. He turned on some soft classical music before crawling into bed himself.

Waltzer and Idjit were the two who stayed awake with me. They rode on my shoulders as I exited the bitty room.

The city outside was twinkling with light. Neon signs, old street lights, and headlights painted a mirage of twirling colors in the dark shadow casted by Mt. Ebbot off in the distance. Waltzer and Idjit gasped seeing the lights flicker in and out of an elaborate dance that only those who lived in the middle of the city could really see. The view would be even better if we were higher up, but I found the lights of apartments on the same level across the city from us comforting. This view wasn’t even possible in the shitty three story rat hole we used to live in. It was a beautiful display on the horizon blocked by cement factory buildings and graffiti.

Here though…we could see it all.

“jesus….that’s beautiful.” Waltzer teleported off of my shoulder onto a fake fern plant that hung in front of the windows, “you can almost see the starts in the sky too.”

“it’s l-li-li-k-ke they’re d-dan-c-cing.” Idjit murmured as I approached the windows.

“In a way they are.” I looked down and saw all of the cars stuck in evening traffic, “This isn’t the city that never sleeps, but I guess you could say it’s that city’s long lost cousin twice removed.”

“why didn’t we live in a place like this sooner?” Waltzer inquired.

“Budgeting. We’ll probably only live here for the next twenty or so years. Then we’ll use the rest of the money to get a nice cottage on a lake. Then we’ll be able to see the stars and be one with nature and all that jazz.”

“i like it.” Idjit watched the lights with an adorable amount of fascination.
“I’m glad you guys do.” I sighed in relief, “We’re in a good place now.”

After that, I left Waltzer and Idjit in front of the window to make the three of us a quick snack. I hunted down some graham crackers, chocolate, and marshmallows in the cabinets. Thankfully, Granny remembered my love of s’mores, so finding all the pieces were easy.

I was heating up the last few marshmallows for myself when my phone began to ring. Confused I looked and saw it was an unknown number once more. I really didn’t want to answer it, but they kept calling and calling.

“Hello?” I grumbled as I finished making the s’mores.

“Miss Newmore?” The voice was new. It didn’t sound menacing.

“Josephine Newmore not Nadia.” I warned.

“Good.” The line crackled briefly, “You’re the one I wish to speak with.”

“What can I do for you?” I kept my tone professional despite my annoyance.

“You’ve adopted two bitties named Snuggle and Blake yes?”

“Uh huh.”

“They’re my kids’ you see. My wife and I heard about Snuggle’s little talent when we came by to pick them back up. Riley insisted on getting them back you see. We’d really like them back. We’re also friends of the people who owned Raze and Sunshine we’-d”

My skin crawled with revulsion.

“No, you really want Snuggle’s healing ability.” I growled, “Because if you knew anything about the family, you’d know that their son’s name isn’t Riley. You also want Raze and Sunshine back for your little business.”

“Dammit bitch.” The voice took on a dark tone, “I was going to be nice.”

I heard someone knock on the door over the phone.

“Hear that? We’re right outside your little shitty apartment. You think this shitty little door will protect you?”

“Sir, I don’t live there anymore.” I let ice flood my words, “And even if I did, I’m not scared of you.”

“Oh really?”

“Really,” Pure fury ignited in my veins as I clenched my fist, “Because I really want to kill you. If I ever meet you in person….you’re going to regret it.”

With that I hung up the phone.

Assholes ruining my night and trying to threaten me. I blocked the number and grabbed my plate of s’mores. It was time to continue my good evening. Fuck those assholes.
A/N: This is some adorable fan art of Tinsel done by Keitai. I like to imagine this is Tinsel in his toddler to young child stage:
Game Plans and Wrenches

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except for Tinsel. He's mine).
I might rewrite part of this after talking with my dad about it (Mostly the medical stuff). I did some research, but he knows more than I do (he's a doctor). I'll let you guys know if the rewrite happens.

Tinsel giggled as I gently tickled his nose with a piece of thread. Like always, he only giggled in short, quick bursts before quieting down. Pain flickered across his face briefly before he smiled and reached for the thread with his small hands. He tugged on it sharply, but I tugged back just hard enough to make him smile. Tinsel had grown a lot in the eleven days that he had been born. Idjit and Waltzer couldn’t even hold him comfortably anymore. This wasn’t surprising given the fact that Sunshine and Raze were the 1st and 3rd tallest of the bitties- Snuggle was the 2nd tallest being only a quarter of an inch shorter than Raze. Still, I didn’t really how quickly “more quickly than you’d expect” would be in the long run.

“gee-juh.” Tinsel tugged hard on the string to pull my thoughts back to him, “gee-juh.”

I forced a grin through my irritation at the nickname while stretching out my comfortably on the couch. Sunshine had been particularly cranky- thirteen hours without sleep can do that easily-when Tinsel had started to finally “name” everyone. Thus, the little bastard insisted to his son I was “Granny Josephine” until the little cutie pie started calling me a garbled version of “GJ” for short. The rest of my bitties found it hilarious, so I had to deal with it.

“At least it sounds cute coming from you.” I sighed leaning down to nuzzle the right side of his face. His red eye flared with happiness, and his hands tangled in my hair tugging on it, “Okay you little shit. I love you, but I need my hair.”

Tinsel- obviously- didn’t realize that he was ripping my hair from my scalp, so I had to distract him with a tissue to get my hair back. My other bitties were passed out in various places of the house. This first week and four days could easily replace one of rings of hell. It wasn’t Tinsel’s fault. The only thing he knew what that his body hurt all the time. The only way he could really “tell” us anything was by crying out when he ached. Since he ached all the time, someone had to constantly be tending to him, and Cyan couldn’t directly touch him because of their opposing elements. Luckily, we had found a method that seemed to work. Someone would look after him for as long as they could. Then they would collapse, and someone else would pick up where they left off.

…. 

……

I never said it was a good method did I?

“j-jojo…?” Idjit tugged on the blanket that hung down from underneath my legs.
“Hey Idjit.” I offered one hand for him to climb on. He scrambled onto it as I asked, “I thought you were napping?”

“i w-wok-ke up…” A dark look flashed across his face as I picked him up, “…n-ni-ght-t-m-mare.”

“I’m sorry.” I kissed the top of his head gently as I sat him down next to Tinsel.

Idjit brightened upon seeing Tinsel playing with the tissue on my lap. The little flame skeleton was tearing apart with his teeth, but apparently he didn’t like the way it tasted. I had a pool of scorched “spitballs” forming on my lap as Tinsel continued to destroy the tissue out of pure curiosity.

“h-hi…” Idjit gently patted Tinsel’s skull. Tinsel nipped at his fingers affectionately before reaching for him, “o-oh…i…can i st-st-i-still even ho-o-old y-you ri-right?”

“We can give it a go if you want to.” I offered.

In a few moments, I had my legs pressed together on the couch, and Idjit used my stomach to lean against as he supported Tinsel as best he could. Ultimately, pale red magic wrapped around the little baby holding up the parts of him that wouldn’t fit in Idjit’s arms properly anymore.

“Want to talk about your nightmare?” I asked picking up the string to entertain Tinsel once more.

“i..w-was in..th-the j-j-ja-jar again…” Idjit managed to fight back his tears for Tinsel’s safety, “only…y-you ne-e-ver-e…came. the-they p-put me-e in th-the gr-g-ground…”

“Idjit.” I tilted his face up to face me, “I came. You’re safe now. It’s okay for scary memories to haunt you though.”

“do…y-you have any…?” Idjit asked rubbing his eyes more so out of habit than out of any real necessity.

“A few,” I admitted, “My dark times during high school for example. Sometimes I dream about the nights when I’d just stare at the razor blade I kept hidden under my bed.” I looked at the thin, faded scars on my arms, “Stress, anxiety, anger….and pointy objects don’t mix well.”

“…t-these a-r-re…” One of Idjit’s hands tapped the old scar.

“Yup…well…..most of the time I was drunk when I did it, so I can’t really remember much about how I was really feeling.” I shrugged like it didn’t matter. You almost died twice Old wounds needed to stay scarred over. The last thing my bitties needed was me regressing back to the way I used to be, “Leo caught on to my Saturday night detrimental pity fests and swiftly replaced them with hours of watching musicals. Truly, he is my closest ally against the greatest threat to any sentient being.”

“what’s th-tha-at?” Idjit cocked his head.

“Your own mind.” I smiled, “It’s a little easier when you have people who care about you. I mean, you guys all make me feel like the world’s a brighter place at least twenty times a day, so don’t worry about it.”

The look on Idjit’s face told me he would indeed worry about it for the rest of our lives together.
“Now, now,” I tapped his nose affectionately, “Smile baby. You’re starting to make Tinsel fret.”

Idjit immediately turned his attention back to Tinsel.

“Josephine? Idjit?” Sunshine exited the bitty room trailed by Raze and Cyan, “Do you have Tinsel?”

“Right here.” I pointed to my lap. I almost flinched when I felt a familiar weight drop on my head, “Where the hell did you come from Waltzer?”

“behind cyan,” Waltzer slid forward on the top of my head to better watch Tinsel and Idjit, “how long have you been looking after him ophie?”

“Two hours I think. Blake and Snuggle finally bowed out after five hours,” I craned my neck back to look at the door, “Are they awake too?”

“They’re still sleeping.” Cyan began to climb up the blanket onto the couch. Raze teleported himself and Sunshine onto my knees, “They looked rather exhausted.”

“guess you could say they were bone tired.” Waltzer chuckled slightly.

“That one was lame Waltz.” I huffed.

“Thank you for looking after him Josephine.” Sunshine smiled up at me.

“No problem. We’re all in this together after all.” I tapped the top of his head gently, “Anyways, since most of you are here, I’ll tell you about tomorrow’s game plan.”

“game plan?” Raze groggily blinked up at me before taking his son from Idjit, “the fuck…?”

“I have to go to the doctor’s tomorrow, so Olivia will be watching you guys for me. She’ll also be staying over since Sunday is her birthday.” I explained.

“doctor’s?” Waltzer slid down far enough to look me in the eye, “are you sick?”

“No, no.” I tried my best to physically wave away the concern in their eyes, “I just have to get screened again.”

“Screened?” Cyan cocked his head.

“For basal cell carcinoma,” I explained pulling my left pants leg up. The scarring left from my BCC years still looked rough, “It’s a kind of skin cancer. I thought they were just discolorations in my leg, so I didn’t really pay them much mind. Then my doctor nearly had a heart attack upon seeing the various bundles of skin cancer on the back of my leg after I came in with a sprained ankle. Life sucked for a while after that.”

“Those look painful.” Sunshine ran his hand across the old scars.

“Ehh…it’s been about 8 or so years since I finally kicked it to the curb.” I shrugged trying my best to not remember the fear and panic that filled the two years of my life I dealt with BCC. Really the worst part had been worrying about whether or not it would spread to my bones or other tissue considering the fact I had let it progress so far, “Just gotta make sure it hasn’t snuck back into my skin.”
“yer goin’ alone?” Raze questioned from where he sat sleepily playing with Tinsel.

“Yup. Besides, I need to go pick up Olivia’s birthday present, so you guys just keep her distracted.” I quickly focused my mind on the small celebration we were having on Sunday, “It’s not going to be anything fancy, but Olivia never really likes fancy to begin with.”

“what’ll happen if they find something?” Waltzer asked hopping down to look at the old scars himself.

“Well… I get to have my flesh messed around with again for however long it takes them to kick it out again. I check my body often though, and I haven’t seen anything forming.” I usually checked after getting out of the shower (when I remember to bathe of course).

“How long will you be gone Miss Josie?” Cyan asked.

“A couple of hours tops. It won’t take too long- promise.” I assured my bitties with a gentle grin, “Now, can we please focus on something besides one of my constant causes of anxiety?”

“li-livvy’s birt-th-thday is s-sunday?” Idjit tugged on my hair to get my attention.

“Yes.” I nodded.

“why didn’t you tell us sooner?” Waltzer pouted lightly punching my leg, “we could’ve done something for her.”

“I forgot to mention it.” I shrugged, “I ordered her gift months ago, so I really didn’t pay much mind.”

“what kinda gift takes months to arrive?” Raze looked up at me like I was the dumbest person he’d ever met.

“The expensive kind you brat.” I flicked the side of his skull, “Everyone will be nice to Olivia. Understand?”

“Yes ma’am.”

“sure.”

“Of course Miss Josie.”

“m-m-mhm.”

“whatever.”

“Good.” I nodded, “Someone remember to tell Blake and Snuggle about this little powwow okay?”

“I will Miss Josie.” Cyan stood up straighter.

“Thank you Cy.” I stretched my arms upwards in an attempt to get the blood flowing again, “Anyways, you guys getting hungry?”

“yuupp.” Waltzer nodded enthusiastically at the idea of food.

“Is there anything we can do for Miss Olivia tomorrow?” Cyan asked cocking his head.

“You guys could make her a card, and she’d be over the moon.” I snorted, “Just saying
‘Happy Birthday’ will more than suffice.”

can we…?” Idjit asked timidly wringing his hands together.

Can you what darling?” I cocked my head.

“m-make her a c-ca-car-r-rd.” Idjit blushed and pulled his hood up.

I felt my heart grow three sizes larger.

I spent the next ten minutes preparing a quickly meal for the bitties and getting Idjit some craft supplies to work with. The hard part was finding a pair of scissors the little baby could use on his own if the others were busy working on another part of the card. Watching all of them- except for Raze and Tinsel- work while eating was adorable. Even Blake and Snuggle had woken up and joined in.

I was swallowing my last bit of dinner when there was a knock on my door. Curious and paranoid, I checked outside the peephole before answering it.

“Miss Newmore?” The landlady looked ready to pass out, “Your sister- Mrs. Nadia- just rented the apartment down the hall a few minutes ago. I’m a bit concerned for her. She looked rather…worn out.”

“Huh?” I blinked.

After the landlady explained once more that Nadia had moved into one of the two bedroom apartments on my floor, I politely bid her good-bye and told my bitties I’d be stepping out for a few minutes.

“NADIA!” I slammed my fist against her door, “OI! I know you’re in there!”

It took a few minutes for her to open the door. For once, Miss Perfection looked less than wonderful. Her hair was a mess. Her clothes were messy. Her make-up was chipping away. She looked nothing like the venomous evil twin I had come to hate in my adult life.

“Na-“ My words stopped once I noticed the dark red hand print that covered most of her face, “Where’s Edgar?”

“I’m not playing games with you tonight.” Nadia hissed. I saw her bitty- Cesar- come to stand in front of her left foot. His skull had a fresh crack.

“I’m not either. Where the hell is he so I can’t give him a black eye for that,” I pointed to her face, “And a good kick to the balls for that.” I gestured to Cesar’s injury.

“Like it really matters to you what goes on in my life,” Nadia glowered at me, “You didn’t care when Granny cancelled all of her appearances at our banquets and parties for the next ten months. Without our matriarch present, nothing will get because of our clients are her clients. If they even sense discord between our companies, they’ll rush over to her side instead.” Nadia slammed her manicured fist into the wall hard enough to make a place holder picture frame rattle, “Do you have any idea how much money this is going to cost us? All for what? Some petty revenge!?”

“What?” I blinked, “I didn’t ask Granny to do anything. Even if I did, she has a mind of her own you know. All that happened was he had a nice fucking lunch together you bitch,” I clenched my fist, “And I don’t like you at all yes, but you’re still my sibling.”
“Tch.” Nadia went to slam the door in my face. She seemed to forget that I’m physically stronger than her by anyone’s standard, “Leave.”

“No.” I growled back, “If I do and Olivia catches wind of this, she’ll be mad enough to burn the whole building down.”

“Olivia. Olivia. Olivia.” Nadia stepped back from the door and entered the sparsely filled apartment, “Ever since we were six that’s been the name on your goddamn lips. Olivia needs this. Olivia wants that. You quit caring about our parents. You quit caring about me. You quit caring about the company that was blossoming before our family’s eyes. What the hell is wrong with you?”

“I should be asking you that!” I slammed her apartment door closed behind me, “Don’t you remember what it was like after their investments paid off. No more dinners together. No more of them showing up for our little plays or your sports events. No more “honey how are you?” situations. No more staying home sick. No more family. How the hell are you okay with that?”

“We could’ve been a family if you would’ve just-”

“Toed the line and been a good girl?” I spat, “I’m sorry, but my free will is not something they have the right to control. I’m proud of the person I’ve become Nadia. I’ve made something of myself without crushing other people under heel to get to the top. I’ve made a name for myself other people respect- and no fear doesn’t count as respect.”

“So you’re saying I should’ve given up everything that I have now to live the life of a hermit?” Nadia looked down at me scornfully, “Just because of a few dodgy business practices and sentimental moments missed?”

“If you don’t have family, then what the hell do you have in the world Nadia?” I crossed my arms, “Money won’t stay with you. Even lovers won’t stay with you. The one thing you can’t get rid of is your blood.”

“You seem hell bent on finding a way to get rid of it.”

“No,” I gritted my teeth at her mockery, “I’ve never once said I wasn’t a Newmore. I’m hell bent on them accepting me for who I am, and I won’t give up my heart and soul for two people who won’t even listen to me.”

“You never bothered to talk to me now did you Phine?” Nadia spat. Our eyes widened simultaneously at the old, forgotten nickname. The childhood memories of a time before the company blew up, before Olivia had been born, burned across the back of my mind. Nadia sighed and collapsed onto the simple white couch, “Why did you come here Josephine?”

“The landlady was worried about you.” I replied honestly, “Like I said, Olivia would be mad at me if I just left you to rot.”

“Maybe you should.” Nadia rubbed her hands across her face.

“MOTHER,” Cesar tugged on her skirt, “DO NOT SPEAK IN SUCH A WAY. IT’S CONCERNING.”

“Sorry Cesar.”

I forced my shock back when I saw her reach down and pick the pained bitty up to press a kiss to his skull. Her face lost its usual harshness. Her eyes seemed to focus on the present instead of the future. After settling him down on her lap she glared at me.
“What?”

“Do you have monster candy?” I asked, “For his injury.”

“No. I left the house in a hurry.” Nadia gently stroked her thumb up and down Cesar’s back, “I worried about what would happen when Edgar came back. All of the financial hits looming over the horizon….it took a toll on him mentally.”

“Fuck him.” I huffed standing up straighter, “He’s a piece of shit anyways. You’re divorcing him for this right?”

Nadia said nothing.

“Dia.” The childhood name fell from my lips before I could catch it, but the flash of embarrassment could fuck right off.

“I’ll think about it.” Nadia said.

“Ugh…” I groaned and pinched the bridge of my nose. I made a decision I knew I would more than likely forget, “Tomorrow Olivia and I are beginning her birthday celebration if you want to come.”

Nadia stared dumbly for a few seconds as her mind processed the invitation.

“You would allow that.” Nadia’s eyes narrowed.

“Yeah,” I grumbled, “It’d make Olivia happy.”

“I will…go then.” Nadia shifted uncomfortably on her couch.

“Good. Ice your face and make sure to cover that up tomorrow. Olivia will have a royal snit otherwise. I’ll swing by my place and grab some of my monster candy for Cesar,” I began to walk towards the door, “If Edgar shows up, just scream. I’ll kick his ass.”

Nadia said nothing.

Well.

My life had just gotten more hectic after the hellish situation surrounding Tinsel’s birth.

_Lady Luck. Karma._ I looked at the ceiling, _I will literally do anything for just a moment of chill. PLEASE._

Thankfully, the eye of the storm was still overhead.
“SISSY!” Olivia flung herself into my embrace upon entering my apartment, “Sissysissysissy! I’ve missed you sooooo much!”

“JESUS FUCKING CHRIST.” I gasped for air in her hug. I forgot how strong she could be sometimes, “Can’t….breath….help.”

Olivia laughed and let me go at last. I panted as my aching lungs finally pulled in air. Olivia had a small night bag thrown over one shoulder. Sitting on the mint green bag, Harley smoked a bitty cigarette while Hiro practically hopped with excitement.

“my Amazing Aunt!” Hiro held his arms up expectantly, “it is wonderful to see you again!”

I smiled and picked him up.

“It’s good to see you too Hiro.” The excited baby blue practically covered my face in excited kisses, “You too Harley. I’m glad to see you guys didn’t end up like…well….”

I grinned at my sister.

“Sissy!” She whined, “No mentioning my tendency to kill pets to my bitties.”

Harley choked on cigarette smoke.

“What?” He looked up at Olivia more than a little shocked before he started laughing.

“brother!” Hiro huffed literally jumping from my hand back onto the bag. I almost died of a heart attack, “do not be so rude to mama!”

“Sorry, sorry.” Harley didn’t sound sorry at all, “It just explains a lot.”

“Great,” Olivia pouted, “Now you have my Lil’ Bro thinking I’m a serial pet killer.”

“Well…..” I pretended to think about it, “That would be an accurate description.”
“JOJO!” Olivia jabbed me in the shoulder. I laughed at the angry blush covering her cheeks.

Tinsel began to huff and puff for something over in Sunshine’s arms. His small baby noises attracted Olivia away from our little “sister’s tiff” like a flashlight would attract a moth.

“Oh…my…goooooodddd….” Olivia squealed silently as she watched Sunshine quietly rock Tinsel back and forth, “He’s so cute!”

“don’t break ‘is eardrums.” Raze growled flicking a scrap of paper at Olivia’s face, “he’s still got sensitive ears.”

“Oh sorry.” Olivia blushed and sat her bag down next to the couch.

“SO….” Harley teleported onto the couch next to Raze. The two taller bitties glowered at each other, “You must be the cranky edgy mom worries about so much. I didn’t think you were too much trouble when we first met. From what I’ve heard, the opposite is true.”

“sorry bud,” Raze snidely looked down at him, “ya got me at a bit of a disadvantage. i neva bothered learnin’ shit about you. some bean pole in a bright ass orange hoodie doesn’t mean much to me.”

“You might come to regret that.” Harley’s body thrummed with orange magic.

“ya wanna go?” Raze stepped closer.

“how about no?” Blake swiftly separated the two bitties with ease. Harley blinked out of surprise when he found himself dangling in midair.

“blake being the primary fun killer.” Waltzer sighed, “it would’ve been interesting to see that brat put in his place.”

“i’m taller than ya waltzer.” Raze growled.

“don’t you know? size doesn’t matter.” Waltzer grinned.

“gotta compensate for somethin’?” Raze popped off.

“Okay.” Sunshine quietly handed Tinsel over to Snuggle to pluck his mate out of the air, “Enough Raze. Be nice.”

“he started it!” Raze protested gesturing to Harley.

“And. I’m. Ending. It.” Sunshine said as he yanked Raze down onto the couch, “Now be nice or be quiet. Olivia’s turning 24 tomorrow, and we are not ruining her fun weekend of birthday celebration.”

“well-spoken my fiery friend!” Hiro jumped from the bag onto the couch and dramatically posed using a nearby pillow to prop his foot up, “we are all gathered here to celebrate one of the greatest days in history! the day my mama was brought into the world!”

Olivia blushed as Hiro’s theatrics, but I could tell she really liked it deep down.

“j-jojo…?” Idjit sleepily exited the bitty room.

“ah!” Hiro hopped down onto the floor and raced over to Idjit, “my cherry companion!”
Idjit looked like a serial killer was coming at him with a knife. Hiro pulled him into a tight embrace and lifted the smaller bitty off of the ground. Hiro spun excitedly with Idjit in his arms. Cyan walked out of the room. The instant he saw Hiro he tried to back track into the room.

“cyan!” Hiro dropped Idjit onto the ground to glomp my curly instead. Cyan groaned as Hiro lifted him into a hug as well, “are you not feeling well my friend!?”

“I have a slight headache.” Cyan lied as Hiro began to fret over him. One look told me this was going to be a long weekend for the poor baby. Idjit got up and hurriedly disappeared into a little hidey hole where he was hiding the card they worked on for Olivia, “It’s nice to see you Hiro.”

“i know it must be hard to go without me, so I commend you for not breaking down into tears at the mere sight of me.” Hiro nodded sympathetically.

“Oh trust me,” Cyan mumbled, “I almost did.”

“rest in peace.” Blake offered a prayer up for poor Cyan as he sat Harley down, “no hard feelings man, but i can’t exactly let you fight on my mom’s couch.”

I flinched. Waltzer did too, but Blake didn’t seem to catch his little slip.

“Aww…” Olivia nudged me with her shoulder, “Cute.”

“Haha.” I nudged her back. “Anyways, I need to get going. I’m going to pick some stuff up after my appointment, so I’ll be about an hour or so later getting back okay?”

“Yes thing.” Olivia sat down onto the couch next to Snuggle to observe Tinsel, “I’ll make sure they don’t kill each other.”

“Are you sure you can handle it?” My brow furrowed.

“I keep you and Nadia from killing each other most days.” Olivia reminded me before waving me away, “Now go. Shoo. I want to watch my bitty nephew in peace.”

“Well then.” I huffed turning to leave the house, “Bye babies.”

There was a gentle chorus of good-byes as I left the apartment.

It felt odd to walk down the street without all of my bitties in tow. In fact, it felt odd to feel sunshine. Ever since I dealt with basal cell carcinoma, I limited my amount of time in the sun, but never to an unhealthy degree. A person had to get their vitamin D somehow. I tried to remember the last time I had gone outside and- not shockingly- it was before Tinsel had been born.

Guess taking care of a bitty baby is as time consuming as it is to take care of a human one. I mused as I walked towards my doctor’s clinic. I wasn’t going to complain though. I almost lost both Tinsel and Sunshine in one horrible day, so being a bit absorbed in Tinsel’s care didn’t bother me that much. My doctor more than likely wouldn’t like it though.

My time in the clinic went by smoothly. I tried to not cringe at every memory of waiting anxiously to learn if I had actually kicked my cancer to the curb or not. I tried to not curl up upon remembering most of the time there had always something else going on. Really, I wouldn’t have been surprised if it had seeped into my bones with the way my doctors acted. It had progressed to a dangerous level, and I was lucky to even be alive. Some people would’ve hated the nasty scarring my BCC left behind. To me, it was proof that I had managed to survive what could’ve been a lethal case of skin cancer. I shuddered when my doctor wasn’t looking, but I didn’t show any outward
signs of discomfort otherwise. The old goat was getting old, but his eyes were just as good as they always had been. The last thing I needed was him worrying about my mental health as well.

“Well, you’re all clear.” He happily announced, “Can I speak freely?”

“Of course doc.” Part of the reason I came to him was because of his honest, candid way of speaking. He never filled his patient’s ears with bullshit or false promises, yet he never seemed like an asshole.

“Most of the time you come in here looking like shit,” Okay, he didn’t seem like an asshole most of the time, “You’re looking great today though. Have you gotten a pet? A boyfriend perhaps?”

“No, no.” I shook my head, “Well…if you count bitties as pets I supposed I have some.”

“Oh bitties.” My doctor seemed to wither and scowl at the idea.

“Don’t like bitties doc?” My protective instinct flared.

“No.” He sighed, “My daughter has a grimby, and the damn thing is destroying our house room by room. He bites like crazy too.”

My doctor rolled up his sleeves to reveal burned bite-marks. I laughed before showing him my own “battle scars”.

“Edgies and grimbies aren’t for playing around.” I chuckled, “Just make sure to give him some love and strict discipline.”

“We’re working on it. The little bugger is starting to grow on me though.” He smiled fondly, “Anyways, I’m certain you’ve got other places to be, and I’ve got other patients to see. If you notice anything abnormal—”

“Run here like I’ve got Satan himself trailing me.”

The doctor got a laugh out of that one.

I left the clinic feeling a lot more relaxed. It was nice not having that little ball of tension beneath my gut whirling around. The damn thing was still there though, and I knew it would start back up again once the reassurance I was fine wore off. Being cancer free didn’t mean being worry free after all.

I refused to let it worry me too much though. It was a nice day, and my sister would be reminding me of how old I was by turning 24 the next day. My life was finally going right for once. I would enjoy it dammit.

The walk to the store where the fancy European jewelry box and Olivia’s other gift were was uneventful. It was what I liked to call “artist alley” because it was filled to the brim with painters, designers, poets, playwrights, and so on. It buzzed with the low excitement of creative minds melding together to create wonderful things. I liked coming to the alley from time to time just to kick back and be an artist. No last names mattered here. All that mattered was that your shit was good.

A few familiar faces waved at me with paint colored hands. Others scowled remembering the competitions I won that they lost. To avoid any confrontations, I quickly found the wood shop I needed and entered. It was a quaint little store filled with wood carvings from around the world. The whole place seemed to radiate this calm, wise vibe that made people believe that all of the works were genuine.
“Miss Newmore!” The old, balding woman behind the counter smiled at me with her remaining eight teeth, “come to pick up your items?”

“Yes ma’am.” I nodded at the woman. She was Mrs. Snyder, the owner and manager of the shop. She was a kind old woman with a scientist for a husband, “Have they been wrapped?”

“Why yes.” The woman smiled as she turned, “Let me go get them from the back.”

I had ordered a hand carved, hand painted jewelry box from some fancy sculptor Olivia had been obsessed with lately. I actually went to college with the guy before he moved back to France. All it took was a phone call and quick price negotiation that ended in an art trade. I thought the box too gaudy and frilly, but Olivia would probably love it. It was worth the large landscape piece that took me around three months to even get halfway done. The jewelry box had been neatly tucked into a cardboard box and wrapped up in pale pink wrapping paper. The other item was a painting I did myself inside a frame I decided to order from Spain. I thought the ornate cherry wood frame fit well with the image I had gone with. It was a colorful hand extending from a warm cloud sitting atop a simmering sunset to tug up a dark, black and white hand with faint scarring on the wrist snagged in thorns. I felt it to be a fitting metaphor for our relationship. It had been neatly placed into a long, slightly flat box and wrapped in light gray wrapping paper. Both packages had a nice bright blue, sheer bow taped on top.

“Thank you.” I smiled, “Olivia is going to be over joyed.”

She’d also be overjoyed to receive the money Granny had given me to give to her. I decided to wait until Olivia’s birthday to give it to her because that was how Granny had originally wanted it done. Either way, my little sister’s birthday was going to be an interesting one this year.

I was about to leave the store when the little bell above the door jingled.

“Mrs. Snyder, I’ve come to pick up- Miss Newmore?” I turned at the familiar voice. Velour had entered the shop. Instead of her usual scrubs, the squirrel monster wore denim shorts and crop top. It must’ve been her day off, “Hi!”

“Afternoon Velour.” I grinned and offered one arm up in a hug. Velour looked stunned before wrapping me in a bear hug, “Whatcha doing here?”

“Dr. Snyder is working alongside the Bitty Care Center in this city to learn more about bitties.” Velour paused as though she wondered just how much she could reveal, “He’s been studying their magic. Fresh, new eyes often reveal things older ones miss. I’m here to pick up some of his reports.”

“Ahhh.” I smiled, “Well, it’s good to see you.”

“It’s good to see you too! It lets me remind you to not miss Tinsel’s checkup in person!” Velour waggled one furred finger at me, “We have to make sure his magic is still stable.”

“Of course.” I nodded, “I wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

“Do you still have enough vitamins for all of them? We’re having a lot of bitties come in malnourished lately,” Velour then turned her attention to Mrs. Snyder, “Sorry, I get caught up in work. I just need Dr. Snyder’s reports.”

“Of course dearie.” Mrs. Snyder shuffled into the back to dig up the reports.

“I should have enough,” I struggled to remember how many vitamins I had left, “Though…
I think I might swing by and buy some more. Better to be safe than sorry. Can I walk you back to the CC?

“Sure!” Velour grinned. She looked at the presents and raised a brow.

“My little sister’s birthday is tomorrow. These are her gifts.” I explained, “I have her watching my bitties just to make sure she couldn’t put any pieces together about what I got her.”

“What did you get her?” Velour sounded curious.

“Some fancy jewelry box and a painting I did myself.” I explained tapping each gift respectively.

“You paint too?” Velour asked her eyes gleaming.

“Yup.” I nodded before frowning a little, “Not as fond of it as I am of sketching things. I always end up having to scrap the first three or so attempts out of frustration.”

“How much does it cost to get a painting done?” Velour asked, “The Bitty CC could really use some artwork.”

“I'll donate a few pieces.” I then swiftly prepared a rebuttal to the protest on Velour’s lips, “You guys have done a lot for us. It’s the least I can do.”

“Miss Newmore” Velour was cut off by Mrs. Snyder entering with the reports.

“Here you are.” She offered up a large envelope. I noticed there was a unique seal on it right underneath the seal of our local government.

“That’s a pretty important bundle of papers.” I raised a brow at Velour. Her tail twitched as she quickly tucked the documents away into a bag, “I’m not going to ask.”

“Thank you.” She sighed in relief, “It’s nothing personal…”

“I know. I know.” I turned to Mrs. Snyder, “Thank you.”

“It’s my pleasure dearie. Have a nice day you two.” Mrs. Snyder waved, “Come again.”

“I will! Have pleasant afternoon,” Velour smiled politely.

We exited the store, and I pulled out my phone to text Olivia. I needed to tell her that I would be walking Velour back to the Bitty CC. She was fine waiting a little bit longer. I also texted Nadia to say that I would arriving home to start the celebration soon.

Velour and I chatted about mundane topics on our way to her work place. I didn’t pry into the secretive research she seemed so scared to mention. I also didn’t have the heart to tell her about the threatening phone calls- which had persisted over the past few days. Every time it was from a new number- burner phones more than likely- and equally petty. They thought a few threats and low rumbling voices would terrifying me? I was Josephine Ophelia Arietta Newmore, and it took a lot more than a few nasty phone calls to make me tremble.

I dropped Velour off at the Bitty CC with some fanfare. The bitty techs all wanted me to wish Olivia a happy birthday for them. They were excited to hear that I would providing some paintings for the CC, and Karli even had a special request for the one that would hang in the lobby. I listened to their requests while mentally planning a theme to run with for the place. It was difficult
though.

The human volunteers working with the bitties distracted me slightly.

“I didn’t realize you guys had human volunteers.” I watched the various groups of humans work with smiles and laughter, “Things going that good?”

“Oh yes!” Karli’s rabbit ears twitched with glee as she smiled, “They’re so helpful! They help us take care of the adoptable bitties and file paperwork. It really speeds up our work day to have them around.”

“I’m glad to hear that.” I suddenly remembered the threatening phone calls. I leaned into whisper to Karli, “By the way, you guys don’t disclose bitty care information to just anybody do you?”

“No.” Karli’s brow furrowed, “Why?”

“Nothing big. Someone just knew about Snuggle’s healing abilities which I’ve been trying to keep under wraps.”

“We haven’t told a soul Miss Newmore. That would be an invasion of Snuggle’s privacy.” Karli said firmly, “If you find out where this person got the information from, please contact us. We take patient privacy very seriously here.”


“Of course!” Karli waved as I left the Bitty CC, “Have pleasant day Miss Newmore!”

“You too!” I smiled back at her before breaking out into a run.

More than a few people stared at me as I bolted on by. I almost stumbled in my flip flops once or twice, but I had gotten good in keeping my balance in them over the years. Excitement filled me as I entered my apartment complex. It was my little sister’s birthday tomorrow, and I’d make damn sure she’d have a nice if small celebration tomorrow before Clara and Daniel drag her off to some fancy party she’d hate.

My good mood died down a little upon entering the hallway my apartment was on.

Nadia hovered outside of my apartment door with a silent glower on her face. Her scowl furthered once she saw me exit the elevator. Cesar sat on her arms with a disinterested look on his face. He followed his human’s gaze and glared at me as well.

“Hello,” I tried my best to sound less like I wanted to punch her in the face.

“You said you wouldn’t take long,” Nadia checked her watch, “That was twenty minutes ago.”

“I got busy,” I shrugged, “Taking requests took more time than I expected it too.”

“You should have inform-“

“You literally live right there.” I gestured to her apartment door with one hand, “You easily could’ve just waited in there until I showed up. You chose to stand here like a creeper.”

Nadia opened her mouth to argue further, but then she finally noticed the presents tucked
“Are those for her?” Nadia asked raising a brow.

“Yup.” I nodded shifting them into a more comfortable position under my arm. All the running had made my arm ache a little bit.

“And you hadn’t picked it up before now?” Nadia looked down at me scornfully.

“It wasn’t in yet. Having something hand carved takes time after all.” I dug out my keys, “Now quit being a bitch, or your ass will go sulk in your apartment alone.”

“How childish.” Nadia huffed.

I paid her no mind as I entered my apartment. Olivia brightened upon seeing me walk in. Her smile wavered before brightening even further upon seeing Nadia trail behind me. My bitties looked worn out from dealing with Hiro, but I saw no blood or dust on the floor to indicate any fighting.

“Hey Livvy. Guess what garbage I found sitting around outside?” I said cheerfully, “I think this thing was our sister at some point…”

“YOU ARE CHILDISH.” Cesar growled.

“And she’s a bitch.” I grinned, “Now. Let’s get this party started.”

I sat the presents on the coffee table before going into the kitchen to dig out the birthday cake Sunshine and Blake had made the night before. It had come out nice and fluffy. Cyan and Waltzer had been the once to ice and decorate it. Maternal pride filled my chest at the slightly messy masterpiece. It wasn’t some generic store bought cake my parents would invest in. It had a lot of love put into it.

“What do you guys want to drink?” I called out before grabbing three human cups from the cabinet and eleven bitty cups. I had fourteen different people give me different answers, but I figured it out eventually. I came back into the living room with cake and drinks in tow. I had even put candles on the cake- they were still unlit. I also balanced plastic plates and cutlery on my elbow.

“I thought we were too old for birthday parties?” Nadia scowled from where she sat on the floor by the couch. Olivia held tiny little Tinsel in her hands as Hiro played with him. Harley dozed on the pillow next to his human, and my bitties were sitting around chatting with each other. Idjit appeared from the hidey hole with a fancy looking birthday card in tow.

“We’re too old for birthday parties.” I clarified, “Livvy here still has six more years before she gets that old.”

“We aren’t old.” Nadia protested as she moved the presents over to give me a place to set the cake down.

“Nadia, your hair is two shades to dark to be your natural hair color. I’m almost willing to be money you’re dying it.” I grinned as she blushed faintly. Cesar scowled.

“AT LEAST SHE BOTHERS TO MAINTAIN HER APPEARANCE.” Cesar snorted and tilted his head away. The crack in his skull had healed some after eating some monster candy, “IT BEATS HER LOOKING LIKE SHE DOESN’T CARE.”
"Damn, you’re a little shit." I resisted the urge to flick the injured bitty, “Guess you two fit perfectly together. Now, let’s drop this. It’s Livvy’s celebration.”

“My birthday isn’t until tomorrow though.” Olivia laughed.

“I know, but knowing our parents, they’ll summon you early for their little party.” I smiled as I pulled out a match box to start lighting the candles. Then I frowned as the damn matches didn’t seem to want to catch flame, “I want to make sure you get your mini party no matter what.”

That and we were going swimming in the morning tomorrow. My apartment complex had an indoor pool on the floor beneath the pent house. Below that was where the maids, janitors, and other workers stayed overnight if they had too. I managed to grab three hours of free time in the pool between 9 and 12. Then Olivia would have to leave to get ready. Then she’d have to drive for three hours to the pointlessly fancy banquet.

“I’ve got it Josephine.” Sunshine chuckled as he raised a hand. The candles burst to life.

“THANK YOU!” I nearly cried in relief, “Now. Time to kill all of your eardrums!”

I broke into Happy Birthday. I was way off key and sounded like a bird with strep throat. Olivia laughed though. Nadia reluctantly sang along at a much lower volume. Olivia handed Tinsel over to Waltzer before leaning over to blow out her candles.

“Yay!” I grinned before plopping down on the ground in front of the coffee table, “Now, open your presents while I serve.”

Olivia nodded and moved to reach for one of her presents when she noticed Idjit struggling to get the card up onto the table.

“Awww…Is that for me?” Olivia asked. Idjit blushed and nodded before holding it up to her. Olivia opened the little card and smiled brightly, “This is so sweet.” She smiled at each of my bitties, “Thank you so much! I’ll have to frame this.”

Idjit quickly scampered away mumbling something about cleaning up. The rest of my bitties- except for Raze who had taken Tinsel away from Waltzer- all blushed happily as they ate their portions of cake.

Olivia loved the jewelry box. She didn’t stop gushing over it for about ten minutes. I finally managed to get her focus off of the damn thing to open up the envelope containing her portion of Granny’s money- in the form of debit cards.

“Debit cards?” Olivia cocked her head confused.

“Your portion of the money Granny wanted to give to us this year. It should be more than enough for you to open up that restaurant you want.” I blinked for a moment, “Blake, go find the portion that’s supposed to go to Nadia’s charity.”

My dependable right hand man saluted me before teleporting off to find Nadia’s portion.

“Why didn’t she give it us directly?” Nadia scowled tapping her fingers on the table. She hadn’t touched her piece of cake yet.

“She didn’t trust our parents enough.” I shrugged before leveling a hard look at Olivia, “That money is yours. They’ll regret even trying to take it from you. Understand?”
“Yes.” Olivia’s eyes had watered slightly, “I can open my restaurant…”

“Hope you’ve got it all planned out.” I winked, “Now eat some cake before you start crying and kill my ray.”

Olivia nodded and took a bite of the cake. Her eyes widened.

“This is good!”

“Sunshine and Blake made it.” I nodded to my bashful little bitty, “Waltzer and Cyan decorated it though.”

“You guys are too much.” Olivia laughed.

“cyan!” Hiro bounced onto my poor curly, “what were the craft items you used to make this cake look so spectacular!? the Marvelous Baby Blue Hiro must know!”

Cyan sighed before telling Hiro about the process of decorating the cake. Blake teleported back into the living room carrying the envelope above his head.

“found it!” Blake handed the envelope to Nadia. She stared at it silently, “this is where you usually say thanks.”

“Thank you for retrieving the envelope.” Nadia said briskly as she tucked the money away.

“close enough, but i meant to ari.” Blake rolled his eyes before heading over to sit next to Tinsel.

“Final present.” I nudged the painting towards Olivia. She quit scarfing down the cake to open it.

The entire apartment was silent as she stared at the painting. I felt sweat collect on the back of my neck. Did she not like it? Was it too ugly or something? Olivia sniffled slightly. She rubbed her face with the back of her hand before holding the painting close.

“You painted this?” She asked weakly.

“Yup.” I nodded, “Do…do you like it?”

“I love it!” Olivia threw herself over the coffee table and landing on top of me. Her foot got in the rest of the cake, but I found the whole thing too funny to get annoyed, “Sissssssyyyy!”

I laughed and returned her tight embrace.

I opened my eyes and saw Nadia avoid looking at us. I was going to have to burn this hoodie afterwards, but…..

“Don’t want to join in on the group hug Nadia?” I offered an arm. Nadia stared at us for a few minutes before briefly hugging us.

It felt weird.

I was used to Granny smothering me. I was used to Leo’s warm embrace. I was used to Olivia’s clingy barnacle arms. I wasn’t used to Nadia’s thin arms wrapping around me. For a person who seemed so strong…. 
Her arms were so frail.

“Ookay. Jojo is getting crushed beneath the bosoms.” I poked the two of them, “Get off.”

“I love you!” Olivia rubbed her face again further ruining her make up.

“I love you too Livvy. Now get your foot out of the cake.” I sighed.

My living room was a mess after Olivia’s little jump. My bitties and I would have our work cut out for us when cleaning duty came by. Still, seeing Olivia happily chatting away with Nadia, my bitties, her own bitties, or even cranky Cesar made it all worth it in the end.

“So Tinsel was a miracle child?” Olivia asked. She had wiped her face clean of make up after she realized just how bad it had smeared, “Wow.”

Sunshine was holding Tinsel in his arms carefully. Hiro, Harley, and Blake were all standing beside him watching little Tinsel wriggle around in his papa’s arms. The baby bitty giggled and fell into a broken string of “gee-juh” until I tapped his little nose with the tip of my finger.

“Yeah.” I really didn’t want to recall the painful memories of wondering whether or not Sunshine would even live to see the next few hours, “Sunshine almost didn’t make it either.”

I sat back down. Cesar was on the floor between me and Nadia observing everything. He wasn’t much of a talker. Some part of me expected him to be pushier. Idjit was dragging his pair of scissors towards me.

“jojo…” Idjit looked up at me, “i don’t remember-“

“IF HE WAS SO WEAK,” Cesar grumbled, “THEN WHY DID YOU EVEN BOTHER KEEPING HIM ALIVE? WHAT A WASTE OF AIR. ALMOST BEING KILLED BY HIS OWN OFFSPRING.”

“whatcha say ya-“ Raze, who had been snoozing on the coffee table, stood up tall, but he never got the chance to finish his sentence. A pair of scissors hung near Cesar’s face where one of the blades had caused a small cut. Only Waltzer’s blue magic had kept the open maw of the scissors from ripping Cesar’s head off.

“hm?” Hiro turned to look at what was going on, but Harley’s hand slapped down on his head and kept him angled towards Tinsel.

“Hey bro, I think he really likes those star eyes of yours.” Harley said weakly staring at my sniffling, angry cherry in horror. Blake stood behind Hiro prevent the innocent cinnamon roll from catching a glimpse behind him as Sunshine quickly began to distract Hiro.

“holy shit.” Waltzer pulled the scissors back and tossed them to the side.

Idjit was crying in earnest.

“s-sunny….sunny…sunny almost died you asshole!” Idjit’s magic wrapped around one of the bitty sized cups. It clinked against Cesar’s chest before Idjit began to cry too much to see. Cyan quickly wrapped Idjit up in his arms and began to comfort the distressed cherry.

“uh…” Raze looked between Idjit and Cesar in confusion, “good job kid.”

With that the quieted Edgy just stood behind his mate.
Waltzer whistled before shaking his head.  

“you almost lost your head in more ways than one buddy.” Waltzer laughed before grabbing Snuggle and teleporting the two down, “let’s get the scratch fixed yeah?”

Snuggle pressed his hand against Cesar’s face and began to heal him. Cesar just stood silently trying to process that a small cherry almost took his head off with a pair of crafting scissors.

Nadia looked at me like my kid had just punched hers.

“I swear he’s a good bitty.” I said weakly. I didn’t know if I wanted to laugh or panic, “He’s never been that angry before.”

“Honestly.” Nadia huffed picking Cesar up after Snuggle finished healing him, “Of course your bitties would all be violent.”

I wanted to retort, but Hiro had finally grown bored of watching Tinsel. He excitedly bounced down to where Cyan was still comforting Idjit.

“what is this? one of my brave companions is distressed!?” Hiro stood up straight, “oh please kind friend! tell me what ails you so!”

Olivia still looked like she wanted to laugh.

“He’s never been that…” Olivia tried her best to find the right word, “…protective before has he?”

“Nope.” I shook my head, “I think two certain bitties scuffling so much might’ve made him a little more open to defend himself though.”

I glowered at Waltzer and Raze.

“wha’? he starts it.” Raze puffed up.

“only because you’re so stupid.” Waltzer forced a fake smile.

_Luckily_, nothing else dramatic happened that evening. We all passed out in the living room with the lights on, and I woke up with Olivia’s butt in my face around 8:30. We went swimming. Blake and Hiro really seemed to enjoy swimming more than the other bitties, and Sunshine obviously sat on one of the lounge chairs with Tinsel watching everyone try their best to drown each other.

…

…

Okay he watched me try my best to drown Nadia. I won’t lie. She tried her best to off me too though! So I called it even. We were still _ways_ away from becoming ‘sisters before misters’, but for a few hours Olivia could pretend we all were. That was what mattered in the end.

Olivia really didn’t want to leave when her time to go home came around. She pouted the whole way down before snuggling Nadia and I into tight hugs.

“I love you both _so_ much.” Olivia squeezed us harder, “Thank you.”

“Anything for you Livvy.” I ruffled her hair, “Love ya too baby boo.”
“I love you as well.” Nadia flushed upon seeing how many people were staring at us in the lobby. Cesar’s low growls turned most of their attention elsewhere upon seeing his human’s discomfort, “Now please let go.”

Hiro waved enthusiastically good-bye as Harley offered us a polite salute. Olivia left after blowing us a final kiss.

“Well…that was hectic.” I rolled my shoulders to loosen them up, “She had a good time though.”

“That was…pleasant.” Nadia- the poise and perfect businesswoman- shuffled on her feet like an unhappy child, “You two do such things often?”

“When we both have the time.” I shrugged, “I don’t get to see her as much as I used to, so we meet up when we can.”

“I see.” Nadia crossed her arms as we entered the elevator, “It’s little wonder you don’t need Mother or Father in your life. I don’t think I’ve ever seen them make a room feel warmer.”

“More like they make it feel colder,” I agreed, “Olivia’s one of the few things I’ve got in the world. I’ve learned to cherish her accordingly.”

There was silence as the elevator crawled up the building.

“You had your cancer screening yesterday right?” Nadia asked after a few heartbeats.

“Yup.”

“And?”

“All clear.” I paused, “Not that you really care. You never bothered to visit me in the hospital.”

“You were two states away,” Nadia scowled, “And-unlike you- I didn’t graduate early. My schedule was packed.”

“Phone call would’ve been nice.” I looked away from her, “It wasn’t exactly pleasant to sit in a white room for four months alone wondering if I was going to live or die within the next few weeks.”

“You had Leo.” Nadia protested.

“Yeah. I did,” I nodded, “Which is why he’s more of a brother to me than you are a sister.”

Nadia flinched as the elevator dinged at our arrival.

“You just always find reasons to hate me don’t you?” Nadia sighed weakly. Her hand blindly reached up for Cesar. She pulled him to her chest as a form of comfort.

“Don’t have to find something sitting on your front door,” I pulled my keys out, “Besides, you always say I’m being childish. I think death kind of takes away that kind of innocence. Anyways, how long are you going to stay here?”

“I…I think I’m going to divorce Edgar.”

I paused and looked back at Nadia as she got her keys out as well.
“Guess that means you’ll be staying a while then?” I cocked my head.

“Yes.” Nadia’s hands trembled, “If he doesn’t kill me first.”

“Just scream if he shows up.” That fire in my belly kicked up, “I’ll pummel his ass.”

“Even though you can’t stand me?”

“I hate abusers no matter who the victims are.”

Nadia fell silent, and I turned my attention back to my door.

“Could I have your assistance in the months to come? I’ve never spent much time with children.” Nadia opened her door.

“What?” I blinked. Nadia hesitated before closing the door.

“The reason he hit me was because he thinks the child I’m carrying isn’t his.” Nadia shrugged a delicate shoulder, “I’ll be by myself when the baby comes however, and it’ll most certainly make the divorce messier.”

My jaw seemed to have taken residence in hell while my brain struggled to process everything.

“Sure.” The brittleness of my voice caught me off guard, “Sure.”

Nadia closed her door.

“Dammit.” I grumbled entering my own apartment, “Always has to be so dramatic and shadowy doesn’t she? Always has to be-“

“jojo..?” Idjit tugged on my toe to get my attention.

“Idjit.” I sighed in relief bending down to scoop him up. I groaned as I cradled him close and closed the door, “Uuuggghh.”

The rest of my bitties popped up and began to wonder what was going on. I didn’t have heart to really explain what the hell was going on. Hell, I don’t think I even had the mental capacity to do so.

Whhhhhhhhhhhhhyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy mmmmmeeeee?
“sooo…your crazy ex got his wife pregnant.” Waltzer mused over a mug of coffee, “only he thinks Nadia’s been unfaithful, so he snapped.”

“Yup.” I groaned as I continued to work on something to keep myself distracted.

“What are we going to do?” Waltzer asked.

I just groaned. I didn’t know. Honestly, I was still trying to wrap my head around the fact that Nadia was pregnant in the first place.

“ophie.” Waltzer walked over to my elbow and rested a hand on my arm, “talk to me.”

“I don’t know.” I sighed. Waltzer watched as I saved my work and cradled my head in my hands, “Right now, we just need to finalize their divorce. We can worry about the rest after that.”

Waltzer made a sympathetic noise and nuzzled his head against my arm.

“I’m sorry.” He said.

“It’s not your fault. I’m just really fucking unlucky.” I pressed a kiss to his head, “Why the hell she chose to tell me this I’ll never know.”

“maybe it’s because she knows you’ll cave if a kid is involved?” Waltzer offered.

“Hmmmm….That has some merit.” I let out a weary sigh before pulling out my cell phone, “Speaking of the divorce….”

Tyrone Jones and I had a very…amusing story. When he and his partner were looking for someone to make a website and logo, he was recommended by his cousin in another city to seek me out. The problem was she gave him the wrong name. He ended up going to an auto shop which directed him to a pediatrician which directed him to a butcher’s shop which directed him to a local café. I overheard him talking about “some graphic designer named Julie Morespore or something that designed the logo of the strip club his cousin worked at called Mystic Midnight”. I remembered making Mystic Midnight’s logo, so I tapped the exasperated black man on the shoulder and introduced myself. He looked ready to cry in relief. The smart, witty defense lawyer quickly fell in love with my work, and even requested a couple of sketches and paintings to hang up in his office. He was also the guy I went to whenever I needed legal advice.

“Jones and Burner.” Tyrone sounded distracted.

“Got some time Ty?” I asked.
“Hey Etta,” Tyrone’s voice was more focused, “What kind of lawyer do I need to get in contact with?”

He knew me so well.

We rarely ever called each other. Most of our communication was random texts throughout the day. Me teasing him about his love of table tennis. Him trying to set me up on blind dates. The only time we ever really called was when we needed something, or we wanted to meet up for lunch.

“Divorce lawyer.” I rubbed my temple, “One that can get sole custody.”

“Huh?” Tyrone dropped something in his shock.

“Nadia is divorcing Edgar, but she’s pregnant. I don’t want that bastard having any right to see his kid considering the fact he hit his wife.” I leaned back into my chair, “Know anyone who can do that?”

“Yup. Compiling a list.” I could hear Tyrone clicking away, “I thought you couldn’t stand your sister.”

“I still can’t.” I admitted, “But we’re…somewhat…kind of….working on it?”

“I see. I just e-mailed you the list.” Tyrone paused, “One second. Yes Burner?”

Tyrone briefly spoke with his partner while I pulled up the e-mail. There was a list of lawyers, contact information, and cases won/cases lost. It would be useful.

“I’m back.” Tyrone groaned, “Our latest case was just crazy.”

“That bad?”

“Yeah. Some creeps were running some type of bitty arena mixed with a bitty brothel. It was vile.” I could imagine the look of disgust on his face. Tyrone hated abuse just as much as I did, “At first we couldn’t do anything, but the Supreme Court technically ruled that bitties were at least property for now. These freaks were running around kidnapping bitties which counted as theft, so we’ve got them behind bars for a little bit.”

Creeps who ran a bitty area mixed with a bitty brothel. My skin crawled.

“They might’ve also threatened me.” I commented.


I briefly explained the odd phone calls. They usually came around 8 or so at night, and always had a new number. The voices always varied too. Sometimes the voice would be a low, threatening man. Others it would a sweet female voice that quickly became similar to the voice of a banshee. They always wanted the same thing: Raze, Snuggle, Sunshine, and Tinsel. I always said the same thing. “Fuck off.”

“Why haven’t you reported this?” Tyrone snapped at me. I heard him furiously typing something, “What if they came through on their threats?”

“Then I’d be killed.” I shrugged.

Waltzer scowled at me before swatting my arm with a pen.
“Etta.” Tyrone groaned, “Let me look into this okay? Stay safe and keep your head down.”

“Sure. Whatever floats your boat.” I smiled despite the fact he wasn’t here.

“I hate you so much right now.” Tyrone grumbled.

“Suuurrrreee.” I laughed, “Bye Ty.”

I hung up after I realized Tyrone was too busy being a worry wart to hang up himself. Leo was still in the dark about it all because I knew he’d living on my couch if he found out. He also was still working on his relationship with Annie and her son. I didn’t see the point in worrying him without reason.

“why didn’t you tell some of us?” Waltzer’s eyes were black voids, “don’t you trust us?”

“Of course I trust you Waltzer.” I picked him up despite his angry scowl, “I just didn’t want you guys to worry about it.”

“you could’ve gotten hurt.” Waltzer tugged on my hair sharply, “or they could’ve hurt one of the others. you need to tell us stuff like this.”

“Sorry hon.” I nuzzled my face against his. He nipped at my cheek annoyed, “You’ve been spending too much time around Raze.”

“you’ve been hiding too much.” Waltzer huffed.

“Josephine?” Sunshine knocked on the door. Tinsel had grown a lot in the week that had passed since Olivia’s birthday. He could now ride on Sunshine’s hip easily, so he sat gnawing on his fist, “Tinsel’s been demanding to see you.”

“GJ.” Tinsel observed quietly while reaching for me, “GJ.”

“Hey there little man.” I laughed and picked both him and Sunshine up, “How’s it going squirt?”

“GJ. Wally.” Tinsel tugged on Waltzer’s face affectionately before nipping at my fingers playfully.

“What are the others doing?” I asked Sunshine.

“The others are making dinner…. Raze is sleeping in the fridge again.” Sunshine sighed, “He’s not happy about being kept in the apartment.”

“Yeah. Had to do it though,” The last thing I needed was for him to leave and get grabbed by those assholes.

“GJ.” Tinsel yanked hard on my hair and put some into his mouth.

“Hi.” I sighed rubbing the sore spot of my scalp, “How can you be so quiet, yet so destructive at the same time?”

“he’s the kid of raze and sunshine.” Waltzer looked up at me with his brow raised, “what did you expect?”

“something that was a little more violent or a little more peaceful.” I explained as Tinsel continued to accidentally tug on my hair while he played with it, “this gray area mixture is hard to get
“We should start teaching him to not do that as much.” Sunshine removed my hair from Tinsel’s grasp. The baby whined, “No Tinsel. You’re hurting Josephine.”

Don’t get me started on following fiasco.

Tinsel was a quiet, peaceful kid until he wanted something. Then his daddy’s side of the family popped out. I had an angry hybrid bitty biting angrily on my finger as his eye pulsed with angry red light. He huffed and puffed, but Sunshine just smiled and dealt with it.

“sunny’s a beast tamer.” Waltzer handed me a couple of band aids with an amused expression on his face.

“Oh hell yeah.” I nodded in agreement, “Here Sunshine. I need to send this list of divorce lawyers to Nadia.”

I handed Tinsel back to his papa. I quickly pulled up Nadia’s work e-mail and forwarded the message. Her business with Edgar was none of my business as long as he kept a distance. I’d pummel him the instant he stepped within striking distance of my twin. I never played games with abusers.

“Nadia will finally be getting rid of Edgar?” Sunshine cocked his head.

“Yup.” I nodded.

“took her long enough.” Sunshine sighed while trying to calm down Tinsel.

I couldn’t agree more.

Despite the raw pain and anger between us, Nadia was still my twin. I’d beaten up guys for hurting Olivia on more than one occasion, and I’d forced Olivia to break up with more than one poor influence. If could offer Olivia that, I could offer something similar to Nadia.

Speaking of Olivia, my dear little sister had begun investing in her restaurant. Right now things were still on the drawing board, but she had her space. Hell, she even had a few employees ready to go. She was finally free of our parent’s chains. She could do as she pleased without them trying to threaten her into obeying them. It was a lovely sight.

“Besides Tinsel wanting to see you.” Sunshine said as he rocked Tinsel to sleep, “Blake said it’s time for dinner, and if you don’t leave your office he’ll set all of your paperwork on fire.”

“The little shit.” I laughed. He knew just where to aim his threats, “Well, I need my paperwork to do my job.”

I saved my work and carried my bitties out into the living room. I quickly entered the kitchen and saw Blake stirring a pot. Cyan was dragging out plates with Idjit and Snuggle’s help.

“Evening my little chefs.” I smiled.

“You go back into that office, and I will punch a hole through your computer monitor.” Blake warned not looking up from the pot.

“I won’t promise.” I raised my hand, “Cross my heart.”

Blake seemed pleased with that. Really he fretted so much. Some part of me thought he
missed taking care of Tony. It would make sense.

We all ate dinner together after I dragged Raze out of the fridge. We even sat down and watched a movie together. Raze even stayed at Sunshine’s request. We spent the next few hours curled in a large dog pile on the couch. The movie Cyan picked wasn’t exactly well received if the various bits of popcorn and candy pooled around the TV screen were anything to go by. Cyan pouted in a corner of the living room unhappily while Idjit tried to comfort him.

“that was a terrible movie.” Blake laughed from where he was checking the old crack in Snuggle’s leg. We needed to make sure it didn’t break again, “how did they even manage to beat the bad guy in the end?”

“the power of friendship apparently.” Waltzer chuckled, “jeez.”

“why the hell did ya make me watch that?” Raze grumbled into Sunshine’s shoulder.

“Honestly,” Sunshine shifted a sleeping Tinsel into a more comfortable position, “It wasn’t that bad you big babies.”

“did we watch the same movie sunny?” Blake asked.

Their discussion quickly turned into them taking apart every little part of the movie they hadn’t liked and discussing why they didn’t like it. In the months they’d lived with me, they’d all turned into bitty film critics.

I was cleaning up our mess and washing dishes in the kitchen when our phone rang. Yes, I called it our phone. At this point all of my bitties knew how to use my phone, and they all argued over who could use it. It was funny seeing them act like angry preteens being forced to use the same landline. I answered my phone without much thought. I knew the chances were high that it would be my would be intimidators.

“Hello.” I said in French, “Good evening. Why are you calling me so late?”

“Because this was the only free time I managed to get.”

I almost dropped my phone when I realized it was Granny- the woman taught me French in the first place- on the other side of the phone.

“I want you to come to my house for Thanksgiving this year.” Granny said simply.
My heart dropped to the floor.

Thanksgivings spent alone were what I was used to. I wasn’t selfish enough to crash someone else’s celebration or beg my friends to stay with me. Watching Thanksgiving specials while eating whatever I had on hand was how they went most years. There was none of that warm family feeling or that gentle enthusiasm. I had grown used to it over the years.

“Are you sure that’s wise?” I asked pained, “I mean…”

“You will attend.” Granny said firmly, “I will not have another Thanksgiving without one of my granddaughters there.”

“Things aren’t exactly great between me and my parents right now.” I reminded her.

“They aren’t great between me and them either, but I’m still showing up.” Granny scoffed, “I also want to see more of my bitty grandbabies.”

“Granny.” I whined, “I…I don’t wanna…”

“You’re a thirty year old woman Joey.” Granny scolded me, “You’re also part Arietta, and no Arietta woman will bow down to the wishes of a pair of fools.”

“But-“

“No buts.” Granny said finally, “You’re a member of this family too Joey. You aren’t some stranger.”

“I think my parent’s would argue that point.” I grumbled.

“They can argue until their blue in the face. You are my granddaughter. I will see you, and we will celebrate Thanksgiving together.”

“Okay.” I relented.

“Wonderful.” Granny sounded relieved, “I can’t wait to see you again Joey.”

“Yeah, yeah ya old bag.” I grunted while running a hand through my hair, “I’m going to regret this. I hate you.”

“No you don’t.” Granny laughed, “You wouldn’t come if you did.”

“Hmph.”

“I love you Joey.”

I waited a few seconds before speaking.

“I love you too Granny.” I sighed, “Even when you make me want to rip my hair out.”

“I have to go now darling, but I will see you at my house on Thanksgiving even if I have to drag you there myself.” Granny warned.

“I’ll be there. No dragging necessary.” I assured her before hanging up.

“was that them?”
I yelped and dropped my phone. Waltzer caught it with his magic. He pulled it open and checked my call list. He sighed in relief upon seeing it was just Granny.

“what did granny want?” He asked handing me the phone back.

“Well…” I hesitated.

tell me.” Waltzer warned, “or i’ll crush your computers.”

“We’re going to Granny’s for Thanksgiving.” The words rushed from my mouth.

“annndd…?”

“My parents will be there.” I added exasperatedly.

“oh shit.”

“Ugh…” I sat down on the kitchen floor, “Dammit all.”

Waltzer walked over and sat on my lap. He played with one of my hands while I tried to collect my thoughts.

“Well, nothing I can do about it.” I said, “Just going to have to deal.”

At least I didn’t have to deal with it alone.
Progression? (No)

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing ('cept Tinsel)

...That moment where you start to ship two characters without meaning too....DAMMIT....welp...I know what's going into the addendum eventually.

“Tinsel.” Velour scolded the little bitty as he gnawed on her thermometer, “I need to make sure your temperature is where it should be.”

Sunshine watched with an amused expression as a thoughtful Tinsel experimentally chewed on just about every medical instrument she brought his way. Raze just scowled at Velour as she continued her examination. To this day, he never really trusted the Bitty CC with Tinsel or Sunshine. I think almost losing both of them in here left a pretty big dent in his faith in them.

“you should see him at home.” Blake chuckled, “he’s even shocked himself by chewing on electrical cords.”

“didn’t really show any signs of discomfort though,” Waltzer added, “he just kept chewing with his hair straight up.”

“it’s not like ‘e can burn ‘imself.” Raze grumbled.

“Luckily,” Cyan scowled at Raze, “Considering you let him run around as he pleases.”

“he needs to wander round some,” Raze protested, “try to get ‘is leg to hobble less.”

“Idjit, Waltzer, and I always have to hunt him down.” Cyan crossed his arm, “After you go to mope in the fridge of course.”

“The fridge?” Velour raised a brow.

“You really don’t want to know.” I sighed. Raze liked the fridge because it was small and cool. Why he liked to sleep in it? I had no fucking clue.

This was our second visit this month to the Bitty CC. Tinsel needed constant examinations. It was a bit costly, but making sure Tinsel was okay was my top priority. He needed to be in good health if I was going to bring him up with me to Granny's for Thanksgiving.

“Well,” Velour pried her tools away from the fussy bitty toddler, “He’s completely healthy-as healthy as he can be at least. His magic does have a tendency to expand more than it should though.”

“he’s already able to make snuggle float.” Blake piped up, “he held him in the air for fifty-three seconds before he had to put him down.”

“He’s got a lot of his father’s magical talent.” Pride filled Sunshine’s voice.
“With Sunshine’s control thankfully.” Cyan added. Raze growled, but Waltzer simply stepped between the aggravated edgy and the confident curly.

“I’m glad to see that you guys are helping him learn,” Velour patted Snuggle on the head. The meek looked up at her confused. He had been drawing something during the examination, so he had no clue what was going on, “Just make sure he doesn’t put too much pressure on his bad leg while he learns to walk.”

gotcha.” Waltzer said. Idjit also nodded.

“Miss Velour?” A human woman poked her head in. She had pretty lavender eyes. I felt my hand twitch. Well, I knew what I was drawing when I got home, “We have an emergency case in R4.”

“Oh dust me,” Velour cursed. She gave the volunteer a pleading look, “Can you wrap this up for me?”

“Yes ma’am!” The human beamed. Then she stumbled slightly. A radiant blush spread across her face as she mumbled apologies.

“Sorry Miss Newmore,” Velour sighed.

“It’s fine. Go save a bitty’s life.” I shooed Velour out of the room.

“Oh wow.” The human stared at Tinsel in awe, “He’s so cute!”

“I know right?” I grinned poking Sunshine in the back, “He gets most of his good looks from this one.”

“what’s tha’ supposed to mean?” Raze’s teeth almost sank into my hand.

“that you can break mirrors with that mug dude,” Blake grinned before side stepping Raze’s right hook.

“can’t fault the guy for speaking the truth. maybe you should sit down and reflect some.” Waltzer ducked when Raze tossed a pen over his head.

“Oh for the love of…” Cyan sighed moving Idjit out of the way as the other bitties continued their little scuffle.

Sunshine just shook his head and gathered Tinsel up in his arms.

“Let’s see…”The human paused. She blushed slightly before looking up at me, “I’m sorry. I’m new.”

“It’s fine.” I waved it off, “I’m in no rush.”

I really wasn’t. I had to speak with Nadia and Tyrone about filing her divorce, and I really didn’t want to go. I’d have her back when our parents roared their outrage. That didn’t mean I wanted to be her best friend though. Hell, I didn’t even want to be her friend.

The process of leaving the Bitty CC was a bit longer as the human struggled to remember the exact process. I wasn’t going to bite her head off for being new however. We still got out in a timely manner. She was a bit ditzy, but her bubbly attitude made up for most of her failings.

“Have a good day Miss Newmore!” The bitty tech waved excitedly as I left the building.
“I will.” I waved back.

“s-she-e’s nice.” Idjit commented from inside my hood where he sat with Cyan as always. Waltzer worked some tangles out of my hair while I walked.

“She was.” I resisted the urge to nod in agreement. It was a good thing I had gotten used to Waltzer being on my head.

“i hope the bitty in room four is okay.” I looked at Blake from the corner of my eye. His gaze was unfocused as he thought, “snuggle…could’ve helped maybe.”

Snuggle sat with Blake on his lap, so he couldn’t see Blake’s mouth move. He could still tell his brother was upset though. He tugged on Blake’s beanie forcing the Blake to turn and smile at him. Snuggle’s mouth curled into a frown. He poked Blake’s cheek to let the smaller bitty know he wasn’t buying it.

‘I’m fine.’ Blake signed. Snuggle looked tempted to shove him off my shoulder.

“We’re meeting with Nadia right?” Sunshine asked. I turned my head to my other shoulder where he sat on Raze’s lap with Tinsel in his arms.

“Yup, and Tyrone.”

“i like tyrone.” Blake commented, “he’s pretty funny.”

“You met him once.” I raised a brow. I had taken them all to meet Tyrone when Leo, he and I went for lunch a week or so ago. It was just a routine hang out slightly made more interesting by Tyrone freaking out over the fact I had eight bitties.

“we text each other all the time.” Blake shrugs, “he texts waltzer too.”

“What?” I couldn’t glare at Waltzer, but I damn well tried.

“you’re the one who leaves her phone everywhere.” Waltzer tugged on my hair.

“Okay. We are buy a new phone for you guys to use.” I grumbled, “Jesus fucking Christ. Next one of you will be telling me you’re knitting partners with Granny or something.”

“..m…” Raze mumbled.

“What was that?” I asked.

“i am.” Raze said louder. I physically stopped moving to look at my edgy in horror, “what? who else made tinsel’s blankets bitch!? he chews through the damn things like they’re candy.”

“But how do you even show her what you done?” I blinked.

“He teleports.” Sunshine said.

My breath stopped for a few seconds. Raze was unknowingly putting himself at risk by wandering about on his own. The realization I could’ve lost him without even being able to defend him hurt like hell.

“What?” My voice had hardened. I felt Raze shift uncomfortably on my shoulder.

“You need to be honest Raze.” Sunshine chided him, “I just found out recently myself.”
“i teleport to ‘er house.” Raze grumbled, “from the fridge.”

“okay now you’re just lying.” Waltzer snorted, “there’s no way you can teleport to her house and back. bitty magic isn’t that strong.”

“normal bitty magic ain’t that strong dumbass. my magic is.” Raze spat, “it’s true takin’ others makes the whole process harder, but i can carry up to three other bitties there and back.”

“Raze.” I began to walk once more, “Don’t leave the house without me knowing.”

“ya never cared before!” He fumed.

“Because I didn’t have people trying to kidnap you before!” I hissed under my breath. That commented silenced everyone, “I didn’t want to tell you guys this way, but we’re being targeted. That’s why you’re on lock down.”

“They want to kidnap us?” Sunshine cradled Tinsel closer to his chest protectively. I could see the fear run across his face.

“Yes.” I sighed in defeat. Then, I stood up straighter, “I’m not going to just hand you over to them though. You’re my bitties dammit. I’ll defend you no matter what.”

“Please don’t put yourself at too much risk Miss Josie.” Cyan tugged on some of my loose hair that had spilled into the hood of my hoodie. What is it with these guys and tugging on my hair? I thought to myself, “We need you alive to protect us after all.”

“nailed it in one go cy.” Waltzer scooted down to look at my face, “which means you need to quit grumbling when tyrone goes on the defensive.”

“I swear.” I blew air across his face.

After that particular bombshell, our walk became a peaceful stroll lined with every day banter.

Primarily, we talked about how big Tinsel was getting. Hobbling around, Tinsel often got himself into more than a few precarious situations until someone showed up to pluck him out of them. He had inherited all of the abilities of his father. He’d teleported from the couch to floor once. He’d set my pillow on fire before, and his telekinesis was just getting stronger. His speech was delayed because of his sore ribs, but that didn’t stop him from letting his feelings known. If you pissed him off enough, he’d shriek the house down. If he was hungry, he’d chew on you until you gave him something. I preferred seeing his little red magic eye flare up with happiness at being played with. His education and upbringing were coming together nicely with everyone- including Raze- contributing to his every day routine.

Speaking of the little devil, he chose to bite my ear right as we entered the café. I had to bite back a yelp while Sunshine struggled to make the little flame baby let my ear go. Raze radiated this smug air for a little while until Waltzer almost swatted him off of my shoulder. Sunshine placed a Band-Aid on my ear- Cyan had taken to carrying some around- during his apologetic ramblings.

“Etta!” Tyrone waved me over towards the back of the café.

I grinned upon seeing my tall friend hunched uncomfortably in a tiny little pink booth. He looked sharp in his crisp black suit, bold blue tie, and polished dress shoes. Sadly, the mysterious appeal just looked awkward in the fluffy café setting. Biting back a snort, I sat down and helped my bitties get situated.
“ty!” Blake excitedly ran over to Tyrone. The two fist bumped, “did you see that game last night?”

“Wouldn’t have missed it for the world.” Tyrone laughed before growing bitter, “Still angry that Manchester one. Wilbur had it!”

“i know!” Blake crossed his arms, “that match had to be rigged.”

Snuggle sidled up next to his brother. He tried to keep up with Tyrone and Blake’s fast conversation about a table tennis match they hated, but he couldn’t read their lips fast enough. He turned to me and signed:

‘What has them so excited?’

“Geeky shit.” I sighed, ”Table tennis? Your brother’s latest obsession?”

Snuggled nodded understandingly.

“t-the g-ga-a-a-ame was int-t-erest-t-ting.” Idjit interjected quietly.

“Oh god. They got to you too?” I pressed a mournful kiss to his skull, “Poor baby.”

“It wasn’t too terrible.” Cyan protested, “I didn’t really understand the rules though.”

“What’s to understand?” Waltzer asked sitting down next to where Cyan stood, “you hit the ball a certain way. you earn points. you win.”

“There’s more to it than that Waltzer.” Cyan nudged his skull playfully, “You fell asleep halfway through.”

“uhh…no i didn’t?” Waltzer tried to lie.

“You were snoring in my lap for the last half of the game.” Cyan snorted.

“uhhh…did I?” Waltzer blushed bright blue while Cyan simply rolled his eyes and turned to speak with Snuggle about something.

I raised a brow and looked at Idjit. He blushed before holding his hands up in the form of a heart and nodding towards Cyan and Waltzer. My eyes widened in shock. I nodded towards them in confirmation. He nodded back frantically. All I could do was stare at Cyan and Waltzer and ponder their relationship for a few seconds. They were my two most emotionally stable bitties. They cared for everyone else- well Waltzer hated Raze, but I digress- while making sure I didn’t rot alone in the darkness of my office. They often went everywhere together with Idjit in tow- except for when Waltzer and I were speaking privately of course. Since they were some of my more reliable bitties, they often had to carry more of my burdens than the others. In the end, I decided it was adorable and laughed.

“Josephine?” Sunshine looked up at me concerned, “Why are you laughing?”

“shit,” Raze sat with Tinsel chewing on one of his hands, “she’s gone batty.”

“I haven’t.” I wiped a tear from my eye, “I haven’t.”

“Care to enlighten us then?” Tyrone asked turning his attention back to me.

“No.” I was halfway certain Waltzer would kill me if I did, “I won’t.”
“I can make you crack.” Tyrone wiggled his fingers threateningly, “I know where you’re ticklish.”

“Don’t make me regret taking that bullet for you.” I warned while instinctively protecting my sides. The old scar where a bullet intended for Tyrone hit me tugged slightly. That hadn’t be a pleasant experience, “It might make me not do it again.”

“You’ve been shot?” Nadia’s voice cut through any further banter.

I looked back at her. She outwardly looked alright- if a little disheveled. No new bruises marred her face, and she looked as though she had gotten some sleep. That was all good- especially if she was expecting. Cesar warily eyed Idjit as Nadia sat down and placed him on the table. My cherry didn’t even blink at his scrutiny.

“Careful now.” Blake warned with a teasing glint in his eye, “there are plenty of sharp things for idjit to finish what he started.”

Cesar growled in warning. Sharp bones appeared from the table top, but Blake just hopped upwards with ease. Idjit’s stance tightened some as he glared at Cesar from across the table. The larger bitty quieted quickly.

“Enough,” Nadia said, “We need to discuss the lawyer I chose.”

“Of course,” Tyrone nodded, “Nice to meet you Mrs. Newmore-Tate…Mrs. Newmore. I’m Jones, Tyrone Jones.”

“Quit with the James Bond impressions.” I flicked his hand.

After that, we discussed Nadia’s major aims. She wanted full custody of her child, and she wanted Edgar removed from her employment. Technically, she was the sole CEO of her company, but our parents controlled that chair. If the decided to see her divorce in an unfavorable light…

“I could lose everything.” Nadia said silently, “Everything I had been raised to control could be given to someone else. Everything I’ve worked hard to maintain could mean nothing.”

“I highly doubt that Mrs. Newmore.” Tyrone rolled his shoulders, “You’re a decent business woman with a recognizable name and list of victories. Even if you lose your CEO position, I’d be willing to be you’d get a new one within a few weeks.”

“Granny still needs an heir to her company remember?” I remembered Granny being upset that my parents had turned me so far away from the family business that I wouldn’t take over her company. I didn’t want the glitz and glam lifestyle Nadia and Olivia seemed to thrive in. An introverted artist like me belonged in an apartment chained to her office. She didn’t belong in a winter gala surrounded by serpents ready to strike.

“True,” Nadia looked slightly pale, “I’ve…never been without their support however. It’ll be…”

Nadia trailed off. Cesar touched her hand comfortingly.

“Rough,” I filled in for her, “Depressing. Brutal. Devastating. I’d be more sympathetic, but I’ve already lived through it. Listen, Olivia, Granny, and…I,” I almost had to force that last bit out, “Will support you. They can’t just throw you out into the cold.”

“No, but they can most certainly harm my prospects.” Nadia sighed before standing up. She
shook Tyrone’s hand, “Thank you for discussing this with me. All of my lawyers are in Edgar’s pocket, so having someone to rely on is a blessing.”

“No problem Mrs. Newmore. I promise you Daniella will get the job done.” Tyrone smiled his easy going, “relax and it’ll be okay” smile that worked on all of his clients. Nadia was no exception as she smiled back.

“I’ll be seeing you at Thanksgiving?” Nadia asked picking Cesar up.

“Yup.” I nodded reluctantly, “If I don’t throw myself from the rooftops first.”

“Don’t do that.” Nadia chided, “If you kill yourself, do it privately. It’ll make the scandal less viewable.”

“Thanks Nadia.” I glared at her. Nadia sniffed.

“Just stating the obvious.” She fixed her hair with one hand before looking down at me.

“Be glad you’re pregnant.” I growled.

Nadia left without another word. Oh we were far from being friends. One could have allies they despised after all.

“By the way Etta,” Tyrone checked his watch to make sure he had more time, “You’ll be coming to meet Annie with me on Friday right?”

“Yup. Olivia will watch my bitties and everything.” I nodded. I needed to be able to yell at the bitch if I didn’t like her, so my bitties needed to stay far, far away. They’d yet to actually see me blow my top. I preferred to keep it that way.

“Good, “ Tyrone sighed in relief, “I don’t know what we’re going to do if she’s…well…less than desirable for our mutual friend.”

“I vote to beat her ass.” I grumbled.

“Illegal.” Tyrone pointed out.

“Like you haven’t gotten me out assault charges before.” I waved him off.

“Barely.” Pride briefly flickered across his face, “They were rewarding cases though.”

“how many times has he had to save your ass?” Waltzer cocked his head.

“More times than she’d like to admit.” I jabbed at his hand with my fork, “I’ve gotta run Etta.”

“Bye Ty.” I waved as he left. Then I noticed it, “Of course they left me to pay the bill.”

This Thanksgiving was going to be…interesting. Meeting Annie was going to be a test of my patience. All I could hope was that my bitties could keep me sane in the end. Well, at least I had Waltzer's interesting love life to be interested in.
Fuck Annie

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except for Tinsel. He's mine) Full disclaimer in Ch.1

First of all: Thank you to everyone who's come this far! I swear there's more to this story after we finish the Newmore Family Fracture miniarc, so I can only hope you guys will keep reading long enough to get there.

Also, I originally was going to make Annie more sympathetic but...ehhh...fuck her.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I didn’t over dress. No, that would’ve been something Nadia would’ve done. I took great strides to make myself as normal looking as possible. Annie needed to see me as a female friend who wasn’t a threat to her relationship after all. I wore dark jeans, dark converse, and a clean, dark green hoodie. My hair behaved after a few minutes of crimping. Bare bones make-up covered up most of my old blemish scars.

I looked hard at myself in the mirror. A short woman with bags under her eyes looked back at me. No enthusiasm appeared on her face. I tried my best to pull up a smile, to ease the haunted look my face had. In the end, all of it crumbled into stoic sadness. I could make myself look like a pauper, but that wouldn’t change Annie’s opinion of me in the end.

Why are you so anxious Josephine? I resisted the urge to smack my face. You’re his best friend, and she’s some girl he’s been…living with…shit.

“Miss Josie?” Cyan poked his head into my bathroom. He fell silent upon seeing me.

“Cyan?” I turned and raised a brow, “What’s wrong baby?”

Cyan just blinked up at me.

“cy?” Waltzer peered around the curly, “is someth- whoa.”

Confusion had settled in at this point. I couldn’t figure out what was bothering them even after I looked around the bathroom for something shocking.

“You’re so pretty Miss Josie.” Cyan finally said.

Oooooohhhh…I’m dressed in clean clothes for once. Right. I almost laughed.

“Guys, I’m in jeans.” I bent down and picked them both up, “You’ve seen me in a dress before you know.”

“welllll…” Waltzer rubbed the back of his skull, “you looked too much like nadia. this though? this is all you, and it looks good.”

I felt myself blush underneath my foundation. Very rarely had anyone ever compared me to Nadia in a positive way- physically at least. She had the perfect body, the correct proportions. Thus, I
lost more than one of my crushes to her more “womanly” charms.

“Thanks. I look normal right?” I asked while checking myself in the mirror one last time, “I just want to look like Josephine- not a Newmore.”

“You’re going to stick out I’m afraid.” Cyan crossed his arms thoughtfully.

“Huh?” Fear bit into my spine, “Why?”

“Because you’re too pretty.” Cyan rolled his eyes, “Then again, you’d probably attract attention no matter what you did.”

I was blushing again.

Dammit.

*I need to get out of here before they permanently stain my face red.*

Olivia arrived on time for once. Idjit and Cyan were pounced on by her hyperactive baby blue within minutes of my younger sister entering my apartment. Harley had simply greeted Waltzer and Blake with weak enthusiasm. I noticed all three of them looked rather tired. Starting up your own business took a lot more pain and suffering than most people thought it did.

“You sure you’re up for this Livvy?” I asked after Olivia pulled away from her crushing bear hug, “You look kind of tired.”

“I’m fine,” Olivia gave me an honest grin, “Besides, I want to see my bitty nephew.”

Tinsel turned his sleepy attention to Olivia upon hearing that. By now, he recognized that she was speaking about him. He smiled up at Olivia happily, but he shied away timidly from Hiro’s more energetic advances. *Well, someone’s been spending too much time with Idjit.* I thought. *We’ll need to help him keep his confidence up.*

“You look great by the way Jojo.” Olivia looked me up and down with slight approval, “A little too casual for my tastes, but you guys are just going to some dive bar right?”

“Yeah,” I nodded. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Idjit curl into himself timidly glancing up at me in fear, “But I’m not drinking. Swore off alcohol.”

Alcohol and I were never necessarily best friends. It made all of my anxieties and stress bubble out in the form of self-harm when I was in high school. It had become my emotional crutch after being diagnosed with cancer. It had almost destroyed my liver after everything with Edgar fell through. Leo often called me the “local alcoholic” to remind me that I needed to stop drinking so much.

*Didn’t have much of a reason to stop before.* I thought as I gently kissed most of my bitties good bye. I picked Idjit up and tilted his face towards mine. His eyes were wide with hesitation and concern. *I’ve got a damn good one now.*

Besides, I can’t get work done if I’m shit faced drunk….even though the booze does call to me sometimes.

“I’ll come home sober.” I promised as I kissed the top of his head lovingly, “Promise.”

“o-okay.” Idjit took a deep breath.
“Siiisssyy.” Olivia plucked Idjit from my hands, “Go. You’re going to be late.”

I scowled at her for taking my Idjit, but she was right about me being late if I didn’t hurry up. I gave my bitties one last order to behave while I was gone. Most of them promised to do so, but Raze just glowered at me. I just nuzzled Sunshine one last time before leaving to aggravate the edgy. Raze threw all of the pillows on the couch at me as I fled.

My unhappiness at the whole situation only seemed to grow on my way to the dive bar. For some reason, Annie didn’t seem to like me. She hadn’t even met me yet, but I was an enemy? Shouldn’t a person try to endear themselves to their new boyfriend’s best friend? Hell, I knew Leo before my family life went to shit— in other words, a long ass time. His like and dislikes had been memorized over the years. His paralyzing fears and crushing insecurities were land mines I could easily dodge or briefly disarm. My brain was a vault of knowledge about Leo, but she’s been too busy trying to keep me out of their new life to access any of it.

I do hope this works out for Leo in the end. My breath came out slightly white with the November chill. He deserves some happiness.

The dive bar Tyrone and I selected lacked the shadier elements of the ones downtown. The atmosphere remained relaxed and easy without veering into silent threats or bouts of violence. It also would be cheap enough for Leo to afford. Initially, Tyrone and I discussed going to one of the fancier clubs, but we didn’t want to sting Leo’s pride by footing the bill.

“Etta!” Tyrone sat in the back of the dimly lit dive bar. There was a small crowd surrounding the TVs watching intense football games. A few groups of young men and women clustered around the pool tables betting money and drinking shots throughout each game. Tyrone smartly chose to sit at one of the more private, smaller tables that had access to the dive bar’s jukebox, “You made it.”

Tyrone stood and gave me a bro hug. The rough hug quickly turned into bit of a rough housing match until I finally managed to make him trip backwards into his chair.

“Damn,” Tyrone laughed straightening himself out in his seat, “I forgot how fast your feet are.”

“Can’t win a contest of strength against a man,” I shrugged, “I make up for it by being faster.”

After that, Tyrone and I fell into our usual easy banter. We rarely discussed heavy topics when we could avoid them. Both of us saw or dealt with a lot of shit on a daily basis. The only time we bothered to rehash it all was when we were about to burst with frustration. These little chats acted as a break from life in the city’s hustle and bustle. They were nice.

“Joan!” Thin, wiry arms wrapped around my neck, “It’s been a while.”

I chuckled and tugged Leo around to my side to hug him better. It really had been a while. His adoptive mother had been sick a few cities over, so he’d been keeping vigil at her bedside for the past few weeks. It was why he couldn’t make it to Olivia’s birthday party- which she understood. He had her gift delivered the day after the party though. Olivia had texted me about the cute, comfy bathrobe he bought her. There were many reasons I adored Leo, but the fact he cared for Olivia like I did definitely made it easier.

Which made it another reason I wanted Annie to like me already even though I hated her guts. Any woman who involved herself with my baby Leo immediately landed on my shit list until
she moved up. That didn’t mean I wanted to ruin his relationship though.

Annie hovered in the background. Her short, soft brown hair curled softly under her chin. Her dark brown eyes trailed up and down every inch of where Leo and I were touching. Her small little mouth trembled slightly while her delicate little hands tangled in her fluffy skirt. She was very pretty. I’ll be honest and say I expected her to be a bit more harpy like. Instead of a fire breathing bitch I could hate, I ended up with an angelic looking girl who obviously saw me as some kind of a threat.

“Annie,” Leo pulled back and gestured towards Tyrone and I, “These two are Tyrone and Josephine. Guys this is Annie.”

“Nice to meet you,” Tyrone politely stood up and offered his hand.

“Nice to meet you too.” Annie’s small hand was dwarfed by Tyrone’s larger hand.

“Hi.” I nodded towards her. Annie was silent for a few moments.

“Hello.” She finally said.

We sat down at the table. I could tell Annie was annoyed when Leo sat across from her and to my right instead of sitting right beside her. Tyrone waved over a waitress.

“What you drinking tonight?” Tyrone asked as a buxom young woman made her way towards our table.

“Water.” I smiled as Tyrone’s jaw dropped, “Promised Idjit I wouldn’t drink tonight.”

“Idjit?” Annie’s voice was quiet, “That’s one of your bitties isn’t it?”

“He’s one of my bitties.” I corrected with a forced smile, “Sweet little thing. His last humans didn’t exactly give him good memories of drunk people though.”

Annie’s delicate little mouth turned down into a frown. Whatever she wanted to say was cut off by the waitress finally arriving to take our orders. Tyrone and Leo just ordered beer while Annie got some fruity cocktail. Leo and I decided to order some nachos to split- just like our college years.

“So Annie,” Tyrone broke the ice before any woman at the table could throw a verbal dagger, “What is it you do?”

“I’m a small scale graphic designer.” Annie answered. Her eyes became icy as she glared at me across the table. “It’s the only thing I could really do while taking care of my son.”

“Hm?” I cocked my head. I knew just about every other graphic designer in the city, “Do you do online stuff?”

“I’m a small scale graphic designer.” Annie answered. Her eyes became icy as she glared at me across the table. “It’s the only thing I could really do while taking care of my son.”

“Hmm?” I cocked my head. I knew just about every other graphic designer in the city, “Do you do online stuff?”

“Considering someone has monopolized the market in the city, yes.” Annie’s voice was tart, “In fact, I was almost driven out of business when all of my former clients suddenly switched over without telling me.”

“That’s the way business is.” I shrugged. Did she expect me to apologize for being good? I busted my ass to keep my art work as good as it could be. Apologizing because my hard work paid off wasn’t about to happen any time soon, “I’m a graphic designer too. Also rather small scale. It’s mostly a side job. Most of my income comes from running websites of local businesses and companies.”
“You have a son?” Tyrone interjected into the conversation.

“Yeah,” Leo quickly jumped on the opportunity to avoid my fist ‘accidentally’ flying into Annie’s face, “He’s a really good kid. Bit hyper though.”

“Oh yeah.” I sat back in my chair like I wasn’t interested, “Why did you lie about his age Annie?”

“Very few men are willing to date women with younger children,” Annie’s fists were clenched, “They have a tendency to run away once they realize my son isn’t some soft-spoken, intelligent older child.”

“You do realize you drove Cyan out of his own home right?” I cocked my head.

“What?” Annie was confused.

“My curly, Cyan.” Leo clarified, “Remember? I mentioned him a lot.”

“Oh right,” A look of little care flashed across Annie’s face, “It’s not my fault he wasn’t compatible with smaller children. They’re just pets right?”

Our drinks arrived. I grabbed Annie’s cocktail the instant it was in front of her. Then I threw it in her face. Leo immediately jumped up to hold me back. Tyrone quickly flanked to my back to do the same.

“Bitties aren’t pets.” I hissed.

That mentality was despicable. Hell, even dogs and cats are traumatized by being rehomed out of the blue. That thought process remained even worse when one took into account how intelligent bitties were. They thought like us. They felt like us. They loved like us. Sadly, there were people in the city who felt the same way she did, but to an even further extreme. I would see fancy, painted up bitches walking around with malnourished bitties just to flaunt their well-dressed accessories. It infuriated me.

“This was a new top.” Annie gasped staring down at her now ruined beige top, “Leo! Are you going to just let her get away with this!?”

“FUCK YOU!” I roared. The dive bar fell silent as Leo and Tyrone struggled to keep me from launching myself forward to punch a bitch, “Leave Leo out of this! You’ve already lied to him. You’ve already made him give up Cyan for you! What!? Are you going to ask that he abandon his best friend as well? What’s next!? Telling him to not go visit his sickly Mom because you don’t want him too?”

“You don’t know anything about me!” Annie stood up and leaned across the table to spit in my face. I growled and lunged forward. Leo lost his grip, but Tyrone’s strong arms kept mine trapped next to my sides, “Leo loves me! Right Leo? Let’s go! I came to this stupid-

“You’re leaving.” Leo’s voice was very quiet, “You’re leaving.”

I looked over and saw Leo’s eyes were filled to the brim with disappointment. For a moment, I feared the disappointment was directed at me. His gaze stayed on Annie though.

“You said you would try Annie.” Leo sighed before Annie could even speak, “You said you’d try. I guess that was another lie? Dammit.”
“L-Leo…?” Annie’s voice became pathetic, “Y-You’re breaking up with me because of…her? You are fucking her aren’t you!?”

Her tiny little fist flew up to strike Leo.

Tyrone let me go.

My fist connected with her jaw hard enough to whip her head to the side. Surprise, shock, and disbelief covered her face as she struggled to process the fact I just punched her.

“I want you out of my house.” Leo sighed leaning against me for support. I knew the little bastard was doing it to keep me from actually pummeling her - his pain needed to be soothed more than she needed her ass beat after all.

“You heard the man,” Tyrone neatly inserted himself between Leo and I and Annie, “You’d better be gone by…oh…lunch tomorrow? If there’s any property damage to Leo’s house, we’ll sue you. Have a pleasant evening.”

“I’m going to charge you with-“

“I can recommend you a lawyer,” Tyrone offered pulling out his phone, “But no one in this state can beat me in the court room, so it’d just be a waste of time.” Tyrone’s smile was wickedly sweet, “Feel free to try though.”

Annie left the bar cradling her bruised jaw. She was a little bitch since I knew I held back to avoid snapping her thin, waif-like neck. Leo sighed and hugged me. I patted his back comfortably.

“I can’t believe she’d say that about Cyan,” Leo grumbled, “I talked about him for hours…especially after he moved in with you.”

“Speaking of which…” I would hate asking this, but it needed to be done, “Cyan moving back in with you?”

Leo pulled back and bit his lip. I could see the scales moving in his head.

“He makes you happy doesn’t he?” Leo asked, “I mean, he’s part of your new little family right?”

“Yeah, but so are you.” I tugged softly on Leo’s hair, “It’ll be a little…rough to not have him around, but… I want you to be happy.”

Tyrone wrapped his arms around both of us to steady our nerves a bit. I would respect his decision if Leo decided to take Cyan back. Cyan was originally his bitty after all. It wasn’t like I’d never seem him again He wouldn’t be around to comfort Idjit or manage the house hold. Really, Leo deserved to be happy. Leo is more important. Or do you just not value yourself enough.

“I won’t.” Leo finally said, “I won’t do that. That would be…cruel to everyone involved. I mean… I’m the one who chose Annie over him in the first place.”

“He doesn’t begrudge you for that.” I protested gently.

“I know. I know.” Leo forced a smile, “Besides, Cyan looks so happy with other bitties around. I could never take him to school because of his sensitivity to sound…he must’ve been so lonely back home. I think I’ll get a new bitty though. One who can handle the life of a high school
chemistry teacher.”

Internally, I rejoiced. Externally, I pulled both of my buds into a big hug. My heart ached for Leo though. His happily ever after wasn’t happening quite yet. It’d come one day though. Nice guys like Leo might finish last, but all of the bad girls ran off to chase bad boys. That means only the good ones stayed behind.

“Well,” Leo groaned, “I want to get drunk right now please.”

“We’ve still got our beers. Luckily, she chose to throw the expensive cocktail at Annie instead hm?” Tyrone said gesturing to our table.

“I’ll pay for wasting it.” I offered.

“No-“ Leo began.

“I’ll. Pay. For. Wasting. It.” I tugged on his hair, “Now come on. I want to see who can drink the most out of you two!”

The night had gone as horribly as I had expected. In all honesty, I never figured it would’ve been an offhand comment about bitties that set me off, but anyone who saw bitties like pets wasn’t good enough for my precious Leo. He was worth so much more than that.

So Annie could go dry hump a cactus for all I gave a damn.

Chapter End Notes

My formatting fucked up again, so please point out any glaring errors. *It's very late right now, and I have a test tomorrow, so I can't double check*
Dim Thanksgiving

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (except for Tinsel. He's mine)

I'm sorry if this chapter is shit, but you've gotta understand something: I rewrote this thing around four times, and in the end I shifted around major plot points (at this point my original outline just jumped out of a window) because really I didn't feel the need to reiterate certain points. Jo's parents are shitheads. We all know this. We don't need another chapter dedicated to showing their assholery. It's showcased in every insecurity Jo, Olivia, and Nadia have. I can finally move on to the next 9 chapters (that will come out over the next 3 Saturdays (my time for anyone who doesn't live in the states)). SOOOO...I'm gonna go sleep now.

I sang along to “Stairway to Heaven” softly. Tyrone’s car- which he had kindly let me borrow to drive out to Granny’s- had been taken care of. The seats were clean, and I winced every time one of my feet brushed against the clean carpet. I really owed Ty for this.

My parents had hijacked Thanksgiving dinner. The dinner that should’ve been held in Granny’s little bit of paradise would instead be held in my parents’ dismal, plastic mansion. “Funnily” enough, this change happened after my parents heard about my attendance. Fuck them. I thought. Old pains rose up, but one look at the sleeping bitties to my right quickly quieted my heart. I don’t need them anymore.

“ari?” Blake looked up at me from the center console. Waltzer and Cyan slept curled together in one of the cup holders. Idjit slept in the other cup holder. Tinsel- who was about 4 inches tall at this point- slumbered peacefully between his parents. Snuggle had curled up beside the little bitty family and fallen asleep sitting up. Blake was the only one still with me, “you okay?”

Part of me wondered why he was worried. I followed his gaze to me hands to find they gripping the steering wheel so hard my knuckles were white. Forcing my fingers to relax, I shot Blake a calm, lazy smile.

“Sorry about that.” I reached over and tapped his head, “It’s been a while since I last drove a car.”

Owning a car in a city was unnecessary. A person could walk to their destination faster after all. Still, my parents lived 3 hours south of the city, and worked from home most days- only showing up to host parties and so on. We’d left around 7- Tyrone ran late because of work. The night sky was dark with thunderclouds that couldn’t quite get past Mt. Ebbot yet.

“you’re nervous.” Blake slid onto my lap and patted my thing, “don’t be. we’re here this time.”

“I’m not nervous.” I snorted. A small blush crawled across my face. It’s unfair that he can read my emotions better than I can most days.

“suuurreee…” Blake raised a brow.
“Oh hush.”

Blake laughed quietly. Then, he began to sing along to “Hey, Hey What Can I do” with me.

I had almost used Tyrone running late as an excuse to not show up at my parents’ the night before. Since Granny and my parents both lived outside of the city, Olivia, Nadia, and I would have to spend the night at their houses before any major holiday or celebration. That way we didn’t eat up most of our day driving to get there in the first place. Not having a car would’ve been a valid excuse to not show up. Granny’s firm voice demanding an explanation around 6:30 made me double check to make sure I would be getting the car I needed to get to the hell hole. Sadly, Tyrone got the car to me quickly.

“So we’re meeting your cousins too?” Blake asked.

“I don’t know.” I shrugged, “I know Aunt Catherine will show up, but Bobby and Thomas might decide to not show up with their wives.”

I didn’t want them to show up. The bastards were just as bad as Nadia. They gave Olivia a lot of shit, and they felt like everything with us was a competition. Then again, Mother always used us to make herself look better in comparison to her sister.

“They’re assholes.” I sighed honestly, “Like big ones.”

“oh,” Blake thought for a moment, “so we’ll have to throw shit at them too won’t we?”

“Probably.” I nodded with a small smile.

Eventually, traffic from other cities began to blend in around me. I found myself on a winding road with a line of cars behind me or passing me. Then, some asshole started to cruise right beside me making all the cars behind me honk angrily. My phone also decided that would be the best moment to ring.

“Hello?” I tried to keep my voice civil as I dropped my speed. The black car just slowed down as well.

“Will you hand over your bitties?” The familiar deep voice made me roll my eyes.

“Not a chance as- Mother fucker!” I gasped as I quickly accelerated to avoid the car on my left from ramming in to me, “You need to learn to drive asshole! Now-“

“My friend does know how to drive.” A gun appeared from the passenger side window, “Let’s see you dodge this.”

I dropped the phone as shots rang out into the night sky. Tyrone’s car jerked when a bullet hit the back tire. I struggled to keep the car under control.

“what?!” Raze and the other bitties quickly woke up. Flashes of magic kept everyone held in place as the car began to wriggle out of control. The black car reappeared beside me. I braked suddenly and veered off the side of the road to try to avoid the bullets.

Pain blossomed in my arm. The bullet ripped a canal through my flesh before shattering the passenger side window. Blake’s eyes flashed red as he redirected a bullet that would’ve hit me in the head. More bullets slammed into the car, but they hit the back of it. My bitties and I careened forward into a tree. Magic desperately reached out to slow down the car.
We slammed hood first into the tree—shattering the windshield in the process. White filled my vision as the air bag slammed into my body leaving bruises everywhere. Magic kept my bitties in place and protected them from the debris.

A large, pointed tree branch ripped through the windshield and ripped a cut into the right side of my throat. Panic set in as I struggled to free my arms—pinned under the air bag and twisted dashboard— to stop the bleeding.

“speck!” Raze teleported onto my shoulder— he looked tired and a bit chipped— to hold my neck together. He tore the branch away to get a better look at my injury.

“Snuggle!” Cyan called desperately. Blake teleported his brother onto my shoulder. A chilled, tingling sensation ran across my throat.

Black spots filled my vision.

I could hear people panicking on the road behind us. Sunshine desperately tried to burn his way through the seatbelt. Tinsel simply began to tear at it with his teeth. Raze and Waltzer teleported out of the car to rip the door off while Cyan struggled to free my arms.

*I’m going to die or wish I was dead. I thought through the pain. What if my arms don’t work anymore? How can I make art without my hands? Hell...am I still...bleeding?*

*What’s going on now?*


My voice won’t work properly. *Why was I trying to speak?*

Agony burned through me anew when I was removed from Tyrone’s poor car. Somehow I managed to answer the paramedics with a croaking voice. Snuggle clung relentlessly to my neck to continue his work.

The ambulance bounced along the road towards the nearest hospital. Underneath the painful white light the black spots began to take over my vision.

*Who’s speaking to me? Why…*

*Why do I need to comfort someone? Who’s crying?*

Idjit’s tear stained face pushed into my arm.

I could barely tell him everything would be alright.

Shadows took me.

*Is this how I die?*

*What’s that? R S T S V? What?*

Faded letters hovered in front of me. They were cracked and dim, but I felt like the blurry words had some kind of weight I couldn’t comprehend. Why they were in front of me I couldn’t figure out. The letters I couldn’t see clearly avoided clarity.

The words faded away behind a dim, gentle light crawling across the images in my mind. I felt something in my chest thrum welcomingly as I was tugged back into the present—the very blurry,
drug muddled present.

I awoke in a hospital room with some kind of beaver monster methodically running healing magic across my body. I felt Snuggle’s gangly arms cling to my neck desperately. My bitties were strewn about my bed. Idjit quietly whimpered into my bruised chest while Waltzer and Cyan curled up by my hip. Blake sat on top of my pillow to keep an eye on Snuggle, and Raze kept Sunshine and Tinsel tucked into his arms.

“Boys…” I winced as my voice cracked. My throat throbbed slightly with movement, but I didn’t feel any pain. Painkillers were marvelous human invention.

“jojo!” Idjit’s head popped up. The rest of my bitties clamored up to closer.

“Be careful,” The beaver monster advised gently preventing them from sitting on my chest, “She has bruised ribs. Good afternoon Miss Newmore.”

“Holy shit,” I wheezed. She offered me some water which I happily gulped down, “How long have I been out?”

“Two days. Originally, you were in a hospital outside the city, but your grandmother had you transferred here.”

Thank you Granny. I thought with a sigh.

“How bad is it?” I finally asked, “Are my arms…”

“Your arms are fine,” The monster smiled at me kindly, “Bruised to all hell and back, and your left one will have a scar from a bullet wound. You dislocated your right shoulder as well. I managed to heal it up rather nicely, but it’ll still be tender. You also have bruised ribs, a formerly torn ACL- we performed surgery with your grandmother’s permission- in your left leg, hundreds of smaller lacerations here and there, and slight bump on the top of your head.

“You were covered in blood.” Sunshine’s pain whisper quietly interrupted the monster. His flaming hands clung desperately to my fingers, “We all thought…”

“we thought you were a goner,” Waltzer's eyes were black as he finished Sunshine's thought aloud.

“You would’ve been,” The monster admitted, “If your meek here hadn’t healed your jugular, you would’ve bled out before arriving at the hospital to begin with.”

“Snuggle saves the day again,” I laughed, “Jesus. Why is the ceiling orange?”

“Oh dear,” The monster chuckled, “Are you still that high up?”

“Yup.” I tried to count numbers in my head, but they all began to blur together after ten, “I literally can’t count past ten right now. How bad was that knot on my head again?”

“Not too bad, but I’ll grab the doctor just in case.” The monster quickly left the room.

“GJ.” Tinsel sniffled tugging at my hand, “GJ.”

“Hey Tinny,” I kissed the air in poor mimicry of a blown kiss, “It’s okay baby.”

“It most certainly is not.” Cyan’s voice had a panicked softness that lessened the grit in his voice, “You…you almost died Miss Josie.”
“stupid speck,” Raze kicked the thigh of my uninjured leg.

“I’m so glad you’re alright,” Blake sighed into my hair.

“Me too.” I agreed.

As it turned out, my inability to think did come from the high dosage of painkillers I was on. After being weaned off of it, clarity kicked in alongside the dull ache. The beaver monster progressed my healing progress one last time while I waited for someone- who I didn’t know- to pick me up from the hospital. I wondered how Thanksgiving went to distract myself from the pain of having my screaming body poked and prodded. She healed my leg up entirely, but she also discouraged walking when I could avoid it.

_How the hell am I going to get any work done?_ I grumbled to myself. _Or even take care of myself._

The list of things I _could_ do was _much_ shorter than the things “discouraged”. I shouldn’t walk when I could avoid it. I should avoid straining my arms. Blah. Blah. Be a baby for the next five to six weeks with constant visits from a monster healer until “you’re all better” again.

_I hate being injured._ I finally decided as my bitties began to fret of me as well.

“Guuuuyys.” I whined tugging my shirt on carefully, “I’m not an invalid.”

“you heard what the beaver lady said,” Blake scolded me, “Quit being such a child.”

I really wanted to tell him to fuck off, but I knew that was the pain talking.

“I’ll be fine in a few weeks.” I added gently.

“In a few _weeks._” Cyan agreed threateningly, “Not a few hours.”

“Take it easy,” Sunshine dragged my shoes to my feet, “Let us help.”

The panic in their eyes and remorse in their voices convinced me to adhere to their smothering for as long as I could possibly tolerate it. The hospital phone rang. Waltzer answered it.

“it’s olivia.” He held the phone towards me. I sat down to speak with her while Raze and Sunshine laced up the sneakers.

“Hey Livvy,” I said gently.

“OhMYGODJOJO!” Olivia had obviously been crying, “Siissyyyy are you okay?”

“I’m fine baby girl,” I held the phone away from my ear slightly. My ear drum screamed at the brutal attack it had just endured.

“Granny said you couldn’t make it to Thanksgiving, but she didn’t tell us you were _hurt!_” Olivia huffed. I didn’t have the heart- or the balls- to tell her that I agreed with Granny’s judgement. Telling Olivia about it while she was hours away would've done nothing for me or Livvy in the long run, “Did you know about Nadia?”

“Being pregnant or divorcing Edgar?” I asked.

“Both!”
“Of course,” I winced as she made a loud noise of frustration, “How did that go exactly.”

“Nadia has to find a new job.” Olivia finally said lamely, “Our parents…don’t like the fact she’s divorcing Edgar. They even called him up to the mansion!”

“Damn,” Part of me regretted not being able to make it. Edgar would be the one in this hospital room if I had.

“The people who did this to you were all caught right?” Olivia asked.

“Yup,” I nodded, “One of them was the brother of one of the volunteers at the Bitty CC. He found my address and stalked me until he finally grew impatient and decided to fire on me.”

I honestly didn’t know what the hell the guy had been expecting. He shot at a car in heavy traffic. Yeah, I might’ve died the crash, but he wouldn’t have seen the light of day again either way. Officially, this had been ruled as a stalking case, but I knew it had deeper roots than that. This was a group of people who had something to prove and something they wanted.

“Oh Sissy,” Olivia sniffled loudly.

“I’m fine-“

“Quit lying to me!” Olivia scolded me, “I mean it!”

“Sorry, sorry,” I refused to shrivel up under her noise though, “Listen, I’m being discharged soon, so I’ve gotta go.”

“Okay,” Olivia sighed, “Call me when you get back home alright?”

“Alright.” I nodded.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

I hung up the phone and began to the process of standing up again.

“ophie.” Waltzer sighed.

“I am not being pushed out of here in a wheelchair.” I scowled defiantly.

Grim determination glittered in all of my bitties eyes.

In the end, I left the hospital in a wheelchair with eight very smug bitties. Leo had been the one who came to collect me. Tyrone had accompanied him.

“I’m so sorry about the car man.” I said immediately upon seeing him. For some reason, this made his face grow even darker.

“If you say shit like that again, I will hit you.” Tyrone warned raising a fist, “The car can go fuck right off. You’re much more important.”

“At least let me pay-“

“I. Will. Hit. You.” Tyrone opened the door to Leo’s car. The two men helped me get in.
“Hmph.” I snorted.

“Hello,” A low bitty voice said. I looked up and saw a 4 ½ inch tall G standing on the center console, “You’re Miss Joan correct?”

“Yuuppp…” I stared at the new bitty with wide eyes.

“This is Ember,” Cyan explained as he settled on my lap, “He’s Papa’s new bitty.”

“I see.” I nodded quietly, “You really like your grillbitties don’t you Leo?”

“Huh?” Leo asked sliding to the driver’s seat, “Oh yeah.”

I just sighed and settled down into the back seat with my bitties.

It had been a long Thanksgiving break, and I didn’t even have to deal with my parents.

I didn’t know if that had been a good or a bad thing.
Nadia and I

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except for Tinsel)

So...this is some “fluff” (it's mostly comedy, not sickeningly sweet stuff....does that make it not fluff? I dunno) mixed in with some character development. Enjoy (I forgot I won't have wi-fi on Saturday, so expect the next two chapters to appear randomly between now and Sunday) Also (just in case) Idjit isn't stuttering when he says Tin-Tin. That's his nickname for Tinsel.

“Oh it’s you,” I raised a brow at Nadia. Taking a sip of my hot chocolate, I continued, “You need something?”

I’d been back in my apartment for a week now. My recovery had been going smoothly because of the meds and Snuggle’s constant vigilance. Blake locked the door to my office though-the little shit. How people could just laze around and do nothing was beyond my comprehension.

“May I come in?” Nadia’s voice was clipped but polite. Cesar balanced carefully on her arms.

“Sure.” I resisted the urge to shrug. Monster magic could work wonders like healing a torn ACL or relocating a shoulder, but it couldn’t prevent the awkward, aching stiffness that came along with the accelerated healing process.

“You're recovering well,” Nadia offered robotically as I locked the door behind her. There really wasn’t any need for the precaution. My new apartment building was the place where people of power congregated to avoid the paparazzi or other intruders. The lobby alone had twenty security guards (inside each entrance, two outside). The elevator also stopped on the first five floors to allow security guards to check to make sure anyone riding inside them hasn’t been blacklisted- a similar process happens in stairwell. The police had notified my landlady about my predicament, so I now had two armed guards on my floor at all times.

“Meds and magic.” I said sitting down on the couch. I startled when Tinsel teleported in front of me only to tumble onto my lap.

“tin?” Blake’s voice called through the apartment, “you were just supposed to teleport on top of the bed! little guy?”

“He’s in here Blake,” I called back.

“Tinsel?” Sunshine poked his head out of the kitchen. Cyan’s head appeared beneath his, “Are you okay sweetie?”

“Yes Papa,” Tinsel blushed a brilliant gold color. His flared eye dimmed with embarrassment.

“jeez kid. you’re gonna give us heart attacks” Waltzer chuckled from where he was… dangling on the…?
“That’s it,” I glowered at Waltzer, “No more Sia for you.”

Waltzer just sang a few lines of “Chandelier” before going back to sleep. Sunshine and Cyan reentered the kitchen to continue making dinner.

“ti-tin-tin.” Idjit walked into the living room, “b-blake wa-ants you.”

“Yes Iddy,” Tinsel looked down at the ground with a frown before looking up at me with pleading eyes.

“Don’t tell Blake you didn’t get down on your own.” I winked at him and sat him down on the ground, “Come on. Have a seat Nadia.”

I patted space on the couch next to me only to feel fangs sink into my hand.

“Really Raze?”

Raze just growled at me before spiting my hand out and shuffling over to the other side of the couch to give Nadia some room.

“You’re home is quite lively,” I could’ve sworn a small smile carved its way across her face.

“Yup,” I agreed.

Silence fell between us.

“You’ve made headlines,” Nadia inexpertly tried to fill the air. How odd. She’d never had problems weaving bullshit before, “I’ve seen “Woman Stalked by Bitty Abusers” in just about every major newspaper in the city.”

“It should be “Bitty Fighting Rings Being Dismantled” instead.” I grumbled.

In the simple seven days since my attackers were arrested, five bitty fighting rings were broken up. As it turned out, all of the damn things were connected, and they all wanted Snuggle and Tinsel. The group was also closely aligned with a monster hate group as well. Before, they could get away with their dark deeds in the shadows, but they fucked up by attacking me. Now they had an assault charge, conspiracy to murder, and other charges mixed together ready to fuck them over. Tyrone and I were just waiting for all of the people involved with the bitty fighting rings to be wrangled in. The police were also still trying to track down some mysterious ringleader that was paranoid about some “dark plan” the Monsters had in store that somehow involved bitties.

Crazy bastards.

“Making waves is always a good thing,” Nadia offered lamely.

“Oh okay Nadia,” I sighed, “Cut the bullshit. What did you actually come here to talk about?”

“My divorce with Edgar finalized.” The words ran from her mouth quickly.

I burned my mouth with my hot chocolate spit take.

“hey!” Raze growled glaring at the now stained white rug, “do you know how long sunshine made me scrub that damn thing when i dropped some pomegranate on it!?”

“SILENCE,” Cesar scowled at the edgy, “THE HUMANS ARE NOT TALKING TO YOU.”
“make me.” Raze growled. I could tell listening to me talk about the bitty fighting rings had put him in a foul mood.

“Raze.” Sunshine’s voice echoed from the kitchen, calm, commanding.

“Enough Cesar,” Nadia gently pressed her thumb against his skull, “We aren’t here to cause trouble.”

“…” Cesar simply fell silent.

“So... you’re finally free of the bastard.” I paused, “Legally at least. Why do I have the sinking suspicion he’s still giving you problems?”

“He is,” Nadia admitted through gritted teeth, “Our divorce was finalized five hours ago, but he’s already promoting his new engagement to try to garner some good publicity. He’s also been dragging my name through the mud.”

“How so?” I cocked my head.

“Don’t even get me started,” Nadia sighed, “He’s accused me of cheating, bribery, emotional manipulation, pedophilia- despite the fact I don’t even interact with children- of all things, and many other equally damning things. He’s also managed to get the attention of that Monster-Bitty hate group focused on me.”

“Going to sue for slander?” I asked.

“What was Tyrone’s number again?” Nadia looked at me pleadingly.

“Raze?” I began sweetly, “Pl-“

“no.” He growled grabbing the TV remote and cranking up the volume.

“Raaazzzeee.” I whined, “Don’t make me call out to Sunshine.”

“ya wouldn’t dare.” Raze snarled. I cocked a threatening brow.

“Daddy!” Tinsel called from the bedroom excitedly, “Daddy! Daddy! Come see.”

“comin’ kid,” Raze grumbled, “and i’ll grab yer damn phone while i’m in there.”

Raze teleported off of the couch.

At least he didn’t throw anything at me-

My phone smacked against my chest- not hard enough to destroy the new phone or crack a rib though.

“I had faith you!” I threw a pillow towards the bedroom.

“fuck off!” Raze yelled back.

“Raze.” Sunshine stormed out of the kitchen and into the bedroom, “What have I said about the cursing? Not where Tinsel can hear you!”

“oh shit.” I didn’t have to be in the room to know Raze was probably two steps from teleporting away.
Cyan peered out from the kitchen and listened to the resulting argument for a few minutes before sighing.

“Dinner may take longer now that there’s only one pair of hands working on it.” Cyan told me sadly.

“i can help,” Waltzer said from behind Cyan. The curly jumped forward about three inches before stumbling. Waltzer caught him, “hey now, i know i’m gorgeous, but you don’t have to literally fall for me.”

“Not funny,” Cyan blushed before quickly heading into the kitchen, “Not funny at all.”

“cyyyy.” Waltzer trailed the curly, “aww…come on…”

I laughed at my bitties’ antics. Nadia watched with what seemed to be…pained amusement? Maybe a dash of jealousy? I wondered how lonely it was in that big apartment with just Cesar and a baby still in the womb.

“Mom and Dad turning their backs on you stung didn’t it?” I asked. Idjit slipped into the living room and quietly edged over to the couch.

Nadia jolted out of her current thought process. She blinked rapidly, but I saw a single tear slip through. Cesar looked up at her with concern on his face. He snarled at me before viciously flinging himself towards my face. Pale red magic wrapped around him and slammed him back against the couch.

“d-don’t hur-ur-urt jojo!” Idjit’s fingers twitched threateningly, “sh-she’s…she’s a-alre-e-e-ady i-in pain!”

“Cesar?” Nadia tucked the boss into her arms. He snarled a bit at the babying, but quieted down once she settled him on his lap. He wasn’t injured, just a bit shaken up.

“IT’LL TAKE MORE THAN A FLICK FROM A CHILD TO-“

Idjit’s eyes narrowed dangerously. Wisely, Cesar shut his damn mouth.

“Idjit?” I prodded gently while texting Nadia Tyrone’s number, “Did you need something baby?”

“e-ember called ea-earlier,” Idjit smiled wanly at me, “le-leo i-is wor-r-ried.”

“I’ll text him baby,” My best friend could worry like no tomorrow if I left it unchecked, “Did Ember sound okay? He’s fitting in at the school well right?”

“m-mhm,” Idjit nodded enthusiastically, “the kids r-real-ly like h-him.”

“That’s good.” I sighed in relief. Cyan could never go with Leo to work, so it was amazing that Ember could, “Do you want to curl up with me sweetie?”

Idjit thought about it for a few minutes.

“i-i c-can’t.” Idjit reluctantly shook his head, “p-pro-omi-ised tin-tin a na-ap toge-e-ether.”

“Okay.” I nodded.

Idjit returned to the bedroom. Nadia made sure there was nothing wrong with Cesar before
returning to my earlier question.

“You don’t understand,” She sighed, “They were all I had growing up.”

“You lie.” I slipped into French just in case any bitties- one that liked to wear blue jackets in particular- decided to eavesdrop on this little conversation, “You had Granny at the very least.”

“Oh yes,” Nadia snarled, “I was supposed to somehow compete with Granny’s favorite for attention.”

“There weren’t any favorites Nadia,” I scowled, “You just avoided us all of the time.”

“It’s not like I tried to!” Nadia protested, “They had plans for me… plans I’ve ruined.”

She lapsed back into silence.

“They didn’t have plans for you Nadia. They had a cage ready,” I corrected, “You’re better off without them. You have a new job yes?”

“Of course I do.” Nadia snorted defiantly, “It’s not a CEO position, but the hours are more flexible for…” Her hand strayed to her abdomen.

“Then quit whining.” I scolded her, “What’s done is done. If they want to pretend Edgar was the son they never had, let them. They’ll come running back in a few months.”

“And what do I do then!!?” Nadia asked in frustrated English.

“You tell them to fuck off out of your life,” I scolded her, “Unless they’re willing to understand it’s your life- not theirs.”

“Don’t you want your parents to love you?” Nadia asked disbelievingly.

“Of course I do,” That familiar painful tug in my chest started up again. Sadly, painkillers and bitty/monster magic couldn’t fix this one, “But I’m more than a Newmore. I’m Josephine Newmore. It’s about time they started treating us like we were their kids. Don’t you remember how it was in the old days? Before their personal company blew up so big?”

“Yes,” Nadia’s voice almost sounded wistful, “I do.”

“Then you should know why things changed,” The finality of that statement weighed heavily on the room’s atmosphere.

We’d lost so much the same year we supposedly “gained” everything. No longer were we the kids with the rich grandma. We also had rich parents now. It meant a new flow of “friends” and “lovers” that wanted to cash in on favors and treats that typically costed a pretty penny. It meant bending over backwards to live up to our parents dreams of a business super power to beat all other businesses. It meant killing our creativity, our individual thought to submit to cold groupthink.

My response to finding all this out at the ripe young age of 12 was: Ha. No.

Nadia’s response had been Okay. Her submission to the overlords kept the pieces of shit away from me, but it had turned her into a horrible person in the process. True, her business deals were always clean and precise, but she had done some petty shit in her personal life to get her way-like the whole Edgar fiasco.

“Josephine?” Nadia asked suddenly, “When you were with Edgar did he ever…?”
“Oh hell no.” I laughed, “I’d have never agreed to marry him if he did.”

“Why did you agree to marry him then?” Nadia cocked her head.

“At first, Edgar just seemed like a slightly ambitious guy with a good sense of humor and a nice smile,” I shrugged. It was painful to talk about the façade that piece of shit had put up to get me caught up in the relationship, “We’d have simple dates- movies, simple restaurants. Romantic shit you’d see in movies. Then he started asking me to do simple things.” I tugged on my hair, “Grow my hair out, wear a little more make up. I was fine with that. He wasn’t asking me to go get liposuction or anything. Besides, growing my hair out made it easier to bind up in the first place. Suddenly, the simple suggestions became much more…specific, controlling. He wanted me to dress a certain way all of the time, talk to people I hated more often, participate in events I didn’t like going to, and so on so forth. He proposed, and I hoped maybe he’d change if we were married. Then you were fucking him in that hotel room and my last nerve snapped.”

Damn. It really hurt to think about that mess. When I was on my way to marrying Edgar, my parents had this hopeful gleam in their eyes that he’d tame me into some Nadia clone. Why the hell I hadn’t noticed it sooner was beyond me. Still, part of me always wondered “what if”s to a hell and back. What if Edgar had actually been a good guy? What if I had gone through the marriage anyways? I shuddered to think about it.

“edgar’s balls need to be crushed,” Waltzer commented from where he leaned against the door frame, “hey, nadia, cy wants to know if you and that idiot are staying for dinner.”

“EXCUSE ME?” Cesar stood up.

“i don’t make a habit of excusing stupidity,” Waltzer mused.

Nadia didn’t say anything at the two bitties continued to trade barbs until Cyan called Waltzer back into the kitchen. The sansy had to leave without an answer.

“YOUR BITTIES NEED TO BE DISCIPLINED.” Cesar growled.

“Eh,” Discipline? This lot? Not easy. I took what I could get most days.

“How do you do it?” Nadia’s voice was quiet, “How do you just keep going on with life? Right now you have what? A bitty fighting group and a Monster hate group trying to kill you, and you’ve been injured….You keep walking though. How?”

“Leo thinks it’s because I’m too stubborn to die,” I grinned, “But there’s another, simpler reason for it.”

“What’s that?” Nadia asked expecting an answer.

I was about tell her to “figure it out” herself before my phone rang. It was Leo.

“Jesus,” I sighed fondly, “I don’t text him for two hours, and he acts like I’m dead.” I paused and looked at Nadia, “By the way, this is why.”

Nadia merely looked at me with confusion while I quietly dealt with Leo’s angry ravings. For being such a little Japanese guy, he could yell. It took about five minutes to assure Leo that I was fine. No, I wasn’t about to drop dead. Yes, I’d been taking my medication and taking it easy. He’s such a mom. I thought hanging up the phone. But I love him for it.

I also received text messages from Tyrone, Granny, and Velour. I pointed at my phone
again.

“This is more of my ‘why’.” I told her before responding to them, “Now, are you two staying for dinner or not?”

Nadia’s brow furrowed.

“You’d let me stay?” She asked hesitantly.

“Yeah,” I experimentally rolled my shoulders and hissed as my formerly injured one burned in protest, “I don’t mind.”

“Why?” Nadia glared at me.

“You’re like a newborn baby walking around for the first time without mommy and daddy holding onto your wrists,” I explained, “You might end up getting yourself killed if I let you wander about blindly.”

Also, Olivia would murder me if I didn’t take the silent olive branch Nadia was offering by just talking to me. I loved my baby sister too much to do that to her.

“I would like to stay then,” Nadia said slowly.

“Cool. Fair warning, my bitties will get into fi-“

Raze flew out of the bedroom and skidded to halt. He popped up and charged back into the bedroom bellowing curses at Blake for…something.


I stood up.

“Watch some TV or something. I think Blake might kill him this time around….“ I paused, “Or Sunshine might.”

This time I knew I saw amusement flicker across Nadia’s face. It was a heartbreakingly small flash of softness, but I didn’t expect her to defrost after a few hours.

With her divorce, my sisters and I were officially all cut off from our parents. No more chains to hold us back from our futures. I could only hope Nadia and Olivia would seize their chances before our parents came crawling back on their bellies.

Well, I had other concerns at the moment.

“Boys.” I entered the bitty bedroom to find it a mess, “What in the….BOYS!”

“he did it,” Blake pointed a finger at Raze.

“excuse me!” Raze fumed.

Idjit and Tinsel were somehow napping in a corner of the room while Sunshine and Snuggle just watched Blake and Raze try to kill each other.

“but-“ The two protested. My silent glare shut them up.

My family might be officially two parents more empty than it used to be, but I had a feeling that it would still be just as crazy.
Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except for Tinsel)

Sooooo....yeaahhh....have fun with this one.

I knew that humans were capable of some crazy shit.

Just take a look at our history.

But I never thought I could be even more disgusted with my own species.

The Bitty CC was a mess. The windows were in jagged shards on the ground, and the door had practically been ripped off of its hinges. Nasty graffiti covered just about every inch of the front of the building.

The worst part was the bit that made me want to cry.

Piles of dust were somberly being collected by teary eyed monsters. Traumatized bitties clung to some of the bitty techs terrified of the humans here to help.

“oh shit,” Raze clutched Sunshine and Tinsel closer, “dammit.”

Sunshine didn’t even bother to get onto Raze for swearing.

“this is sick,” Waltzer growled from the top of my head, “we’re going in right?”


The Bitty techs all looked up at me with sad but relieved eyes. Velour approached gently calming three terrified soft bones.

“Hello Miss Newmore,” Velour said. Her smile was thin, “I’m sorry, but we’ll have to reschedule Tinsel’s appointment.”

“That’s fine,” I waved it aside, “What can we do to help?”

“That’s the good Samaritan we all know and love here,” Velour chuckled, “We’re mostly keeping the humans on clean-up. The bitties are still…anxious.”

“Understandable,” I sighed, “Boys, go help the techs calm everyone down. I’m going to go grab some stuff.”

“jojo…” Idjit whispered, “y-you’re st-still hu-urt.”

“I won’t strain myself baby.” I helped my bitties get their feet on the ground, “Besides, my ribs are feeling fine today.”

Mostly fine.
“Oh I completely forgot,” Velour’s eyes widened, “I’m so sorry. You shouldn’t be-“

“Velour,” I pressed a finger to her lips, “Its fine. I’ll go clean up that glass before someone gets hurt.”

Velour reluctantly nodded. They only had so many volunteers that were still around after seeing the carnage. She really couldn’t turn my help down.

Cleaning up the area around the windows helped calm down the fury singing in my veins. I didn’t care that I was still supposed to be on bed rest. I wanted to grab those fools and beat them into submission. They’d pay for this. They’d all pay for this.

I found more dust beneath the glass shards as I cleaned up. I couldn’t stop myself from crying when I also discovered a small tattered scarf that had presumably once belonged to a baby blue. What kind of monsters could kill bitties? Small, helpless creatures like them could never stand a chance against a human.

“Miss Newmore?” I turned to face behind me, rubbing my tears away. The lavender eyed human volunteer I had met before approached me timidly. Her face was pale, “I’m so sorry about my brother…I… I didn’t know….”

Ah. She felt bad about something her brother did.

“It’s not like you’re a mind reader,” I waved away her concerns, “I’m fine.”

“I’m still so sorry,” A dark look crossed her face, “He could’ve hurt your meek or your little hybrid.”

“But we all walked away alive.” I stood up- slowly because of the pain- and calmly patted her shoulder, “We’re all fine.”

“Which makes me so happy,” The volunteer forced a smile, “I brought you some gloves to help with the glass. You’ve already nicked yourself a few times.”

“I live with an edgy,” I wriggled my cut covered fingers, “These don’t hurt that much.”

I threw myself back into cleaning up the floor around the windows after the volunteer bandaged my hands up. Cyan and Sunshine would be cross to find new injuries on me, but Snuggle could patch up small things like these easily. The volunteer grabbed some gloves for herself and began to help me- mostly by cleaning up the dust when I couldn’t. Her movements were swift, quick.

“This is so terrible,” I sighed rubbing my cheeks dry again, “Jesus fucking Christ this is terrible.”

She made a small, pathetic noise of agreement. My heart went out to her. She worked here. She had to have known more than a few of the bitties on a personal level.

“GJ?” Tinsel tottered over silently crying.

“Hey sweetie,” I picked Tinsel up, “What’s wrong?”

“I don’t like this,” He sniffled. He leaned close and whispered to me, “Can I hide in your hood?”
When no one was looking I slid the little guy into my hood. He was too young to deal with this shit in the first place.

“Where did the little hybrid go?” The volunteer asked.

“Tinsel’s taking a nap now. All of this mess… it’s too much for him.” I sighed.

“I hope he feels better soon.” She held the bag open so we could get the metal fragments from the window sill picked up, “We’re almost done.”

“Still have to tape cardboard over the windows though,” I sighed, “And someone needs to clean that disgusting graffiti off.”

“That next?” The volunteer offered.

“Sure.” I nodded.

We finished up patching the windows up when Velour called me over. I gave the volunteer a sad grin and a promise to be back quickly.

“Hey Velour,” The Monster looked slightly better. Most of the bitties had calmed down enough to eat and sleep at this point, “Before you talk, I’m thinking of contacting some of my buddies who run a bodyguard business. Have a couple dozen burly guys watch over the place until this all blows over?”

The guys were clients of mine, and more than a few had bitties of their own. They’d help out with smiles.

“Oh Miss Newmore,” Velour’s paw covered her heart, “You’ve done so much for us already.”

“Nonsense.” I chuckled weakly, “If I had, you guys wouldn’t be in this mess. Now, what did you need?”

“Two things. One: Thank you.” Velour’s smile was genuine, “You mean a lot to us here.”

“It’s not a problem.” I insisted, “Will these bitties end up like the ones from the fighting rings?”

Basically, I was asking if they would ever find homes. Most of the ones from the fighting rings were too feral, vicious, or petrified to find actual homes. These bitties almost died, so I could understand them forever hating humans.

“We don’t know.” Velour rubbed her temples, “We won’t know until time has passed.”

“Let me know if I can help.” I said firmly.

“I’ll put you on speed dial,” Velour said wryly, desperately trying to lighten the mood. Her face quickly clouded over though, “I’m… I’m sure you’re wondering why all of this is happening. Why you’re being targeted like us.”

“I do,” I nodded, “But it’s not like you guys know any…” I blinked as Velour shied away, “You guys do know something.”

“We do.” Velour sighed, “It’s just… It’s classified information, and… I’m trying to get you clearance. I swear. You deserve answers.”
“Damn right I do,” That fury from earlier was directing itself towards Velour. I desperately tried to reign it in. I thought I should try anger management classes again.

“I’ll go over everything with you as soon as I get permission,” Velour promised, “It’s taking some time since the other monsters aren’t too excited about sharing. What we’ve got going on…it’s a big deal Miss Newmore.”

“Is it by any chance that “dark plan” the psycho running the bitty fighting rings is worried about?” I asked. Velour’s eyes widened.

“It’s nothing malicious! We’re…we’re trying to save lives.” Velour said lamely, “I can’t say more now…will you please wait?”

“I’ll cooperate.” I sighed, “You guys know I’d do anything for bitties or monsters.”

“Miss Newmore?” The human volunteer tapped me on the shoulder, “Could you come help me gather the supplies we need to clean up the graffiti? It’s scaring bitty owners. Velour? Our pressure washer is in the back right?”

“Oh,” Velour blinked, “Yes, it is. Lucy, please handle the heavy duty washing. Miss Newmore is still recovering.”

“Velour,” I griped playfully, “I already have all of my bitties babying me. I don’t need you to do it too.”

“I won’t have you busting your stitches or cracking a rib,” Velour waggled a furred…finger? I don’t know…at me.

“Fine, fine.” I patted Velour on the hand, “Things will work out, and we’re definitely talking later.”

“Of course,” Velour nodded.

“Boys?” I called out to my bitties. They all looked at me with sad but warm eyes, “I’m going to be outside cleaning okay? Behave.”

After I got a few quiet “yes” responses, I followed Lucy into the back of the Bitty CC. I noticed an elevator at the very back of the hallway and wondered if it led to a basement. Plenty of the buildings in the city had a few basement areas, and I could see the Bitty CC needing one or two for supplies and bitty lodgings…potential lodgings that would probably be filled with scarred, terrified bitties. My stomach roiled as I followed Lucy into one of the storage closets in the back. The pressure washer was right by the door, and Lucy quickly located it.

“Could you grab the soaps?” Lucy asked fiddling with the washer.

“Sure.” I stared at the jug of soap wondering how painful it would be to carry it.

I heard a gun safety click. My back tensed.

“Finally,” Lucy sighed, “Got you alone.”

I looked over my shoulder to find the usually ditzy volunteer pointing a revolver at me in the dim light of the closet.

Well shit.
“So, your brother wasn’t the only one involved with that hate group.” I questioned.

“Of course not,” Lucy snorted, “He can’t count past ten on a good day. The only way we were making any money off of that fighting ring bullshit was because I took over.”

*I hate you bitch.* My eyes narrowed.

“Oh does that make you angry?” She said teasingly, “Did you know the monsters had all of these rooms soundproofed? I could shoot you six times and still be able to get out of the city before they found your body.”

“Then why haven’t you done it yet?” My voice was icy.

“I’m a practical woman Miss Newmore,” The way she said my name made my skin crawl. It was too sweet, too innocent sounding to come out of her mouth, “You have some things I want, and you have cash I can pull from.”

“So kidnapping my bitties and blackmailing me for life?” I cocked a brow, “That’s your plan? How do you intend to work that out? Especially since you tried to kill me.”

“That was my brother,” Lucy rolled her eyes, “The idiot didn’t realize how useful you’d be to us alive.”

“You can’t always have a gun at my back you know.” I reminded her. She didn’t even flinch.

“Do you know Nadia still goes jogging every day?” Lucy smiled at me, “One of my boys knows her route inside and out. All it’ll take is a quick text, and he’ll rip that baby out of her stomach and mail it to you.”

I snarled at her.

“Or perhaps I should have them burn down dear Olivia’s home. She often keeps that window open after all. A Molotov cocktail would work wonders in all of that cotton,” Lucy mused, “That’s not counting dear Granny, or Leo, or Tyrone, or the other people you care for. I have a list of way to deal with them if you don’t cooperate.”

“In a few days, you won’t have enough men for this to work.” I commented, "The police are flushing them out like rats.”

“It’s easy finding people who hate monsters. It’s even easier once I tell them all about that little plan of theirs I heard you sign up for,” Lucy pressed the gun against my back, “So dirty monster fucker, tell me, do you get off on the idea of your people struggling? Those monsters plan on waking something up, and I’m willing to bet it’s some kind of weapon to finish the war we started all those years ago. Do you really want to be the human who helped monsters destroy all of humankind?”

“They aren’t like that.” I protested. I felt Tinsel stir in my hood. Sweat dripped down my neck as I hoped and prayed he’d stay silent, “Monsters are far kinder than humans most days.”

“Tell that to my father,” Lucy hissed, “The day after monsters were freed from behind the barrier, he was killed.”

“By a monster?” I questioned.

“Oh the police say it was a human, but what human could leave marks like that?” Lucy
asked with a mad look in her eye.

“A human with a knife.” I jerked when she pressed the gun further into my spine. *You’re dealing with a psycho idiot.* I bit back a wince. *Her logic only has to make sense to her for it to be right.*

“Don’t test me.” Lucy snarled, “Enough questions. You’re going to hand over the hybrid and your meek after we exit this room. I also want the edgy and ray who produced the hybrid and the meek’s companion. It’s easier to control thoughts when you have leverage.”

I said nothing.

“Then you’re going to pay me to not have everyone you love killed,” Lucy’s eyes twinkled with amusement. She waved the gun away from my body as she talked with animated gestures. I felt Tinsel’s weight in my hood disappear, but she was too busy ranting to notice the bulge in my hood disappear, “I’ll use it get rid of those monsters one by one. They’ll all pay. They’re going to regret ever-”

Raze teleported into the room and ripped the gun right out of unaware Lucy’s hand. She shrieked in anger as she whirled around. Raze teleported the gun away and side stepped her kick.

“*you.*” Raze snarled, “*i thought ya looked familiar. yer the bitch that would throw sunshine around all the time.*”

“Glad to see you remember me.” Lucy drew out a knife. I relaxed. Guns terrified me, but I could handle a knife, “Surprising, since you two were so drugged up half the time, and it’s not like I ever showed my face.”

“hard to forget the bitch who abused my mate.” Raze snarled, "*yer gonna pay for his scars.*"

Lucy moved to strike at him with the knife, but I ran my battered body into hers. The knife flew from her hand onto the floor. Lucy stumbled with shock. My body throbbed with pain, but my fist flew into her face.

Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Every single strike made me just get angrier. This was the bitch that hurt my bitties. This was the bitch who controlled the bitty fighting rings, the human hate groups. It felt so good to pummel her.

Eventually, police officers pulled me off her. When they showed up, I couldn’t say. They struggled to calm me down as Lucy was put into the back of a police car looking like a big bruise. The police decided to take her to a nearby hospital before throwing her in a jail cell.

“Miss Newmore,” The officer in front of me tried to hold my attention again. My gaze wouldn’t leave Lucy’s form though. That bitch had better not walk, “*Miss Newmore.*”

“Josephine!”

“ari!”

“ophie.”

“Miss Josie? Are you alright?”
“j-jo-jo-jojo!”

“GJ!”

Snuggle’s warm arms wrapped around my ankle as the rest of my bitties joined Raze and I. They curled up in my arms clinging to my hoodie. Finally, something pulled me away from the hot flames of hatred burning in my body.

I still wanted more—more blood, more cracks in Lucy’s bones, more of her pain.

But I wanted to take care of my bitties more.

“Miss Newmore?” The officer tried again.


“That’s understandable.” The police officer nodded, “Can you walk me through what happened?”

I began to tell him in detail what had happened and why.

By the end of it, the police had their evil mastermind. After they finished busting the bitty rings, they’d have a massive case on their hands. I would make damn sure these people were in bars for years for this.

I had to go down to the station to speak with the police more, but I cast one final look back at the Bitty CC. Velour stood at the door looking out at me with a sad smile.

My eyes narrowed in warning. I wanted answers. What had Lucy so crazed? What were they trying to do?

I was going to get them.

One way or another.

“Josephine?” Sunshine’s finger’s touched my chin, “Mommy?”

“Hi sweetie,” I let the slip slide. This was the second time in about sixteen days my life had been in danger. The stress had to be eating at all of them.

“Why are you growling?” Sunshine asked.

“Because I’ve spent too much time emulating Raze,” I forced the joke from my lips, “It’s starting to become my natural angry response.”

None of my bitties laughed. I couldn’t blame them.

Our life most certainly wasn’t fucking funny right now.
123.

123 bat shit crazy people had wanted me dead at some point.

_Lovely._

“You were good in there,” Tyrone wrapped an arm around my shoulders as we finally exited the courtroom, “Leave the rest to us okay?”

“Sure.” I sighed wrapping an arm around his waist. My painkillers weren’t doing their job for some reason, so my entire body just throbbed with pain. I leaned against Tyrone to catch my breath some, “I’ll admit…I wasn’t expecting that number to be _that_ high.”

“It was a big group.” Tyrone ran his fingers through my hair soothingly, “They're also all going to be behind bars by the end of tomorrow.”

“Good.” Those bastards didn’t even deserve the sunlight that would pour into their cells in prison.

Tyrone offered to walk me home, but I knew he needed to get back to the courthouse in a timely manner. I had a _very_ important stop I needed to make. He seemed reluctant to let me wander off on my given my injuries. It took some convincing to drive him back into the courthouse. Victory favored me in the end though.

I had just sent him off back into the court house when a large light flooded me from behind. I turned and blinked when thousands of cameras went off.

“Miss Newmore!”

“-a few questions!”

“How did you learn of this organization’s wrong doings?”

“Why didn’t you act sooner?”

“Are you a monster sympathizer?”

I just stared at the mob of reporters for a few minutes. Then, I turned on my heel and walked around them.
“No comment.” I said tucking my hands into my pockets and pulling my hood up. I was glad I had left my bitties back in my apartment with Leo and Ember. Raze would probably lose his shit if he saw this.

“Really Miss Newmore!”

“They have stories that need to be told!”

“Don’t you care about bitties?”

I whirled around and glared at the woman stupid enough to ask me that.

“You listen to me.” I stepped closer- not close enough to be perceived as threatening though- to the reporter, “I love my bitties. I sure as hell care for all bitties. I don’t love you lot diving on me instead of interviewing the traumatized monsters who run the Bitty CC! Their still having to have repairs done, but I don’t see you jumping over each other to cover that story. You’ll get a proper interview when you drop the double standards.”

I left the reporters jotting down some skewed version of what I just said. The pro-monster media would use me as their new martyr- fun- while the anti-monster crowd would twist what I said into something else entirely. I really couldn’t muster up enough fucks to go back and clarify though.

Most people didn’t recognize me with my hood up. I’d probably never be able to wear this identifiable hoodie in public again, but for now it was enough camouflage to dodge armature reporters, assholes, or “good Samaritans” that wanted publicity. Velour had managed to get me some clearance apparently, so I would be getting some answers.

Not all of them though.

*It’s not Velour’s fault.* I reminded myself firmly. *Besides, it’s understandable monsters wouldn’t eagerly accept human help given our past.*

I also knew that it was the monsters up top who didn’t have faith in me. The bitty techs who saw me every time we all came in for check-ups and visits all seemed to like me. I at least hoped they would trust me enough with something like this.

The Bitty CC had replaced its windows, but the graffiti was being repainted every night by some people. I scowled at the horrible slurs marring the wall. *Disgusting.*

The inside of the scarred building looked better as well - if a bit empty. The only bitties in the pens were either newly born or bitties returned by their previous owners after all of this shit had gone down. The ones who had witnessed and survived the attack were being held by the bitty techs for potential rehabilitation or life time in house care.

“Miss Newmore,” Karli looked up from her computer the instant I walked in the door, “Velour has been waiting for you.”

I could hear the strain in the small bunny monster’s voice. The hesitation in her eyes forced me to smile.

“Well,” My nose twitched some at the intense air freshener in the building, “I’m sorry to keep her waiting. Dealing with all of those bastards involved with the bitty rings took longer than expected.”

“I’m sorry you’ve been drug into this,” Karli sighed.
“It’s not your fault,” I patted the top of her paw, “Besides, I’d do anything for you guys.”

Karli gave me an actual smile this time.

“Karli has Miss- Oh Miss Newmore,” Velour entered from the back hallway, “You’ve finally arrived.”

“Sorry for the delay,” I nodded politely, “Got caught up in the courtroom.”

“That’s fine,” Velour waved her paws frantically, “It’s…I….oh….”

“Deep breaths,” I offered walking over and patting her on the shoulder, “Just breathe Velour.”

“I’m sorry,” Velour took a steadying breath, “Please follow me. We can’t discuss these things here in case a bitty owner comes in.”

“Of course.” I tucked my hands into my pockets and followed the lithe squirrel into the back of the building. I fought the urge to cringe upon seeing the door to the closet where Lucy had held me at gunpoint. For a moment, I swore I could still feel the barrel of the gun pressed against my back.

Velour led me straight to the elevator though. I knew the Bitty CC had a second floor for office space, but I did not know that it had five underground floors. Velour pressed ‘3’ and the door closed.

“Holy shit,” I blinked as we actually began to move down.

“The first two floors are for the CC,” Velour explained, “The first holds supplies, and the second houses excess, traumatized, or sickly bitties.”

“And ‘3’?” I questioned.

“You know there’s more than one way for a bitty to be created right?” Velour asked.

“Yeah,” I nodded.

“This is that second method.”

The elevator finally dinged to a stop. It opened up into a large lab filled with cylindrical tanks. Nine of them filled the room from ceiling to about three feet above the floor. Below them were glass containers filled with soft silk. I watched as a small cherry dropped from one of the tanks into the glass container. I approached one and saw it was filled with wild flames. The flames twisted, whirled, danced, fought for space in the tank at a leisurely pace. The flames were all expanding from a single center that was slowly sinking. Leaning in closer I saw the thin outline of a grillbitty being formed. “Holy shit.”

“What the hell?” I looked at the tanks in horror. I watched as a small cherry dropped from one of the tanks into the glass container. A Bitty tech hurried over and collected the blurry eyed bitty from the tank. The tech quickly gave the bitty a once over before heading to the elevator Velour and I stepped out of. The monster gasped upon seeing me in the room, but Velour’s quiet look stopped all questioning.

“Please don’t be alarmed about this set up,” Velour rested a paw on my shoulder, “Bitties aren’t really coherent until around three hours after being created this way. They don’t even remember this room most of the time.”
“What is going on Velour?” I asked, “What is that stuff?”

“Erratic magic removed from—“ Velour paused, “I can’t say that part yet, so we’ll just call them…sources. The source magic became corrupted in a way. It causes the magic to go haywire and form these globs of stray magic. This magic was slowly choking the source’s life force. We had to act quickly, so we removed the wild magic from the sources as best we could. Upon being removed, this magic will continue to grow infinitely. As it grows though, older parts stabilize and form bitties.”

“So if it grows infinitely…you have an infinite number of bitties,” My brain struggled to make sense of this magic dick fuckery.

“Yes. We’re also constantly drawing more from the sources.” Velour sighed, “We actually have three of the sources on the fifth floor down, but you don’t have clearance yet.”

“I see.” I stared at the tanks, “So what does Snuggle or Tinsel have to do with any of this?”

“We’re trying to stabilize it,” Velour sighed.

“I thought it stabilizes naturally as is?”

“The source,” Velour clarified, “We’re trying to stabilize the source of bitties. Tinsel is a unique hybrid. We’ve never seen two bitties from different sources successfully reproduce without human interference, yet Tinsel was born. Sure, he was broken in places, but he’s stable. Somehow.”

“And that’s what you want. You want to know how he’s stable despite his magic technically not fusing.”

“It hasn’t fused at all!” Velour threw her hands up in exasperation, “His edgy magic and his ray magic are completely separate with one wrapping around the other, yet he’s so stable only extremely strong bitty magic can even begin to penetrate his magical aura. He’s the poster boy for stability, and I have an inkling Snuggle had something to with that. His healing magic somehow let the two magics at least coexist in harmony. I need to learn how this all happened though.”

“Huh,” I really needed to sit down, “Is there an open chair anywhere?”

“Oh of course,” Velour blushed and led me over to one of the scientist’s rolling chairs. She shooed the dog monster away to let me sit down, “I’m sorry. I know this must be a lot for you to take in.”

“A bit,” I calmly counted backwards from 100, “The tests you want to run on Tinsel…they wouldn’t hurt him right?”

“Of course not!” Velour actually looked offended, “We’d never risk the bitties safety. If they get harmed trying to find a cure for the source we’ve failed as scientists.”

“I see,” I rubbed my temples, “I see.”

“I’m not going to ask anything extra of you,” Velour sat down on the desk beside me, “All I’ll ask is that you’ll keep bringing Tinsel in for his weekly check-ups. Every little bit of new information I can gather will help.”

“I can do that.” I leaned back into the chair, “Jeez. I was expecting something odd, but…not this crazy. Fuck me.”

“I’m sorry.” Velour said again.
“It’s not your fault,” I sighed.

Silence fell through the lab. The whirring machinery did little for my frayed nerves as I tried to make sense of the madness before me. This was the second way bitties were formed. They just dropped out of erratic, destructive, unstable magic like it was nothing…guess that beats out the human stork story any day.

“I must ask that you keep all of this private,” Velour cleared her throat awkwardly to get my attention, “Even from your bitties. At least for now. I…technically wasn’t even supposed to show you this yet.”

“Velour,” I scolded her, “You shouldn’t have put yourself at risk.”

“I’m not,” Velour held her hands up defensively, “They need me to keep the Bitty CC in this city running after all. I’ll probably get docked on my next paycheck though.”

“Velour.”

“You deserved to know at least a little bit,” Velour continued on, “I know that it doesn’t answer much, but I hope it’s enough for now. I don’t even know how Lucy heard about the sources to begin with. I’ll have to tighten our security more.”

“It’s enough Velour,” I stood up and put my hands on her shoulders, “Thank you for telling me this much- even though it’s not everything. I won’t tell a soul, promise.”

“I can always rely on you can’t I?” Velour offered me a wan smile, “Well, thank you for listening to me….and not freaking out. I should…get you out of here before my boss shows up though.”

Velour led me back up to the Bitty CC lobby. Thankfully, some of the bitty owners in the city had stayed loyal. A few customers filled the waiting area.

“All done?” Karli asked anxiously.

“For now,” Velour nodded.

“Oh thank the stars.” Karli sighed, “You’re going to get into so much trouble Vel.”

I glared at the squirrel.

“I’ll be fine,” Velour soothed, “You should get back to your bitties though.”

“I should,” I nodded in agreement, “Take it easy you two. I’ll work on those paintings as soon as the doc says I can use both my arms at full capacity again.”

The two monsters waved good-bye as I left.

Why can’t my life be simple? I thought to myself, walking home. It’s always something. Fate…you just hate my guts don’t you? Well fuck you too asshole.

I was in the lobby of my apartment building when my phone rang.

“Hello?” I asked waiting in front of the elevators. The damn things always cut my calls off mid-conversa-

“Josephine.” My mother’s familiar icy voice made want to burn my phone, “You finally
answered.”

I glared at my phone and checked to see that I did indeed have six missed calls from her.

“I was in an area with bad reception earlier,” I would not apologize. She was lucky I even answered the damn phone in the first place, “What do you want?”

“Must you always be so blunt?” Clara sighed like I had actually disappointed her, “Your father and I are have a brunch this Saturday. You’ll be expected there like your sisters.”

“Why the sudden desire to meet with the family?” I cocked my head, “It’s not like you cared when Edgar- oh wait,” A large grin covered my face, “Edgar stole what…four million dollars from you guys and ran to some European country? Funny how you timed this just right.”

“Josephine,” She hissed viciously, “We will not be discussing such matters over the phone. Especially since I can hear that you’re in a crowd.”

“What? Afraid to let the city know the Newmore dirty laundry?”

“Enough. Be at the brunch or else.”

“Or else what?”

“I’ll ruin your business.”

“I’ll sue you for slander or libel and win. Tyrone Jones is my lawyer after all.”

“I’ll have Nadia removed from her current position.”

“Good luck with that. Her current boss has been gunning to have her work for him for years. You can’t touch her or Olivia at all.”

I could practically see my mother grasping for straws.

“Yeah, I won’t be going,” I declared, “And I don’t think Nadia or Olivia will eith-“

“I guess the bitty your father and I picked up will just have to be left at some pet shelter then,” The quick words cut me off.

“Bitty?” My parents hated monsters.

“You’re fond of them aren’t you? We figured we’d give it to you.” My mother said innocently.

“Fuck you,” I growled.

“If you won’t show up to collect him-“

“I’ll be at the damn brunch.” I grumbled, “If you hurt this bitty I swear to God-“

“The bitty will be fine. It’s a…cherry? I think. It cries a lot at least. You already have one of those don’t you? Taking in another won’t be too hard.”

“I hate you.” I said simply. There was no way in hell I would leave a little cherry behind in their grubby hands.
“Be at the brunch.”

“I already said I would.” I snapped.

“Good.” With that, Clara hung up the phone.

“God dammit.” I launched my phone into the wall. It shattered. The people in the lobby turned to look at me, “What? It’s not like I hurt the wall!”

They all wisely looked away.

I hopped into the elevator after gathering up the remnants of my formerly new phone. My feet guided me to my apartment quickly.

“Miss Joan?” Ember looked up at me as I stormed into the apartment.

“Josie?” Leo appeared from my kitchen wearing a ridiculous chemistry themed apron.

I stalked over to him and just pulled him into a hug. He let me scream my frustration into his shoulder.

“Your parents called?”

I nodded.

“I’m sorry.”

So was I.
Disclaimer: I own nothing. (Except for Tinsel). Buttonberry was created by @button-tale on tumblr. Here’s a link to their amazing blog: http://button-tale.tumblr.com/

And Jo's final bitty is introduced. (There is a book two following Nadia for the people interested in her, so that's where other bitties will pop up). BTW His nickname is pronounced "deh-ss" like saying December with out the ember.

I'm actually about six chapters ahead writing wise. That way I can update even if I get slammed with work later on. I'm going to stick with three-six chapters a week until this story is wrapped up. I'm also outlining the first nine or so chapters of Nadia's story as well. I also have a variety of Addendum chapters to write. Sooo....yeeahh... :P This schedule works best because it lets me relax more often without burning out as quickly.


“Josephine.” My father’s voice cut through my mental chanting.

I opened my eyes and looked around the gaudy café with disdain filling my very being. The entire place screamed “superiority complex” and stank of some shitty “exotic” fragrance that irritated my nose.

“Hello,” I kept my voice businesslike as I approached the table. I would resist the urge to fling myself across the table and just cuss the two of them out. I dammit. For one thing, it could hurt my bitties, and, for another, it would technically be attempted murder. My parents weren’t worth going to prison over.

“Jojo.” Olivia said excitedly. Her smile didn’t quite reach her eyes though. Harley sat glaring at my parents while Hiro tried his best to make Cesar crack a smile. Nadia looked back at me with bare anxiety in her gaze, “You’re here!”

“Sorry,” I shrugged, “Ember is a bit sick, so Leo asked me to pick him up some medication.”

Leo didn’t mean to drop the text on me out of the blue. He just had hundreds of papers to grade. Needless to say, I helped my best friend out before coming to this shit fest.

“Is he okay?” Olivia asked tugging my chair out for me to sit in.

“Just a slight fever because of the colder weather,” I waved away her concerns. The chair looked comfortable and welcoming, but it was actually rather uncomfortable. Kind of like this situation really, “Sunny’s feeling a bit under the weather himself.”

Sunshine blinked up at me blearily. All of the cold moisture left him dazed. The edgy magic in Tinsel protected him from such reactions to weather changes luckily. Raze cradled his mate close once I sat the two of them down on the table.
“cyan!” Hiro turned his attention to my curly and cherry, “idjit! how marvelous to see you again!”

Cyan and Idjit quietly groaned as they were pulled into a squishing embrace. Waltzer chuckled and Tinsel just stared at Hiro and Harley curiously.

“don’t remember them?” Blake asked looking up at the now physically fully grown hybrid. Standing at 5 ½ inches tall, Tinsel had become the second tallest bitty of the bunch after his daddy. His face had lost just a bit of its roundness, but his body was still that of a sans type, “you were small enough for idjit to hold you when they last visited.”

“Hey scamp,” Harley stood up from where he sat and walked over to Tinsel, “You grew up fast didn’t you?”

“fast learner too,” Blake grinned, “still a bit off with the teleporting though.”

“I’m Harley kid,” Harley held his hand out. Tinsel shuffled on his feet timidly and looked at the rest of my bitties for permission, “I don’t bite.”

“It’s okay sweetie,” Sunshine said comfortingly.

Tinsel shyly shook Harley’s hand before attempting to head over to Idjit.

“greetings!” Hiro stood in front of him, “it is magnificent to see you again my dear cousin!”

Tinsel stopped in horror. Raze’s magic wrapped around the hyperactive blue berry.

“he’s got real creaky ribs kid,” Raze- reluctantly- gently sat him down instead of flinging him into a wall, “be gentle.”

My mother cleared her throat before our bitties could start another round of antics. Harley quickly tugged Hiro behind him while Raze snapped his teeth at her.

“We didn’t call you all here for a bitty meeting,” She scolded us like she had some right to, “We need to discuss the future of the business.”

“What future is there to discuss?” Cesar crossed his arms, “you abandoned your heir, cut your back up out of your lives, and ruined your youngest child’s opinion of you.”

“yer fucked,” Raze agreed, “thoroughly.”

“We didn’t ask the opinion of you little brats.” My father’s fist slammed onto the table. Tinsel and Cyan flinched. Waltzer’s arm wrapped around Cyan’s waist comfortably. Blake stepped in front of Tinsel and Snuggle protectively, “Dammit. This is your fault.” My father glared at me.

“my fault?” I blinked, “What?”

“These damn things,” My father gestured to the bitties. He kept one hand clamped over something though, so that hand stayed still. His voice was getting louder, “You’re the one who got one first. Now Olivia and Nadia are just as obsessed with the damn th-“

“Quiet. Down.” I said quietly through gritted teeth just loud enough to cut through his ranting, “Curlies are sensitive to loud noises, and you’re making people stare at us.”

“You will not tell me what to do young lady.” My father snarled, “I’m-“
“a piece of shit.” Waltzer interrupted.

My father’s hand raised towards my bitty. I was faster. My stronger fingers were wrapped around his fat wrist within seconds.

“Do not make crack your wrist old man,” I warned, “I’ll do it to because technically you’re trying to destroy my property. I can get you thrown behind bars in a heartbeat. Keep your meaty paws to yourself.”

“Enough Daniel,” Clara- Not mother Jo. Daniel isn’t your father either- sighed, “You’re just making her preen. She loves causing us trouble.”

“maybe because you make it so easy?” Blake offered with a malicious grin. My more protective bitties- Harley and Cesar joined in as well- looked ready to rip my parents a few holes in new places.

Damn. I thought placing my arms in front of my bitties to discourage this kind of behavior. I knew things would devolve, but shit. They’re pissing me off faster than normal.

Even when I was younger, my parents and I rarely spoke with even voices. “Civil” discussions always ended in a screaming match that I would usually win. They never spoke softly with me or pulled any verbal punches. My thick skin had to come from somewhere after all.

“What do we have to do with the future of the company?” Nadia’s voice was steady despite her apparent discomfort and anxiety, “You’ve given control over to outsiders.”

“Edgar only became an outsider after you impulsively insulted him,” Clara snorted, “You shouldn’t be sleeping around Nadia. It reflects poorly on our ima-“

“I didn’t sleep around,” Nadia snapped. Then she blinked in horror upon realized who she had just snapped at. I literally applauded her aloud.

“Good job.” I reached over and patted her hair, “You’re getting better at the whole “Fuck our parents” thing aren’t you dear?”

“Nadia wouldn’t do anything like that,” Even Olivia’s patience had worn thin at this point.

Dear fate? Was this happening? Were we all about to tell our parents to fuck off to the pits of hell to be fucked by barbed cocks for all we gave a damn?

_Hallelujah._

“MOTHER WORKED TOO MUCH FOR SUCH DISTRACTIONS,” Cesar growled, “PERHAPS YOUR BUSINESS WOULDN’T BE FAILING IF YOU WORKED HALF AS HARD AS SHE DOES.”

“She kept her business in the black,” Clara crossed her hands over each other in the table, “That’s hardly impressive.”

“She kept it in the black _despite_ Edgar blowing their money right and left,” I corrected.

“None of his projects paid out,” Nadia agreed, “Not a single one.”

“You look stronger with a husband,” Daniel protested, “Now you’re just a harlot with someone’s bastard.”
“My nephew is not a bastard!” Olivia’s hand flew to her chest. I saw her hesitate before spitting out the next bit of her sentence, “But you’re one!”

I patted Olivia on the back.

“Now, now Livvy,” I ruffled her hair, “You’re too sweet to be mean. Leave this to me and Nadia.” I looked back our parents, “If you’re so angry at us, why did you even call this meeting?”

“Because you’re going to fix this obviously,” Clara tossed her hair over shoulder. The damn wasp of a woman needed to quit acting like she was 20, “Nadia, you’re going to abort the bastard, say you were never pregnant, and rejoin the company. Olivia, you’ll stop preparing to open this foolish restaurant and work in the company. Josephine, you’re going to quit your job as well and work as Nadia’s secretary. A lot of our clients and backers are pulling out seeing how divided we are, so we’ll put up a united front.”

“Burn in hell.” I stated bluntly.

“Fuck off.” Nadia spat clutching her stomach protectively.

“Not a chance!” Olivia’s face was red with anger.

Clara and Daniel actually seemed shocked that we said no.

“Do you forget who you’re talking to?” Daniel growled.

The glass of water beside him flung its contents into his face. I looked to my left and saw Harley’s eyes glowing orange. Cesar was snarling in front of Nadia protectively, and Hiro patted Olivia’s wrist comfortingly. Raze, Blake, and Waltzer had stepped closer to my parents. I could see the magic crawling around their fingers. Sunshine, Cyan, Snuggle, and Idjit hung back hiding behind my arms.

Tinsel then decided to take a bite out of Daniel’s arm.

Wait… When did my precious baby Tinsel get over there!? He was too quiet for his own good sometimes. Shhhiiiiiiitttt!!

“Ah!” Daniel roared looking down at the furious bitty biting down on his arm hard enough to draw blood. His hand released whatever he was holding to pull away from Tinsel’s flaming fangs. The hybrid’s malformed eye glowed with a dark red light, and I could see soft light pulsing through his sweater from his cracks. Tinsel quickly grabbed up the small bitty that Daniel had unintentionally released. Clara went to strike at my baby, but Raze was much faster. He tugged Tinsel and the new bitty out of range with expert precision.

The new bitty- dressed in a simple over-sized t-shirt that probably belonged on a Barbie doll somewhere- clung to Tinsel desperately. It was a small bitty. A sans type if the skull was anything to go by. My jaw dropped when the little bitty looked up though.

He had buttons for eyes.

Motherfucking buttons for eyes. WHAT THE HELL!?

He held one of said button eyes protectively as he looked up at me warily.

“What the hell did you do him?” I growled at my parents while tugging my more passive bitties closer. Snuggle looked at the thin trail of blood leaking from the new bitty’s eye for half of a
second before placing his hand on the bitty’s skull. The little guy—he was tinier than Idjit for fuck’s sake—flinched at first. He calmed upon realizing that he was being healed.

“We found him like that,” Clara looked down her nose at me, “Someone had thrown him in the trash, and he was causing a fuss.”

I was about to kill a bitch.

Olivia and Nadia clamped their hands down on my arms before I could swing though. Smart, smart girls. Sadly, they forgot about three certain bitties….

My parents squealed like the worthless pigs they were when the legs on their chairs snapped. Blake and Waltzer shared an evil, victorious grin while my parents struggled to right themselves. Some of the waiters hurried over and quickly murmured apologizes about their weak chairs and offered to pay for any hospital bills.

Raze then took my mother’s glass of water and poured it over her head, ruining her hairspray and painted on face in the process.

“the outside matches the inside now,” Blake laughed.

“You!” Clara swatted the helpful hands of the waiters trying to help her as she stood up, “You are disowned for this Josephine!”

“Okay,” I shrugged and collected my bitties, “I disowned you years ago. You haven’t meant a damn thing to me since I was an eight year old trying to get my little sister to a reputable babysitter, so I could go to school. You’ve been out of my life just about completely since you condemned me for pursuing an art degree. Sooo….whatever.”

“How dare you! We made you what you are.” Daniel almost looked like he was going to have a heart attack.

“In a way? You have, but trust me when I promise you it’s not the way you’re thinking.” I made sure that the new bitty was tucked safely in my hood with Snuggle, Idjit, and Cyan, “Congratulations on creating an antithesis to your ideology without even trying.”

“let’s go home,” Waltzer still looked like he wanted to cause more mischief. He resisted the temptation though. Unlike a certain beanie wearing bitty who snapped one of my mother’s heels which made her fall down again. Dammit Blake.

I turned and left the table. People were staring. A few were filming the whole scene. For a moment, I feared I’d be turning my back alone, but I soon heard the clicking of my sisters’ heels behind me.

“You’re nothing without our last name!” Clara shrieked, “You won’t survive without our money either!”

“We’re already something, and we’ve already accomplished a lot,” Olivia called back charmingly, “Have a good afternoon Mom.”

Nadia shook silently as she followed the two of us out of the building.

The midday air had warmed slightly compared to the chill of the morning. It was a hell of a lot more welcoming and comforting.
“is the button-eyed bitty alright my Amazing Aunt?” Hiro bounced on Olivia’s shoulder anxiously, “i spotted blood earlier!”

“He’s fine,” Cyan called out, “Terrified, but fine.”

“Speaking of the emotional state of bitties,” I angled my head to look at Tinsel. The young bitty sat between his parents stewing in silence on my shoulder, “Tinsel?”

“GJ?” His eyes focused on mine, “Huh?”

“Are you okay baby?” I asked.

“….Yes,” Tinsel blushed bright yellow, “I’m sorry I bit your papa.”

“He deserved it,” Nadia and I said at the same time. We stared at each other for a couple of seconds. It had been a while since we had the whole twin-telepathy thing going on.

“I can’t believe they actually thought we’d just show up and bend to their demands,” Olivia’s usually sweet, angelic face twisted into an angry snarl, “No. I can believe it actually. Ugh.”

“DO ALL HUMANS MAKE HABIT OF TRYING TO PUSH THEIR BETTERS AROUND?” Cesar questioned Nadia from her gentle grasp.

“Some,” Nadia’s eyes unfocused as she drifted off, “What will happen to the company now? They don’t have an heir…unless they give it to one of our cousins.”

“Catherine’s kids can barely wipe their asses,” I laughed, “They’d destroy the company within weeks of being in charge.”

“True,” Nadia bit her lip, “Our parents gave up a lot to bring their business up so high…. We did reap the benefits of it….”

“Oh we most certainly had it easier financially than most people,” I agreed, “I’ll never claim otherwise. Mommy and daddy dearest sacrificed too much though- way too much- to get ahead in life.”

My sisters nodded silently in agreement.

We fell into calm chatter about Christmas fast approaching. Granny would be in Germany for Christmas, and we weren’t exactly welcome at our parents anymore. In the end, we agreed to just celebrate on our own this year.

I said good-bye to the two of them when we began to pass the Bitty CC. The new bitty needed to be examined after all.

“Miss Newmore?” Karli looked up at me curiously, “Tinsel’s next appointment is next week.”

“Not here for Tinsel,” I reached back and carefully plucked the new bitty from my hood. The little baby trembled in the palm of my hand, “This guy here is…well…new. I don’t even know what kind of bitty he is.”

Karli looked the little guy from me.

“He’s a human bred one- a buttonberry,” Karli answered. She called out to one of the bitty techs in the back, “Make sure…what’s his name?”
“Huh?” I had no clue, “Sweetie? What’s your name?”

The buttonberry looked up at me from Karli’s paws. He shied away, but he did shake his head.

“Do you not have one?” I asked. He nodded, “Ah well..ummmm….shiiittt…December?”

“really ari?” Blake said wryly, “december?”

“We could call him Dec for short?” I offered weakly, “I can’t name things.”

December looked up at me from Karli’s grasp. Blake smiled at him comfortingly.

“Don’t worry. We’ll make sure you’re okay,” I promised before they took him to the back.

December was a bit malnourished, but he was otherwise alright. Snuggle had fixed his eye injury easily. He still curled in on himself timidly however. Since anxiety kept him from speaking, we didn’t know his story.

We really didn’t need to know it though. He’d have a home either way.

December sat on the desk statue still. I spoke with Karli about how to get his body back up to speed, and my bitties were taking a break on the desk as well. Tinsel had begun to doze off against Raze’s shoulder out of boredom. Idjit stared at December from where Cyan and Waltzer were quietly talking about something. He shuffled over edging past Blake and Snuggle.

“d-dec?” Idjit offered a small hand to the new bitty, “we sho-o-ould ge-et you s-some n-ne-ew clothes.”

December looked down at Idjit’s outstretched hand for a few heartbeats. His fingers slid into Idjit’s, shaking the entire time.

“j-jojo?” Idjit looked up at me.

“Of course,” I nodded over to the area of the lobby that had bitty clothing, “Blake? Mind taking them over there to look for some clothing.”

“sure.” Blake nodded. Snuggle accompanied the small group as well.

I watched Idjit interact with December from the corner of my eye. December shook standing next to Idjit until the cherry gave him his jacket. That seemed to calm him down some.

“I thought you weren’t adopting anymore bitties,” Karli commented watching them as well.

“I wasn’t.” I sighed.

“bleedin’ heart,” Raze grumbled.

“That bleeding heart is the one that gave you a place to stay,” Cyan reminded him waspishly. Raze just stuck his tongue out at him.

“You’ll be good for him,” Karli smiled.

“I hope so.” I sighed.

I never knew bridges could be burned twice, but somehow my connection to my parents
had been destroyed again. Olivia would probably be depressed, and Nadia was more than likely still shaken about losing the connection as well.

“ari!” Blake called my attention over to Snuggle. The poor baby had tugged a pile of clothes down on top his head, “look!”

“Oh jeez,” I chuckled.

My parents could go fuck off. I had more important things to tend to after all.
Stitching Up a Bond

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except for Tinsel). Full disclaimer and links to everything can be found in Ch.1

Idjit's never getting that jacket back...but hey he has a little best friend now.

“Achoo!” I rubbed my nose with the back of my hand. Luckily, none of my snot had landed on the painting I was working on, “Shhiiittt….”

“ophie?” Waltzer appeared on my work desk. My office light was on for once, but my computers were turned off, “are you getting sick again?”

“No, no,” I waved it off, “I’m just allergic to this brand of paint.”

I could never figure out why, but this paint’s scent always made me sneeze. Luckily, the reaction wasn’t severe enough to kill me like my reaction to nuts. It just made my eyes water and my nose runny.

“Then why are you using it?” Waltzer frowned.

“Because it looks good,” I sneezed again, “These are the paintings for the CC. I want them to look the best they can.”

“oopphhiieee.” Waltzer groaned, “you’re eyes are bright pink right now.”

“Let me just finish this last bit up, and I’ll stop for the day,” I promised.

Waltzer waited impatiently as I finished up my last task of the day for this painting. It was still two weeks until Christmas, but my doctor said I could start working again if I wanted to. The instant I came home, I began to work on the paintings for the Bitty CC. I had already had the images sketched out on the canvas in November, but I hadn’t gotten around to painting them yet.

Waltzer growled when I went to touch my stuff.

“I’m just putting my stuff away Waltzer,” I laughed.

“i’ve learned to not trust you,” Waltzer crossed his arms.

After cleaning my stuff up, I picked the cranky sansy up and exited my office.

Cyan and Sunshine were fussing over…something in the kitchen. I honestly couldn’t remember the last time I had made us something to eat. Raze was who knows where in the apartment, and Blake sat with Snuggle reading one of Olivia’s books.

“Where’s Idjit and Dec?” I asked looking around.

“uuhhh…” Waltzer scratched the back of his head, “i dunno.”
“they’re in the bitty room with tinny,” Blake chimed in from the couch.

“Ah, o-“ I sneezed again, “Okay. Thanks Blake.”

“no problem.” Blake smiled over the top of the book.

Waltzer surprisingly stuck with me.

“Don’t want to go cuddle with Cyan?” I asked.

“he gets snippy whenever someone enters his kitchen without permission,” Waltzer’s pupils turned into hearts briefly, “it’s cute seeing him get riled up, but he can really hold a grudge.”

I rolled my eyes and entered the bitty room. It was surprisingly…. dark?

“Idjit? December? Tinsel?” I called out.

“GJ?”

I looked around and saw the three of them were curled in front of a tablet watching a scary movie. They had gathered some of the pillows and the blankets in front of the tablet to make a nest of sorts. Tinsel turned around to look up at me right as a jump scare made Idjit and December curl closer together around him.

“Hey guys,” I said sweetly. I stretched out across the ground and rest my chin on one of the pillows. Waltzer slid down and sat beside Idjit, “What are you guys watching?”

“Nightmare on Elm Street.” Tinsel settled back down, “I was watching it alone, but I accidentally woke Idjit and Dec up.”

“I see,” I laughed, “Enjoy it?”

“c-ca-a-an i sl-le-leep w-with y-yo-ou t-to-o-ni-night?” Idjit whimpered.

“Of course baby,” I rubbed comforting circles on top of his head, “Dec? Are you holding up any better?”

December angled his head up at me. Without proper eyes, I couldn’t really tell what he was thinking. His mouth was always slightly frowning, but from time to time the edges would curl up ever so slightly. Right now, his teeth were in a straight, scared line. He still wore Idjit’s *old* jacket-the same one Idjit wore when I first rescued him. Timidly he extended his hands up towards me.

That was new.

December tended to hide away from me whenever I entered a room. Hell, he preferred to be around *Raze*. Idjit claimed he spoke with December from time to time. The story my little cherry managed to piece together was heartbreaking. The buttonberry’s old human didn’t want him. He’d been an unwanted gift from a *stalker*. Needless to say, the woman hadn’t been nice to innocent little buttonberry.

“Hey sweetie,” I sat up and picked the little guy up. It was always scary to hold him. He was the smallest of the bunch, and I always felt like I’d snap him in half if I wasn’t careful because his malnourished bones were a bit thinner than they should’ve been, “Don’t like scary movies?”

He nodded and wrapped his arms around one of my thumbs.
“You don’t have to sit here and watch it then,” I began to lean towards him. Then I paused. I hadn’t been particularly affectionate with December before, so I wondered how he’d respond. In the end, I decided nothing got done if one was too scared to act. I pressed a gentle kiss to the top of his head.

He looked up at me confused. For a minute, I feared he’d freak out. Then he blushed deep blue and pressed his face into my thumb. When he looked up again my heart stopped. There was a tiny smile on his face.

“Ugghhh.” I cuddled him close, “You’re too cuutteee.”

“j-jojo?” Idjit popped his head over the pillows to look at me. He smiled upon seeing me holding December, “oh.”

“You’re such a sweet baby,” I sighed. Then I smiled at Idjit, “You want to go watch something else in the living room honey?”

Idjit shook his head.

“i-i l-li-k-ke spend-ding time w-ith t-t-tin-tin,” Idjit explained, “a-and wa-altzer i-is he-ere.”

“Okay. Do you want to stay here Dec?” I asked. The buttonberry shook his head, “Well, I need to go pick out some clo-” I angled my head to the left to sneeze before continuing, “Some cloth to make more clothing for you. Do you want to come with?”

December nodded.

“M’kay. Waltzer, keep an eye on these two. I’ll have Blake look after Cyan and Sunshine. Does anyone know where Raze is?” I remembered to ask as I stood up.

“Daddy’s sleeping,” Tinsel gestured to the Raze-Sunshine bitty mansion, “He stayed up last night cleaning the room up some. He doesn’t like stepping on random things at night.”

“At least he hasn’t run off anywhere,” I grumbled, “Waltzer make sure Raze doesn’t kill anyone.”

“sure thing,” Waltzer waved good-bye.

I walked out of the bedroom to hear something drop in the kitchen.

“Cyan? Sunshine?” I popped my head in the kitchen to see Cyan picking up the fragments of a plate, “Is everything okay?”

“Sunshine just dropped one of the dishes we were trying to clean,” Cyan continued to gather the shattered pieces off the ground, “Everything is fine Miss Josie.”

“Sorry,” Sunshine winced, “I should’ve gotten Raze to help put these up.”

“Want me to grab Blake?” I asked.

“No,” Sunshine shook his head, “We’re fine.”

“Okay,” I raised a reluctant brow.

“Shoo,” Cyan waved me out of the kitchen, “You need to run your errands and be back before dinner after all.”
“Sir, yes, sir.” I saluted the curly with my empty hand before exiting the kitchen, “Blake keep an eye on those two okay?”

“sure thing,” Blake paused, “if they don’t poke my eyes out for getting in their way.”

I laughed at that. December giggled a little himself.

Grabbing my hoodie, I headed out of the door. December sat in the collar of my hoodie because he was small enough to fit. Back when I first got him, we managed to get a few pieces of clothing that were small enough for him, but only a few sets would fit properly.

“It’s a good thing I can sew.” I sighed fondly as we rode down the elevator, “You and Idjit are so tiny.”

December of course said nothing.

“I’m just glad your bones seem to be getting thicker,” I continued to chat with my silent companion. The people in the lobby looked at me for a few minutes- probably thinking I’d finally lost my goddamn mind- before realizing there was actually a bitty with me. I honestly think most of them weren’t used to seeing me without all of my bitties in tow, “Motherfuckers just take a picture. Jesus, you’re acting like you’ve never seen me just walk around. Am I too beautiful for your delicate minds to comprehend?”

They all looked away from me. Honestly, I just wished they’d let me meander about in peace. Well, as peaceful as I could sneezing every few minutes.

Sadly, with the way my family’s companies were going, I’d be dealing with a lot of stares.

The Newmore company and its sister business Newmore-Tate were falling apart at the seams. My parents weren’t used to having to do work on their own. They had tried to strong arm Olivia and Nadia into coming back twice since their little brunch. At this point, Olivia was too focused on her opening in February to really pay them any mind, and Nadia had practically fallen off the face of planet with some assignment she was dealing with to care about them anymore. The city had to know how broken the Newmore family was at this point. A few reporters had even requested interviews. It sucked- mostly. Watching my parents get their comeuppance brought me a lot of pleasure.

“L..i..a?”

I paused. A couple of my old college friends had called me Lia after my middle name Ophelia. I looked around trying to find whoever might’ve been calling out for me. Of course, I would be embarrassed to all hell and back if someone was just calling out to an actual Lia.

“lia,” the voice was really soft, and this time I felt December fidget, “you…stopped walking…”

“December?” I looked down at him, “Ohmygod you have such a cute voice.”

December hid his face behind his hands and fell silent again.

The late afternoon hung heavy over the city. For once, the city actually seemed to slow down with the season. People walked angled against the chilled wind that cut through the streets. A storm looked ready to pop loose from the top of Mt. Ebbot, and all I could hope is that it would hit after we got home.
“Etta!”

I turned and saw Tyrone strolling down the streets looking as sleek as always. He sauntered up next to me and stepped a few paces in front of me to protect me from the wind. He’s as attentive as always. I thought with a wry smile.

“Hey Ty,” The two of us fell into a natural walking pattern, “What are you doing out here? I thought you were locked up in your office with your latest case.”

“I stepped out to avoid going insane,” Tyrone rolled his neck like it hurt, “My partner is driving me insane, and I- There is a little bitty on your collar.”

“Huh?” I then remembered I hadn’t been able to speak with Tyrone about my latest bitty, “Ooohhh. This is December. He’s new. Dec, this is my buddy Tyrone. He doesn’t bite- promise.”

December edged over to get a better look at Tyrone before hiding his face in the folds of my hood.

“He’s a shy one isn’t he?” Tyrone chuckled, “Hey there little guy. Nice to meet you.”

I heard the faintest murmur come from December. We couldn’t make out what he said, so we decided that he had simply said hello.

“What are you doing out?” Tyrone asked, “With only one bitty in tow too.”

“I need to get some cloth to make Dec some clothing,” I explained, “He’s too tiny for most of the pre-made bitty clothing to fit properly.”

“You sew?” Tyrone blinked, “Is there any kind of crafting you don’t do?”

“Uhh…” I thought about it, “No?”

“Jeez,” Tyrone laughed, “Why don’t you just start a crafting business instead of your current one?”

“I do crafts on the side already,” Nothing really noteworthy though- a stray bonnet here, a prom dress there.

“I’m starting to wonder which one of us works more,” Tyrone raised a brow.

“Probably me,” I said honestly, “Blake and Waltzer get mad if I work too much though. They worry about me getting sick or passing out.”

“Understandable,” Tyrone’s face went a little bit darker with his thoughts, “You’re recovering okay?”

“Yup,” I patted his back comfortably, “They’re behind bars Ty.”

“I know,” Tyrone rubbed the back of his neck, “I just wish we could’ve done more for the monsters as well. They didn’t get anything for the vandalism because the judge is a racist prick.”

“They don’t blame you Ty,”

“Doesn’t mean I can’t blame myself.”

I punched the dumbass’s waist before sneezing off to the side.
“Quit moping. You still got over a hundred bastards convicted and put in prison,” I told him firmly.

Tyrone forced a bitter smile.

He walked me to the small craft store I went to for supplies before heading back. He offered to walk me back to my apartment, but I was well enough to turn down too much babying.

“nice.” December murmured after Tyrone had left me in the cozy, soothing beige colored store.

“Ty?”

“mmhmm.” December tugged on his perch slightly, “you…too.”

“Awww. Thanks.” I offered my hand out for him to crawl onto. He quietly slid onto my palm.

“Miss Newmore?” The bright eyed young girl who ran the store poked her head out from the back, “Do you need any help?”

“No. I’m just here to pick up some fabric.” I smiled, “Gotta make some clothing for this little guy.”

“He’s cute! That jacket is a bit too big though,” The girl smiled, “There are some really nice new prints over there.”

I followed her gesture to a nice collection of soft colored cloth.

_Oooohhh…Nice._

I began to poke around the cloth with December in my hand. He needed some clothing that fit properly.

“What kind of colors do you like?” I asked, “Blues maybe?”

“blue and yellow,” December was looking at something. I soon realized he was staring at a deep blue cloth with small, glittering yellow stars on it.

“I can work with that.” I picked it up and was happy to see a small smile crawl across December’s face.

The two of us ended up walking out of the store with quite a bit of cloth and thread. Thankfully, the girl gave me a discount because I’m one of her more frequent customers. I didn’t feel bad about buying the cloth of course. I just hoped I’d find enough time to create all of his little clothing.

“lia?” December asked quietly, “why did you…take me in?”

“You needed a home,” I shrugged, “There’s no telling what my parents would’ve done with you either.”

“They kept me in a box for three days.” December’s voice cracked with fear.

“Oh sweetie,” I wanted to throw a Molotov cocktail into their fucking house, “I’m so sorry.”
December quietly fiddled with my collar.


“Thank you.”

The storm was beginning to force its way free from Mt. Ebbot’s magical grasp. Thunder rolled across the city. I pulled my phone out and texted Leo. Thankfully, he was out of town visiting his parents, so he wouldn’t be around for the thunder to terrify him. I would still have my more sound fearing bitties to worry about though.


“What’s thunder?”

“Oh dear lord.” I laughed, “Well this is going to be interesting.”

It had been interesting.

For one, the power was knocked out for about ten minutes when the storm came. The loss of electricity ruined the nice dinner Sunshine and Cyan had been working on. For two, December did not like thunder.

Thus, I created a nice little blanket fort in the bitty room.

Sunshine and Cyan were cranky about having to eat some quickly made macaroni and cheese. They hated it whenever something messed with their domain of the apartment. Still, they calmed down as the movie Blake had picked out to watch began to play over the thunder.

Cyan and Waltzer sat side by side in front of my crossed legs. Waltzer dozed through the action flick that had Blake and Raze engrossed. Blake sat on my legs with Snuggle laying on his stomach reading the subtitles with a relatively bored impression. Sunshine sat on Raze’s lap quietly chatting with Tinsel who leaned against Raze’s side. Idjit and December were curled up in empty space between the two other groups sitting on the ground.

The newest storm free from Mt. Ebbot raged outside, but we were in a much sturdier building than my old apartment. These windows were shatter proof actually, and we were high enough that there was no risk for any kind of flooding or water damage. We’d probably have a coat of ice on our windows outside because of the chill, but we were safe.

I relaxed in the little fort.

Safe. We’re safe.

What a nice feeling.
Pre-Christmas Christmas Party at the CC

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except for Tinsel). Full disclaimer and links to everything can be found in Ch1.

Fun Fact: Most children find our dear Josie Jo 'scary' looking. It's why she doesn't interact with little humans often.

Growing up, Olivia had always been more of a daughter to me instead of my sister. It was equally parts sweet and heartbreaking to think about. While our bond had grown due to our parents’ neglect, it had robbed me of a lot of my childhood. The bitter part of me kept still wondering if it had been worth it.

Maybe that was why I struggled to connect with kids.

“Miss Newmore,” Karli whispered to me, “I think you’re scaring the kids.”

I blinked and tried my best to smile.

“Oh dear,” Velour chuckled, “Where’s our usually relaxed good Samaritan?”

“I don’t do well in crowds.” I admitted, “Or around children.”

The Bitty CC had managed to repair the damage caused earlier in the month enough to have a small little Christmas themed get together for kids. I had also finished the paintings for the CC after just painting for three days straight. Blake and Waltzer threatened to torch my office by the end of the third day, but I got all of them done. The nice, warm pictures of bitties doing everything from playing in leaf piles to just napping on window sills really made the Bitty CC seem more welcoming. Despite all of my sneezing, they came out great....yeah, I know modesty is great and all, but I do take pride my work.

“We can tell.” Karli patted my shoulder politely, “Your bitties seem to be doing fine at least.”

Thankfully, my bitties seemed to thrive chatting with other bitties and the kids. Raze just grumpily hung behind Sunshine, but Sunshine’s gentle demeanor kept kids coming back to speak with him. Even Idjit was quietly chatting with the shyer bitties who hung back against the wall. December kept close to his favorite cherry though and didn’t speak.

“Yup,” I nodded happily, “Think you’ll get some adoptions today? Not all of the kids have bitties of their own.”

“We’re hoping.” Velour leaned against the desk, “I’d say my fingers were crossed but..”

She held up her squirrel paws.

“I’ll cross mine for you then,” I crossed my fingers jokingly before turning the conversation to a more serious topic, “By the way…”
Velour leaned in close to hear me whisper.

“How do humans alter the way bitties are formed?” I questioned silently.

“Oh,” Velour’s eyes widened. She looked around to make sure no one was paying us any attention. Once she was certain no one was giving us any special attention, she answered, “They add other things to the tanks like determination or monster dust. It mixes with the…you know and alters the bitties formed.”

“I see,” I nodded, “How’s that whole thing going?”

We all jumped when some of the kids hurried towards us to get Karli’s attention. The embarrassed rabbit quickly herded the kids towards the activities the bitty techs were running.

“It’s…not working.” Velour sighed, “We’re trying everything to stabilize S-the sources, but nothing is sticking.”

“Anything we could do to help?” I offered.

“Not sure yet,” Velour growled softly in the back of her throat, “My higher ups are already… displeased with how much you know.”

“Well, I’m already involved Velour.” The feeling of chilled metal pressed against my back haunted me. I had almost died over something I barely knew anything about, “Besides, my bitties would be happy to help in any way they can.” Still, it wasn't in my nature to leave someone who had been good to me hanging.

“I know,” Velour looked away and sighed, “I know. Thank you.”

“Don’t worry about it,” I patted her shoulder comfortingly.

“speck!” Raze’s gruff voice called out over the din of children playing in the lobby, “get ova ‘ere!”

I glowered at the edgy before quietly walking over towards the group of kids.

“this is ophie,” Waltzer gestured towards me, “she’s our human.”

I froze as roughly twenty sets of eyes focused on me.

My bitties stood in front me proud. Even December looked up at me with strands of affection tugging a smile on his face. I was happy that they seemed to love me enough to be proud of me, but dammit Jojo does not do well in crowds.

“H-hey.” I forced a smile. I tried my best to remember how I acted when I was younger. In all honesty, Olivia probably found me comforting only because I was the one who had been there for her. To these kids, I probably looked like a 5’2 thug with a crooked nose.

“You’re their human?”

“Why do you have so many bitties?”

“Are you the crazy bitty lady?”

“You look scary.”
I cringed as the kids continued to flood me with answers. Stuttering out answers, I tried my best to appear friendly. The parents just glared at me for not being like the monsters. I didn’t have a sunny disposition or charming smile to hide my insecurities behind.

Why didn’t I ask Olivia to come? I grumbled in the back of my mind. The kids finally seemed to grow bored of me, but then the parents came over and began grilling me as well.

“How do you afford all of those bitties?”

“I work a lot,” I answered.

“Bitties seem to be too hyper.”

“Depends on the kind you get.” I frowned, “There are some very relaxed bitties.”

“How do you keep them from destroying your house?”

“Can’t say. Every bitty is different. What works for me probably won’t work for you.” I shrugged.

“You were the one involved with that case after Thanksgiving right?”

“I was the victim yes.” My frown turned into a threatening scowl at some woman, “And those people are behind bars.”

“Are bitties really safe then?”

“Yes.” I nodded, “They are,” Then I paused, “But they deserve better humans than you. They deserve humans who are willing to protect them no matter what, so do them a favor and don’t adopt.”

The woman looked at me aghast. She spluttered something out in retaliation. Some of the parents took her side, but quite a few seemed impressed with easily I could defend them.

“lia?” Small hands tugged on my flip flop. December stood beside my foot holding onto my shoe.

“Hey Dec,” I leaned down and plucked him off of the ground. He wore a shirt made out of the dark blue, star covered cloth we had bought a few days before, but he still hadn’t returned Idjit’s jacket. I honestly doubted he would at this point, “Everything okay baby?”

He nodded.

“Good,” I looked back at the parents, “Bitties are not dogs or cats. They’re practically human. They think like us, feel like us, and need care like us. Don’t get one just because it’s a new fad. Adopt one because you want to provide someone a home.” With that, I put December in his usual spot inside my hoodie’s collar and left the parents to go check on the rest of my bitties.

Waltzer and Blake were helping kids speak with bitties in the various pens. Sunshine, Tinsel, and Cyan helped the bitty techs running the crafting table. Idjit and Snuggle chatted with the bitties that belong to some of the kids attending this little party.

Wait.

Where’s the edgy?
I looked around trying to find the moody bitty. He couldn’t be trusted to not take a bite out of a kid if they got too grabby. I swear I can’t trust him with anything can I? He’s going to bite someone…or throw something. UUUGGHHH Raaazzeeeee….why do you have to be such a hand-

“oi.” A crayon smacked me in the back of the head, “quit talkin’ about me like i’m sum kinda rabid dog.” Raze's voice interrupted my internal rambling.

“Was I talking out loud?” I asked.

“yup.” Another crayon hit me. I turned and saw that Raze had actually taken up the task of cleaning scraps off of the floor, “wha’?”

“You’ve been on a bit of a cleaning kick lately haven’t you?” I cocked my head.

“so what?” He grumbled, “i don’ like messy places. the arena was bad enough.”

Ooooohhh.

“makes sunshine anxious if the place is too messy,” Raze continued, “an’ when he’s anxious ‘is panic attacks come easier.”

“I see. Well, don’t let me get in your way. Just don’t snap at little fingers.” I warned.

“don’t tell me what to do bi-“ Raze bit off his curse, “ya know what i was gonna say.”

“I do.” I glared at him, “I am telling you what to do. Do not bite the kids.”

“humph.” He disappeared under one of the chairs to chase a stray marker that dropped from a little girl, “quit spinnin’ it around.” He thrust it back up into her hands, “brats. the lot of ya.”

“Hey!” The girl’s parents stepped forward, but she just laughed at it.

“He’s a cranky edgy!” She giggled.

“A very cranky edgy.” I agreed. A colored pencil whizzed by my head and buried itself into the wall behind me.

The little shindig winded down as parents began to take kids home. There were actually a few adoptions, and a few parents looked like they were contemplating it as well. Thankfully, there had only been five emergency cases for the bitty techs to handle during the whole thing. Still, kids were messy. The lobby looked like a Kindergarten classroom threw up in it.

“Jeeezzz.” I plopped down into an open chair. December clung to my collar, “Kids are so much work. Remind me to never have any.”

“okay…” December agreed. I laughed. He panicked wondering if he said something wrong.

“That was a joke baby.” I rubbed the top of his skull, “But I’m glad you’d be willing to keep my head on straight.”

“this was fun!” Blake said as he helped the bitty techs gather some of the better drawings to hang up on the walls, “some of those kids were really good ari. we need to do stuff like this more often.”

“I had fun too,” Sunshine smiled, “Even if I was almost doused with some juice.”
“don’t worry sunny,” Waltzer patted his back, “i got you covered.”

“tin-tin…” Idjit tugged on Tinsel’s hand, “y-you di-d-didn’t t-ta-al-alk to other b-bitties m-m-u-uch.”

“They didn’t want to talk to me.” Tinsel pouted, “I look funny apparently.”

“Well that’s their loss,” Cyan said smoothly, “You’d make an amazing best friend.”

“Thank you Cy.” Tinsel blushed.

“And you’re so adorable!” I added.

“GGJJJ.” Tinsel’s blush deepened.

“quit messin’ with my kid ya lazy bitch!” Raze could curse now that there weren’t any little ears to be tainted, “get off yer ass an’ start cleanin’!”

“watch your mouth Raze,” Waltzer stood up straight and glared at the taller sansbitty.

“make me.” Raze stepped into his personal space.

“guys.” Blake said in warning. His hands glowed with magic, “don’t make me break up a cat fight.”

“Raze.” Sunshine’s eyes bore into his mate’s back, “Come help me move these boxes.”

Cyan just raised a brow at Waltzer.

The two sansbitties reluctantly didn’t throw any punches.

“Pussy whipped,” I snorted. This time Waltzer threw a half-empty glue bottle at me.

Once my legs felt like they weren’t about to fall off, I stood up and helped Velour move some of the tables to the back. It took about two hours to put everything away and clean the floors, but the Bitty CC would be open for patients the next morning.

“Thank you so much for coming to help.” Karli sighed flopping down into her rolling chair behind the front desk, “Quite a few of our volunteers left after that mess after the attacks.”

“It’s no problem.” Mentally, I began a head count of my bitties as I picked them up. Idjit, Cyan, Tinsel, Raze, Sunshine, December, Blake, Snuggle….I paused, “Waltzer?”

Velour and Karli also realized I was missing my usual bitty headpiece.

“over here!” Waltzer called out to us.

I walked over and saw he was trapped in the tight embrace of a sleeping soft bones.

“help.” He pleaded.

“How did this happen?” I laughed.

“one of the kids took him out of the pen to speak with him and didn’t put him back,” Waltzer winced when the soft bones squeezed him tighter, “i was trying to put him back with the other soft bones and wellll…..”
I sat to sit down to laugh.

“Really Waltzer?” Cyan sighed poking his head out of my hood to look over my shoulder.

“i swear this wasn’t intentional babe.” Waltzer protested, “now could someone help me?”

No.

No one could. We were all laughing too hard.

“can’t trust any of you can i?” Waltzer sighed dramatically, “is this how i die cruel world? squeezed to death by a soft bones? Oh…the light! i see it!”

“quit bein’ such a pansy,” Raze snorted tugging the soft bones off of Waltzer. The sansy quickly teleported onto my head. The soft bones whimpered in his sleep at losing his Waltzer teddy bear, but he calmed down once he was placed back with his things in the pen.

“it is a sad day when he helps me.” Waltzer grumbled tugging on my hair harshly.

“Oh put one of your stray socks in it.” I snorted. Tinsel’s typical broken, breathless laughter accidentally made him kick off one of his pink slippers. I picked it up and slid it back on his foot, “Alright, alright. We should head back home.”

_Idjit, December, Tinsel, Raze, Sunshine, Snuggle, Blake, Waltzer, and Cyan._ I counted again, _One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Got everyone._

“Do you guys need anything else before I leave?” I asked.

“Nope.” Karli shook her head.

“Okay. Velour,” The squirrel monster jumped, “Let me know if I can help with the you know what in any way.”

“I will.” Velour smiled before sighing, “You know all of this would be so much easier if he were still able to help.”

“He?” I cocked my head carefully.

“An old scientist.” Velour waved her paw absentmindedly, “His father was the former royal scientist before the current one…not that we have her either.”

“Why not?” I asked. Velour seemed to snap back into reality. Concern was radiating from Karli.

“Oh…illness.” Velour scratched the back of her neck, “I can’t say more right now. That goes into sensitive monster politics.”

“Okay,” I made sure I had my phone and some cash, “Well, see you guys later.”

“Good-bye!” Karli and Velour said waving.

“what’s the ‘thing’ you guys were chatting about?” Waltzer asked.

“Can’t say this time around.” I put my hands into my pockets, “It’s important to Velour and the others at the CC though.”
“Is there anything we could do to help?” Sunshine questioned.

“Not yet,” I forced a smile, “But Velour’s bound to get permission to tell me the full truth eventually.”

“and you’ll tell us then?” It sounded like a simple question. Blake’s voice betrayed an underlying threat of “you will be telling us” below the gentle voice, “i don’t like it when you take too much on your shoulders.”

“I know. I know. You threaten to destroy my work shit enough as is.” I leaned my head back to breathe in some fresh air, “I won’t bite off more than I can chew.”

“p-pro-omise?” Idjit asked.

“Cross my heart.” I crossed my heart and accidentally dislodged December from his precarious perch on my collar, “Woah! Got you buddy.”

December frowned up at me.

“Sorry, sorry. You’re just so tiny and light. It’s easy to forget you’re sitting there sometimes.” I blushed, “It’s taking some getting used to.”

December just quietly nodded and returned to his perch on my collar.

“Oh by the way! Miss Josie,” Cyan tugged on the hair on the back of my neck, “We’re going out with Papa and Ember tomorrow.”

“Oh really?” My brow raised.

“we meant to tell you about it sooner,” Waltzer rubbed the back of his head, “we just forgot.”

“So we’re meeting-“

“no!” Blake interrupted then blushed, “sorry, but erm…we’re meeting leo tomorrow.”

“I’m not allowed to come?”

The chorus of “no” I got was answer enough.

“So you guys are just going to have a guy’s day out huh?” I grumbled, “I feel so loved.”

“It’s not like that.” Sunshine scolded me, “We just have to do something without you. We’ll be back before dinner.”

“Hmph.” I pouted.

*It’s been a while since I had the house to myself. I thought. I wonder how that’s going to go...*
Leo arrived on time the next day with Ember. He flashed me a simple, tired grin when I opened the door. Ember sat on his crossed arms and looked up at me sleepily. It was still so weird seeing a bitty besides Cyan with Leo.

“Hard week?” I asked letting him in.

“Final exams are coming up.” Leo rolled his shoulders, “The kids are getting anxious about them.”

“Bah, they’re your students.” I waved away his concerns, “They’ll pass.”

“I’m glad you have so much faith in me,” Leo laughed, “So where are the bitties?”

“right here.” Waltzer teleported with Cyan in tow. The ecstatic curly launched himself at Leo’s legs.

“Papa!”

“Cyan,” Leo carefully shifted Ember over to one hand to pick Cyan up and hug him, “I’m glad to see you.”

“I’m glad to see you too.” Cyan nuzzled his face into Leo’s cheek. Ember watched with a slight bit of jealousy, “Hello Ember.”

“Cyan,” Ember nodded politely.

“leo!” Blake appeared from the bitty room with Snuggle and Idjit in tow, “you’re on time man! good job.”

“I try.” Leo jumped to the left when Raze teleported right next to him with Sunshine and Tinsel wrapped up in his arms, “Hi Raze.”

“fuck off.” The edgy grumbled rubbing his eyes.

“Daddy didn’t get much sleep.” Tinsel explained.

“He should still be nice to Nagihiko.” Sunshine frowned. I didn’t know if it was caused by his mate’s actions or the headache he had been battling with all morning.
Raze stuck his tongue out at Sunshine. Sunshine just rolled his eyes and pressed a kiss to Raze’s cheek. Deep crimson flooded Raze’s face.

“Aww…” Tinsel laughed.

Raze tugged his hood up to hide his face.

“w-where’s d-dec-ce-cember?” Idjit looked around concerned. He zeroed in on something behind the couch. I looked over and saw December timidly observing Leo and Ember, “d-dec?”

“Right,” I rubbed my temples, “You haven’t met them yet. I forget how new you are sometimes.”

December edged further from behind the couch towards my voice.

“December, these two are Leo and Ember. Leo’s my best friend, and Ember is his bitty,” I explained gesturing to Leo and Ember in turn, “Guys that’s December- Dec for short.”

“I take it you named him?” Leo asked wryly.

“Yes. Don’t make me hit you.” I warned.

“Heel,” Leo took a step back.

“Do you want to stay with me baby?” I asked December. He looked at Idjit. Idjit calmly shook his head and waved him over. The buttonberry scurried across the room and clung to Idjit.

“h-hee need-ds to c-come to-o-oo.” Idjit told me firmly.

“Well then.” I crossed my arms, “Don’t let me get in the way.”

“ophie,” Waltzer poked my foot, “it’s nothing bad. promise. we’ll be home in a couple of hours.”

Snuggle snapped his fingers to get my attention.

‘We’re just going to help Leo with Christmas shopping,’ Snuggle explained.

“brooo.” Blake whined.

‘It’s better to tell the truth then have her ripping her hair out all day.’ Snuggle pointed out.

“true,” Blake sighed, “that’s it though. promise.”

“There wasn’t any need to be so secretive about that.” I said exasperatedly. I had done most of my Christmas shopping online. In fact, some of the gifts had already arrived, “Well, now that I know you aren’t planning to run off to Paris, have fun boys. Leo, you take care of my bitties.”

“I’ll guard them with my life,” Leo swore solemnly, “Now how the hell am I going to walk around with ten bitties…”

“You can borrow one of my hoodies,” I offered.

“That’d be great.” Leo smiled in relief.

I managed to dig up a hoodie that fit good enough. Sadly for him, it was a bright pink one
with sequined letters spelling out “Queen Bitch” on the back.

“Bet you regret buying that for me as a gag present.” I smirked.

Leo smacked the back of my head before stomping out of the apartment, leaving me to laugh.

“Be safe guys.” I called down the hallway as they walked towards the elevator, “Don’t walk around with any strangers! Stay close to Leo!”

My bitties just waved good-bye.

I closed my apartment door and paused.

Silence.

Nothing but silence.

Did parents feel this way the first time they didn’t have to take care of their kids? The silence was deafening, strangling. I knew that they were with Leo, but that didn’t mean they couldn’t be hurt. Anxiety and fear weighed heavily on my stomach.

_It’s so weird._ I sat down on the couch. Out of habit, I checked to make sure that I wasn’t about to sit on anybody. _So weird…_

I spent years alone in my dingy, old apartment in the ghetto. It had never been silent outside. There was gunfire, arrests being made, arguing couples, and so on to fill the din that would otherwise flood my habitat. Inside the tight, musty apartment, it had just been me. My footsteps had been the only ones to fill the silence.

Silence and I had never particularly got along. Mostly because it had a tendency to favor my inner demons instead of me. I could sit and stew and chew and _think_ for hours. The pain would build up and up and up and up until the proverbial noose closed on my neck and forced me to seek the buzz I had discovered alcohol could give me.

Work had been the only way to ignore the silence, ignore the demons in my mind whispering their venom from the shadows. They’d tug, and they’d push. They’d choke the life out of me bit by bit if I let them. In my teenage years, they’d almost won…

I glared down at the thin scars on my wrists.

I needed a distraction.

Sketchbooks tended to not lost long in my possession. Anger would make me tear poor drawings, or tears would bleed through the papers when I was depressed. Still, I kept some on hand. For once, I didn’t have any work- a problem that could not be repeated if my bitties made it a habit to leave me alone- to complete.

My pencil slid across the page easily.

_C’mon on Jo._ I frowned when my pencil snapped. _Get your act together. You’re not about to shatter into a thousand pieces because they-_

What if they don’t come back?

_They’ll come back._
Why? To what? A cranky, forgettable old bitch?

They care about me.

They have an odd way of showing it. Why would they leave you all alone if they loved you? They just left without warning. Just like everyone always does.

No.

Yes.

I realized that during my inner battle I had begun to draw my bitties.

Do you guys love me? I wondered. Or am I just the one who pays the bills?

It wasn’t too far of a stretch. Growing up, more than a few people pretended to care about me in order to get to my wallet. Hell, Edgar had technically been a smarter version of those people. He said he loved me. He held me close and treated me like a princess. Then when I didn’t keep giving him what he wanted, he left me for Nadia instead.

You mean nothing:

Absentmindedly, my brain reminded me that Cyan and Sunshine had just sharpened the knives last night.

No.

I focused on the sketch in front of me. Maybe that psychologist was right. I might actually need meds.

That familiar sinking feeling came back. It slowed down the strokes of my pencil and made me tremble. I couldn’t figure out why this felt so much worse than normal- why it hurt so much more.

The bitties… The realization struck me when I tried to pull my thoughts back to a more positive place. They’ve always been here. I never had to focus on things like this, or, if I did, I never had to do it alone.

I wanted them to come back.

Being alone just reminded me of too many things.

Those years where stress and my parent’s resentment ate at my teenage heart.

Those years where my BCC kept coming back, over and over, like a boomerang, threatening to kill me.

The childhood I never got to have.

Why my parents couldn’t have been bothered to find a proper caretaker for Olivia, Nadia, and I was beyond me. They were too busy focusing on growing their wealth to pay us any attention until Nadia started obeying them. Then, it was just me.

I was the one staying up all night with a cranky baby Olivia and trying not to pass out in school the next day.
I was the one racing across town to drop Oliva off at preschool before racing back to my first class forty minutes late.

All of my teachers just scorned me, abandoned me, because I was a Newmore. They could hate the rich kid and her “wealth born arrogance” without feeling guilty. They didn’t care if I made straight 100s on *everything*. They didn’t care when I took the ACT four times and made two 36s, a 35, and 34 just to try and prove that I was more than my name.

In college, it wasn’t much better. The professors never treated me poorly, but the distance between us kept me from having a mentor I could rely on.

*You have nothing.* You have had *nothing* because you are *nothing*.

The image I had worked so hard on disappeared behind lines of black as I tried to scribble out my pain. I wouldn’t seek out alcohol. I wouldn’t touch pointed objects. I wouldn’t *fling myself from the window*.

*I do have something* I reminded myself looking around the room.

Pictures of me with Olivia as kids covered the walls. Leo and Tyrone’s smiling faces calmed me down. I had them. I had Granny too.

My footsteps weren’t the only ones in this apartment.

Blake and Snuggle had stacks of books beside the couch. The DVR was filled with movies and TV shows that the bitties enjoyed watching. Raze’s knitting gear sat balled in one corner of the room, and I saw a few dozen pieces of bitty clothing strewn about the room.

My bitties would come back to this place.

*Their home.*

They’d come back to me, and I remembered the little Christmas celebration at the Bitty CC.

*I’m their human.*

*You…are…*

*Not perfect, not okay.* I sat up straighter, *But I’m still here. I’m still in the now.*

I redrew the image I had accidentally ruined with that little…fit.

I hated giving those experiences names. It gave them power over me.

The image was a small, simple sweet sketch of all of my bitties. It looked like they were posing for a photo. Raze’s face was twisted into a snarl as he stood behind his mate and son. Waltzer had a cheeky wink and one hand tangled with Cyan’s. Blake stood protectively forward compared to the others. Snuggle just kept a hand on top of his head. Idjit and December were in front. December might’ve been the newest bitty, but he was still part of the family.

It was a warm, kind picture.

I don’t know what made me draw the next part.

Soon, behind them was my face with a big smile. My eyes had mirth and happiness in them as I gazed back at whoever was looking at the sketch of my family.
Family.

My family.

I threw my head back and laughed.

Family.

Family.

Family.

Family.

I had a family now.

Not just a bunch of random pets to fill the void my unhappy childhood left in its wake.

I looked back at the sketch and smiled. I wrote across the top.

*Patchwork Family.*

“Seems fitting enough.” I chuckled, “Even with a few pieces presumably missing.”

After I cleaned up the slight mess I had made with the ruined sketch, I put the better one back up on the wall. Shaking my muscles lose, I wondered what chores needed to be done.

Cyan and Sunshine would kill me if I touched their kitchen, and Blake got fussy whenever I tried to tidy up the living room without his help.

In the end, I did some laundry. Raze would probably be cranky and complain I didn’t wash things correctly, but I needed *something* to do.

Hours passed as I just randomly did things around the apartment. I still hated how lonely I felt. I wanted my bitties to hurry the hell up and get back home already. It wasn’t natural for silence to fill my apartment anymore.

Blake and Snuggle needed to be reading a book on the couch or watching whatever they felt like. Waltzer needed to be teasing Cyan in the kitchen while Raze tried to get Sunshine to just go take a nap with him. Tinsel needed to be exploring the nooks in crannies of the apartment with his usual naive curiosity. Idjit needed to be napping in my hood or playing with Tinsel or taking care of December.

*Did that dumbass get himself lost?* I wondered checking the clock again. *I wouldn’t put it past him to get lost in his own damn city.*

I jumped when my apartment door opened. *If he had his key, why did he knock earli-Right...My tendency to punch first ask questions later....*

“Papa!” Cyan was scolding Leo, “You should be more careful. What would you do if you sprained your ankle?”

“I didn’t though,” Leo pointed out.

“You still cut it way to close,” Cyan huffed.
Leo entered with all of my bitties accounted for. From the looks of it, Cyan had been chastising Leo for a while. Blake actually sighed in relief upon seeing me.

“ari.” He teleported onto my shoulder and squeezed my neck, “ohymgodyouhavenoideaahowmuchi’vemissedyoutoday.cyancanbearalassholesometimesyouknow!”

“Okay, I barely caught half of that,” I laughed leaning my cheek against his head, “But I’ve missed you too.”

“j-jojo.” Idjit appeared in front of me with December. He held his hands up with tears in his eyes.

“Do I even want to know?” I picked both of them up, “Jeez.”

“insanity.” Waltzer’s familiar weight appeared on top of my head, “pure insanity.”

Apparently, their day had been filled with arguing, petty bickering, and the like. They had accomplished their task, but they all looked exhausted.

“I don’t know how you do.” Leo groaned into one of the pillows on my couch, “They all have such different personalities. How do you handle it all?”

“You get used to it.” I shrugged.

Life had returned to my apartment. Raze and Tinsel were off in the bitty room chatting about something. The familiar sounds of Cyan and Sunshine banging around the kitchen echoed into the living room where Blake and Snuggle had begun to read. Waltzer lazily dozed on the chandelier making it sway back and forth slightly. December and Idjit were curled up on my lap watching some random romcom.

“How?” Leo asked.

I didn’t really have an answer.

I just got used to it all. The noise, the bickering, the disagreements, the brief truces, and the warm bond between us all just became the new “norm” to me. Our apartment wasn’t perfect of course. It was messy. A few things were broken- some fixable, some scarred, some forgotten. We didn’t always get along well, and sometimes we all really got on each other’s nerves.

Like a family.

“How?” Leo- the little bastard- kicked my side gently, “Helloo…space cadet?”

“Yup?”

“Sunshine’s been calling out for you.” Leo pointed to the kitchen.

“Where did you move our garlic powder?” Sunshine asked again sounding slightly annoyed.

“Third cabinet, second shelf!” I called back.

“Miss Josie,” Cyan poked his head out of the kitchen, “Why were you in our kitchen?”

“Got hungry…” I cocked my head.
That’s when I got scolded for moving things around without permission while Leo just laughed his ass off at the sight of me being scolded by a 4 inch tall curly.

I took the scolding with a smile though. Noise had come back to my life, and I didn't want it gone any time soon.
Snuggle tugged on my hair. I knew it was him because anyone else would've just yelled at me.

I groaned and buried my face into my pillow more.

Snuggle tugged harder.

“Snuggllee…” I whined, “Whhhyy?”

Another sharp tug on my hair. I turned my head to look at the meek. I was careful to not to crush Idjit and December who and slept with me that night. Waltzer and Cyan were sitting on the foot of my bed watching something on the TV while Blake was off doing who knows what. I could hear Raze, Sunshine, and Tinsel moving around in the bitty room.

‘Your phone has been ringing.’ Snuggle explained before walking over to my phone. I saw the green light blinking. He slid it over to me before signing, ‘I think you put it on silent accidentally.’

“Oh…” I yawned, “Thank you honey.”

Snuggled curled up under my chin as I checked my missed calls.

“Why the hell did Velour call me six times?” I grumbled and checked the time, “At 7 in the morning on a Saturday no less.”

“lia?” December crawled next to my ear. He rubbed at his button eyes like he had been sleeping.

“Morning Dec,” I shifted my head some to let him get into a more comfortable position, “Sleep okay honey?”

I felt him nod.

“Good.” I nudged Waltzer and Cyan with my toes, “What are you two doing in here?”

“Blake’s hogging the living room TV,” Cyan rolled his eyes, “He’s also got our phone talking to Tyrone.”

“something about ping pong…” Waltzer snuggled closer to Cyan’s side, “boring stuff really.”

“Nerds.” I chuckled, “The both of them.”
My phone began to ring again. It was Velour.

“Good morning.” I moved December off of my head to sit up, “Sorry I missed your calls. I just woke up.”

“It’s fine.” Velour sounded a bit breathless, “I…I just needed to tell you that I’ve gotten you clearance for the fifth floor down.”

“Really?” I raised a brow.

“The situation has…it’s reaching a critical point.” Velour admitted, “If any benefit comes from you or your bitties…it could save lives.”

“Ummm….” She lost me there.

“Please just come to the Bitty CC sometime today.” Velour begged, “If you’re not busy of course.”

“It’s fine. I’ve got a meeting at eleven, but we can swing by around one?” I offered.

“Perfect,” Velour sighed in relief, “I’ll see you at one.”

“Ookkaayyy…” I cocked my head some, “See you this afternoon.”

Chaos erupted from Velour’s side of the line.

“What!?” Velour was speaking to someone else, “Sorry Miss Newmore! I have to go.”

“Bye.” Velour hung up on me, “Talk about a crazy morning.”

I stared at my phone for a few seconds before just laying it on the bed next to me. Some part of me wanted to go make sure that the Bitty CC was okay, but Velour didn’t sound like she was being attacked.

“did that have anything to do with the thing you’re not supposed to talk about?” Waltzer questioned. He angled his head back to look at me.

“Yup,” I nodded and looked around my room, “Raze has been in here cleaning.”

“That was me actually,” Cyan raised his hand, “You were going to trip over something eventually.”

“Ah..well…where the fuck did you put my bras?” I looked at my empty floor. My bras were all missing from their usual random spots.

“In the third drawer where they should be!” Cyan blushed deep blue.

“Does seeing my various bras really bother you that much?” I cocked a brow.

“eh, not really.” Waltzer shrugged, “i’ll use them to make a hammock sometimes.”

“No wonder the straps have been getting stretched,” I grumbled getting up and hunting down clothes to wear, “With your fat feet weighing them down.”

“can’t help it,” Waltzer wiggled his large feet. I stuck my tongue out at him.
The rest of the day I wondered what was going on at the Bitty CC. My client was a frequent customer of mine, so he was fine with me being a bit spacey. Raze wasn’t as kind though. He took up to yanking on my ear hard every time he thought I looked too out of it.

“get yer head in the game,” Raze chomped down on my ear angrily, “ya almost walked into a light pole twice!”

“Sorry, sorry,” I put pressure on my bleeding ear, “Calm thy bony tits please.”

“i don’ have tits ya moron.” Raze tugged on some of my hair.

“enough man,” Waltzer growled.

“you’re going to really hurt her if you keep acting up like this.” Blake added leaning forward around my neck to glare at the edgy, “so stop. you’re aggravating sunshine too.”

Raze looked to his left to find that his mate was indeed glaring at him while making sure that a napping Tinsel didn’t tumble off my shoulder. Cyan and Idjit were chatting softly in my hood, so they weren’t really paying attention to my edgy’s gnawing. December was though. He had edged closer to my left shoulder to get away from Raze.

“Sorry guys,” I forced a laugh, “I’m just wondering what has Velour so worried.”

“We’re about to find out aren’t we?” Waltzer questioned.

“Yeah…” I admitted reluctantly.

Whatever was going on with the Bitty CC almost got me killed, and it terrified a human hate group enough to make them even more aggressive than they already had been. I thought back to Lucy’s mad ramblings. Was the source this thing she mentioned waking up? Why was she so scared of it in the first place?

No. I told myself firmly. Velour and the others wouldn’t do something like that. They can’t even kill a spider without crying.

I stood up straighter.

“Well boys,” I tucked my hands into my pockets, “Time to see what skeleton Velour’s got in her closet.”

“she probably has more than a few,” Waltzer rubbed his chin, “i mean…she has what? a few hundred skeleton bitties in the back probably?”

“That was a poor attempt at a joke Waltzer,” Cyan sighed from inside my hood.

“eh,” Waltzer shrugged, “what can i say? my funny bone got lost in some alley a f- dec,” Waltzer chided as the buttonberry almost slid off of his perch. Blue magic kept him in place though, “please be more careful pal. falling from this height wouldn’t do you any favors.”

“sorry.” December clung to my collar tighter, “sleepy.”

“Want to ride in my palm?” I offered. He hesitated before nodding. His bones were getting thicker, so he weighed more than he used to- which was most certainly a good thing, “Sorry you’re having to deal with this after only living with us for a little while.”

December didn’t say anything in return.
Walking down the streets beneath the skyscrapers was-as always- a pain in the ass. Even with the cold air keeping most people inside, the few outside crowded the sidewalks and could never seem to figure out exactly how fast they wanted to walk. It took me a little bit longer to arrive at the Bitty CC because of said irritating midday crowd.

The CC looked great though. It was decked out in Christmas lights and stickers. The building actually looked brighter than the others around it with its genuine warm, cheer. The bitty techs had been able to repaint the outside at last- getting rid of the nasty graffiti by hiding it behind a few layers of paint.

“Good afternoon,” I called out cheerfully upon entering the lobby. A few humans sat with their bitties in the new and improved seats that filled the lobby’s left side. To the right, bitties interacted and moved in the various pens. It was just your average day in the Bitty CC, “Hey Karli.”

Karli jumped upon hearing me enter the building. She smiled once she realized it was just me though.

“Hello Miss Newmore,” She said. The positivity in her eyes waned when she checked the time, “You’re here to meet with Velour right?”


“little bit of warning would’ve been nice,” Waltzer grumbled climbing back on top of my head.

“You know I nod whenever I’m confirming something.”

“yeah, but you know i fall asleep a lot,” Waltzer tugged on my hair.

“Not my fault you’re narcoleptic.” I pouted and frowned at December, “Right Dec?”

December stared up at the two of us silently before burying his face into my thumb.

“Ah well,” I remembered to not shrug and dislodge the five bitties resting on my shoulders at least, “We’ll try to involve you in our banter more at a later time.”

I kissed the top of his head and looked around for Velour.

“So? Where is my favorite purple squirrel?” I asked.

“I’ll call her up,” Karli picked up the phone, “Just a couple of minutes okay? Things are a bit hectic down there right now…”

“I can wait,” I promised her.

I did wait for a little while. After about twenty minutes, Velour finally popped up looking like she had lost a fight with the sandman. She forced a chipper grin.

“Miss Newmore,” Her voice was blurred with fatigue, “I’m so glad you could make it. It’s nice to see all of you too.” She smiled at my bitties.

“Hey Velour,” I shook her hand with the one that wasn’t holding December, “You look like shit.”

“Thanks,” Velour’s voice dripped with sarcasm, “This way please.”
I followed her back towards the elevator. Tinsel woke up and cringed upon seeing *that* closet.

“It’s okay Tinsel,” I reached up and patted his head, “We’re not going in there.”

He calmed down some once he realized that we were actually stepping into the elevator.

“Down to 5?” I raised a brow and smiled. Velour didn’t return it as she pressed the button to go down.

“Miss Newmore,” Velour swallowed, “You do know how monsters have had a hard time because our leaders- the Dreemurr family- have not been able to speak with world leaders on behalf of our kind right?”

“Yeah,” I had listened to it on the news. The representatives that the monsters did have could get little done because they couldn’t speak for the royal family, “What does that have to do with anything?”

“Do you remember your last visit here?” I nodded, “Then you remember the illness I mentioned?”

“Uh-huh,” I nodded slowly, “They’re connected somehow?”

The elevator dinged and opened up to a long hallway filled with windows looking to hospital like rooms. Most of them had their curtains drawn, but the one second down from the elevator on the right had light spilling from it.

“This way.” Velour lead me to the window, “It’d be easier to show you. Here.”

She gestured for me to look into the room.

Inside, a large…sansy (?) was laid out on a hospital bed with hundreds of wires connected to him and dozens of needles buried into his bones. His body shook with fever as his bones seemed to…bubble? A monster in the room stared at the growth on the sansy’s leg. He waited until it grew up to his knee before beginning to remove it. The bubbling liquid was then quickly sealed in a small…tank…like the ‘source’ had been in.

“Is that a mutated sansy?” My voice was hollow. Velour shook her head.

“That’s not a sansy. We named the sansys after him because they’re the closest to his normal personality,” Velour rested a paw against the class, “Miss Newmore, this is Sans, Sans the skeleton. He worked with Dr. Alphys- another afflicted patient- before taking a simple sentry position to keep a closer eye on his brother Papyrus.”

I stared into the room with my mouth hanging open.

“Around the time the seventh human entered the underground, all of the boss monsters and a variety of other monsters were afflicted with what we could only call magic overgrowth. Monster magic destabilizes whenever we’re sick, but it always goes back to normal quickly. In this case, their magic *refuses* to stabilize,” Velour rubbed her eyes, “It’s killing them. Their magic is growing too much for their physical bodies to take, and the energy it takes to produce new magic is slowly leeching their life away.”

“What does this have to do with bitties?” Waltzer seemed to be the only actually able to wrap his head around this.
“Bitties come from that,” Velour pointed to the tank, “In a way, bitties are kind of like small scale clones of the original. The magic grows and grows before reaching a point where it begins to stabilize and condense into a smaller size. You could compare the patients and their bitties to the alkali metals and the noble gases. These sick monsters are like the former, desperately trying to get rid of the unstable magic in their system. Bitties are like the later- completely stable and unable to be altered by monster magic. Bitties are the only lead we have towards a cure. That’s why we study them- specifically anomalies that break the mold.”

“And my bitties are special,” I breathed, “Because of the abuse he suffered, Raze’s power level is astronomically higher than that of a normal bitty. Snuggle’s freak accident awoke monster level healing abilities, and Tinsel shouldn’t technically exist. They don’t fit into your normal bitty pattern, and you want to see if they can be the keys to solving all of this?”

“Essentially, yes.” Velour nodded, “Tinsel is stable despite his magic being erratic while he was in the womb. Snuggle miraculously stabilized him, but we couldn’t come forward before. Thus, we’ve been studying Tinsel’s magic and trying to figure out how Snuggle might’ve affected him. Our royal family is also plagued with this disease. We need a cure Miss Newmore, but some humans already fear monsters. They think we’re awakening some kind of evil super monster to kill them all when all we really want to do is just rescue our fellows.”

“I see.” I abruptly sat down on the cold floor of the underground hospital, “So that’s what you meant by lives were at risk.”

“Yes,” Velour sighed and sat down beside me, “This morning, Sans almost completely disintegrated. He only has 1 HP, and that makes him more vulnerable to this disease. We’re beginning to lose ground Miss Newmore. He might die at this rate.”

“We can help right?” Tinsel asked, “We can do something? You need to study my magic? Go ahead.”

Tinsel slid down my front despite Raze trying to hold him on my shoulder.

“I want to help.” Tinsel said firmly.

“Snuggle does too,” Blake added after quickly recapping the whole thing to his brother.

“oh so i’m just supposed to let my kid get poke and pulled by some mad scientists,” Raze scowled, “not a chance in hell.”

“Daddy,” Tinsel protested, “Velour would never hurt me!”

“i-“

“Enough Raze,” Sunshine rested a hand on Raze’s shoulder, “Tinsel is capable of making his own decisions.”

Raze growled softly, but said no more.

“Is there anything we could do to help?” Cyan’s head popped out of my hood, “We’re not special like the others, but perhaps we could offer some new insight?”

“You’re all very special.” Velour chuckled, “I saw your determination levels during your last group checkup in November. You have unnatural amounts of determination in your magic.” Velour smiled at me, “Probably because of your human here.”
“Huh?” I cocked my head sending Waltzer tumbling off my head. I caught him easily.

“Your determination— which is at an extremely high level by the way— has rubbed off on them due to constant exposure.” Velour pointed to December, “He’s even beginning to build some up as well.”

“Could that help?” I asked.

“It might. It might not.” Velour groaned and buried her face into her paws, “I honestly don’t know at this point. We’re desperate.”

“we’ll do everything we can to help,” Waltzer promised.

The rest of my bitties chorused an agreement.

“Thank you,” Velour rubbed tears from her cheeks, “Sans is stable for now, but we don’t know how much longer he’ll stay that way. Could we maybe take some samples to look over during the holidays? That way we can have a game plan come January?”

“Sure,” Tinsel nodded.

My bitties were taken by some scientists to be examined and sampled. I stood up and looked into the room. The monster inside stepped out.

“You can go in if you’d like.” He said.

I did.

Sans was a small monster. He’d probably only come up to my eyebrows standing up. His bones were thin and slightly yellow. Fever induced sweat raced down his skull. His magic seemed to have calmed for now.

“Sorry you’re in this mess,” I said unsure of what to really say, “My bitties and I will help in any way we can.”

I’m not a particularly affectionate person to strangers, but the small skeleton on the bed looked like shit. I wrapped my hand around his and gave his hot hand a gentle squeeze.

“So keep fighting okay?” I forced a smile.

“j-jojo?” Idjit asked from the hallway.

“Hey buddy,” I walked outside and found all of my bitties waiting for me, “Well, today has been an interesting day. Who’s interested in just going home and taking a nap?”

Nine hands shot up.

“Home we go then.”

We literally spent the rest of the day watching some shitty comedy movie to distract ourselves. Needless to say, having the lives of about a dozen monsters on our shoulders wasn’t in our game plan. We’d adapt though. We always did.
I had spent more than a few depressing Christmases drinking away the pain. I had spent many a lonely Christmas Eve texting my friends asking how their holidays were going. I had hoped to survive to see the next Christmas when my leg was going to shit.

I had never found myself wondering if someone else was still alive on Christmas though. Velour assured me that Sans was stable, and she practically demanded that I just think on things and enjoy the holiday.

Which is easy for her to say. I grumbled mentally while I glared at my clock. It was 3 A.M. on Christmas day. Olivia was clinging to me in her sleep, and Nadia snored softly on the ground, curling around Cesar.

“lia?” December’s whisper barely reached my ears. I looked down and saw his black button eyes looking up at me, “are you…okay?”

“I’m fine,” My voice rumbled with sleep, “Just thinking.”

December’s small, chilled hand rubbed my chin soothingly.

“do you need waltzer?” He asked.

“No sweetie,” I tilted my head down and nuzzled the top of his skull. My movement sent Blake and Snuggle sliding down the pillow. Blake accidentally kicked out in his sleep and hit my forehead. I frowned playfully at the snoozing bitty. Snuggle reached out for his brother instinctively when too much space had entered between them. The meek calmed upon feeling his brother’s shoulder press against his palm, “Is there anyone not in this bedroom with me?”

In truth? No.

Leo had trapped my legs. Tyrone was on the floor on the other side of the bed. I could hear Granny snoring over the speakerphone. All of our bitties were dozing around their humans in a variety of poses. The one that made me laugh the most was looking at the reflection of my bed in TV to find Hiro asleep on Olivia’s face.

“Phine…” Nadia’s blurry voice cut through the atmosphere. A pillow swatted at my arm, “It’s three in the morning. Shut the fuck up.”

“Sorry, sorry.” I buried my face against December’s skull to cut off my laughter.
Sleep refused to return to me though. Fatigue made my bones ache, but my mind churned with anxiety. December began to snore softly against my neck after about thirty minutes.

*I can’t just sit here.* I bit back a loud sigh. Wriggling out of Olivia’s grasp carefully, I slid off of the bed without waking anyone up. Waltzer- who had curled up on top of Tyrone’s head- stared up at me sleepily until I gestured for him to just go back to sleep.

The remnants of the previous evening’s dinner still sat on the coffee table in the living room and the counters in the kitchen. Sunshine and Cyan had put every last bit of cooking knowledge they had amassed into a delicious Christmas dinner- the leftovers of which I would hide and hoard until the middle of January. I didn’t have a tree, but I noticed that the pile of presents- which only included mine and Nadia’s presents before- had grown overnight. *No wonder Leo fell asleep on my legs.* I snorted. *He must’ve stayed up late to carry all of this inside.*

The child in my wanted to go and poke around, but my brain demanded coffee before doing anything else.

“Okay,” I muttered to myself looking around the kitchen, “I were Sunshine and Cyan where would I put the expensive coffee?”

Raze and Waltzer were particularly fond of the same *expensive* brand of coffee I enjoyed. Cyan and Sunshine had to hide the container from us to keep it from bleeding out too quickly. Thus, the three of us only really got to enjoy it on rare occasions, and I felt that Christmas was a good occasion to have it on.

“Miss Josie?”

I bit back a yelp and turned around. Cyan rubbed his eyes sleepily. He stared back up at me.

“What on earth are you doing up so early?” He chided, “And in the kitchen no less.”

“Sorry,” I shuffled on my feet like a guilty child, “Couldn’t go back to sleep, so I wanted some good coffee.”

“You were poking around my cabinets?” Cyan raised a brow.

“Sooorryyy…”

“I’ll make you some coffee,” Cyan narrowed his eyes, “But you aren’t staying in here to learn where Sunshine and I hide the good coffee.”

“Well shit,” I grumbled shuffling out of the kitchen.

“You’re smart Miss Josie, but you’re not that clever.” Cyan called after me. I stuck my tongue out at the kitchen.

Cyan’s version of my favorite brand of coffee was a bit sweeter than I liked. I didn’t complain though since he didn’t have to get up and help me find it in the first place. He also didn’t have to join me in watching some lame Christmas specials as everyone else slowly began to drag themselves out of my bedroom.

Snuggle and Blake were the first ones out. The sleepy meek fell asleep clinging to my ankle until Blake just hefted him up on the couch beside me. Idjit, December, and Tinsel came next. Poking their heads around the corner, they smiled upon seeing that some of us were awake. After that, everyone just seemed to wake up at once. Granny had to say good-bye because her train would
be arriving at its destination soon, so Olivia, Nadia, and I all promised to call her later on in the day.

“How in the world can you wake up so early?” Tyrone yawned. “Leo’s a teacher, so he has an excuse. What’s yours?”

“Insomnia?” I offered.

“i don’t think you quite fit that bill,” Waltzer mused over a cup of the expensive coffee.

“Yeah,” I stretched my arms up, “Just got stuck thinking about things. That’s all.”

Tyrone just raised a brow before Olivia finally busted into the room with Hiro.

“Merry Christmas!” She bounced over and pulled me into a strangling hug, “I love you Sissy!”

“Hi,” I choked out, “Love you too…please let me go.”

Nadia slid into the room silently with Cesar still have asleep in her arms. She eyed all of us in the living room warily. It was an understandable reaction. Leo and Nadia never got along to begin with, and he still hadn’t forgiven her for the whole Edgar fiasco. Tyrone had barely interacted with Nadia because she had her own personal lawyer in the next town over. She was a fish out of water here.

“We don’t bite Nadia,” I waved her over, “Are we eating first or opening pres-“

“Don’t even bother asking,” Leo laughed pointing over to where Olivia and Hiro were sorting the gifts.

“Livvy,” I pinched the bridge of my nose, “Well then.”

After wrestling my sister away from the gifts, I shooed everyone into sitting positions. This must be what it’s like to have kids. I thought as I passed out the gifts. Pure chaos….Granny wants me to spawn some? Hell no.

Obviously, I was the one who brought the most gifts. I had to provide one for each of my guests, my bitties, and their bitties. Tyrone appreciated the watch because of the intricate engraving on the back of his personal motto, and Leo was over joyed to see tickets for a flight to Japan- he needs to see his grandparents after all. Olivia’s nice evening dress was hand designed by a French designer associate of mine, and I traded my Spanish friend an antique, golden mirror for a necklace filled with diamonds and rubies for Nadia. I had also contacted one of my carpenter friends in Italy to create a crib for Nadia’s kid. My bitties had each received something related to their hobbies- a skateboard for Blake, cook books for Cyan and Sunshine, etc., etc.

“Your turn Etta,” Tyrone nodded to my small pile of gifts, “You haven’t touched a single one.”

I snapped one last picture of the scene for Granny before putting my phone aside.

Leo’s gift- made not bought. A teacher’s salary only goes so far- was a CD filled with ‘our songs’ and old pictures. Tyrone- the typical worrywart- bought me a revolver of all things. Olivia and Nadia had apparently combined their efforts to get me a better phone and laptop. Granny’s present hadn’t arrived from wherever it was coming from yet, so I thought that would be it.

Then Waltzer directed my attention to a smaller box.
“Huh?” I picked it up and saw that it had sticker with a variety of handwriting on it.

To: jojo, Miss Josie, ophie, Josephine, speck, GJ, ari, josie jo, lia

From: idjit, Cyan, waltzer, Sunshine, raze, tinsel, blake, Snuggle, December

I stared at the neatly wrapped gift for a few seconds wondering when on earth they had time to go out and get me something. Then I remembered their shopping trip with Leo.

“Was this part of your shopping list?” I asked running my hands over the gift carefully. The bitties nodded, “No wonder you didn’t want me around then. It’d ruin the surprise.”

Carefully, I tore the gift open. It was a jewelry box. Inside said jewelry box was a copper charm bracelet. There was an array of mismatched charms- obviously made for different bracelets- tacked on to it here and there.

A gold covered fang hung close to a small, fabric fluff ball sun. Nestled between the two was a small, glitter covered plastic star. A wooden teddy bear was only one small circle away from a rather clunky skateboard charm that looked like it would fit on a necklace better. A tiny little silver snowflake sat alone, but a small little red ‘pearl’ hung nearby. Beside said ‘pearl’ a clear teardrop shaped piece of glass was next to a plastic bunny slipper charm. I also saw a charm reading “big sister” and “twin” next to a painted lion charm and a paintbrush charm.

I sat and stared at the mangled bit of jewelry. The small bracelet weighed a decent bit because of the charms. It rested heavily in my palm. There were still places to slide in more charms in the future. The bracelet wasn’t complete at all, and nothing matched. It wasn’t perfect.

Which was perfect.

With a gentle grin, I slid it onto my left wrist. I was ambidextrous, but I did favor my right hand more than my left. The weight felt like an anchor grounding me.

“jojo?” Idjit timidly edged closer.

All of my bitties were staring at me waiting for my reaction. Even Raze watched me cautiously from the corner of his eye.

“do you like it?” Waltzer asked, “we didn’t exactly have much to work with.”

“I love it guys,” I rattled the bracelet against my wrist, “I love it a lot.”

They all practically sagged in relief.

“Awww,” Olivia examined the charms on my bracelet, “This is so cute!”

“oh wow!” Hiro peered over Olivia’s shoulder. He smiled brightly at my bitties, “excellent choices my dear friends! truly a spectacular gift!”

“A lion,” Tyrone snorted looking at the charms, “Didn’t have a bear?”

“Not one that didn’t resemble a teddy bear,” Leo sighed, “Trust me. We looked everywhere.”

I cocked a brow at the two of them.

“You’re more of a mama bear is all,” Tyrone shrugged.
I frowned at him.

“It’s true,” He held a hand up in an attempt to ward off my glare, “Please stop. You look like you’re about leap across the room and rip my throat out.”

“That would most certainly ruin your carpets Josephine,” Nadia commented from where she marveled the crib. Cesar had already begun digging into the massive book of puzzles and mindfuckery I had purchased for him, “The craftsmanship of this crib is brilliant. Who made this?”

“One of my buddies in Italy,” I popped my knuckles to soothe the forming pressure in my joints, “I can get you his number.”

“I’d appreciate it.” Nadia nodded her head.

After I forced the lazy humans in my apartment to help clean up wrapping paper, Cyan and Sunshine offered to provide a large meal for everyone. Leo and Tyrone had to go through. Both had family elsewhere.

“Be safe,” I hugged each of them respectively, “Watch your step too.”

“Yes Josie,” Leo chuckled poking my cheek.

“You’re the one who should be careful,” Tyrone chided ruffling my hair, “It might snow, so keep an eye on Sunshine.”

“I’m not neglectful you know!” My fist connected with his side before he could twist out of the way.

“Owww…” He wheezed, “You do realize I have to walk to my sister’s house like this right.”

“You’ll live you big baby.” I stood on my tip-toes and tapped him on the nose, “Now fuck off.”

Olivia and Nadia left a few minutes after them.

“I’m sorry,” Olivia pouted, “I promised to attend some Christmas parties with some old friends of mine.”

“It’s fine Livvy,” I straightened her jacket, “Call me if you need someone to walk you home.”

“I will,” Olivia wrapped me in a hug and left a lipstick stain on my cheek, “I loooove you! Merry Christmas!”

“You’ve already said that.” I sighed and patted her back, “You guys look after her okay?” I asked Harley and Hiro.

“You got it,” Harley saluted me.

“no harm shall ever come to my precious Mother!” Hiro declared.

“Then all of my worries have faded.” Fighting the urge to roll my eyes, I turned to face Nadia, “You’re gone too?”

“Yes,” Nadia helped Cesar find a perch on her shoulder, “I have to attend a meeting this

“Plenty of people,” Nadia and I said at the same time.

“Okay, creeepyyyyy.” Olivia took a step back from the two of us.

“That wasn’t planned,” I scowled at Nadia. She gave me a dirty look in return, “Enjoy your little party Nadia.”

“I will,” Nadia tucked some hair behind her ear, “My colleagues are interesting.”

*Not nice or funny.* I thought wryly ‘*Interesting*’.

After the two left, some part of my brain expected my apartment to go silent like it always did on Christmas.

No silence came.

Cyan and Sunshine were making brunch instead of breakfast while Blake and Waltzer were making sure there wasn’t any hidden trash anywhere.

“lia?”

I looked down and saw December look up at me. He wore an adorable set of gray pajamas with Idjit’s red jacket. His tiny hands prodded at the scarring on my foot anxiously.

“Yes Dec?” I questioned moving to stand on my other foot to tickle him with my toes. Thankfully, the buttonberry giggled at my antics.

“i liked this.” He admitted quietly.

“I’m glad you did,” I bent down and picked him up. I looked towards my other bitties, “Did everyone else have a good Christmas?”

“christmas isn’t over yet.” Blake protested, “we still have dozens of christmas specials to watch and a gingerbread house to make.”

“We have stuff to make a gingerbread house?” I cocked my head confusedly.

‘The stuff is hidden in the kitchen.’ Snuggle answered.

“Cyan. Sunshine.” I barreled into the kitchen with December in my hand, “We have a gingerbread house?”

“Yes Miss Josie,” Cyan sighed like was talking to a child, “We have a gingerbread house.”

Old memories came forward. Twin sets of small hands “sneaking” candy from underneath a smiling mother’s nose. A happy father looking on while occasionally making a mess just to make his little girls get annoyed.

*Holy shit those sting.*

I blinked back tears and rubbed my face. By the time we were old enough to enjoy *making* the damn things, my parents were too busy running their damn company to care. That left me to
playfully swat away small fingers that would otherwise nab gumdrops and help a young Olivia draw the rooftop of her little house.

“ari?” Blake’s voice cut through the memory. He teleported onto my shoulder and touched a tear stain, “ari!?”

Immediately, all of my bitties zoned in on me.

“j-jojo?”

“ophie! what’s wrong!?”

A chorus of concern made me laugh.

“Nothing, nothing.” I chuckled, “Just can’t wait to make it. It’s been a while.”

‘yer cryin’ over a goddamn gingerbread house?” Raze kicked my foot, “quit makin’ us worry you stupid bitch.”

“hey,” Waltzer’s hand glowed dark blue, but it dropped to his side once I simply laughed.

“Yeah,” I admitted, “It’s a bit ridiculous, but you guys love me for my eccentricities right?”

“o-of course!” Idjit’s hands clung to my pant’s leg.

A chorus of ‘absolutely’ and ‘never doubt that’ warmed me up more than the coffee had.

“Christmas with the family,” I murmured quietly, thoroughly amused, “Never thought it’d actually happen.”

Raze bit my foot for saying that which made him and Waltzer get into a fight. That whole mess ended up getting Blake involved and well….

It took a couple of hours before we got started on the gingerbread house.
Jo really doesn't like it when it's quiet.

Velour really liked to call me during the ungodly hours between midnight at six in the morning.

“He’d better be dying Velour,” I grumbled into the phone, rubbing my eyes roughly, “I literally had to drag my sister’s ass home at 2:13 this morning after she went out and got hammered.”

Olivia didn’t booze up often, but she got shitfaced when she did. A stressed Hiro had been the one to call me on the 26th to inform me that Olivia insisted the night sky was pink. My giggling drunk sister left about fifteen ‘braids’ in my hair before I managed to wrestle her into bed. Luckily, none of my bitties were disturbed by my late night errand.

“Sorry,” Velour winced then yawned, “I started working about lunch yesterday, and I haven’t stopped. I should’ve checked the clock.”

“It’s fine Velour,” I crawled out of bed, careful to not crush any bitties with my slow motions. I stretched until my back popped, “Did you need something?”

“ophie?” Waltzer’s head poked into my door. He scratched his ribcage absentmindedly as he yawned, “something going on?”

“Velour’s on the phone,” I explained. He nodded understandingly.

“I was wondering if you guys could come in today,” Velour paused, “I know it’s the day after Christmas, but we could lower everyone’s chances of magical depletion if this goes through.”

“It’s fine Velour,” I held my hand up even though she wasn’t there to see it, “I don’t have plans or anything. Besides, I need to bring you guys your Christmas stuff.”

“Christmas stuff?” I could easily imagine Velour’s tail twitching in confusion.

“Yuup,” I yawned. I didn’t mention that I had also picked up a blue hoodie for a certain skeleton. Sansys liked the damn things, so I thought he would appreciate it when he woke up, “What time do you want me to come in?”

“Is 9:30 too early?” Velour asked.

“That’s four hours to drag my bitties from their little hidey-holes, eat, and get ready,” I chuckled, “We’ll be on time- promise.”

“Thank you.”

“No problem,” I smiled out of habit, “See you.”
“Yes,” Velour said happily, “See you!”

I hung up the phone and resisted the urge to flop onto the bed. Idjit and December were hidden somewhere within the soft comforters, and they were easily crushable.

“soo….” Waltzer stretched, “need me to go hit raze awake?”

“Blake too,” I sighed.

None of us had stayed up too late the night before, but none of the bitties wanted to seem to crawl out of bed. Sunshine was the only one with an actual excuse. The rest were just trying to laze around. The all perked up once they learned where we were going though.

I leaned against the door of the bitty room while the bitties all got dressed. I stared out the large living room window instead of looking at them of course.

“If we’re going back to the labs, we’ll need to be well fed,” Cyan said as he tightened his belt.

“It needs to be quick though,” Sunshine frowned as he struggled to find a good jacket to wear, “We have to walk there.”

“True…to go maybe?”

“Perhaps.”

The two grillbitties continued to toss ideas back and forth.

“please quit talking about foot,” Blake sighed patting his not existent stomach, “it’s making me hungry!”

“Sorry, sorry,” Sunshine blushed.

“We’ll get started though,” Cyan patted Sunshine on the back. The two- despite being very close- were always careful to never touch flame to water. It would be a death sentence for Sunshine if they did.

“GJ?” Tinsel attempted to walk over to me before wincing and rubbing his leg.

“What’s wrong sweetie?” I stepped into the room.

“Sorry,” Tinsel blushed, “My leg hurts more than normal that’s all. I slept on it the wrong way last night.”

‘I tried to fix it,’ Snuggle signed, ‘But he kept moving it back.’

“Sorry Snug,” Tinsel’s blush darkened. Snuggle just patted his head.

“We’re going to help Sans right?” Tinsel cocked his head.

“Yes.” I nodded.

“What are you going to be doing?”

“Uhhh…” I blinked, “No fucking clue baby.”
“Josephine.” Sunshine scolded me as he walked out of the bitty room, “Language.”

“ha.” Raze chuckled darkly.

“like he doesn’t get onto you for it all the time,” Blake rolled his eyes. Raze growled at the cocky bitty who simply made a ‘bring it’ gesture.

“now, now,” Waltzer stepped between the two, “we’ve got stuff to do.”

Thankfully, the two sans type bitties decided to listen to him. Since I wasn’t trying to keep my bitties from murdering each other, we managed to slide out the door with enough time to walk to the CC instead of having to run there. The streets were filled with drunks just getting home from late parties and weary adults returning less than desirable gifts. The Christmas cheer that had surrounded the city beforehand was gone- replaced by the bitter reality that a new year was just around the corner.

“lia?” December tapped my neck gently, “the sky is really gray.”

I squinted up at the sky.

“That’s snow building up above Mt. Ebbot,” The clouds were too light to be thunderclouds, “It’ll probably some pouring down sometime in January.”

“the weather around here is crazy,” Blake shook his head.

“Magic screws with just about everything.” I shrugged ever so slightly, “Hopefully it won’t snow when everyone’s trying to set off fireworks.”

“fireworks?” Blake cocked his head.

“Oh,” Cyan grumbled from my hood, “The loud things that went off on the fourth of July.”

“Yeah…” That hadn’t been a good time for Cyan. He’d been jumping with each pop because we still lived in the shittier apartment at that point.

“we actually didn’t get to go see them,” Waltzer pointed out.

“I’d like to see them,” Tinsel said excitedly, “I’ve seen pictures of them.”

Cyan sighed.

“I’ll think of something,” I promised everyone, “For now though, let’s focus on the task at hand.”

My bitties all nodded in agreement.

The Bitty CC was slammed with humans and their bitties. More than a few bitties apparently ate something bad over the holidays or had gotten sick because of the chill. I hovered in the background with my perfectly healthy bitties until the chaos finally calmed down around 10:20.

Velour approached me clutching a cup of coffee like it was a lifeline.

“I’m sorry about that,” She winced taking a sip, “We had so many emergency visits…”

“It’s fine,” I waved away her concern.
“i-i-is ever-r-ry-one o-o-okay?” Idjit poked his head out of my hood to look at Velour over my shoulder.

“Yes,” She smiled, “Everyone’s okay.”

“ah,” Blake chided himself, “why didn’t we think to see if snuggle could help?”

“It’s fine,” Velour patted the bitty’s head, “Besides, we need Snuggle today, so it’d be bad if he was all tuckered out.”

“Speaking of which?” I raised a brow.

Velour nodded and lead me back towards the elevator. The bitty techs eyed me in wary affection. They still liked me because I took care of so many bitties, but I was delving into secrets they didn’t want the human public to know. It was an understandable reaction.

“We might be able to keep the magic from expanding so much,” Velour explained in the elevator, “It’ll still be an issue, but it lessens the chances of someone dying due to magical depletion. We’ll need to examine more of Snuggle’s magic and Tinsel’s magical make-up before being sure.”

“hmph,” Raze still didn’t like Tinsel being messed with. His arm subtly curled around his son protectively.

“It won’t be painful or invasive.” Velour promised, “You can watch the whole time Raze.”

Raze just snapped his teeth at her. Sunshine sighed and leaned into Raze’s arm.

“Raze,” He said quietly. The edgy calmed a bit, but I could still feel how tense he was on my shoulder.

More of the curtains were open in the hallway this time. Some bitty techs approached.

“We’ll take the bitties then,” Velour said, “You can wander around if you’d like, but I’d prefer it if you didn’t go into any of the labs.”

“Sure,” I allowed my bitties to be taken into gentle hands. The bitty techs- well scientists would be a better term for these guys I guess- smiled at my bitties and asked about how they were feeling. They won’t hurt them. I reminded myself. They won’t hurt them to further their own goals.

“lia?” December hesitated on my collar. One of the bitty scientists waited patiently for him.

“Yes?” I asked.

“can…i stay with idjit?” December asked quietly. Idjit looked around the arm of the bitty scientist who was holding him when he heard his name.

“I’m sure Idjit won’t mind,” I looked at Idjit, “He wants to stay with you. That okay?”

Idjit nodded. December quickly bolted into Idjit’s arms once the cherry was in range. Idjit blushed and patted his head. He must’ve been picking up some tricks from Blake on how to be a good big brother.

With all of my bitties swept into various labs, I was left to meander through the halls. I could finally see the other patients- a tall skeleton, two goat monsters, a dinosaur like monster, some human-fish hybrid, a spider human hybrid, a small flower, and some shaded figure. They all looked rough. The scientists and doctors in their rooms glared at me when I approached too close to the
window, so I just went back to Sans’s room.

He looked pretty good all things considering. His bones were still way to thin and not colored properly, but the bumps on his body were small compared to the apple sized ones I had seen on the others. Even his fevered breath sounded calmer for once.

“Hey man,” I pulled up a chair on the left side of his bed. I sat the plastic bag holding the blue jacket on a nearby table, “Brought this for when you wake up. Merry Christmas I guess?”

Sans of course said nothing. He was kind of unconscious.

“Well,” I leaned back in my chair, “My bitties are working with the scientists down here to help stabilize your magic. They’re pretty honorable, so they won’t leave you hanging.”

I paused and really thought about his situation.

“You won’t know a damn thing when you wake up,” I frowned, “The last thing you’re going to remember is falling ill in the underground. You won’t remember when the monsters surfaced almost two years ago. You won’t know how bad the political situation is….shit man. I’m sorry.”

I leaned forward and patted his hand gently. His magic thrummed in mimicry of a human pulse. It tickled a little.

“It’s going to take a lot of adjusting to get used to life on the surface,” My frown deepened as I felt his hand. The bumps on his fingers were getting pretty big. I kept talking to myself though. Distractions were welcome in this dark place, “I could help if you’d like. It’d be a shame for my bitties to work so hard only for you to get killed.”

I continued to chat with my poor incapacitated audience while I waited. Some part of me would swear that I saw white light flicker in his eye sockets for a few seconds, but I knew that was ridiculous. Velour had insisted that he was the weakest monster being treated. The sedation had to be hitting him hard.

It was how I could ramble on about my political concerns without much care. When the Dreemurrs finally stepped up, there would be a lot of trouble. Monster hate groups would feel threatened once monsters had a proper figure head. Given my history with them, one could understand my anxiety about it all. Especially since my bitties would be personally involved with the welfare of these powerful monsters.

“I don’t know Sans,” I grumbled tapping a random rhythm into the back of his hand, “I honestly don’t know how this is all going to go. Hell….I don’t even know we can stabilize you guys yet. I shouldn’t even been thinking this far ahead.”

The future wouldn’t fall silent though. It liked to remind me of unpredictable and ever changing it was.

If this all works out….there’s going to be a lot of issues. I bit my lip and stared at the sick skeleton in front of me. But I can’t just leave people to suffer and die. That’s not right. Besides, my bitties are the ones who decided to do this. All I can do is support their decision.

Well, technically, I could pull the plug on the whole operation.

That would kill a number of innocents though.
“Ugghh…” I pulled my hands away from Sans’s to rub my face, “A tiny part of me wishes you could actually answer me. I’d have someone to bounce ideas off of if you could.”

Sans was still- obviously- silent.

“Jeez Jo,” I rubbed the back of my neck and checked the clock, “You sat here and rambled on about politics and the future to an unconscious skeleton for about three hours….I need a life.”

After another forty minutes of me dozing in the chair by Sans’s bedside, Velour finally entered the room with a happy grin.

“It worked!” She said excitedly, “We don’t have a cure, but it’s a step in the right direction.”

“Great,” I yawned, “Where are my bitties.”

“Being treated to lunch since they worked so hard,” Velour blushed, “I almost forgot you were here in all honesty. Sorry I didn’t bring you anything. It must be boring to sit around doing nothing.”

“Bah,” I waved aside her worries, “I’ve got a great chatting companion.”

Velour cocked her head.

“Sans of course,” I gestured to the comatose skeleton, “He can’t talk back, but it’s better than talking to a wall or something.”

Velour laughed. It took a few minutes for her to calm down. Once she could speak clearly again, she asked me to come pick up my bitties with her.

“So how much time does this new discovery grant us?” I asked.

“Years if need be,” Velour said, “By controlling how often the unstable magic can spike, we can control how much magic the afflicted monsters are using. It also gives us an opportunity to further study why their magic has gone haywire in the first place.”

“That went over my head,” I said honestly, “But I’ll assume it’s good.”

“It’s very good.” Velour promised me.

“jojo.” Idjit flew into my ankle the instant I stepped into the room where he and my other bitties had eaten lunch, “i missed you.”

“Hey sweetie,” December quietly waited a few steps away from my feet. I picked them both up, “You guys feel good about what you’ve accomplished?”

“Yes,” Tinsel beamed. He looked a little tired, but extremely happy, “We helped people!”

“fuck needles,” Raze grumbled in a dark corner, “fuck them to the depths of hell.”

“Do I want to know?” I asked Sunshine.

“His magic is the stronger one in Tinsel, so they asked for a sample,” Sunshine explained with an affectionate huff, “He’s just being overly dramatic.”

“never would’ve thought it would just take a little rod of metal to freak him out so much,” Waltzer commented from where he snacked on the remains of a large cookie, “did you stay with one
of the patients the whole time?”

“Yup,” I nodded, “The whole time.”

“jeez,” Blake winced, “that must’ve been dull.”

“Eh,” I shrugged and looked at Velour, “Is there anything else you need from us today?”

“No,” Velour shook her head, “We need to study what we have.”

“Great,” I gestured to my bitties, “Well, come on. We still need to call Granny about Christmas because a certain sansy forgot to remind me to call her.”

Waltzer blushed and looked away.

“sorry.” Waltzer rubbed the back of his head.

“It’s fine,” I shrugged, “We’re just going to get a long lecture.”

And a long lecture we did receive that day after we got everyone home. Granny went on for about two hours before she had to go to a meeting. My bitties looked like scolded school children.

“And this is why you don’t forget to call your grandparents.” I pressed gentle kisses on the tops of their heads. Raze bit my nose for it, but I swore I could see a light blush on his cheeks, “They get cranky.”

With that, we dissolved into our usual late afternoon early evening groups. Cyan and Waltzer were watching something in the living room while Blake and Snuggle poured over their latest book. Tinsel, Idjit, and December were off entertaining themselves in the bitty room, and I didn’t want to know what Raze and Sunshine were up to alone.

I managed to sneak into my office unnoticed by the bitties to get some work it.

*I feel like a husband with a wife who nags him about work too much.* I chuckled as I started up my computer. *But I was smart to-

My computer screens went black.

“What?” I almost cried. I looked down and saw Blake holding the plugs that powered my computer screens.

“don’t think we quit watching you when we quit watching you,” Blake warned gesturing towards the door, “no working right now. go enjoy a break before drowning yourself in work again.”

“Blakkee,” I whined. He just pointed to the door again, “Fine.”

Well, it seemed like no work would be done until January.

*Dammit all.*
I didn’t expect to spend my December 31st scolding my Granny for three hours straight. I also didn’t expect for it to happen in French, but Granny had a tendency to slip into other languages without meaning too. That tendency to slip in and out of languages gave my sisters and I an advantage whenever we wanted to learn a new language because chances were high we’d heard Granny speak it before. The only language I hadn’t picked up from her was Japanese which I learned from Leo. Still, odd language aside, I chatted with her as I ate my breakfast on my living room floor. Raze had fallen asleep on my leg after arguing with me for about two hours before Granny called, and the others were off doing their various things within the apartment.

“Granny,” I chided the old bag over the phone. My French sounded rougher than usual because of my frustration, but she had started the conversation speaking it, “What have I said about overworking yourself?”

“I’m not some child Joey,” Granny snorted before coughing, “Besides, you work more than I do.”

“I used to.” I corrected, “My bitties get frustrated if I try to do that too often.”

“You have no idea how happy that makes me,” Granny sighed in relief, “Are they going to be able to drag you tonight for the fireworks?”

I scowled at the TV at the thought. Blake and Snuggle seemed interested in going to see them, and Tinsel was bound to find them fascinating. Cyan would hate every second of it though which meant Waltzer would hate every second of it too.

“Curlies are sensitive to sound,” I reminded her, “It’s a case of what’s more unfair: leaving Cyan and Waltzer behind or not taking anyone at all. I also doubt that December would enjoy them very much either.”

“Tough spot.” Granny agreed. I heard her shift more comfortably in the bed she had been confined to by her secretary, “You’ll think of something dear. You’re very clever.”

“No, I’m not. I can be lucky at times though.” My hand began to stroke the top of Raze’s head absentmindedly, “I’m glad you have so much faith in me.”

“And I always will Joey,”

A happy smile forced its way onto my face. It might not have been from my parents, but having an older relative believe in me….shit…that was priceless.
“Anyways,” Granny sighed, “Caspian is about ten minutes away from breaking my phone. He thinks I should be napping like some doddering old biddy.”

“You are a doddering old biddy,” I grinned wickedly at her sound of protest, “But I love you nonetheless. Get well soon Granny.”

“Such a sweet granddaughter I have,” Granny said dryly, “I will.” She switched over to English, “I already love you, but I will love you more if you send me some wine. Caspian says I shouldn’t drink it as much.”

“And have your half Italian, half French secretary gut me for disobeying his wishes?” I raised a brow and laughed, “Not a ch- Dammit Raze.”

Raze had bitten onto my finger. He glared up at me with bags under his eyes.

“Really?” I huffed. He bit harder, “Fuck you.”

“Is that my little grandbitty?” Granny asked fondly while slipping back into French, “Oh Caspian, I just want to speak with Raze. Honestly. Put my little craftsman on the phone.”

“Little craftsman?” I bit back a laugh. Raze’s eyes widened in horror. He ripped the phone from my hands and teleported away, “Oh my god.”

Falling backwards onto the ground, I curled into a ball laughing.

Eventually Cyan and Sunshine stared at me as they collected my plate and utensils.

“Josephine?” Sunshine rested a warm hand against my arm. At this point, my full belly laughter had dissipated into soft chuckles, “You’re worrying us.”

“Nothing babies,” I couldn’t help the last few chuckles that slipped out, “Nothing.”

“Miss Josie,” Cyan began hesitantly, but he didn’t continue.

“Yes?” I cocked my head making my hair pull somewhat uncomfortably on my scalp.

“What…are we doing this evening?” Cyan’s words rushed out of his lips like a damn breaking, “I know that Blake wants to go see the fireworks, but they are so loud and…I….I.”

Cyan looked ready to self-destruct at that point. Sunshine tugged his sweater sleeve over his hand before resting it against Cyan’s upper back comfortingly.

“I’m uncertain as to whether or not I’d be able to handle it,” Cyan wrung his hands together uncertainly, “I’d hate to ruin someone else’s fun though…”

“Cyan,” Sunshine’s annoyed sigh came before my own protest, “Blake would easily understand the situation. He’d never want us all separated, and he wouldn’t want you to do something you’re uncomfortable doing.”

Blake walked into the living room.

“hey ari have you-” Blake smiled at Cyan and Sunshine, “hey guys, i’m surprised to see you two aren’t still pouring over that cookbook.”

“We got a little preoccupied,” Sunshine smiled at the Blake. The skeleton bitty walked over to our little powwow and looked at each of us in turn. His relaxed smile slipped into a frown once he
noticed how tense Cyan was.

“cy?” Blake stepped over and rested a hand on Cyan’s arm, “is everything okay?”

“Y-Yes!” Cyan’s chuckle strained beneath the weight of his anxiety, “I…I’m fine.”

Blake furrowed his brow. Then he briefly teleported out of the room. Quickly, he returned with Waltzer in tow.

“i’m telling you wal,” Blake gestured at Cyan with both hands, “somethings up with your curly.”

“he’s not my curly,” Waltzer blushed and shoved Blake just a hair for the comment. He looked at Cyan with concern in his eyes, “is something up cy? not feeling well?”

Cyan blushed deep blue and crossed his arms.

“I…” Cyan hesitated. He looked up at me with scared eyes.

“Cyan is scared of fireworks,” I told Blake, “They’re too loud for him.”

“ooohhh,” Blake frowned at Cyan and playfully shoved him, “you could’ve said something sooner cy. we can just watch some new year’s theme movies tonight then.”

“But you were looking forward to-“ Cyan turned to face Blake. Waltzer tugged him into a loose embrace.

“cy, it wouldn’t be fun if everyone didn’t enjoy it,” Waltzer nuzzled his head into Cyan’s arm, “it’s not a big deal either. it’s just some fireworks.”

Cyan was silent. Then a big, heaving sigh of relief made him sag against Waltzer.

“Thank goodness,” He grumbled, “I hate fireworks.”

“At least that’s all sorted out now,” Sunshine grabbed my plate and hefted it over his head.

“let me help with that,” Blake offered grasping the plate with his magic, “that way we don’t lose anymore china.”

Sunshine and Cyan blushed before popping Blake’s shoulders in tandem. The blake managed to playfully complain about them ‘injuring’ him until he couldn’t hold back his laughter anymore. The two grillbitties grumbled at his antics as they headed back into the kitchen. Waltzer simply tucked his hands into his pockets.

“talk about worrying me over nothing,” Waltzer stretched his back out some.

“Blake means well,” I picked Waltzer up and snuggled my face into his chest. My sansy laughed and tugged on my hair playfully, “You smell like ketchup.”

“i always smell like ketchup,” Waltzer reminded me.

“True,” I pulled my head away.

The rest of the day went by very relaxed. Velour called me sometime to tell me that the experiment from a few days ago was a success. I scheduled my bitties next check-up on the same day she wanted them to come in for more experiments. Olivia also blew up my phone excited about
a small party she was throwing. She begged me to come, but I was done with people for the holidays. Nadia also swung by to tell me that the slander case had ended in her favor. She and Cesar had to leave to make a doctor’s appointment though, so she didn’t stay long.

As the last midnight of the year grew closer, I reflected on how much had changed in such a short period of time. In the span of about nineish to elevenish months, my life had changed completely. My family had grown and shrunk exponentially, and my overall quality of living had drastically improved. Alcohol and sharp objects still called to me at times. The dark voices in my head liked to pop back up now and then to rip the metaphorical rug from beneath my feet just because they could. Still, all it took was one word, one touch from my bitties to draw my attention from the darker parts of my heart. My rough demeanor had been worn away little chip by little chip.

I hadn’t changed that much though. Once a prickly jackass, always a prickly jackass.

“jojo?” Idjit called through my bathroom door. My bathtub had begged me to fill it with bubbles and relax, so I obviously obliged it. I had just gotten out when I heard him call out to me. I quit drying my hair and wrapped the towel around my waist before opening the door. Idjit blushed upon realizing my top was bared to the world, but he just turned around and covered his eyes, “i-i-i di-d-didn’t s-se-e-e an-n-ny-th-thing!”

“Idjit,” I laughed, “It’s fine baby. They’re just boobs.”

Very flat boobs. Nadia took all of the big breast cells in the womb. Still, they were my boobs no matter how flat they were.

“jojo.” He whined.

“Okay, okay,” I held my hands up before quickly sliding on a shirt, “I’m decent now.”

Idjit timidly checked over his shoulder before turning to face me.

“b-b-blake wa-ants to t-turn-n the li-i-ights out f-for a m-m-o-ovie.” Idjit wrapped his arms around himself, “s-so it’ll b-b-be d-da-ar-rk.”

“Oh,” I nodded, “Okay. Thanks for warning me sweetie.”

Idjit nodded before hurrying over to the door to my bedroom to join December. December must’ve also gotten a nice view of my upper body if the embarrassed red tint to his skull was anything to go by. I’ve walked around this house in just a hoodie or just a bra before. I thought incredulously. Is it the nipples? Do they make a difference? Hmmmm….

I pondered the new random thought as I dried my hair and got dressed. Making sure there wasn’t a single drop of water on my person took a lot of time, but Sunshine and Tinsel’s health were very important to me. A single drop of water could seriously injure or kill them. I took the time to even dry the floor of the bathroom before turning the lights out and stepping to a pitch black apartment.

Hooolllyyy shhiiittt…I edged around the things in my room carefully. What the fuck? I knew Idjit said it’d be dark, but daaammnnn…. 

I used the light from the living room TV leaking into my bedroom as a beacon of sorts. Blake and Snuggle were quietly dissecting plot synopses on the back of DVD cases underneath light from a flashlight Idjit and December held in place. Tinsel peered over Blake’s shoulder reading the synopsis of the current DVD as well.
“hmmm…” Blake scowled at the back of the DVD case, “this sounds so cheesy…”

“It could still be good.” Tinsel offered.

“do we take a chance on good thought?” Blake raised a brow.

“oh fer the love a…” Raze bit into one of the pillows on the couch before screaming into it.

“don’t destroy the couch man,” Blake said absentmindedly, “this is a very important decision.”

Waltzer just laughed.

“Is there some grand debate over what movie to watch?” I asked walking over to the couch. Blankets and pillows had been gathered from the bitty room, and Cyan and Sunshine were gathering snacks in the kitchen, “Shouldn’t we just pick one that sounds good.”

“i don’t want to waste two hours of my life on a shitty movie though,” Blake protested, “we were checking reviews online, but the phone died.”

“They’ve been at it for a while,” Sunshine chimed in as he and Cyan tugged in the snacks for the evening on a tray, “Maybe you could be the tie breaker?”

“Well what are our op-“

Colorful light exploded in the sky outside the building. Everyone flinched waiting for a loud sound, but I remembered that this apartment was soundproof.

The city’s grand New Year’s firework show had begun. Blasts of color tore into the night sky leaving dazzling displays of glittering color to paint the black sky with dots of color. The bitties quickly scurried over to the window staring at the show with wide eyes.

“wooaahhh…” Blake breathed his face pressed against the glass, “that’s so cool!”

“We couldn’t actually see them back in the old apartment,” Even Cyan seemed cowed by the brilliant display.

“Because the old apartment wasn’t this high up,” I leaned against the couch with a grin, “Don’t know how I forgot how close we were to the park where they’re firing everything off. We’ve got front row tickets.”

“They’re so pretty.” December traced the outlines of the next round of fireworks into the glass.

“Well,” I gathered the blankets and pillows and tugged them in front of the large window, “I know what we’re watching tonight.”

Curling up with my bitties in front of the window reminded me of the first night we spent in this new apartment. The glittering city lights had dazzled the bitties who stayed up with me, and now we got to watch the fireworks together.

Raze and Sunshine sat resting their backs against my right knee. Tinsel and Blake were pressed up against the glass with Snuggle sitting a couple of inches behind them. Idjit and December sat on top of my left knee right above Cyan and Waltzer. Bundling myself up into a blanket, I pulled my phone out to snap pictures of my bitties for Granny.
I sent them to her with the brief message *We found a work around* beneath them.

Granny’s response was a terribly taken selfie of her smiling at the camera victoriously.

“did you see these every year?” Blake asked during a brief pause in the fireworks.

“No,” I forced myself to not frown, “My parents, Nadia, and I quit going together after Olivia was born. I had to wait for her to get bigger before I could take her to see them. Then in college, I was usually swamped with studying….this is a rare treat.”

“We should watch them every year then,” Sunshine leaned more into Raze’s side.

“Every year huh?” I chuckled, “Sure.”

The promise came out before I could stop it, and only a real bastard would take it back.

Three years ago, I couldn’t ever promise to see something every year because of my…issues. Leo, Olivia, Tyrone, Granny, and just about all of my clients and old college friends would constantly try to set up traditions. They wanted something for our little groups to do together. I just…couldn’t commit. I couldn’t invest in something when I felt like my life was one project after another-moving from point A to point B with few side trips.

I could now though. Reviewing the things I had said to my bitties, I quickly realize that little promises and assurances kept coming out. In the beginning, I used them without much thought because they kept Idjit calm. Now, they meant so much more.

“lia?”December tapped my knee shyly.

“Yes?”

“you’re smiling.”

My hands traced my face. I was indeed smiling- a large smile at that.

“I guess I am,” I tapped the top of his head fondly, “I’m having a good time.”

“hmph, surprised ya ain’t cryin’ considerin’ ya always seem to pull the waterworks outcha ass,” Raze grumbled into the bit of blanket he had curled up in. Sunshine smacked his shoulder softly, “what?”

“Raze,” Sunshine sighed, “Why do I even try?”

“because everyone thinks they can change a bad boy?” Waltzer offered. He didn’t follow up though. Sunshine’s dark glare quickly silenced any further snark.

“Daddy!” Tinsel pointed to a really big explosion of red, “That’s the same color as your magic!”

“yeah,” Raze agreed, “it is.” A smaller burst of lighter red follow, “that’s like yours.”

“Really?” Tinsel looked back at him excited. Raze nodded. Tinsel grinned and almost lost control of his teleportation powers if his brief moment of clinging to Blake was anything to by, “Whoops.”

Snuggle quietly grabbed Tinsel by the arms and tugged him into his lap. He signed something I couldn’t see to Blake.
“Ha,” Blake covered his hand with his mouth, “He says if you’re going to keep giving us gray bones, we might have to just keep you taped to our sides.”

“Nooo…” Tinsel whined crossing his arms. The overly loud whine was followed by a coughing fit.

“Tinsel?” Sunshine leaned forward.

“I’m fine Papa.” Tinsel finished coughing into his arm, “I should…watch my breaths better.”

We all let out a collective sigh of relief once his coughing fit died down.

And so, we sat watching the sky shimmer with color.

Midnight slowly turned over to 1:00 A.M.

My bitties had already fallen asleep though.

“Happy New Years,” I smiled down at their small forms, “And thank you. I think my resolution will be to make sure that this little family of ours gets to see these fireworks again no matter what….Hmm…that’s more a promise isn’t it?” I cocked my head, “I supposed I’ll focus on not worrying you all so much then.”

I also had a silent little promise tucked in the back of my head. I’d help them help the monsters as much as they wanted to. Even if all of my smothering instincts demanded I removed them from the labs. It was their decision to make, so I promised to stay out of their way as much as I could.

“I love you all. So very much.” The confession had fallen from my lips before, but never had it been so genuine. It was too bad none of them were awake to hear it.
The beginning of January meant I could finally tackle projects again.

Working had a new kind of joy with it that didn’t exist before. I had never hated my job, but as I grew more dependent on it as a distraction, my affection for it waned. Now, cleaning up websites and designing logos came with a low buzzing excitement. The bitties still forced me onto a relatively normal schedule though, so no more working for 23 hours straight. Tyrone and Leo rejoiced when they learned I was being forced to act like a normal human being.

_Traitorous bastards- the both of them._ I thought to myself. _They’re supposed to have my back._

“lia?” December’s sleepy voice pulled my attention away from my computer screens. I looked down at the small bitty who had been dozing on my chest.

“Hey Dec,” I rubbed circles into his back after he stretched some, “Have a good nap?”

December nodded.

“when did…” December picked his head up to look around, “…we come in your office?”

“I brought you in about,” I checked the time, “Twenty minutes ago. I know you were napping with Idjit before, but he’s helping Waltzer and Blake with…something. You started having a nightmare on the couch after Idjit left you alone.”

December’s little body had curled up into a tight ball and shook uncontrollably. Initially, I had worried he was having a panic attack. Then, he began to murmur soft, broken apologizes to some woman- more than likely his previous human. I had grabbed him once he didn’t answer me.

“You calmed down after I picked you up,” I focused back on my current project, “I didn’t want you to start having nightmares again, so I brought you with me.”

“oh…” December shifted on my chest, blushing bright blue, “i’m sorry.”

“It’s fine Dec,” I soothed, “It’s not like your big enough to get in the way or anything.”

December blushed more and buried himself into my hoodie more.

“Aw,” I chuckled, “Do you not like being called little?”

“i’m…not a baby,” December grumbled pitifully.

“Well, you’re technically the baby in this family since you’re still new.”

December just sighed into my hoodie.

Peaceful silence slid into my office. December eventually crawled into my collar which meant I could finally sit up straight. He watched me work with naive fascination. Unlike the other bitties, who would’ve filled the silence with unimportant chatter or empty conversation, December seemed content to just sit quietly.

“Hmmmm…” I checked the time again. Another fifty minutes had passed, “It’s too quiet.”
December looked up at me confused.

“It’s too quiet for this apartment,” I clarified, “There’s no telling what those boys are up too…”

Narrowing my eyes, I saved my work and stood up. After stretching out the stiffness in my body, I strode out into…

Into…

What the literal fuck?

Nadia sat in my living room speaking with Blake. Cesar sat on my couch scowling grumpily and avoiding Idjit’s stern gaze.

When the fucking hell did she get into my apartment?

“Ummmm….” I cleared my throat. Blake, Nadia, Idjit, and Cesar all turned their heads towards me, “Anyone want to explain?”

“ari.” Blake smiled, “hey, nadia had to talk with you about something, but it’s your working hours.”

My schedule- carefully crafted each week by the bitties- was a mixture of meals, sleeping, working, and relaxing. It was the only way to keep the bitties from riding my ass all the time, and they thankfully respected their own rules and didn’t bother me during my working hours.

“It’s fine,” I tucked my hands into my hoodie pocket, “I’m due for a break soon anyways.”

“true,” Blake turned back to Nadia, “well, she’s here now, so you two can talk all you’d like.” Blake teleported onto the floor next to Idjit, “c’mon little guy. let’s let these two talk.”

“iddy?” December shifted forward. Idjit turned and smiled up at December.

“w-we-we’re hel-l-lping sunsh-sh-shine and r-raze fix the h-hole ti-tins-s-sel made in th-the-e-eir roo-o-o-of.” Idjit offered his hand, “wanna c-come?”

December nodded.

I helped him down, and he quickly scampered over to Idjit’s side. He gave me one final look before following Blake and Idjit into the bitty room.

“Hole in their roof?” I wondered aloud.

“I’ve only interacted with Tinsel in small doses, but he never seemed particularly violent like his father,” Nadia commented quietly.

“He’s not. Unless you piss him off,” I looked down at the tooth mark shaped burn scars on my hand, “Then he shows his father’s side of the family. His powers are a bit too much for him to handle sometimes though.”

“I see.”

Awkward silence fell between us.

Our relationship had improved a lot since the divorce was finalized. We weren’t as openly
hostile as we once were, but we still lived in different social circles and worked different hours. That left little time to really sit down and talk about things.

“Did you need something?” I finally asked. Nadia startled at the bluntness of my question. Instinctively, her hands reached for Cesar. He huffed and puffed about being cuddled like a teddy bear for a few seconds, but he ultimately relaxed into her embrace.

“I…” Nadia took a deep steadying breath, “Edgar is back in the states.”

“Oh really?” I cracked my knuckles.

“Josephine,” Nadia glared at me, “No.”

“Why not?” My fists were practically singing at the idea of cracking a few of his pretty boy teeth, “He didn’t give a shit about hitting you.”

“It’ll only add more fuel to the fire,” Nadia scowled, “He’s taken my former CEO position.”

“What the fuck?” I shouted incredulously, “He ran off with a shit ton-“

“Josephine!” Sunshine poked his head out of the door, “Language.”

“Crap ton of their money last time,” I amended with an apologetic look at Sunshine. He simply shook his head and smiled wanly at me before disappearing back into the bitty room, “Why are they being so stupid?”

“They’re claiming he went to Europe to expand their business efforts,” Nadia snorted squeezed Cesar a little too tightly for the boss’s taste if the quick snap at her hands was anything to go by, “I guess they truly intend to put on a good front for the press.”

“They’ll do anything to look good in front of a camera,” I agreed.

“I’m here because Edgar has requested to visit me,” Nadia scowled at my nice rug. One of her hands strayed to her stomach, “He’s been rather insistent, but I fear for my safety. I was wondering if you could deal with it?”

I grinned viciously.

“Without violence.” Nadia reminded me firmly. I deflated, “Oh for the love of-“ Nadia broke off and mumbled something along the lines of ’..and she's the one I'm going to trust with...’ before her voice dropped to a volume I couldn't hear.

“I’ll still do it,” I held up a hand to silence her grumbling, “Where is he?”

“Outside the building right now,” Nadia explained, “He’s threatened to stay there until I talk to him.”

“Can’t he be put in prison for loitering?”

“He’d just bail himself out. Our parents gave him more than enough money to do so.”

“FOOLISHLY.” Cesar commented, “YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER ARE THE BIGGEST IDIOTS I BELIEVE I’VE EVER MET.”

“You can say that again,” I agreed, “You need me to run him off? Make sure my bitties don’t kill each other or destroy the place. I’ll be right back.”
“Thank you,” The words sounded a little less forced than they would’ve in the past.

“Eh,” I shrugged, “Boys! I’m stepping out.” I headed towards the door. My hand was on the door knob when I paused, “Nadia’s in charge! Blake! Keep everyone in line!”

“yes ma’am!” Blake called back.

*Hope my apartment is still in one piece when I come back.*

The elevator ride down to the lobby left me bouncing with unspent energy. My body anticipated a fight despite the fact Edgar was a known coward. My adrenaline refused to calm the fuck down though, so I looked like a demented rabbit hopping through the lobby.

Edgar stood outside scowling at the upper windows of the buildings in one of his fancy suits. He smelled like old, cheap booze and hooker perfume. His eyes were bloodshot when he turned to look at me.

“Oh shit.” He took a step back.

“Boo.” I wriggled my fingers, “I live here too.”

“I know you do!” He snapped.

“Attitude check,” I warned balling my fists, “Or I don’t play nice.”

Edgar looked ready to piss himself.

“Nadia and I need to discuss our marriage-“

“Your divorce was finalized you little shit,” I reminded him.

“We should get it reversed or something,” Edgar protested, “I need her to keep all of my backers involved!”

“Then maybe you should’ve treated her better.”

“Like you’ve ever treated her nicely,” Edgar spat.

“I’ve been a bitch, but I’ve got a rule about hitting people who can’t hit back harder.” I cocked my head to the side, “Though…if that’s the case, I guess I can’t hit you since you hit like a little cuck.”

Edgar’s face burned bright red as the people on the sidewalk finally turned their attention to our confrontation.

“Don’t forget,” Edgar got up in my face, “I’m the one who holds all the cards now. I could ruin you.”

“You could *try.*” I leaned in close enough to kiss him, “But your chances of succeeding in doing so are worse than your chances of bringing a woman to climax.”

Josephine. That was just juvenile. My inner old lady scolded me.

*But it felt goooooooddd…*  

*Bad.*
Edgar’s fist flew towards my face.

My adrenaline took over.

He found himself winded with his back on the pavement in no time flat.

“Edgar, Edgar, Edgar,” I tsked while twisting his arm in my grasp, “I’m used to flipping larger guys over my shoulder you know. Now, stay away from my sister, or I’ll remind you exactly how many fights I’ve been in.”

I released Edgar. He bolted whimpering like a baby. The crowd- that I hadn’t realized had formed- cheered. I flinched as a few people got in my face with cameras. It took me a few minutes to explain that Edgar was my sister’s abusive ex-husband, and that I was just running him off.

This is going to be on the news isn’t it? I thought wearily. Greeeattt…

Eventually, the crowd dispersed save one small, yellow monster kid.

“Woooow!” He bounced up to me and looked me up and down, “You’re so cool!”

Wow, a kid who doesn’t think I’m terrifying. That’s a first.

“Violence should always be a last resort,” I warned, “But I’m glad you enjoyed that little sh-” Language Jospehine. I was almost willing to bet money Sunshine was glaring down from the apartment window at me, “Little show down.”

“It was way cool!” The kid insisted, “You know…you remind me a lot of Undyne!”

“Undyne?”

“You don’t know Undyne!?” The kid asked me incredulously before frowning, “Oh right… she’s sick. She’s the captain of the royal guard! She’s also way cool! Like you!”

Oh. Puzzle pieces clicked in my mind. She’s one of the afflicted monsters. She must be a boss monster then.

“I see,” I crouched down some, “Well, I’m honored to be compared to someone of such high social standing.”

“You should be,” The monster kid beamed, “I can’t wait for her to get better. My parents won’t let me go check up on her though! It sucks.”

“I’m sorry,” I could understand why his parent’s didn’t want him going anywhere near the underground labs beneath the Bitty CC. They weren’t exactly welcoming, “She’ll get better soon though if she’s like me. Tough chicks like us are pretty hard to mangle.”

“I know!” The monster kid protested puffing his chest up. He took a step forward to speak with me more, but he tripped.

“Woah,” I caught him quickly, “Careful buddy.”

“Tha...n...ks...” He stared at my chest mesmerized, “Wow lady! You have a really strong SOUL!”
“Huh?” I looked down at my chest.

“It’s purple. Hmm….I guess that makes sense!” The monster kid laughed.

“My soul?”

“Yeah,” Monster kid gestured to my chest with his chin, “Your SOUL! Everyone has a SOUL. Humans even have seven kinds. Yours is purple that mea-”

A female voice called out to ‘kid’ in the distance.

“Oh crud!” The Monster kid winced, “That’s my mom! She wasn’t supposed to be home from work so soon!”

“Really bud?” I cocked a brow, “Honestly, go on. Go to her and apologize.”

He looked up at me confused.

“Parents worry about their little ones,” I patted the top of his head, “So apologize for making her worry, and she might not be as rough on you.”

“But-“

“Do it for me?” I asked with a wink, “I’m trying to be a good role model here.”

He hesitated before grumbling a soft fine. His good-bye was still chipper, but he dragged himself towards the sound of his mother’s voice slowly. I heard her scold him severely for running off on his own. Eventually, the voices grew too silent for me to hear.

_Apparently I have similarities with the captain of the royal guard._ I thought as I entered the lobby. People stared at me as usual, _And a purple soul…Whatever the fuck that means._

I decided then and there to google SOULs and what not. Knowing new things could never hurt.

There was a loud crash on my floor the instant the elevator doors opened.

“Of for the love of…” I grumbled hurrying to my apartment.

Nothing was wrong in the living room, so I turned my attention to the bitty room.

Raze and Sunshine’s bitty house had lost its roof completely at that point.

Nadia sat with the bitties trying to figure out how to piece everything back together.

“Do I want to know?” I asked.

Nadia jumped and threw a piece of the roof at me. I caught it with Raze trained reflexes.

“Oh, Josephine,” Nadia relaxed, “Their construction plans…didn’t go well.”

“So I can see.” My voice was tart, “Alright, everyone screw off. I’ll fix this mess.”

The bitties dispersed. Nadia stood up and picked Cesar up.

“Did you deal with…?” She eyed Waltzer and Cyan in the corner of the room looking something up on one of the tablets warily.
“I did.” I nodded, “He shouldn’t be coming back.”

“Thank you.” Nadia sighed in relief.

“No problem.”

"Josephine?"

"Yes?" I raised a brow. What else did she want from me. Nadia hesitated.

"I'll discuss it with you later. I've already asked much from you today." She decided.

"Oookkkaayy...." I had no clue what the hell she was thinking.

Nadia left after that.

After making sure the front door was locked, I sat down in front of the little bitty mansion and glared at the roof.

“Now….how the fuck do I fix you?”

The answer?

A lot of glue, blood, wood pieces, duct tape, and nails.
Velour, the scientists, and my bitties threw themselves into finding a cure after all the fuss over the winter holidays died down. All of my little ones seemed determined to help the ailing monsters to the best of their abilities, leaving me to just sit and watch silently. The protector, the guardian, was now regulated to a seat with only an unconscious monster to chat with. At this point, I think I had told Sans more than a few of my dirty little secrets and old anecdotes to pass the time. Still, I kept coming back.

After my bitties departed with the scientists to begin that particular day’s experiments, I made a quick trip around the fifth floor to check in on all of the patients. The last successful breakthrough had drastically improved everyone else’s conditions, so I was excited to finally check in on Sans. I slid into his room quietly shutting the door behind me. I didn’t need to be so quiet since he was in a medical coma, but it seemed rude to just barge in and out.

“Well, you’re looking better,” I smiled at a still unconscious Sans. His bones were losing the yellow color previously plaguing them, but they were still way too thin. The bumps also still appeared across his arms and legs, “It’s still not a cure though. Sorry.”

Sans said nothing.

I settled down into the chair by his bed and stretched my legs out.

My bitties and I had been summoned by a hyperactive Velour who swore up and down that they were centimeters from discovering a cure. The January air hadn’t been kind to Sunshine, so I hoped that this was worth it.

“You know,” I began chatting to him like I had a tendency to do, “We’ve been coming back here three times a week for the past two weeks, but we’re still not any closer to figuring this all out.”

Each time a plan failed, my bitties seemed to feel more and more defeated.

They also seemed to be getting weaker.

As a human, I couldn’t really say much. They weren’t children or animals. They could make their own decisions.
That didn’t mean I had to approve of everything of course.

Still, they seemed happy every time a small breakthrough paid off, and that alone seemed to keep their spirits up.

But Sunshine can’t keep doing this. My mind betrayed me. He’s getting weaker. Raze, Tinsel, and Snuggle are feeling it too. Everyone’s starting to get run down trying to save this guy.

I shook the nasty thoughts away. It wasn’t as though Sans asked for this to happen.

“Some part of me hates you,” I found myself admitting without meaning to, “My bitties wouldn’t be under this much stress if they didn’t have to worry about you after all.” I paused, “But it would be wrong to leave you and the other monsters to die.”

Is it thought? Is it wrong if doing so will keep the bitties safe?

Yes. Yes it is.

What if they die? I can’t just get them back.

They won’t die. Velour has too many safety nets in place for that.

Sure. For now. What happens when those safety nets get in the way of results? What then?

I won’t think that way.

You should. They’re important to you right? Or are you just like your parents? Cold and detached? A chilled ice queen who doesn’t love anyone?

That’s not true. I leaned forward and rested my head in my hands.

What’ll you do if they die? You already know you can’t live without them. They won’t survive this pace much longer.

It’s not like that. I insisted. They’re just tired. They’ve all said that.

And you took their words at face value?

“Enough,” I snapped to myself. I tugged on my hair until my scalp screamed in pain, “Enough. That won’t happen. I won’t ever let it even progress to that point. I won’t.”

Fear still sat in my belly.

Taking deep breaths, I thought of random things I could discuss with my unconscious companion. My mind kept trying to take me down a darker road, but I was too stubborn to be pushed around that easily.

“No snow this year,” I forced out the words to fill the silence and cut off the darker thoughts chanting in my mind, “It rarely snows here, but when it does, a blizzard shows up.”

I continued to chat about the way the city’s weather worked. Eventually, I began to discuss Leo, Tyrone, Olivia, Nadia, and other people in my life. If this poor bastard were awake, he’d probably be bored, but I didn’t really have much to work with anymore.

“Olivia just absolutely adores Harley and Hiro,” I chuckled, “I wonder what she’d say if she met an overgrown sansy? You know…” My mind went back to what the monster kid had said to
me, “Apparently I have a purple SOUL. I didn’t know that. I googled it, and it turns out that my SOUL type is pretty common. Can’t remember what it means though. Bah. I’ll leave the magic to the professionals.”

“Perseverance.”

I nearly jumped out of my skin when a turtle monster hobbled into the room with a weary Snuggle.

“Purple means perseverance.” The turtle monster explained, “It suits you.”

_Perseverance? What the fuck?_

I didn’t question it aloud though. It was too much of a weird thing to really worry about.

“Snuggle?” I reached out to the meek. He weakly shifted himself over into my palms, “Is he okay?”

“He’s just tired,” The turtle monster explained, “His bitty healing magic has reached monster level, but it wears him out faster to heal on such a large scale.”

“I see.” I eyed the scientist warily.

“We decided to end the experiment early because he was getting to haggard,” The turtle scientist sighed, “I hope you feel better soon little one.”

Snuggle said nothing as he leaned into my chest and began to doze.

The turtle scientist left to help his colleagues with the other experiments.

**Snuggle feels so tiny.** My mind hands trembled around Snuggle’s thin body. He’d always been slim, but now his bones had a new fragility to them.

_He’s going to die if they keep this up._

_Shut the fuck up._

Snuggle tugged on some of my hair.

“Yes?” I looked down at him.

‘You’re squeezing me.’ Snuggle frowned. I had accidentally begun to squish him into my chest protectively.

“Sorry,” I blushed, “Did I hurt you? Are you feeling okay?”

Snuggle’s frown deepened.

‘I’m weary, but that’s it,’ Snuggle paused, ‘You look distressed. Has something happened?’

“N-No.” I protested.

Snuggle raised a brow.

“I’m just worried.” I admitted. The little bastard actually _scoffed_ at me.

‘We’re not going to crumble because we’re tired.’ Snuggle patted my cheek to placate me.
He only really succeeded in pissing me off, ‘There’s no need to worry.’

“I’m going to worry.” I huffed. Snuggle rolled his eyes.

Why is it so hard for them to understand that I worry about them?

I sat in silence with Snuggle tapping a random rhythm into my elbow. I could’ve started talking with Sans again, but it was embarrassing to do it with another person in the room.

Yes even a deaf person.

Snuggle seemed to grow a bit bored. He wriggled his way from my grasp and climbed onto the bed next to Sans. I tapped on his skull to get his attention. He turned to read my lips.

“Worried?”

‘Yes, his condition is improving, but if we don’t find a cure….All of this would have been for nothing.’ Snuggle frowned and pressed his hands into the back of Sans’s hand for a few seconds before pulling back to sign some more, ‘I just can’t figure it out. His magic is behaving like normal with the exception of over growing. It’s so frustrating.’

“I see.” I patted his head comfortingly, “Too bad you can’t just replace it with someone else’s magic huh?”

‘If only,’ Snuggle sat down between my right hand and Sans’s arm.

He kept fiddling with Sans’s arm the rest of the time we sat in the room.

Monsters really were disadvantaged when it came to disease. Their magic was their whole being, and it was what got sick. Unlike a human who could replace a heart or a liver, a monster couldn’t just replace a portion of their magic. If they could, this wouldn’t have been an issue.

Snuggle’s magic flickered on and off as he explored Sans’s ill magic on his own. From time to time, the scientists let him do this to try and see if he noticed anything noteworthy.

Snuggle eventually threw his arms up in defeat.

“Done for the day?” I questioned after getting his attention. He nodded, “I’m sorry.”

‘No,’ Snuggle shook his head, ‘I am. I’m sorry I’ve been so moody. I don’t like not being able to fix this.’

It was understandable. For the longest time, Snuggle had become the “healer bitty” that could fix just about any injury. Meeting his match had to agonizing.

“It’s okay,” I kissed the top of his head and placed my hand over his on Sans’s arm, “I’m sure Sans would appreciate all the hard work you’re throwing into this.”

Snuggle smiled at me wanly.

I chatted with Snuggle about the latest book he and Blake had picked up while he continued to quietly poke around Sans’s magic. The meek lit up as he signed, telling me all about how expansive the lore was and how likable the main characters were. It was adorable.

“Miss Newmore?” Velour entered the room with the rest of my bitties. The eight of them looked tired and worn out, “We’re done for the day.”
“Cool,” I forced myself to smile. My body felt surprisingly fatigued. I figured it was the stress of worrying about all of my bitties and brushed it off. I quickly collected my bitties from Velour’s arms and fought the urge to cringe when I felt how weak they were getting. Raze didn’t even hiss at me when I picked him up instead of letting him teleport to my shoulder, “We’ll be off then.”

“Of course,” Velour’s grin was wide and hopeful. It made me feel like shit for even thinking about pulling the plug on this whole operation, “Thank you so much! All of you. We’ve come very far with your help.”

“no problem…” Waltzer murmured from where he dozed on top of my head. The rest of my bitties quietly chorused his agreement.

I looked back at Sans one last time before leaving the room.

The rest of the bitty techs and scientists all gave me cheerful good-byes and promises that this would all be over soon. I just waved and forced a happy mask to fall over my face.

In the end, I didn’t leave the Bitty CC until all of my bitties were either in my hood or my hoodie pocket. They were all way too tired to keep themselves upright and hold on the whole walk home.

They weren’t this weak when all of this started.

They’re just going to get weaker.

Fuck off.

“Hey!”

I turned to face the excited monster kid from a few days ago. He bounded up to me and tripped.

“Oww…” He whined.

“Are you okay?” I hurried over to him and helped him up. A bright red bruise was forming on his face, “Jeez kid.”

“How’d you learn my name?” His eyes widened, “Can you read minds?”

“Huh?” I cocked my head, “Your name is…kid?”

“K-I-D-D!” The boy declared excitedly, “Kidd! But how did you know that?”

“I didn’t.” I chuckled and stood up straight, “Humans often use the word ‘kid’ to address unfamiliar children.”

“Ioohh…” Kidd nodded enthusiastically.

“Did you need something buddy?” I put my hands in my pockets. Raze chomped down on my thumb grumpily, “Tch- Ow! Raze.”

I yanked my hand free of his cranky grasp and pulled it out of my pocket.

“Oww.” I pressed my sleeve against the vicious bite to stop the bleeding. I would’ve liked to have told the little bastard off, but I had a monster child looking up at me adoringly.
“Was that one of your bitties?” Kidd asked.

“Yeah, Raze.” Damn that little shit bites hard when he’s tired. Fuck. I don’t have any Band-Aids either, “He’s a cranky little edgy with a temper.”

“And he’s in here,” Kidd craned his head to look into my pocket, “Hey! I see him! Hi!”

Raze grumbled something incoherent, but Sunshine spoke over him.

“Hello,” Sunshine’s voice was sleepy, “It’s nice to meet you.”

“Woah! Hi!” Kidd bounced excitedly. He paused narrowing his eyes, “Oh, you’re all really tired. Sorry, I’ll quiet down some.”

“They’ve had a long day,” It wasn’t a lie per say…I was just being vague.

“Mm.” Kidd nodded understandingly, “Are you going home?”

“Yeah,” I looked up at the extremely gray sky, “We just had a thunderstorm a few weeks ago, but it looks like another will be swinging by soon. I need to make sure that we’re not caught in it. You should go home too buddy. Didn’t your mom get onto you for wandering around the city?”

Kidd blushed.

“She did,” He kicked his feet pitifully, “But there’s nothing to do in the monster area downtown all the grown-ups are like ‘stay where we can watch you’ and ‘humans are mean’, but that can’t be right! You’re not mean!”

“I’m glad you think that,” I patted his head, “But there are mean humans- plenty of them. You should listen to the grown-ups Kidd. Running around without people knowing where you are could get you serious trouble.”

Kidd pouted at me.

“The puppy dog eyes don’t work on me kiddo,” Too many years of Olivia using the same tactic. Of course, with her I cave like a house of cards, but that was because she was my little sister, “They’re just trying to look out for you. I’m sure one day you’ll be able to roam around to your hearts content.”

“Really?” He narrowed his eyes disbelievingly.

“Really,” I nodded, “You’ve just got to leave the heavy lifting to the grown-ups for now okay?”

“Fine,” He sighed, “I’ll go home, but I want to actually meet your bitties someday!”

“Sure Kidd,” I chuckled, “When they’re not feeling so sleepy okay?”

“I’ll be waiting.” He warned.

“I know.”

“You’re a really nice lady,” Kidd smiled at me, “You really do remind me of Undyne!”

Some part of my brain didn’t register that as a compliment since the last time I saw Undyne she was on a ventilator struggling to keep breathing. Shaking my head, I tapped his nose.
“I’m flattered, but you need to get home mister.”

“Okay,” Kidd huffed, “Bye lady!”

“Bye Kidd,” I waved as he scampered off, “Try not t-“

He tripped.

_Dammit Kidd._

“I’m alright!” he said bouncing back up, “I do that often!”

“So I can tell,” I called back wryly.

The big sister in me wouldn’t let the matter drop, so I followed him back to the monster area downtown. When I saw a larger yellow monster begin to scold him about running off, I turned and made my way back to my apartment. Yes, following a kid is creepy, but I was worried alright?

“taking up stalking as your latest hobby?” Waltzer asked as he quietly crawled onto my shoulder. Instead of sitting or standing, he just stretched out belly down and let his body hang.

“No,” A dark blush crawled across my cheek, “I just wanted to make sure he made it home okay.”

“You know…a normal person would’ve just offered to walk him back.”

“Shut up Waltzer.” I grumbled. Logically speaking, he was right.

Instead of giving me a snarky reply, he began to doze again.

_Shit. He’s really tired._

_They’re going to die._

_I won’t say it again. Shut up._
Thunderstorms had rampaged across the city for the past nine days. The random display of nature’s wrath shocked almost everyone and forced people indoors. All experiments had been stalled because there was no way for me to bring Tinsel to the CC in this weather safely, but the violent war in the sky did little for my crumbling mood.

My bitties didn’t enjoy the free days to recover. They kept fretting about getting back to the Bitty CC because “they were so close” to finding a cure. I was getting tired of hearing about how “close” they were. It was the constant vague, empty assurance the scientists and my bitties had practically force fed me all of January.

“You should be resting,” I glared at Blake and Waltzer. They sat with the bitty phone between them on speaker phone.

“we’re just talking with velour about how to start back up,” Blake said. Waltzer used one of the tablets to read the complicated emails Velour had sent them, “the scientists have been making some progress with isolated the kink in their magic.”

“We hit a wall though,” Velour lamented over the phone, “I was hoping that a fresh set of eyes might help.”

“i’m still trying to make sense off all of this,” Waltzer griped, “their magic shouldn’t be behaving this way. the answer should be obvious, but it isn’t.”

“Tell me about it,” Velour sighed.

“Boys,” I opened my mouth to protest further.

“we’ll rest later ari,” Blake waved my concerns aside before yawning, “we’re fine.”

Biting the inside of my cheek, I left the two of them to their conversation with Velour.

Even the other bitties were distracted from their usual hobbies. They studied diagrams of the afflicted monsters and looked into old magical treatments online. Their dedication was admirable, but I struggled to remember the last time any of them had sat down to just relax.

“Hey guys,” I approached Tinsel, Idjit, and December. The three were trained on the diagram of Papyrus. The three stopped their soft conversation about how to apply healing magic to erratic magic to turn their attention to me, “Maybe you should take a break and relax a little.”

“w-we’re fine,” Idjit turned his attention back to the diagram.
“Yeah GJ,” Tinsel smiled. Bags had begun to form under his eyes. As the miracle bitty who defied all odds, he was the one they wanted to poke and prod the most, “We’re not babies you know.”

December hesitated between the diagrams and me. He rubbed at one of his eyes sleepily.

“Do you want to take a break Dec?” I crouched down.

The little buttonberry jumped slightly. He looked between me and the other two. His teeth grinded slightly with indecision. He stood up with wobbly legs before ultimately sitting back down and shaking his head.

“Okay,” I fought the urge to scream.

Everyone’s health was deteriorating. They all loved to ride my ass on how much I worked and how little I cared for myself, but heaven forbid I expressed an interest in their wellbeing. I’d been getting empty promises and almost rude dismissals for the past four days. If they all didn’t look ready to crumble, I’d be fine with the cranky treatment and just go back to work.

I told you.

Fuck off.

They don’t love you. If they did, they’d at least listen to you, but no, they continue to work at this demonic pace to suit their desires. Your heart means nothing to them.

I entered my bathroom grinding my teeth.

It was getting late, so I knew I should get my shower. The doubtful, vicious inner thoughts just wouldn’t leave me be as I took off my hoodie and bra. The thin scars on my wrist glowed faint silver in the bathroom’s light.

They’re so engrossed in their work you could kill yourself and they’d never know. They probably wouldn’t even care.

Shut up.

I’m just speaking the truth.

I stared at myself in the mirror. My face had lost the granite gauntness it had before the bitties came into my life. My hair was just as wild, but better taken care of. My eyes still had the haunted look of panic though.

Fear-wormed in my chest- screamed about all the things I could lose.

You mean nothing to them. Nothing. You are nothing. So what if you look better? None of that matters if your little patchwork family falls to shreds. Face it Josephine. You’re not strong enough to be the thread to bind them all together. You’re nothing. nothing. nothing. nothing. nothing. nothing. nothing. nothing. nothing. nothing. nothing. nothing.

My fist slammed into the mirror in front of me.

Beautiful pain lanced up my arm. I could understand why drunk me had been so fascinated with the pain. It cut through everything. Nothing could hurt worse than this. I was pretty sure I’d broken a finger or two. That knowledge didn’t stop the mad laughter from crawling out of my chest.
Tears fell from my eyes in fat droplets. My uninjured hand entangled itself in my hair and pulled as I tried to piece together things through the mixture of adrenaline and agony in my body.

Everything was blurry.

I stared at the reflective shards in my sink.

You know how easy it is.

My silver scars winked up at me under the bathroom light- teasing me, toying with me.

I need a drink. I needed pain. I needed something to wipe away everything else. I needed it.

I needed-

“ophie!” Waltzer’s small fists beat against my bathroom door, “we heard something shatter? Are you okay?”

Waltzer?

He was outside my bathroom door?

“ari!” Blake.

Silent beatings. Snuggle?


They were all out there?

They had heard the sound of my mirror shattering? I knew that I had left the door my bedroom open, but they had seemed so focused….

Clarity forced its way into my head.

I released my sore scalp and finally the pain lost the pleasing quality. My fingers screamed in pain.

Shit. I winced gently nudging my fingers. I’d probably broken three of them.

“I’m fine guys.” I lied through my teeth while trying to rub my eyes dry with the back of my arm. I decided then and there to book an appointment at some point. This kind of behavior could harm the bitties.

“No you’re not,” Sunshine protested, “You’re voice is hoarse. Have you been crying?”

I didn’t say anything as I began to clean up the shattered glass with my unbroken hand. I’d need to somehow splint my fingers until I could get to a hospital.

“it’s rude to keep people waitin’ spe-” Raze’s voice was inside the bathroom, “wha’ the fuck!?”

I turned and found a dumbstruck Raze looking at the various glass shards scattered about the floor and the sink. Tiny pools of blood had formed around them making a macabre map with
glass for islands and blood for water. It…it looked bad.

“Raze,” I sighed, “It’s not-“

“what the hell do ya think yer doin’ you idiot!?” Raze screamed infuriated, “you could’ve really hurt yourself you dunce.”

That was kind of the plan at the time….I shook my head.

“It’s nothing Raze. Just let me clean this mess-“

“you ain’t doin’ a damn thing,” Raze growled opening the door with his magic, “sit yer ass on the tub. oi, deaf, patch this dumb bitch’s hand up while i clean up the glass.”

Snuggle’s eyes widened upon seeing the sorry state my mangled hand was in. Immediately, Idjit, December, and Snuggle had me sat down on the tub while the others cleaned the mess up. The mirror couldn’t be saved, but, considering the amount of people who had to get reconstructive surgery after my right hooks, I wasn’t shocked.

“w-what’s wr-ro-o-ong?” Idjit sniffled rubbing his eyes roughly while trying to look at me, “a-are yo-ou n-not ha-a-ap-py? d-di-id we-e d-do so-o-omth-th-thing?”

“lia…?” December’s hands clung to the fabric of my pants hard enough to make his bones creak.

I didn’t know how to exactly explain it. Really, it was a rather shameful display. I was too old to be throwing temper tantrums because I didn’t get my way. My hands- both now fully healed thanks to Snuggle- curled tightly. My nails bit into the palms of my hand, but I didn’t care. My mind raced to figure out a way to explain this in the most positive way possible.

“Oh I just punched at a bug,” The lie was stupid and silly. I hoped it would distract them maybe. They might think there was some truth to-

“Don’t you lie to us,” Sunshine stood up straight and glared at me. He was just as infuriated as Raze was, “What happened Josephine?"

My words failed me.

Dammit. I’m getting sick of crying. I’m getting sick of all of this in general.

My bitties crowded around me and tried to comfort me. They didn’t ask anymore questions.

“I….“ My voice had cracked under the strain of crying so much, “I don’t want to lose any of you.”

The admission caused waves of confusion among them.

“we’re not going anywhere ophie,” Waltzer insisted rubbing at my face with a washcloth for the fifth time in the back two minutes.

“That’s not what I mean,” I snapped without meaning too.

All of my bitties blinked at my sudden lack of control. I honestly couldn’t remember a time where I genuinely snapped at them. Discipline was held in a slightly light hearted manner, and I never raised my voice at any of them. In fact, they rarely saw me express anger how I usually did.
I carefully pulled my bitties away from me to stand. As kind as their pitying gazes and gentle touches were, I was going mad under their focus. I paced back and forth across the now clean bathroom floor.

“I can understand commitment. I can understand wanting to help people. Hell, I adopted all of you didn’t I?” My laughter was hollow, “But I can’t understand running yourself ragged to help a stranger. I can’t understand almost dying for someone who may not even survive tomorrow. I know that’s a cold, terrible way to think, but that’s how I really feel. Sans and the others deserve to get better. They deserve to recover, but I would never forgive myself if their good health came at the cost of your lives.”

“There are too many safeguards-“ Cyan began quietly.

“Fuck the safeguards.” I spat into a corner. I somehow managed to keep my voice level and my eyes away from my bitties despite the natural urge to get in their faces. My usual tactic of scaring my problems off wouldn’t work in this case. I didn’t want them to be scared off. I wanted them to be safe, “You’ve all lost weight over the past few days, and that is terrifying. You’re constantly skipping meals and sleep. None of you take breaks. None of you relax. The stress is starting to turn your bones and flames gray! Do you even realize how fragile you all are? A child could snap one of you in half, and all of this stress, fatigue, and lack of proper care can kill you! Believe me, I’ve looked it up. Do you know how many bitty owners lose some of their bitties because the damn things won’t listen to them? Won’t let their human get a word in edgewise or protect them?”

I was actually the one not allowing them to get a word in edgewise now. Ever since these damn experiments started, I’d been the one silenced by frustrated patient glowers and empty excuses. No more. I won’t listen to that bullshit anymore dammit. I won’t!

“Do you guys even know how much you mean to me!?” My hand strayed to the bracelet they had given me for Christmas, “You are the glue holding me together at this point. I don’t even know what I’d do if I lost any of you! You don’t get how terrifying this is! Being the only human around twiddling her thumbs fucking sucks. If something happens, I can’t do anything! When I do try to tell you guys to take a break or take better care of yourself, you push me away. How is that supposed to register? I’m not even worthy of telling you take better care of yourselves? Well, I’m glad I know where I stand in your eyes.”

I was getting lighted headed because of the fast paced ramblings. The tears made trying to talk even harder. This is why Granny is always trying to get you to a psychologist. One of my inner thoughts scolded me. Look at what you’ve done now! You’ve gone and accused them of being the source of all your problems. Apologize. It’s not their fault you’re pathetic.

Tired, defeated, and done, I took in a deep breath.

“I’m sorry about that.” I double checked my fingers to make sure they were still steady, “That was beneath me. You don’t deserve to take the blame for my faults.”

I straightened myself. They’re going to leave now. Just like everyone does when you blow your top like the useless cunt you are.

“I’ll just stay out of your way,” I found one of my old hoodies, “Just pretend I don’t exist. I don’t care anymore.”

I had just tugged the hoodie on when I felt strong magic yank me ass first onto the ground. Wincing, I struggled to get up when nine bodies slammed into my chest.
My bitties were hugging any part of me they could get a hold of.

“lia.” December whimpered under my chin practically strangling me.

“stars,” Waltzer buried his face into my hair, “ophie, i’m so sorry i didn’t pay close enough attention.”

“Miss Josie,” Cyan sniffled rubbing at his eyes while hugging onto my side, “We’re sorry for worrying you so much. We didn’t even think about how that could affect you.”

Stunned silence kept me partially limp where I rested on the ground.

They were sorry?

They…they weren’t the ones who just practically lost their goddamn minds.

“G-Guys.” I struggled to try and comfort each of them at the same time. Fresh tears started up, “It’s not your fault I’m fucked in the head. Just forget this ever happened okay? Guys? It’s okay-“

“it’s not okay!” Blake yanked on some of my hair, “it’s not okay that you don’t tell us things like this until after you hurt yourself!”

“I did.” I scowled, “Did you think I just went on a babying kick or something? I’ve been trying for days to get you to understand.”

“that’s why we’re sorry,” Waltzer groaned clinging to my head tighter, “we should’ve paid more attention to our health and you.”

“This isn’t just a take scenario.” Sunshine rubbed his face quietly before resting his head against my leg, “We’re supposed to give back and listen to. I’m sorry.”

An impromptu crying session happened in my bathroom while I tried my best to piece myself and my bitties back together.

Eventually, we moved to the living room curled under some blankets on the couch. All outside materials/information was put aside and replaced with materials to make s’mores- my favorite comfort food.

“I don’t mind you guys helping the scientists out,” I reinforced after inhaling another s’more, “I just want you all to take better care of yourselves- pace yourselves, take breaks, eat and sleep like normal. You’re not as unbreakable as you like to think you are.”

“okay ari,” Blake nodded quietly, “we will. thanks for not making us quit entirely though.”

“I’d never to that to you guys,” I frowned and rubbed at my eyes, “I know what this means to you. It means something to me too, but just remember you mean more to me than just about anything else.”

“o-o-o-okay.” Idjit sniffled from where he nibbled on a s’more, “i st-s-st-i-il-l fe-e-eel ba-a-ad.”

“Idjit,” I put aside my next s’more to pick him up, “It’s not your fault baby. It’s no ones fault. I need to go see a psychologist anyways. Maybe get myself on whatever drugs Nadia takes to get by.”
Not that she had been taking them throughout her pregnancy. It was a precaution she decided on, and her boss and co-workers were very understanding of her situation. It’d be rough when she got back on her meds. I had a little bit of faith in her though.

“thought ya hated drugs,” Raze sat facing away from the rest of the group. He didn’t want anyone to see the tearstains on his face.

“I do,” I nodded, “But I want to be the best I can be for you guys. If I can’t control myself better….”

I shuddered to think about the number of horrible humans out in the world with bitties. I didn’t want to join their ranks as garbage.

“Maybe just try a therapist?” Cyan offered, “At first? See how that goes?”

A head doctor once a week instead of some pills.

All of my bitties looked up at me hopeful and expectant.

“Fine,” I sighed, “I’ll ask my doctor doctor if there’s a head doctor around to help out.”

There was. Ironically, Leo was the one who introduced me. I- of course- called him after this little debacle and told him about what happened. He showed up within in ten minutes and bear hugged me for about two hours before referring me to a therapist he’d looked up for this very situation. Some Indian man with a mouse face and fox eyes. He was nice enough- if a bit too perceptive for my tastes. I began seeing him shortly after this whole fiasco, and the bitties told the scientists of the new rules.

The experiments began anew, but this time they ended much sooner and took less of my bitties vitality in the process. Still, progress was made- if a bit slow.

It was six days before the end of January when Velour called me buzzing with excitement.

“Miss Newmore! His arm! His arm is stabilized somehow!”
Sans the Skeleton

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except Tinsel). Full links/disclaimer in Ch1

Annnnd we have the last bit of this miniarc. I can now focus on the next big thing and plan some.

Sans’s arm was perfectly smooth.

My fingers stroked the perfect bones on the back of his hand in awe. For so long, I’d gotten used to the feeling of bumps and rents in his bones, but now they were all gone.

“Holy shit,” My head couldn’t quite wrap itself around this little miracle, “Sans, this is amazing.”

Velour still had Sans heavily sedated because the rest of his body still needed treatment. He didn’t need as many wires and nodes as he used to however.

The issue had been something the scientists and doctors hadn’t even been able to touch. Dr. Alphys, before she fell ill, had left many notes warning against determination based experiments and medical treatments. That was where their answer had been though.

The magic of these monster’s was rapidly expanding because it thought it was gravely injured. Monsters couldn’t be revived from death, and their healing rate is faster than that of the average human. Their magic, believing itself to be injured and on the verge of death, began to expand and create more itself to heal a nonexistent injury. The magical input it took to do this left the monsters’ bodies to begin to fail under the strain actually putting them in a near death situation further aggravating their condition. The issue was how to convince their bodies to stop trying to heal a nonexistent injury. How does one do that with a species that doesn’t have a revival option?

Determination and bitty magic.

Snuggle accidentally combined my determination with his healing magic while exploring Sans's injuries that one time. The meek had leaned heavily on my determination for support since bitty magic could communicate with determination easily, and this caused my determination to mingle with his healing touches.

Apparently, determination is perfectly fine in humans, but it’s pretty dangerous for monsters. The scientists couldn’t just pump the monsters full of determination without killing or mutating the afflicted. Determination and monster magic were two polar opposites that caused a violent reaction when combined. The two needed something to stabilize the combination and bring out the best in both monster magic and human determination. That was where bitty magic came in. Bitty magic—being extremely stable—could control the volatile monster magic to allow the determination’s lingering effects to kick in. This tricked the monsters’ magic into thinking it wasn’t about to die, so it quit producing more of itself to heal nonexistent injuries.

This of course left the already produced material stored away in tanks to keep expanding,
but that wasn’t attached to innocent monsters.

“The treatments still have to be handled very carefully,” Velour continued. I finally turned my attention back to her, “Even with bitty magic to act as a buffer, it’s still too risky to mix too much determination into monster magic. We can only add so much in, and we have to remove the determination from them before it can harm them.”

“But it’s still a cure right?” Sunshine questioned from where he was examining Sans’s elbow.

“It is.” Velour beamed.

“woohoo!” Blake hopped excitedly, “hear that snuggle?”

The meek blinked at his brother in confusion.

“is there anything else we can do to help?” Waltzer asked cocking his head, “or do you guys have it from here?”

“We have it from here,” Velour chuckled, “But please feel free to stop by and visit. When all of these monster wake up, they’re going to want to thank you.”

So come and visit we did.

All throughout the next days we would pop by just to check in on the monsters. They decided to treat the patients one at a time to avoid mixing things incorrectly and making sure each treatment was done perfectly. Obviously, they began with Mr. 1 HP Sans.

His bones completely lost the yellow tint to them and began to smooth out. The snow white bones also slowly began to thicken as his magic stabilized. He’d still be shorter than me, but he’d weight a lot more than he originally did. It was great to watch. My bitties grew happier with each positive development. Snuggle even kept a mental catalog with Sans’s progress.

“-oan. Josie.”

A pair of fingers snapping in front of my face brought me back to the conversation I had been having.

It too my brain a few minutes to recognize that I was in my apartment with Leo instead of back under the CC with Sans.

“Sorry,” I said sheepishly. All of our bitties were passed out on the floor in front of the TV. They’d all conked out at various times during our late night Saturday movie marathon, but Leo and I had somehow managed to stay awake, “Didn’t mean to space out on you.”

“You said that last time,” Leo said tartly. His fingers pinched my cheek without much aggression, “What’s got you on cloud nine space cadet?”

“Just stuff,” My words came out slightly garbled.

“Just stuff?” Leo repeated mockingly. His brow raised. He never did like it when I kept secret from him. Though I imagined most of that annoyance came from fear, “Josie.”

“It’s nothing big Leo,” I insisted prying his fingers off of my cheeks, “Just thinking about something really good that’s happened lately.”
“What got a boyfriend?” Leo asked nudging me with his shoulder, “If so, I need to go buy a shotgun like a certain Miss I know almost did back when Olivia was in high school…”

“Oh hush,” I shoved him back harder, “I’m not dating anyone. I don’t have time to date anyone. Between my work and my bitties, my plate is full.”

“They’re not kids Joan,” Leo chided, tugging on my hair playfully, “They’d understand you wanting to go out on a date or two. Besides, you know Granny is going to be pestering about you when she shows up at the end of January for that dinner.”

“Don’t remind me,” I groaned leaning into Leo’s chest. He wrapped his arms around me and ruffled my hair, “Uggghhh….She’s going to be worse because Nadia’s preggers. Dammit.”

Granny was coming by to do a “check-up” on my sisters and I. That mostly meant a painful dinner of her cooing over Nadia’s slightly distended belly and her pointed questions about our respective love lives. It would be pure hell, but I loved her too much to complain to her face.

“Well…you could always go to a sperm bank,” Leo ran his hands through my hair. I practically melted into his shoulder. Dirty bastard. You people playing with my hair makes me giddy.

“No thanks,” I grumbled shifting our position. I snuggled on top of his chest stomach down. He leaned back against the arm of the couch running one hand through my hair while flipping through TV channels with the remote with his other hand, “I’d rather know who the father is thank you very much. Besides, one pregnant Newmore woman is enough.”

“Isn’t one of Thomas’s side chicks pregnant with twins?”

“Please don’t make me try to remember all of the various illegitimate second cousins I have.” I groaned trying to remember how many women he’s gotten pregnant, “I think…five with the twins making seven. Then he also has three daughters with his wife.”

“Jeez,” Leo sighed, “He just needs to go get a vasectomy.”

“Damn straight,” I cuddled closer to Leo, “At least Bobby has some semblance of restraint.”

“That’s the plain one right?”

“Yup. I almost want to call him Joe sometimes because of how average he is. He isn’t exceptionally smart, handsome, or charming. He’s just plain Bobby. Seems happy though,” Truly, I think that lucky bastard is the only one of the Newmore children without much baggage.

Then again, he had to grow up with Aunt Catherine as his mother…. Yeah, he’s probably got more than a few screws loose himself.

“Well he’s lucky then,” Leo finally decided to leave the TV on some shitty reality TV show.

“How were your grandparents in Hokkaido?” I questioned.

“They’re doing great.” Leo smiled brightly, “Thank you so much for giving me tickets to go see them.”

“I always give you tickets to go see them.” I reminded him.

“But you don’t have to.” Leo ruffled my hair.
“True,” I yawned.

“What’s this?” Leo looked down at me shocked, “The woman who works insane hours is going to be at only one in the morning?”

“How the hell does a chemistry teacher have this much energy?” I griped tickling his sides as retribution. He began to giggle quietly to avoid waking the bitties up, “It’s not fair.”

“Jooossiieee…” Leo complained before tickling me back.

The loud thump of the two of us slamming to the floor during our roughhousing woke everyone up sadly.

No one was happy for the next few hours.

“wha’ kind of idiots have a,” Raze’s face twisted with scorn, “tickling match at one in the goddamn morning!?”

Leo and I ate breakfast at seven sheepishly.

“have they always been like this?” Waltzer questioned a still groggy Cyan.

“Hmm?” Cyan blinked for a few minutes while trying to comprehend the question, “Oh, no. Usually they’re worse- cuddlier and sappier than this.”

“Hey!” Leo and I puffed up angrily, “We aren’t sappy.”

Cyan’s flat look told us his opinion of that particular statement.

We had argued with the ten cranky bitties for about thirty minutes when Leo got a phone call.

“Hey Reina,” Leo chirped happily, “Hm? It’s no problem that you called this early. I was already awake. Huh? Oh! I’m at my friend Josie’s apartment. Yeah, I’ll be leaving soon. Ahhhh… Sure. I’ve got all of my grading done already. I can come help you out…..No problem at all. See you in about fifty minutes? Great. Bye.”

I stared at him. His face flushed bright red.

“What?”

“Reina?” I cocked a smug brow, “Hmmmm…”

“It’s not like that,” Leo huffed flicking my nose, “She’s a new teacher, and I’m just helping her out.”

“Ooohhh….” I still had a shit eating grin.

“Ugh.” Leo rolled his eyes, “Ember, we need to get ready. Reina needs some help grading papers. Sorry to cut this little party of ours short, but I really don’t want to leave a newbie hanging.”

“It’s fine,” I shrugged, “As long as she isn’t a second Annie.”

“She’s nothing like Annie,” Leo insisted.

That already scored the woman some brownie points in my head.
After giving Leo a tight squeeze good-bye, I stared at the clock.

“Anyone want to go check up on the CC?” I called out through the apartment. There was a small adoption drive going on today, so we might be able to help them out some.

The chorus of affirmation almost made the windows rattle some.

“Okay…” I said after getting read, “Waltzer?”

“here.”

“Blake and Snuggle?”

“sup?”

“Idjit? Cyan?”

“h-here.”

“Hello.”

“Raze and family.”

“We’re here GJ!”

“And finally, Dec?” I looked down at the sweet buttonberry. He quietly raised his hand.

With everyone accounted for, I quickly left my apartment.

A few journalist tried to pin me down to question me about my parents’ failing businesses, but I just literally dodged them. Luckily, my muscular legs weren’t just for show.

We made it to the Bitty CC in record time. There was no city rush to fight against for once, and I felt better than I had in months. Karli smiled at me warmly as I entered the CC.

“Hey Karli,” I grinned looking at the small information booths set up near the bitty pens, “Need any extra hands?”

“Do we ever,” Karli laughed, “I was hoping you might come in to save us.”

My bitties and I were quickly separated to handle different jobs. Cyan and Sunshine helped one of the information booths- one about bitty expenses- while Idjit and December timidly greeted older customers at one of the adoption booths. Blake animatedly spoke with kids about bitties with Snuggle hovering in the background. Tinsel and his father were making sure to keep the place clean, and Waltzer made sure that all of the bitties out to be adopted were behaving themselves.

I basically became the errand girl for the whole event. Running back and forth between the first floor down and the main floor, I made sure that booths never ran out of things, and that the people downstairs knew what was going on upstairs.

“Miss Newmore?” Karli waved me over, “Could you go grab Velour? She’s on B5. I have a couple who may adopt one of our disabled bitties, but I want Velour here to help them work everything out.”

“On it,” I smiled, “Keep an eye on my little guys okay?”
“Of course,” Karli nodded, “Please hurry.”

Hurry I did.

I found Velour in Sans’s room on the fifth floor. Luckily, everyone seemed to be busy with either the adoption drive or perfecting the cure, so I wasn’t sidetracked during my hunt to find her.

“Hey Velour,” I waved, “Karli needs your help up top.”

“Hm?” Velour looked away from Sans.

“A couple wants to adopt a disabled bitty?”

“Oh! I handle those cases,” Clarity came to Velour’s eyes, “I’ll head right up. You look tired Miss Newmore. You’ve been running Karli’s errands for the last four hours right? Take a break. Who know, maybe Sans will finally wake up for you.”

My pride was miffed at the idea of me needing break, but my legs cried out in relief when Velour gestured to a chair. It would also be nice to sit with Sans for a little while. He’d been taken of the heavier sedation, so they were just waiting for him to wake up naturally.

“My feet love you,” I groaned stretching out.

“My feet do,” Velour chuckled, “I’ll have someone cover for you while you recuperate.”

“Thanks.”

I was left alone then- well, not completely alone.

Sans rested in the hospital bed breathing steadily.

“Hey man,” I shifted into a more comfortable position, “You’re looking really good!”

His bones were now smooth and milky white. They even seemed to be growing a bit thicker.

By bitties helped achieve this. I thought proudly. I love them so much.

I continued to chat about random things that came to mind as I always did. It filled the silence of the underground hospital room and kept things light. Otherwise, this place had a tendency to rate a ten on the creepy scale.

“You know,” I laughed leaning closer to Sans, “It’s so weird hearing people say ‘sansy’ now. My mind just jumps back to you every time. It’s doubly weird since I actually have a sansy.”

Sans’s hand...twitched?

“Huh?” I stood up. My legs protested the motion, but this was a serious matter, “Sans?”

The furrow of his brow moved downwards unhappily.

I went to take a step back to call for a nurse when Sans’s eyes opened wide.

Deep black pools with a single dot of pure white zeroed in on me and my blue and purple hoodie. His face contorted into a frown as he tried to piece things together.
“Sans?” I spoke softly. My hand reached out to comfort the obviously distressed monster.

That was a dumb move.

My brain almost didn’t register the fact I was hovering in mid-air when I hovered in mid-air. I was slammed brutally into a wall. Nothing broke though, and my head didn’t hit as hard as my back did. Struggling for breath, I looked at the shaky monster. Sans stood up on the bed awkwardly. His left eye flared with the blue magic keeping me pinned against a wall. He had just woken up though, so I could feel his magic losing its grip on me.

“Sans…” I panted, “It’s okay. I’m not going to hurt you.”

My words seemed to get through to him, or something else did.

I was dropped unceremoniously onto the floor while Sans struggled to remain upright. He stumbled forward right as I managed to get myself up.

I caught him with my sore body before he hit the ground. He still felt way too light to me, but it was awkward holding someone so close to my own height comfortably.

“You’re not Frisk,” He observed warily.

“Uh, no.” Who in their right mind would name their child Frisk? Jesus, “I’m a friend. Josephine-“

“newmore,” Sans finished closing his eyes, “the voice that talked to me a lot.”

I blushed bright red.

“Y-You caught some of that?” I squeaked. What conversations had he heard? How much of them? Ohgodohgodohg-

Sans snored against my shoulder.

“Really!?” I grumbled in a low whisper, “Greeeatt.”

_I have a skeleton snoring against me._

LOVELY.
Sans the Skeleton Aftermath

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except for Tinsel). Full links and disclaimer can be found in Ch1

I don't like odd numbers =_= sooo...I'm throwing this up because that '37' is annoying me....I'll be honest. I rewrote this chapter like seven times until I was finally content with this one. Sans is so difficult to write T-T I suck at puns, so expect more wordplay instead of tons of puns.
I still love him though.
Also, for anyone going 'I hope this will end up with Sans/Jo' it will. I just don't have it tagged because A) Spoilers for new readers and B) People might think it means Jo/one of her bitties, and that's just accidental false advertising. So Sasie is a thing.
Nooooooww...to go add that Leo chapter in the Addendum because one of the commenters requested it. BTW, the addendum is supposed to be used to add more to the story, and that includes showing you guys more of what you want to see (even if only one person wants to see it. The bitty background saga happened because of one stray comment that sent my train of thought going). If you want to see something in particular, just drop a comment somewhere saying so. *If it doesn't appear in the addendum, it's because it's in the main story* This will go on until Patchwork Family ends and Burned Family begins which will herald the beginning of the Burned Family Addendum.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

His strength was surprising given the fact he didn’t have actual muscles. I chalked it up to the magic in his bones. Why was I noting his strength? He had a death grip on my hoodie which forced me to stand up cradling him.

“Really?” I groused, “C’mon lazy bones, you’ve slept enough.... Sans!”

I tried my best to rouse my sleeping bonehead until nurses and doctors flooded the room to try and find out why all of the machines Sans had been wired to were freaking out. They stopped abruptly and gawked at me.

“He woke up,” I explained, “Then fell back asleep. He won’t let my hoodie go.”

“Move it. Move it!” Velour shoved her way through with my bitties in tow. Her eyes widened, “Miss Newmore?”

“I swear to whatever higher power you believe in he woke up,” I repeated myself, “Right now he’s being a little shit and won’t turn my hoodie loose. Sans! Wake uuuppp man. You’re not heavy, but it’s hard to hold someone close to my height like a princess.”

“ari…” Blake teleported onto my shoulder. I winced when he hit a bruise, “ari!”

“I’m fine.” I didn’t want to worry by bitties.

It took a few minutes for them to get Sans to release my hoodie. My arms ached in pure
relief when they were unburdened the awkwardly held weight. Sans ended up waking up again.

“huh?” He blinked.

The room devolved into pure chaos at that point, so I took my bitties out into the hallway to keep them from getting squished. They all buzzed with excitement. The long, sometimes painful experiments had finally paid off. None of them liked being shoved to the side, but Sans needed to be taken care of since he had been in a coma for about two-ish years.

“You can come back in,” Velour waved at us from the doorway after the last of the doctors came out of the room, “He’s still awake.”

Sans had raised the head of his bed some. He looked more alert than he had earlier, but he also looked a little embarrassed. Velour left the room to give us some semblance of privacy. The open door kind of voided her sweet gesture however.

“sorry about earlier,” Sans apologized the instant I entered the room.

“It’s fine.” I waved his concern away with the hand not holding December, “Forget about it.”

“Well our past hang ups aside,” I glared at him for the wordplay, “i’ve been told you and uh…these little things have been the ones to help me out.”

“Hi!” Tinsel teleported onto his lap excitedly. Raze grumbled a curse at not being able to catch the little hybrid before he could run off, “How are you feeling?”

Sans stared at the bitty for a few seconds.

“I’m still a bit bone tired, but otherwise i’m good,” Sans’s fingers tapped the top of Tinsel’s head experimentally, “so…odd….this isn’t monster magic.”

“That’s cause we’re not monsters dumbass,” Raze snorted. Sunshine elbowed him sharply.

That was true though. Velour might’ve compared them to small clones, but my bitties had discovered the truth behind their existence. Magic- like energy- could not be made or destroyed. Even when the infected source material made more of itself, it pulled from the magic in the air; thus, a person could control the bitties that would form by controlling the kind of magic they were exposed to. The source acted not as a source of DNA or a magical basis for the bitty but a template to be filled in with outside magic. This was because the unstable magic was too unstable to stay stabilized for a long period of time. Small pockets would form, and magic attracts magic. Thus, outside magic would slowly fill the holes until all of the outside magic had filled the template the source had left for them. Controlling what magical particles in the air the source could reach controlled the outcome of the bitties. It was why putting the source in tanks with a simple magical mixture produced only a select few bitties. So, despite looking like the monsters they came from, they shared no form of DNA, magical, or blood connection. Bitties were essentially a separate species with no true relation to the source at all. They just looked like them, and they often had similar magical abilities.

“sorry about him,” Blake teleported himself and Snuggle next to Sans as well, “he’s a bit of an asshole.”

“I can tell.” Sans eyed Snuggle carefully, “you’re the one that blended determination and monster magic right?”

It took Snuggle a few seconds to process what Sans had asked, but he quietly nodded once
he realized what was being asked. Snuggle then proceeded to poke around Sans’s body. The doctors might’ve made sure he was okay, but Snuggle could worry as much as Sunshine and Cyan sometimes.

“jojo?” Idjit whispered quietly, “can i see Sans?”

I forgot Cy and Idjit were in the hood. I sighed while taking Idjit and Cyan out of my hood. I approached the bed and sat the two of them on it. December also leapt down from my collar to join Idjit. He stumbled only to be caught by Idjit before tumbling off the bed.

“he has buttons for eyes,” Sans observed when Idjit and December approached.

“Yup,” I nodded, “Kind of weird huh?”

“given everything i’ve seen and heard sew far, this is nothing.” Sans sat up straighter in the bed to get a better look at the bitties. Sunshine convinced Raze to at least teleport him down, but Raze was obviously not letting his mate wander around an unfamiliar monster alone, “huh.”

“Be glad that you can’t be sued for child support,” I sat down in my usual chair, “They’re cute though.”

“GJ,” Tinsel whined snapping at my fingers crankily. Thankfully, the little shit didn’t get those burning fangs of his into my fingers, “I’m too old to be cute.”

“All small things are inherently cute,” I flicked the part of his skull that wasn’t cracked “Also, no nipping. It’s bad enough your dad uses me as his personal chew toy.”

Raze growled at that.

“What?” I poked the side of his head, “It’s true!”

“so this is the one that left twenty bite marks on your hand that one time,” Sans chimed in quietly.

“Ummm…” I remembered that conversation. It had come shortly before the ‘I somewhat hate you’ monologue, “Do remember what happened after that?”

“yup,” Sans’s eyes turned black for a second, but he didn’t seem angry. If anything seemed sad- maybe a little disappointed too, “glad that plug stayed in place though. otherwise this shocking development might’ve never happened.”

“I’m glad it did too,” Out of habit, my hand covered his. His pupils returned and zeroed in on my hand. I blushed bright red and smoothly jerked my hand back. He’s not asleep anymore you dunce, “Anyways! Before I forget…”

I got up and went to the small package holding the blue jacket. I tugged it out and held it up to his chest. Thankfully, I had predicted the length of his arms and torso correctly. Sans stared at the jacket with an adorably confused expression. He reminded me of Waltzer after the sansy had an argument with Cyan.

“I didn’t know what color you’d like, so I just went with blue. It gets cold down here, so I figured you’d appreciate something to keep your bones warm,” I explained handing it to him. I didn’t expect the little bastard to slip the thing on.

“reminds me of my old jacket,” Sans felt inside the pockets and ran his hands up the sleeves,
“softer material though. my old one was probably some outdated jacket a kid tossed.”

“Well… I don’t know if this was a good or a bad thing then,” I tapped my chin, “So? Good thing? Bad thing? Is my head touching the ceiling again?”

“good.” Sans smiled to himself fondly, “pap found my old jacket. i wonder if these guys still have it.”

“We could most certainly check and see,” Cyan chimed in, “They might’ve left it in the Underground however.”

“monsters were kind of in a bad position when the barrier broke,” Blake added, “they probably only took what they needed. still, they could have it.”

“Glad to see you guys have been googling monster history,” I went back to my chair and sat down.

“did the kid break the barrier somehow?” Sans asked.

“Kid?” My brain jumped to the deceased child found within the barrier, “No, they didn’t. From what the coroners said, the child starved himself or herself to death in front of the barrier despite the fact they could’ve escaped or gone back to the monsters. A dog smelled the child’s corpse. That was how humans discovered the other way into the Underground. At first, the rescue teams only want to bring the child’s body back, but they delved deeper and found monsters suffering. The rescuers brought the monsters back with them and shit has been clinging to the fan ever since.”

“the kid’s dead?” Again Sans’s eyes blackened, “dead?”

“Uh huh…” I nodded. Then I paused, “Did you know the child? Before you collapsed?”

“in a way,” Sans said hollowly. Fear, confusion, and terror crossed his face. He looked around like he expected the whole world to just collapse in on itself.

“s-sa-an-ns?” Idjit’s hands rested on the back of his hand.

“are you…okay?” December cocked his head.

“Oh my,” Cyan frowned, “I think he’s overwhelmed.”

“no, no,” Dim light returned to Sans’s eyes, “i’m fine. really.”

“I’m sorry you lost your friend,” Sunshine quietly patted Sans’s arm.

“friend? yeah, guess you could say that,” Sans let out a weary sigh and grumbled something under his breath, “well, i hope they- as humans say- rest in peace.”

“I hope so too,” I nodded in agreement, “The saddest part of the whole thing was… no one stepped forward to claim the child as their own. A small petition was formed to get the kid cremated and buried here in the city’s cemetery. They buried them here to keep them a good distance away from the barrier.” I paused, “When you’re feeling better, I could take you to see them.”

“you know where they’re buried?” Sans asked.

“Olivia dragged me out of my apartment to leave flowers at the kid’s grave after they first got buried. She helped the petition out a lot.” I was about to continue speaking when I noticed Sans’s
“Sans?”

“olivia…i don’t think you ever said that name…i think you mentioned a livvy a few dozen times,” Sans absentmindedly petted the top of Tinsel’s head.

“that’s ophie’s nickname for olivia,” Waltzer added while I used my hood to hide my blushing face, “she’s a good big sister, so it’s not shocking she talked about her a lot.”

“OOokKKkkaaAAAaaYyy…” I stood up and flicked my hood back, “I’m going to be permanently scarlet at this rate, and it’s getting late. I think it’s about time we all got home. Besides, we have dinner with Granny this weekend.”

All of my bitties complained at that idea.

“It’s not like we have cot to sleep on,” I scolded them while plucking them off of the bed, “We’re going to come back by anyways. Enough griping.”

It took them a few minutes to settle down, but thankfully they did.

“hope i haven’t run you off,” Sans commented while I tried to pry my fingers from Raze’s mouth.

“You haven’t,” I assured him, “It’s getting late, and you need to recover. Not every day you wake up from a coma after all.”

“surprisingly, i don’t feel that bad,” Sans rubbed the back of his head, “bit of a headache though.”

“Want me to get Velour to come bring you some meds?” I questioned. He shook his head then winced, “I’m going to go get Velour to get you some meds.”

I quickly tried to exit the room. Sadly, Sans’s magic was much faster than my stubby human legs.

“Sans…” I growled at the monster while I dangled a few inches off the ground, “You don’t need to be straining yourself like this. Put me down mister.”

“i don’t need any painkillers.” Sans said firmly, “they need to be working on patching the others up.”

“You’re the one with 1 HP!” I fought the urge to throw my hands up in exasperation, “Sans, stopping ten minutes to get you some painkillers won’t be the death of Papyrus.”

I could tell that I had hit the nail on the head when his magic collapsed. I managed to land on my feet. I turned to glower at Sans. A bead of…sweat?...dripped down his forehead. I didn’t want to understand monster anatomy at that point.

“Sans,” I walked over and used my sleeve to wipe his brow clean, “Pap is by far the sturdiest of the bunch. His magic was very strong against being destabilized, and he’s right after Dr. Alphys on the list of patients to be cured. He’ll be fine.”

“you got mysterious fortune telling powers?” Sans questioned dully, “or are you a mind reader maybe?”

“I’m an older sibling. Trust me, I’ve sat through Olivia when she had a bad case of the flu.
You think that they’re too fragile to handle it on their own, but trust me when I say they can.” I patted his head comfortingly, “Papyrus will be okay.”

“ha…” Sans closed his eyes and took a deep breath, “sorry i’m being so boneheaded. guess i’m just getting to old for this.”

“Hardy har har,” I snorted.

“ari’s actually older than you.” Blake said, “you’re only twenty-six after all.”

“he’s only twenty-six?” Waltzer asked dumbly.

“Waltzer,” I heard Cyan sigh from my hood, “You’ve stared at his chart for hours, and you just now realize he’s twenty six?”

“i was kind of busy trying to figure out how to keep him from dying sooo…” Waltzer shrugged.

“you’re older than me?” Sans cocked his head, “i can see you’ve got some gray, but i figured it was just early.”

“Technically it is,” My previously easily hidden gray skunk strip was growing into something not so easily hidden, “I’m only thirty.”

“Thirty-one in May,” Sunshine reminded me.

“Ah yes, remind me of how another year of my life has passed and can never be regained,” I sighed dramatically, “Anyways, no more distracting me. I’ll get Velour to bring you some painkillers- end of story mister.”

I rubbed his skull carefully one last time before leaving.

“you know…” Sans called after me, “you seem to think there’s a genie in my head or something!”

I quietly took seven steps backwards to lean backwards to look at the monster. At this point, my face probably looked like I rolled around in blush for a few minutes.

“Sans, shut up.” With that, I left a chuckling monster behind.

“he’s nice,” Blake said once we were out of earshot.

“I really like him!” Tinsel practically bounced on my shoulder, “We’re coming back to visit him right!?”

“Yes sweetie,” I said, “Now please quiet down some. You’ll aggravate your rib cage.”

It took me a couple of minutes to track Velour down. She was in one of the back rooms with a flower monster and some goop like monster that vaguely reminded me of the skeleton brothers.

“Hey Vel,” I knocked on the door politely, “Sans needs some painkillers. His head is hurting.”

“He always did get migraines,” Velour sighed closing the flower monster’s chart, “I’ll go grab him something.”
“Cool,” I nodded. Waltzer clung to my hair for dear life. He yanked the strands a few times while grumbling his disapproval, “Oww...Anywho, we’ll be off. I need to finish my work before this weekend.”

“Oh,” Velour checked her watch, “I hadn’t realized it had gotten this late. Do you need one of our bigger monsters to walk you home?”

“Velour,” I walked over and rested my hands on the squirrel’s shoulders, “I’ve been beaten up, shot twice, stabbed before, almost run over twice, and much, much more. A simple jaunt through the nicest part of the city besides manor street,” Manor street was the nickname the locals gave to the simple street that housed all twenty of the major mansions in the city, “will not kill me. Besides, I’ve got these guys to keep me out of a bind if need be.”

Waltzer, Blake, and Raze puffed up a little bit. I decided then I’d call them the puffer fish brigade.

“Alright,” Velour said worriedly, “I guess I’m still anxious about everything. Will you call the CC after you get home?”

“If it’ll make you feel better, sure.” I nodded.

After that, I peered in on Sans- who was dozing- one last time before leaving the Bitty CC. Honestly, the whole experience had left me rather exhausted- and surprisingly embarrassed.

“Where will we be eating with Granny?” Sunshine questioned me as I navigated my way through the cold streets of the city.

“Olivia’s new restaurant. She’s going to use us a test run before her grand opening,” I grinned, “Some part of me wants to be a dick just to see her sweat some.”

“Miss Josie.” Cyan groaned disapprovingly.

If I had known then what was going to happen that Saturday, I honestly don’t know if I would’ve gone. The responsibility about to be laid at my feet still frightens me to this day.

Still, I didn’t know what was coming to my door next.

That’s part of what makes life so frightening. It’s like having a door with no peephole. You could be letting in a nice granny with a warm plate of cookies or an armed serial killer.

I still don’t know if what was coming next had been the kind granny or the armed serial killer.

Chapter End Notes

ALSO! Thank you to everyone who commented! I love you all so much. Reading your comments leaves a big smile on my face...even when...some of them just confuse me or make me face palm. Still love you guys though! Another big thanks to the people who have stuck around for this long and/or given this story kudos!
“Raze,” Sunshine sighed tying his mate’s tie, “Please quit scowling so much. You knew we’d be going out tonight.”

Raze continued to glare at me.

“It’s not like I dumped this on you out of the blue.” I pointed out before making sure that Idjit and December looked presentable. Even though this was just a simple family dinner, I still wanted to dress nicely for Granny. It’d make her worry less.

“hmph,” Raze looked away from me and looked at Sunshine instead.

“Daddy!” Tinsel popped into the bitty room with Cyan and Waltzer trailing behind him. He looked adorable in his little button up and bright green bow tie, “Look.”

He tugged up his left pant leg to reveal a brace that carefully cradled his injured leg. I gave Waltzer and Cyan a confused look. Waltzer held up his hands to show chips and bandaged injuries he more than likely got while making the simple brace.

“It’s to make walking a bit easier,” Cyan explained before stretching sleepily.

“That’s good,” Raze said checking the brace carefully. He let out a satisfied noise before patting his son on the head.

“ari!” Blake called from the living room, “that was olivia! we need to head out.”

“Okay.” I called back gently. I stood up and straightened my knee length skirt. As I always did when I wore shorter skirts/shorts, I wore thick stockings to hide my basal cell carcinoma scarring. The blouse was some old thing Idjit had pointed out in my closet, and the brown satchel I’d be taking with me was to act as a seat of sorts for the bitties. My hair had been tamed into a low ponytail which meant Waltzer couldn’t ride on my head l, but I didn’t bother with make-up.

“Okay guys,” I made sure the heels I wore wouldn’t snap on me one last time before straightening up fully, “Get on, so we can go.”
It was difficult to navigate the late January crowds with Cyan, Idjit, Waltzer, and December perched precariously on the satchel, but we made it work. More than a few people seemed shocked to see me out of my usual hoodie, sweatpants, flip-flop ensemble. It's not like I don't have other types of clothing…I'm just too lazy to put in the effort most days.

“they….keep staring….” December shifted uncomfortably under the crowd’s scrutiny. I guessed it was one thing to be stared at when he could hide in the folds of my collar, but it was another to have nowhere to duck behind.

“they just don’t have a life pal,” Waltzer patted his back comfortingly.

“Don’t worry,” I said after elbowing my way through a crowd of giggling millennials. The little shits- who just had be taking up the entire sidewalk just to keep chatting while going slower than an crippled old lady who had to crawl because she didn’t have her goddamn wheelchair- actually dared to glare at me. Oh, I wanted to show them how to respect their elders. I wanted to. Sadly, I had five bitties on my shoulders, so I couldn’t exactly break their faces like I wanted to. Too bad.

I almost sighed in relief when Olivia’s small little restaurant came into view. It had a nice spot one block away from the main street, so the brilliantly designed building- a mixture of soft beige and pinks with graffiti and brick walls- would be flooded with customers when it opened up. Chez Newmore would attract the younger “edgier” crowd and the slightly older feminine crowd equally.

*I’m so proud.* It was amazing what she got done in such a short amount of time.

“Amazing Aunt!” I heard from one of the back alleys. Hiro bounced excitedly, “this way!”

I followed the baby blue through one of the back doors. The kitchen was spotless, but it had obviously been broken in. Olivia’s workers had all left their little touches to make their respective jobs easier. The front area continued the feminine/graffiti theme with the tables being soft beige with black chairs that had pink fabrics on the seats and backs. The floor was covered in vibrant graffiti while the walls were panels that mixed the two themes. Some were brick. Others were cement with graffiti. Some had ornate white designs on beige wall paper. Others were a frothy pink color.

“Wow,” I looked around, “Daammmmnnn…”

“Josephine,” Sunshine tugged on my ear in warning.

“Sorry, sorry,” I apologized, “It looks really good though.”

“I had some of the local artists do the artwork,” Olivia said approaching me with a big grin on her face. Behind her, Nadia and Granny sat at a table with food already served, “You’re late Sissy!”.

“we got caught behind some slow walkers,” Waltzer explained, “eventually, we just elbowed our way through.”

“At least you made it,” Olivia sighed. She pulled me into a tight embrace and kissed my cheek. Raze’s amused snort let me know that her lipstick had more than likely stained my cheek, “Come on!”

I settled down in one of the chairs. They were surprisingly comfortable. After making sure all of my bitties were situated, I looked at the food presented. She’d already selected a main dish for everyone. Mine though….
“It’s soupy spaghetti,” I—twelve years old—explained to my little sister. Really, it was just something simple I could make every once in a while, but she always seemed to like it, “I can show you how to make it.”

Smiling at the familiar dish, I gave Olivia a knowing look. She grinned back.

“It’s one of our entrees!” Olivia tugged out a menu and showed me that it indeed was, “I’ve also got a few of our sides out too.”

Breadsticks, salad, two kinds of soup, and some kind of grilled vegetables. I noted that all of her choices had some degree of healthy to them—-not a lot, but some. When she grew up, I was the one in charge with feeding her, so I went to great lengths to instill healthy habits into her.

“This all looks great Livvy,” I settled more comfortably in the chair. Hiro and Harley seemed pleased that Olivia looked over joyed. We all started to eat, and Granny began to critique Olivia’s food. It wasn’t that Granny didn’t support her or anything. She just wanted Olivia to be at her best for the grand opening soon. Nadia and Cesar ate in relative silence. I couldn’t decide if I was amused or horrified at the fact the little shit wore the equivalent of a bitty sized Armani suit. Nadia also seemed to be glancing at me nervously for some reason.

“So, Joey,” Granny snapped her fingers to get my attention. She’d always been able to tell when my mind had wandered. Raze sat by her plate with Tinsel and Sunshine. Hiro had basically kidnapped Idjit and Cyan, and December never left Idjit’s side. Thus, Waltzer was left to help Harley mediate the madness in their little corner. Snuggle and Blake stuck by me though, “How goes work?”

Just cut to the chase Granny. I sighed mentally. I know what you’re going to ask.

“Great,” I smiled at the thought of my recent projects, “Everything is going smoothly, and I’m really proud of my current work.”

“I heard from Leo,” Trrraaaiiitttooorr! “That you’ve also been taking some painting commissions. You’re not low on funds are you?”

“No,” I held up a hand, “They’re all paintings for friends, and they insist on paying me for them. I’m fine financially.”

“Good,” Granny smiled, “Though I might worry less if you had a second income to help out.”

I leaned back into my chair and groaned.

“Grannnnyy…I don’t need a husband.” I frowned and added, “And I’m still waiting a few years before you’ll get any great-grandkids from me.”

“You’re not getting any younger,” Granny pointed out, “I’m also not getting any younger either. I would like to see my great-grandchildren at least a little bit.”

“I know,” I sighed, “Maybe when I’m 35…”

“You intend on finding a spouse in the next four years and approximately four months?” Granny’s brow raised.

“No,” I laughed, “I’ll go to a sperm bank. Besides, you’ve already got one little one to spoil on the way if you don’t count my nine bitties.”
I pointed to Nadia’s slightly grown stomach. She really hadn’t put on much baby weight, but then again, she didn’t even know she was pregnant until after her first trimester.

“Oh!” Olivia perked up, “Do we know what gender the baby is?”

“It’s still so weird humans can learn that,” Blake shuddered, “do those uh…ultrasounds hurt at all?”

Cesar rubbed his temples.

“No Blake,” Nadia said. She took a bite of her food before continuing, “A boy.”

“A boy!” Olivia said excitedly.

“Well, looks like you’ve got a solid male heir for whatever new company you take over,” Granny chuckled.

“Well…” Nadia set her utensils down.

In hindsight, I should’ve taken that as my cue shit was about to go down and fucking leave.

“I’ve decided to…give him up for adoption,” Nadia said slowly. Granny practically choked on her whine.

“What?” Olivia asked, pained by the idea.

“Not to just anyone!” Nadia amended quickly, “I’d never do that.”

“You’re giving him to edgar then?” Disapproval and slight disgust radiated through Waltzer’s voice.

“Nadia,” Sunshine couldn’t comprehend this. It was understandable.

“Of course not!” Nadia snapped, making Cyan flinch.

“Pipe down,” Raze growled. Cesar snarled at the edgy before resting a steadying hand on Nadia’s arm.

“Explain,” Granny’s clipped voice sent shivers down my spine.

“Josephine,” Nadia turned to look at me, “I want you to take him. You’d make a much better mother than I would. At the new company, I’ll just be a drudge struggling to climb the corporate ladder. I won’t be able to be there for my son. I’ll end up becoming our mother. I just know it…We’re related after all.”

“Me?” I said incredulously.

“Yes you,” Nadia’s thin hands- when did her fingers start to feel so small? They hadn’t always been this fragile right?- clamped on mine, “You’re experienced. You’re your own boss, and you can make your own hours. You can give him a much better life- a much better family life that I ever could. He deserves more than a caregiver who works from five to midnight every night. He deserves more than a nanny and private tutors. He needs a mother…like you can be.”

“Look at her,” Some of my classmates sneered at me at the Open House. They tugged on their parents’ hands and pointed to me.
“Oh my.”

“Please tell me that child isn’t hers.”

“Where are her parents!?”

“Does she not have any?”

“No, she does.” A particularly cruel parent cackles, “They’re those rich idiots who live a little out of town- the Newmores. My money is on it being hers and some other male relatives. No telling what those rich assholes would do to keep their bloodline pure.”

“Are they even old money?”

“All the more reason to do it!”

“Disgusting!”

I cradled a cranky baby Olivia even closer. There was no way to block her ears without hurting her, but luckily, she was too young to understand them. The diaper bag slung over my shoulder felt like a weight dragging me straight to hell. Even my dear baby sister- I love you so much Livvy. You’re one of the only things I have left to live for- felt like something that had been thrust upon me far to soon.

I’m just a kid... Why me? Why is it-

“-Always me!” My hands slammed onto the table hard enough to jostle all of the bitties. I stood up infuriated, “Always me! I’m always the one handling the babies you don’t want to care for. Is this going to be like Olivia all over again? You dump the responsibility on my shoulders then come back twenty years later to “apologize”!? Is this part of the reason why you’ve even bothered to mend our bond? To dump your kid on me?”

I couldn’t help my volume. I saw Waltzer teleport Cyan away from the madness while Raze and Blake snatched the others up as well. The puffer fish brigade- minus Blake- returned to back to check on me. Black spots filled my vision as a red tint began to cloud my thoughts.

“I’m not just some duty dumpster for you to abuse.” I spat slamming my hand on the table again. I accidentally hit a glass and the newly formed shards buried themselves into my palm. The fog of pain threatened to send me to a dark place, but my anger acted as an anchor into my current situation.

“It wasn’t the reason!” Nadia insisted standing up. Be so glad you’re with child you fucking bitch. I’d beat your ass otherwise for lying to me!

“Liar! Like always,” I curled my uninjured hand into a fist to try and control myself.

“Joey,” Granny stood up. The warning in her voice would normally scare me. Sadly for her, it just made me angrier. Dammit. I’m the one who deserves to be angry in this situation. Dammit!

“It’s the truth! I didn’t even know for sure that mother and father would take away my status as CEO!” Nadia insisted, “I have to rebuild my entire life Josephine! All of it! Do you have any idea how hard that is going to be with a child? Let me remind you that this child will also be the son my abusive husband.”

“Oh, I’m supposed to pity you?” Sympathy had long since checked out of my head, “You
didn’t have to fucking marry him in the first damn place! No, you’re the one that waited too long to change, that abandoned me to be the black sheep. Do you have any idea the responsibility a child is Nadia? How many things in my life you’re asking me to change as a massive favor for you? You’re the one who burned this bridge down a long time ago, and you’ve some damn nerve asking me to look after your kid, asking me to upend my entire life, for you.”

Tears actually dared to fill her eyes. Our relationship had been improving because I had thought she’d learned to be less selfish. I would’ve been willing to help her out with the kid, but asking me to fucking take him from her? That was way too much, way too soon.

“Sissy,” Olivia’s voice cracked. I didn’t look at her. I knew that the sight of tears on her face would dampen my fury and only make me feel even more miserable.

“Josephine,” Nadia rubbed at her face, “I know it’s a large responsibility. I thought forever about this. You don’t even know…I came to this decision because you’re the only person I can trust to take care of him.”

Trust.

“Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” Two little girls- one tall, one short, one pudgy, one fit-giggled in their backyard behind the small upper middle class condo they lived in, “kill me if I ever lose your trust.”

Trust isn’t so easily kept, lost, or regained. I sighed. Can I just leave my nephew to deal with whatever fate she comes up with…? What is her back up plan if I say no? Will he be safe? SHIT… Fuck it… I can’t even think right now. I need to go home. Home.

“Hmph,” I stood up straight and checked my hand, “Where did you take the others?”

“Raze teleported them back to the apartment,” Waltzer answered me quietly, “Cyan is…a little messed up because of the noise.”

“I’ll have to do a lot of apologizing,” I sighed and rubbed my face with both of my hands. Blood smeared across my face, and a few of the shards still stuck in my hand stung painfully, “Because you trust me huh?” I laughed angrily, “Fuck you Nadia.”

“Josephine Ophelia Arietta!” Granny gasped.

“Sissy…” Olivia whimpered more than likely wiping her tears away. My hear twinged as the last two people in my family who had loved me unconditionally more than likely looked at me with disgust and scorn. I knew then and there my head doctor would be getting quite the story at my next appointment.

“Please Phine,” Nadia whispered, “I don’t want to become our mother.”

I quietly picked up Waltzer and Raze after plucking the glass out from my hand.

“I’ll think about it.”

With that, I left the disaster that never should’ve happened.

I couldn’t face any of the more sensitive bitties right after that. My head still didn’t work right. My anger and sadness threatened to overwhelm me.

“oi,” Raze’s hand was surprisingly gentle on my cheek, “…it’s alrigh’ to be mad at ‘er.”
“for once we agree,” Waltzer snorted as he wrapped my neck in a quiet embrace, “she literally dropped a bomb on you ophie.”

“I still shouldn’t have gotten that worked up,” Tears of my own began to appear. Whether the cold January air or my inner turmoil caused it…I couldn’t figure out, “Granny and Olivia probably hate me now.”

“no they don’t,” Raze snapped at my ear lobe threateningly, “ya just worried ‘em is all.”

“They can’t hate you for this,” Waltzer agreed quietly, “none of us do. cy was a little shaken up by the noise, but everyone is concerned about you at home.”

The two continued to try to cheer me up as I went for a quiet, late evening stroll. More than a few people wondered if I was an abused prostitute or something, but my bitties just shooed them away to let me put myself together in peace.

We crossed over a bridge, and I paused to look into the waters.

Oh how I envied that stream. Calm, sure, and uninterrupted. It wasn’t boiling over with anger or frozen with sadness. It could just be.

You could do the world a favor and jump.

“ophie,” Waltzer scolded me when I began to lean further over the rail, “you’re gonna make raze and i slip.”

That brought me back to myself, to the family I had waiting at home.

I stood up straight, and Raze gave me his jacket to wipe my face clean of blood and tears. I closed my eyes and took a few steadying breaths until I felt better. Knowing Cyan and Blake, they’d call Tyrone and Leo. I didn’t need to worry anyone by showing up

“hey,” Raze tapped my jaw, “we goin’ home?”

I nodded mutely.

When I got back home, I was practically tackled by a frantic Leo before both of us were swept up into one of Tyrone’s famously comforting bear hugs and hopped on by all of the bitties. I didn’t cry anymore.

I did sag into their warmth though.

It felt so good to be home.

It felt so good to be with my family.

“I love you guys.” I said quietly from the bottom of the awkward dog pile we had going on in the hallway. A group of my neighbors gawked at us, “But could we please get into my apartment completely before you try to smother me with love?”

We watched shitty movies for the rest of the night after I thoroughly apologized to my more sensitive bitties. Ripping the movies apart until I couldn’t help but smile made all of the left over pain burning in me settle down some. I snuggled deeper in between Leo and Ty on the couch.

I subtly removed the "twin" and "big sister" charms from my charm bracelet. I didn't feel like I deserved to wear them after this, so I tucked them beneath the couch cushions for safe keeping.
Tyrone's arm protectively wrapped around my shoulders, and Leo's head made a pillow out of my flat chest.

At least if all else fails...I’ll have these guys. That's more than enough. I smiled and looked at my bitties who all tried their best to sit on my lap at the same time. I have them too. I'm not alone. I'm not unloved just because I fought with my blood family. I'm still loved.
“Are you sure you can handle this?” I raised a brow at Tyrone.

The two of us were in my living room high above the city streets. My bitties were all of doing whatever it was they normally did, but Raze hadn't appreciated Tyrone cuddling Sunshine so much. Needless to say, Ty learned Raze's teeth weren't for show.

“Y-Yeah,” He winced while trying to remove Raze from his hand, “I think.”

He’d taken the day off to get some fresh air, but he jumped at the opportunity to help me out. I felt bad about imposing. Still, I was taking Sans to the kid’s grave, and I figured the skeleton monster would appreciate a little more privacy then nine sometimes rowdy bitties.

“I can take some of them with me,” From the kitchen, a loud clattering noise was followed by Waltzer hurrying into the room to check on Cyan, “They can be quite the handful.”

“I got it.” Tyrone scowled then practically whimpered in relief when Raze released him to go check on Sunshine, “I’ll make sure no one dies. Go help out that friend of yours…and think about the incident some while you’re at it.”

I scowled at him.

“j-jojo?” Idjit stepped from underneath the couch with December trailing along behind him, “a-r-re y-o-ou lea-eav-v-ving now?”

“I am,” I bent down to calmly rub his and December’s heads, “I’ll be back in a couple of hours though.”

“lia…will you be okay?” December asked worriedly.

“I’ll be with Sans,” I smiled at the little buttonberry, “We’ll both look out for each other.”

That seemed to comfort both of them. After about five minutes of making sure everyone was okay, I left Tyrone to the chaos that was my apartment.

Chaos your nephew would just add to.
But let’s be honest here. Nadia probably doesn’t even know how to heat a bottle properly, and I’m almost willing to be money she can’t change a diaper.

What happens when he squeezes Tinsel, Idjit, or December to hard? What happens when his howling causes Cyan constant pain and discomfort?

I couldn’t give myself an answer for that as I walked through the city’s cold streets.

Besides, you’re not exactly a prime candidate yourself. I mean, your temper and your mood swings are enough to turn most adults away from you. How the hell do you expect to raise a kid if you can’t control your emotions.

That’s what your psychologist is for Jo. You’re improving.

I shook my head to clear away the thoughts. Thinking about all of that when I was taking a man to visit the deceased was insensitive. Sans was my main concern today- not Nadia and her problems.

You’ve said that the past week.

Shut it.

On B5 in the Bitty CC, Sans stood outside Papryus’s room completely dressed. The nurses and doctors had taken great care to put him in thick jeans, a thick sweater, and hopefully warm sneakers. He wore his blue jacket as always, but I frowned upon realizing he didn’t have a hat or scarf or mittens.

“Hey man,” I called out to avoid startling him.

“hey,” Sans didn’t pull his eyes away from his brother.

“How’s Papyrus doing?” Standing next to him, I peered in to check on the taller skeleton, “Are they beginning his treatments?”

“they finished alph’s a couple of hours ago, so it’s his turn now,” Sans smiled, “they say he’ll probably be up in a few days.”

“Well, they are perfecting the method,” The scientists had made many alterations to the treatment that was used on Sans to make treatments go quicker, “I can’t wait to meet him.”

“trust me when i say he’ll be dying to meet you to. he’s-“ Sans paused, “-never seen a human in this life.”

“Well, I can only hope to make a good first impression,” I tugged the hat- Raze had knitted it- and tugged it over Sans’s larger skull. Luckily, his head wasn’t too much larger than mine, so it fit comfortably. He blinked in shock and looked up at me, “Speaking of humans, I’m here to take you to see the kid.”

“frisk,” Sans supplied reaching up to touch the hat, “his name was frisk.”

“Frisk…” Wasn’t that was he called me when he first woke up….? Don’t think too much about it Jo. He had just come out of a coma.

“don’t you need this?” Sans pointed to the hat.

“Not more than you,” I snorted, “You’ve been down here where it’s nice and warm for the
past year. It’s freezing outside.”

For some reason, Sans just grinned.

“Anyways, we’re burning daylight.” I turned on my heel, “If you’re ready?”

“Sure.”

Sans followed me into the elevator. I spotted him eyeing my shoulders and hood.

“Don’t have the bite sized versions of me?” Sans raised a brow.

“Nope,” I stretched some, “Figured you’d want some privacy for this whole thing.”

Sans fell silent for a little bit.

“Thanks,”

“No problem.”

The elevator dinged on the first floor. Sans stepped out with a look of concerned awe on his face. He constantly stared at the other people and their bitties as we passed. More than a few people gave him a few weird looks, but he didn’t seem particularly bothered. I only became concerned after we stepped outside. The large, bustling crowds with little spaces for a person to squeeze into seemed to completely shock him.

“Sans?” I wrapped my hand around his, “You okay?”

“There are so many of you…” Sans’s face went dark for a second before he mumbled something I couldn’t catch.

“Sans?” I frowned.

“Nothing. Just a bit overwhelmed.” Sans waved away my concern before zeroing in on my grasp on his hand, “You really like getting handsy with me don’t you?”

“Oh shut up.” I blushed before tugging him out into the crowd with me. He tensed and stepped a bit closer, locking his hand around mine more firmly, “It’s to make sure I don’t lose you in the crowd.”

“Thanks,” Sans chuckled, “I’d hate for you to have to play a game of ‘where in the world is sans the skeleton?’ because I got lost.”

“You’d probably just be crying in some alley,” I grinned at his scowl, “What?”

He rolled his eyes.

We fell into companionable silence as we continued to walk down the streets.

“You’re paler than when we first met.” Sans said suddenly.

“Huh?”

“You’ve also got bags under your eyes…what’s eating you?” Sans cocked his head.

“Nothing.” I lied.
“huh,” Sans looked at me disbelievingly, “seems to me like you’re starved for an ear to listen.”

“Just some family drama,” I sighed and shoved my way through a particular clot in the crowd.

care to elaborate?”

“Sans,” I tapped the top of his head, “You don’t need me adding my problems to your shoulders.”

“you did it while i was unconscious,” Sans pointed out almost tripping into my chest when someone stumbled into him from behind.

“Because I thought you were unconscious.” I blushed, “You couldn’t talk back!”

“won’t i be more helpful now that i can?” Sans retorted after straightening himself up.

With a reluctant groan, I told him about the Nadia’s baby fiasco. He listened without saying a word or asking a single question. It was nice to have someone just listen for once.

“And that’s that,” I shrugged, “Nadia- my mostly still estranged twin- decided that I- an emotionally unstable jackass- am the one who should raise her kid. Honestly…it’s like she doesn’t think sometimes.”

“but you’re still going to take him.” Sans said quietly, “because you’re just like that.”

My blush deepened.

“Please tell me Velour hasn’t been filling your head with images of me as some knight in shining armor.”

“she hasn’t. i know this because of you.”

What?

At my disbelieving look Sans elaborated further.

“your determination was used in my treatment remember,” Sans pointed out. He looked down at his arm, “it’s still in me some, working its way out of my system. i can see all of the colors in your soul.”

“Thought my soul was just purple.” Oh god…SOUL stuff…

“human souls take the color that most predominately fills the soul. in your case, yeah it’s purple,” Sans examined his arm more, “but i see a lot of red and orange in their too….some green and deep blue as well….not a thread of light blue, but i do see some faded yellow.”

“Oh that’s just creepy,” I shuddered.

“so walking down the streets with a living breathing skeleton doesn’t freak you out, but learning what makes you you induces shuddering?” Sans shook his head as he laughed, “though…i guess that makes sense.”

“Oh great,” I sighed, “Is this where you tell me all about my inner thoughts?”
“i’m not a mind reader,” Sans chuckled, “but i can tell you don’t give yourself enough credit. yeah, you’re a bit hot headed and impatient. yeah, you’re not always the nicest person. you’re still loyal and kind though. a kind, experienced parent with time, determination, and the fortitude to deal with their highs and lows….what else could a kid ask for. besides, leaving people- even people you don’t like- in a lurch doesn’t seem to sit well with your mixture.”

I paused in the middle of the side walk. A few people grumbled around us as they shoved past.

“Do you really believe that?” I questioned him quietly.

“i’ve only known you a couple of weeks, but from everything i’ve seen in your magic and in the cc….yeah.” Sans released my hand to pat me on the back, “you’d make a great mom.”

“How sad is it that a near complete stranger- albeit one who can see into my personality- has more faith in me than I do. Yearing to change the topic, I asked a random question and ignored his resulting frown. Our banter ended abruptly when we entered the cemetery. It only took me a few seconds to find the small marble headstone I was looking for.

“Here we are.” I said quietly.

Unnamed Child

R.I.P

Abandoned once, but will never be forgotten again.

Sans quietly squatted in front of the grave, releasing my hand in the process. Quietly, he reached out and brushed his fingers over the headstone. With a shuddering breath, he closed his eyes.

I said nothing.

What could I say? I didn’t know the kid. I didn’t know what he was going through.

Thus, I silently waited half a foot behind him while he made peace with…whatever seemed to weigh his shoulders down so much. I'll need to see about getting a new headstone reading Frisk instead of Unnamed Child.... I flinched when cold, bitter rain began to pour down from the skies.

“Shit,” I cursed. It didn’t normally just rain. I looked to the east to find Mt. Ebbot and was annoyed to realize that a massive storm was brewing. This little rainfall was just the prelude.

“huh,” Sans stood up and looked at the sky, “so this is rain…”

It took me half a second to remember that Sans probably hadn’t seen rain from the sky before.

“It’s about to be a storm actually,” I pointed to Mt. Ebbot, “It’s going to be coming in hot… shit…We should head back to my place and ride it out. I don’t think we’ll make it back to the Bitty CC in time.”

“What? not going to buy me dinner first?” Sans cocked his head with a forced, pained smile.

“Sans.”

“i mean, coming to a cemetery makes for a splashing good time, but-“
“Sans,” I grumbled and wrapped an arm around Sans’s shoulders. I tried to use my few extra inches of height to shield him from the rain a bit. “Now is not the time for puns. Do you have anything else you need to do for Frisk?”

Sans’s smile fell.

“no,” He said hollowly.

“Then we should get out of the way of that storm.”

He nodded quietly.

I murmured a soft good-bye to Frisk before leading Sans out of the cemetery.

More than a few people had noticed the storm incoming, so the streets were slowly beginning to empty. It made my journey back to my apartment with Sans a lot easier. We entered the lobby shaking water off like dogs.

“Ugghh…” I sneezed, “Great.”

I narrowed my eyes once I saw that Sans seemed mostly unaffected. I raised a brow.

“used to live in snowdin,” Sans explained.

Snowdin….

“Is that place really cold?”

He nodded.

“ Fucking hell…you didn’t need the hat at all did you?” I grumbled leading him towards the elevator.

“nope.” Sans chuckled.

“Grreeeeattt….If my ears fall of it’s your fault,” I bumped my shoulder into his. He bumped me back in retaliation before growing to lazy to keep it up.

Sans seemed surprised at my apartment. Though whether it was the size or mess….I couldn’t tell.

“Sans!” Tinsel excitedly ran up to the two of us.

“We’re wet!” I held my hands up. Tinsel froze a few feet from us, “Let us get dry first.”

“Etta?” Tyrone walked out of my kitchen with…a cup of my…expensive coffee!?

“Oh I love how Raze, Waltzer, and I have to bust our as- butts for a cup of that stuff, but Tyrone gets some by just showing up!” I called into the kitchen, “Favoritism!”

“Uhh…” Tyrone stared at Sans, “Is that an over grown sansy?”

“kinda,” Sans chuckled and tucked his hands into his pockets, “i’m sans, sans the skeleton.”

“He’s the friend I was helping out today.” I explained, “We were in the Grayridge Cemetery when it started to rain.”
“y-you made it b-a-ac- ....sans?” Idjit paused after scurrying into the living room.

“I think it’s going to be pouring all night,” Tyrone sighed finishing his cup of coffee, “I think I’ll head home now- while it’s still not too bad.”

“You could always crash here.” I offered. He smiled and ruffled my hair.

“Got to get to work tomorrow…besides…” He looked at Sans who had become engrossed with a conversation with Waltzer and Idjit, “You didn’t tell me it was a boyfriend.”

“For the love of,” I jabbed at his stomach, “Ain’t like that dummy.”

Tyrone just wriggled his brows in an infuriatingly cocky way before giving me a hug and running out me.

“sooo…” Sans stared at the door after Tyrone left, “boyfriend?”

“Hell no.” Eww…Ty is like my old brother- the twin brother I never had. He’s an overprotective alpha male who is dating some nice French guy right now...

“will he be okay getting home on his own?” Waltzer asked.

“He’s driving,” Raze entered the living room with a bunch of towels, “Thanks Raze.”

“hmph.” He tossed one of the towels at my face. I caught it with a victorious pose only to have him throw three more at me.

“Owww…” I sighed and tossed Sans some of the towels, “Anyways, you can crash here for the night Sans. I’ll call Velour.”

“sure you don’t mind?” Sans asked.

“It’s no big deal,” I shrugged and began to towel his skull carefully after hanging a slightly damp towel around my shoulders, “Now…I don’t need you killing my precious flame elementals.”

My couch was thankfully soft enough to not hurt when I slept on it that night. Sans balked at the idea of sleeping in my bed initially, but in the end, he caved when fatigue set in. Velour seemed a bit uncomfortable with him being out overnight given his condition. It took ten minutes of Sans convincing her he was fine before she relented.

I awoke the next morning and went into my bedroom to find a half-naked skeleton snoozing on my bed. My bitties had ended up sleeping with him because there was more room. The sheets had pooled around his waist, so I could see all of his upper torso. Thankfully, he seemed to have fully recovered.

There was one thing that concerned me though.

As he slept, my fingers carefully traced the deep, jagged rent that stretched across his chest. It was like it had been carved into his chest over and over.

“Sans…what happened to you?” I wondered aloud quietly. He jostled a bit in his sleep, but he didn’t wake.

“Miss Josie?”

“Josephine?”
Sunshine and Cyan stirred.

“Hey boys,” I patted their heads, “Get some more sleep babies. I just came into grab a shower.”

And mentally prepare myself for the conversation I was about to have with them about our future.
Sans was still asleep when I called all of my bitties into the living room.

“he’s really tired,” December frowned at his observation.

“It’s probably all the walking we did yesterday,” I settled down in front of the couch. My bitties all gathered around me, “He’s only been walking in a small area of the CC, so it’s understandable hoofing it across the city wore him out.”

“He’ll probably be hungry when he wakes up,” I could almost see Cyan flipping through his internal cookbook.

“He will be, but he’s still out cold right now. Besides, I need to talk with you all.” I took a deep breath as they looked at me. Working up the nerve to continue was harder than I expected.

“it’s about nadia’s kid isn’t it?” Waltzer guessed.

I nodded quietly before speaking.

“I would like to take him in, but I want to make sure all of you are comfortable with the idea first. Babies are loud, messy, time consuming, and sometimes frustrating. You guys need to be okay with it before I make the decision.” I searched their faces for their opinions. They all seemed to be thinking hard about it, “It won’t be easy, but- let’s be honest now- Nadia isn’t mother material by anyone’s standards. Logically speaking, I’m the one who makes the most sense. I’m a family member with experience with small children, a mostly flexible schedule, and financial security. I’m also out of that young adult phase Olivia’s in, but I’m not as old as Granny. I don’t want my nephew going into foster care if it can be avoided. I also don’t want Nadia to regress. Yes, I know I was completely against it at the dinner, but we’ve only been communicating for the past few months, so her blind assumption pissed me off. Still, this is your home too. I won’t do anything without your approval.”

“i figured this would happen,” Waltzer chuckled, “i don’t mind. pops had four kids, so i’m used to the chaos.”

“i doubt a human brat will be much worse than this one was,” Raze snorted rubbing the top of Tinsel’s head.
“I wasn’t that bad was I?” He asked Sunshine.

“You were worse.” Sunshine smiled brightly. Tinsel frowned, but he giggled when his parents just wrapped him in a nice hug, “It was worth it though.”

“babies are…loud right?” December quietly asked, turning his head to Cyan. The curly flinched at the sudden shift of attention.

“I won’t be a problem,” He assured me, “Back when Tinsel was born, Waltzer and Blake put together a sound proof area for me to relax in whenever Tinsel carried on too much. I can just use that if the baby gets fussy for too long a period of time.”

“not everyone is prime examples of health though,” Blake tapped his chin, “tinny, idjit, snuggle, and dec could all be dusted on accident those first few years, but as long as we keep them out of reach that’s avoidable.”

‘I like most small children. They can be really rowdy sometimes, but they aren’t all small little devils,’ Snuggle signed, ‘Lily wasn’t like most kids though. She was really sweet and gentle.’

“kids aren’t tha’ bad,” Raze shrugged, “annoying, but not bad.”

Blake turned to me and gave me a very serious look.

“i won’t mess up this time ari,” He promised me, “he won’t end up like lily.”

“What happened to Lily wasn’t your fault,” I poked the back of his head. He didn’t argue verbally, but I could see the disbelief in his eyes, “It really wasn’t.”

“a baby,” Waltzer mused silently, “a human baby…this should be interesting to say the least.”

“So…no one feels strongly against this then?” I questioned everyone one final time, “Everyone’s cool with the idea.”

They all nodded.

“Okay then,” I sighed in relief, “Good.”

I don’t know why part of me had expected some massive backlash. This little family of mine always seemed to be growing when I least expected it. One would think that our bleeding hearts would eventually run dry, but I had a feeling they had more than enough compassion to go around for those who needed it.

“I’ll talk with Nadia about it after she gets home from work then,” I leaned back against the couch and groaned some, “Oh great….I get to apologize for throwing a temper tantrum…”

“she literally dumped the idea on you in public with no warning beforehand,” Waltzer raised a brow, “in my opinion, you have the right to be upset.”

“Thanks bud.”

After that, the bitties began to disperse to do whatever they felt like. I smiled a bit when I noticed Snuggle head back into my room to check on Sans. My smile fell when I saw Cyan and Waltzer still standing in front of me looking worried about how they were going to break something to me.
“Guys?” I picked them both up and sat them on my knees, “What’s going on?”

“It’s just…well…this talk reminded us of something we were going to um…ask you about,” Cyan blushed while he tried to figure out what he wanted to say, “Now doesn’t seem to be the right time though. That would just be selfish of us…”

“cy,” Waltzer leveled a slightly annoyed look at the curly, “this is something important. we need to talk to her about it.”

“You can tell me anything,” I promised both of them.

“We were thinking of trying to cross breed,” Cyan blurted, “…like Raze and Sunshine did.”

Both of them groaned when my face twisted up in concern.

“listen ophie,” Waltzer began sitting up straighter, “we’ve already checked out the safety angle. raze’s magic is twenty times stronger than sunny’s. that is what caused all of the issues. i’m only twice as strong as cy, so the same thing shouldn’t happen twice.”

“It really wouldn’t,” Cyan paused and continued, blushing brighter than ever, “We’ve blended magic before to…uh…humans wouldn’t get it, but we know it’ll work smoothly.”

They both looked at me anxiously. I reached over and grabbed a pillow.

I promptly groaned into it after smashing it to my face.

“ophie,” Waltzer tugged on my hoodie sleeve, “soo…not cool with it…?”

“Of course I’m fine with it you dumbasses,” I scolded them immediately, “I’ll be honest and say I’m glad you decided to talk to me about it before giving me a heart attack later on. Another baby bitty wouldn’t be much trouble at all. You guys grow up within in months.”

“So it’s okay?” Cyan asked hopefully.

“Yeesss…” I tugged on some of my hair, “And it’ll always be okay. Have twenty for all I care.”

“Oh thank goodness,” My dear little curly sagged in relief on my knee.

“Did you honestly think I would say no?” Genuine offense burned in my chest.

“we just figured you were under a lot of stress right now,” Waltzer soothed me, “with this whole family drama, and the sick monsters recovering. we just didn’t want to add to it if we could avoid it.”

“Jeez,” I scoffed, “You made me think that one of you was dying or something. Honestly…”

I flicked the sides of their heads.

This resulted in them flicking my hands, and I flicked them back and….

Well…

A flick fight occurred for the next ten minutes.
Then Sans groggily stumbled into my living room wearing one of old, baggy t-shirts and old, loose sweatpants. He stepped on the hem of my sweatpants, but the sight of him meandering about in my old clothing made me laugh too much to care.

“Good Morning,” I carefully placed Cyan and Waltzer onto the ground before standing up, “Did you get enough sleep? You still look a little tired.”

“i’m fine,” Sans yawned, “i’ve never really been able to get much sleep in the first place.”

“We’ll need to get you back to the Bitty CC before Velour freaks out, but I’m pretty sure Sunshine’s been working on breakfast.” I nodded towards the kitchen, “Want to come check?”

“will it be actual food or the bland paste the doctors insist are nutritious?” Sans questioned after a couple of heartbeats.

“I’ll have you know that only food of decent quality is allowed in this house,” Cyan frowned standing up straighter and crossing his arms, “Sunshine and I work hard to keep everything healthy and tasty.”

“uh oh…” Waltzer chuckled, “now you’ve got him all worked up.”

“well that’s just grate,” Sans’s eyes twinkled just a little bit, “am i about to be charred for life?”

I just rolled my eyes and went into the kitchen.

Sunshine had indeed prepared a nice, simple breakfast for Sans. It wasn’t anything too heavy, but Sans seemed pleased with the way it tasted.

“can i just keep him down on b5 with me?” Sans asked after taking a few final sips from his cup of coffee, “that was a hundred times better than the shit they try to shove down my throat.”

“No,” Sunshine said firmly.

“Wooww…shot down.” I winced. Sans just grinned at me.

“just means i’ve got to keep trying.” He teased, “careful newmore. i can be quite charming when i put my spine into it.”

_Just Newmore? That’s a first._

“You can try all you want bonehead,” I quickly dragged him close to give him a noogie.

Snuggle walked into the living room and smacked my knee for rough housing with the former coma patient.

“Anyways,” I stood up after moving Snuggle out of crushing distance and stretched, “I’m going to run Sans back to the CC. Tell Waltzer and Blake they’re in charge.” Snuggle nodded at my orders before turning to scamper off. He paused and signed to Sans.

‘How are you feeling?’

I was about to translate for the meek when Sans spoke up.

“good,” Sans stood up, “still a bit stiff though.”
‘You need to slowly build back your strength after being motionless for so long,’ Snuggle advised, ‘Don’t rush it though. That’ll only come back to bite you.’

“sure.” Sans nodded. Snuggle- satisfied with his answer- smiled brightly before hurrying off to deliver my messages.

“You can understand sign language?” I asked after leading Sans out of my apartment. I carried a bag with his previous days clothes- washed and dried- inside.

“yeah,” Sans hesitated while he decided how much more to tell me, “my mom was deaf, so we all had to know how to sign to communicate with her.”

“Ooohhh.” That made sense, “I had to learn it for a class once, but all the small details came from Blake and Snuggle.”

We continued to discuss various things as I escorted him back to the CC. Only an idiot wouldn’t have noticed his aversion to talking about any family besides Papyrus. He didn’t even want to really talk about Frisk either. Thus, our conversations were mostly about me. It was awkward how much he knew about me temperament wise. The eerie knowledge almost made me wish I hadn’t volunteered my determination up….

Thankfully, Sans didn’t collapse on the way back. We stopped a few times on the way to let Sans rest, but I was extra careful to observe his condition the entire walk home. The last thing anyone needed was for him to trip over a rock and dust himself.

“Oh thank goodness!” Velour rushed over the instant we entered the Bitty CC, “How are you feeling Sans? You didn’t overexert yourself correct? Has he eaten today Miss Newmore? H-“

“veeellll…” Sans held his hands up, “relax. deep breaths. you’re going to go a bit nuts otherwise.”

“You’re absolutely fine,” Velour said coldly and turned on her heel to walk in the other direction.

“it was a joke.” Sans protested following the squirrel back to the elevator, “and you didn’t say good-bye to newmore.”

“Oh!” Velour practically jumped out of her fur before hurrying over to me, “Thank you so much for taking care of him yesterday Miss Newmore. I’m sorry if he caused any trouble.”

“It was nothing.” I assured her.

I left after a short exchange with the squirrel monster because bitty owners began to flood the lobby. I would’ve hated to have gotten under foot.

The rest of the day- after I returned home of course- was spent working. I managed to get a lot done with Blake’s organizing methods helping me keep everything where it should’ve been.

It felt like a mass of lead was growing in my stomach with each hour that passed. Nadia typically returned home anywhere from 5 to 7 in the evening every day. Of course, with my luck, tonight will be one of those nights where she works until two in morning.

Still, I settled down outside her apartment and waited when 5 rolled around. My bitties offered to stay with me, but I didn’t know how this whole mess was going to go. I didn’t want a repeat of that dinner.
While I waited, I pulled out my phone and called Olivia back for the first time ever since that whole fiasco.

“Sissy!” She shrieked into the phone out of pure relief before sniffling, “You’re okay! You haven’t been answering my calls and—”

“Olivia,” I said quietly, “You need to breathe baby boo.”

It took her a few seconds to settle down.

“I was so scared after you stormed off like that.” Olivia blew her nose into a tissue, “I tried calling and calling…I even called your landlady to see if you were okay.”

“I’m sorry I worried you. I just needed to come to a decision.” Genuine regret stabbed me in the chest. *Making the little sis worry...if that doesn’t count as a red mark on my good big sister sheet, I don't know what would.*

“What did you decide?” Olivia asked me quietly, “I won’t be mad no matter what you say Sissy.”

“I’m taking the kid,” I sighed, “I spoke about it with my bitties, and we decided that it’s probably for the best.”

“Oh thank goodness. Have you spoken with Nadia yet?”

“Waiting on her now.”

Olivia and I began to talk about Granny and the restaurant after that. I could almost feel Olivia’s relief at hearing my voice. Around 6:30 Nadia arrived, so I had to end the phone call. She froze the instant she saw me sitting in front of her door. Cesar scowled threateningly at me.

“Josephine,” Nadia’s voice was faint, but clipped.

“I’ll do it,” I said standing up. Shock flooded her face.

“You….will?” The pure hope in her eyes made me fell…something rather indescribable.

“Yes. One condition though,” I stood up straight, “No backseat parenting. *Ever.* I mean it. You won’t be running around undermining my authority like you tried to do with Olivia. That’s my only rule.”

“I’m fine with that….can I still see him though?”

“What am I? A monster?” I scowled, “Of course you can see him you stupid bitch.”

“MUST YOU ALWAYS LEAN HEAVILY ON YOUR VULGAR VOCABULARY TO EXPRESS DISPLEASURE?” Cesar tried his best to look down at me from his position in Nadia’s arms.

“Must you always try to sound intelligent to make yourself feel better?” I retorted, “*Anyways.* I was just letting you know I came to a decision. I can see if Tyrone knows someone who can—”

“I already have someone ready to complete the adoption.” Nadia interrupted.

“Oh…well…that solves that then. See you in May.” I walked to my door.
“Josephine.”

I groaned and looked back at my twin.

The cold ice queen looked more like a broken peasant girl when she timidly added.

“Thank you.”

“Hmph.” I wasn’t going to say ‘Your welcome’ or ‘No problem’ to this situation, “Good night Nadia. I’ll probably start coming to your check-ups by the way.”

“That’s fine,” Nadia called out as I shut my door.

I leaned my forehead against it and groaned.

“lia?”

“j-jo-o-jo?”

I turned to find my little little ones looking up at me with concern in their eyes.

“Hey babies.” I bent down to pick them up.

“did you speak with…her?” December made a face.

“Yup.”

“h-how di-i-id i-it go-o?” Idjit asked.

“Well enough.”

Better than it could have.

“what now?” December quietly wrung his hands together.

“Now? I think I want to curl up and watch some family friendly movies with my little bitties and forget the outside world exists.” I pressed kisses to the tops of their heads, “If that’s okay with you?”

They both smiled excitedly.

Even if it was just for a couple of hours, it was nice to forget about all of the things I had on my plate: work, the sick monsters recovering and needing aid adapting to human society, my bitties, my sansy and my curly wanting a baby of their own, adopting a baby myself, etc.

My bleeding heart really needs to get a valve or something.......at least an on/off switch. I don’t know how much more of this my sanity can take.
“Any plans for Valentine’s Day?”

I scowled at my phone before continuing to design a new logo. *What is it with Leo and asking me about Valentine’s Day a week before it happens? He knows I’m single.*

“I’ll probably be relaxing with Tinsel, Idjit, Blake, Snuggle, and December.” The bitty couples in the house probably already had plans to do something with the holiday, so I made sure to not automatically include them in that statement.

“Well…I mean…there’s this guy at work-“

“No.”

“Jooossiiieee.”

“No. No more blind dates. The last guy you tried to pair me up with smelled like cheese and farted 234 times in less than three hours.”

“He’d had some bad tacos the night before.” Leo protested.

“Still don’t trust you with blind dates.” I moved my finger to hover over the “End Call” button, “Continue with this trail of thinking, and I’ll be hanging up.”

“Okay, okay!” Leo hurriedly interrupted me.

“Good.”

I seriously didn’t understand what was wrong with the people who knew me. Leo, Tyrone, Granny, Olivia, and a few dozen of my clients had been trying to hook me up with a colleague, friend, or family member for the past few days. It was becoming particularly bothersome to deal with.

Around lunch- a couple of hours after my conversation with Leo ended- my phone rang. Dreading another “I’ve got the perfect match for you!” phone call, I picked up with a lot of hesitation.

“Josephine Ophelia Arietta Newmore,” I sighed while trying to maintain some
professionalism if it was a new client.

“newmore,” I blinked at the sound of Sans’s voice on the other side of the phone, “you still interested in meeting my little brother?”

My brain seemed to have lost a few of its cells for a few seconds.

“He’s…awake?”

“and buzzing with energy,” Sans laughed. I heard a loud bang, “ah shit. pap? you okay?”

“BUT OF COURSE BROTHER! THE MARVELOUS PAPYRUS WILL NOT BE SO EASILY DEFEATED BY SUCH SHORT DOOR FRAMES!”

Hoollyyy sshhiitttt….Papyrus is very loud.

“please be careful bro,” Sans said away from the phone before turning his attention back to me, “just wanted to let you know in case you wanted to swing by with your bitties and say hello.”

“We’ll be there soon.” I promised him, “Make sure he doesn’t see any other humans before then!”

“sure thing.”

I quickly saved all of my work and went around calling for my bitties. They were cranky that I had interrupted their daily tasks at first, but they all brightened up upon learning that another of the monsters had regained consciousness.

While they all struggled to get ready, my phone rang again.

<Olivia. Oh…lovely…>

“Sissy. I just wanted to let you know that my friend Peter would be free this-“

“No. Happening.”

“Sissy.” Olivia whined, “He’s a good guy! I promise.”

“No.”

“Do you already have a date then?” Olivia asked.

“No.”

“You can’t be alone on Valentine’s Day!” She declared firmly.

“I won’t be alone. I’ll have around five of my bitties with me.”

“That’s like saying its fine because you’ll be with your cats.” I could imagine Olivia pouting.

“More than a few people have sex with their bitties.” I pointed out, “I’m not one of them, but they’ll probably be spending Valentine’s Day with their bitties.”

“What!”?

“Just stating the truth.” I shrugged.
“Sissy!” Olivia sighed, “You haven’t really dated since Edgar…so I wanted to see if you would try…”

“No. I don’t need any romantic partner, and I’m not desperate.” The finality of my statement prevented further arguing.

“Fine.” Her pout had probably deepened, “Love you Sissy! Even though you can be so hardheaded sometimes.”

“Love you too baby boo.”

“GJ!” Tinsel teleported onto my shoulder wheezing a little bit from the exertion, “Time to go!”

“There’s still eight more of you Tinny.”

Tinsel scowled at the fact he had to wait ten minutes for everyone else to get ready.

_He’s so shy around other bitties, but he’s also so snarky around people he knows….._

Anytime we went to help out the CC, Tinsel avoided other bitties outside of our little circle like the plague. They tended to avoid him too. I was just glad that he still liked going there.

Thankfully, we were heading out during one of the lull periods between lunch and the end of the school day. Our walk was peaceful and uninterrupted. Things got a bit more complicated when I got to the CC however. A ton of news reporters were flooding the doors and harassing the bitty techs.

I shoved my way through, earning barked insults and dirty looks until they recognized me. Eventually, I managed to reach Velour, and I could finally piece together what was going on.

“Miss Josephine Newmore?” The news reporter who had been grilling Velour turned to me, “The woman who assaulted you in December claimed that the monsters were attempting to wake up a super monster. Since you are a human closely allied with them, how does this betrayal make you feel?”

“Get. Out.” I said through clenched teeth. The reporters frowned. I calmly handed Cyan to Velour. She got the message and quickly muffled his ears. Raising my voice as much as could, I added, “Now.”

Most of them scattered. A few persistent ones still lingered.

“You are surprisingly defensive of-“

“There isn’t any super monster you idiot.” I growled at him, “Anyways, why are you suddenly following the lead given to you by a pathological liar? Don’t you know to fact check?!”

“But witnesses have seen mysterious sightings of large, intimidating monsters-“

“Does that mean any monster who’s bigger than a human?” I crossed my arms in exasperation, “If so, that’s unfair. That’s like saying every human male over 6’0 with a six pack is a violent criminal or a rapist. Get your head out of your asses, and get your asses out of here! Your interference could cause bitties to die! There’s no story here. So scram.”

That final burst of energy scared the rest of them off. I panted from all of the yelling. It’d
been a while since I had to raise my voice like that. Cyan was in a bubble of magic in Velour’s hand. I could only assume it canceled out noise.

“lia?” December whimpered, “that...scary.”

“I’m sorry sweetheart,” I picked the little guy up and pressed a kiss to the top of his head, “Not much else I could do though.”

“weird,” Waltzer observed from my head, “how they’re just now getting gun-ho with an anti-monster agenda right now of all times...another traitorous volunteer?”

“No,” Velour said firmly while giving me back Cyan, “We don’t even bring files from B5 up here anymore.”

“Good,” Sunshine sighed in relief, “I’d hate to relive last November.”

“don’t remin’ me.” Raze grumbled, "chances are she 'ad family that fed 'em all false info to stir somethin' up."

That seemed plausible. I could’ve sworn she had a younger brother. Either way, the issue had hopefully been laid to rest.

“You’re here to see the brothers?” Velour said leading me away from the corner of the lobby we had been backed into. The humans waiting with their bitties didn’t seem to care about us after I intimidated about twenty people out of the building.

Before I could even answer, my bitties all chorused yes for me.

“What they said.” I chuckled. Velour grinned and gestured to the elevator. Tinsel was practically bouncing in excitement on the ride down. I stepped out of the elevator with a grin, “Tinny, calm down bab-“

“OH MY STARS!”

The extremely loud voice made me pause. A large skeleton looked at me with awe. Hands with holes in the palms rested against his face as Papyrus the Skeleton looked at me.

“SANS!” He didn’t look away from me, “DO YOU SEE THAT!?”

“hmm?” Sans peered around his brother and grinned when it was me, “oh… the little bitties. i told you about them earlier.”

“NOT THE ADORABLE LITTLE CREATURES!” Papyrus frowned, “THE CREATURE CARRYING THEM! IS THAT...A HUMAN!?!”

“well…tibia honest-“

“Hi Pap,” I interrupted the shorter brother, “I’m Josephine. It’s nice to meet you.”

“AND IT KNOWS MY NAME!?!?!?” Papyrus practically stood on his tip toes.

“she’s the human owner of the bitties that helped wake us up from our long naps pap,” Sans chuckled, “she knows all of our names.”

“Papyrus!” Tinsel teleported in front of the tall skeleton, “I’m so glad you seem to be doing okay!”
“WHAT’S THIS? AN ADORABLE CREATURE APPROACHES ME!” Papyrus preened a bit, “AND YOU COME WITH A HUMAN!”

“She’s my Granny Josephine!” Tinsel giggled a bit when Papyrus picked him up, “I’m Tinsel.”

“He’s so loud,” I could feel Cyan curl up some in my hood.

“seems sweet though,” Waltzer slid off my head into my hood.

“hmph.” Raze teleported himself over to where Papyrus and Tinsel were talking like old friends.

“MORE COME?”

“This is my Papa,” Tinsel pointed to Sunshine before point to Raze, “and my Daddy!”

“A SMALL FAMILY!”

Sans walked over to me as Blake, Snuggle, Idjit, and December all began to observe and question the tall skeleton. In the end, Papyrus simply sat down in the middle of the hallway more fascinated by the small versions of himself and other monsters than he was of me.

“i think you just made his day,” Sans chuckled.

“He’s adorable.” I had the genuine urge to sketch or paint or something. Since I didn’t have anything on hand, I chose to memorize the scene in front of me. This creation was going to happen. I looked at Sans’s more relaxed shoulders, “Told you he’d be fine.”

“you were just guessing.” Sans countered.

“No I felt it in my-“

“bones?”

“-gut.” I popped the skeleton over the back of his head, “gut dammit.”

“pfftt…” Sans bit back his laughter at my accidental slip up.

“Hmph.” I wrapped an arm around his shoulder to tap his head with my other hand a few times.

“trying to make something come out?”

“I’m trying to find any of your common sense.”

“sorry. think that fell out a couple of years ago.”

I rolled my eyes.

“you love it.” Sans winked at me.

“In your dreams maybe.” I snorted.

“always.”

“If you two are going to keep flirting, please let me out of the hood,” Cyan sighed.
I frowned. Sans turned a slight shade of blue.

“Have your husbando do it Cy. He can teleport.” I rolled my eyes.

“oh right.” Waltzer laughed from inside my hood. The two appeared in front of us. Papyrus had calmed down just a little bit while talking to the bitties.

“YOUR BUTTON EYES REALLY ARE REMARKABLE!” Papyrus gently tapped December’s head with one hand while Snuggle observed the holes in his palms.

“thank you…” December blushed.

“sup?” Waltzer waved.

“OH MY STARS….IT’S A LITTLE SANS!” Papyrus’s jaw dropped. He placed December down to pick up Waltzer. My sansy just laughed and went with it.

“I’m glad Raze hasn’t bitten him.” I sighed in relief.

“mmhmm.” Sans nodded, “by the way, do you know what floor vel was on? alphys is starting to show signs of waking up soon, so i wanted to let her know.”

“She’s on the surface level.” I gestured back to the elevator, “If you want, we can pop up there real quick.”

Sans hesitated, looking between the elevator and Papyrus. I rolled my eyes.

“Pap!” I called out. The taller brother looked up at me.

“YES…OH…HOW RUDE OF ME.” Papyrus hurriedly stood up after carefully placing the bitties down and came towards me, “DEAR HUMAN, I AM THE GREAT PAPYRUS! I KNOW THAT MY PRESENCE IS AWE INSPIRING, BUT I MUST ASK THAT YOU RETAIN ENOUGH OF YOURSELF TO LET ME GREET YOU PROPERLY. GOOD DAY!”

“Good day to you Pap,” I chuckled and offered my hand. He looked at it confusedly before giving me his. I shook his hand, “It’s great to finally meet you. Sans and I are about to pop up to the surface level. If you want, you can come with to see more bitties.”

“I CAN?” Papyrus asked with obviously glee.

“Of course.” I shot Sans a simple ‘that’s how you fix it idiot’ look before looking at my bitties, “Come on guys.”

It was a bit awkward riding the elevator with a massive skeleton, a shorter skeleton, and nine bitties all crushing me towards the center of the damn thing. The ride was blessedly short, and Papyrus- escorted by my bitties- practically bounced over to the pens. The lobby seemed to have cleared some.

“Papyrus?” Velour’s confused face make me grin, “Sans? Miss Newmore?”

“just wanted to let you know that alph is looking ready to wake up soon,” Sans told her quickly, “pap also wanted to see more bitties.”

“I see,” Velour chuckled when Papyrus was swarmed by small Papys and Baby Blues, “Please make sure he doesn’t accidentally crush anyone.”
“on it.” Sans said as I nodded.

Sans and I simply chose to sit a few paces back from the pens beneath one of the large windows. Papyrus continued to play with any bitty that would talk to him. It was really cute. I was worried about Idjit, December, and Tinsel, but Papyrus quickly discouraged anything he felt was rude. Aww…my little knights have a big knight to protect them…

Something leaned against my shoulder. I knew it was Sans. I yawned and rested my head against his skull.

“Holy shit your head so smooth and cool…” Fascinated my hands went up to his skull. I hadn’t been able to really feel it because of the callouses, but daaammnnn…Sans found it funny.

“you’re actually really soft. the muscle on your shoulder is kind of like padding.” Sans observed.

“Uh…thanks…for the somewhat backhanded compliment?”

We sat and watched Papyrus interact with the bitties while we chatted quietly about bitties in general. Sans was still fascinated by them, and he found all of their differing personalities interesting and unique. Eventually, we both began to drift off some.

“Sissy?”

I’d never raised my head so fast in my life. Sans opened his eyes sleepily. Olivia stared at us with her mouth open. Harley was laughing his ass off while Hiro looked at Sans and I with what only could be described as hope in his eyes. Olivia frowned at me.

“No man huh?”

What? No man…OOOHHHH-

“Dammit, will you guys all get your heads out of the gutter?” I sighed, “I can sit and cuddle with Leo or Tyrone fine and dandy, but the instant I do with someone else I want to bone them.”

Sans chuckled. He was blushing some.

“You don’t do it with very many people!” Olivia protested crossing her arms.

“Ugh.” I let my head fall back against the wall, “Sans, Livvy, Livvy, Sans.”

“uh…hi.” Sans waved.

“Sans?” Olivia cocked her head, “Like a sansy?”

“kinda/Sort of.” Sans and I said at the same time.

“BROTHER!” Papyrus- with all of my bitties in tow- came over two us with a bright smile on his face, “HMM? ANOTHER HUMAN?”

“Another skeleton?” Olivia raised a brow.

“my younger brother papyrus meet newmore’s younger sister olivia.” Sans introduced the two.

The two optimistic, bright eyed monster and human- who scared me with their levels of
cuteness when they were alone- shared a simple, long look.

“Hi!” Olivia said excitedly.

“GREETINGS!”

“Oh god…hide the women and children,” I groaned leaning against Sans. If this were an anime, the background would’ve gone bright orange while they excitedly chattered on about themselves and their hobbies, “Fluffmageddon has begun.”
Valentine's Day Pt.1

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (except Tinsel). Full disclaimer/ links can be found in Ch1

I want to clarify something: This is not a reader insert story. Some people accidentally (don’t attack anyone who might’ve done this. A lot of reader insert fics on this site are in 1st person with a named reader character, so the mistake is understandable) call Jo "reader" or "(y/n)" which is a bit confusing for me because this is an OC story. No reader character exists. Please- pretty please with an adorable bitty on top- use Jo's name or one of her nicknames when talking about her in the comments. (Really this is a minor issue that rarely pops up since most of you just call her Jo or Josie, but I wanted to address it before it drove me insane the few times it happens. I'm not frothing at the mouth over it or anything though. I just really dislike reader insert characters, so the misconception bugs me more than it would another person).

ANNNYYWHHO- that thing above us aside- plot happens in this chap. I should have Pt 2 up tonight, but it needs to be written soooo....bbbyyyee...*waves*

I couldn’t tell if Olivia and Papyrus’s friendship was a match made in hell or a covenant made in heaven. Either way, the two quickly got along to my horror and amusement. Even my bitties seemed worn out by the extreme amounts of positive energy the two had, and they had hurried back over to me while Olivia and Papyrus chatted away.

It was nice that Livvy was meeting with some new monsters and getting new friends, but I had the distinct feeling that the duo would quickly become something equal parts annoying and adorable. Work had lured me away from the CC shortly after Olivia and Papyrus met. Sans- exhausted but happy- had called me later to say Papyrus had chosen to Olivia to be his “MOST AMAZING HUMAN FRIEND EVER” after I left. We both got a laugh out of that.

Of course, we kept Olivia in the dark about everything going on B5. I hated lying to her, but she really didn’t need to get involved with this. Papyrus- thankfully- seemed more interested in asking Olivia about her ability to cook. He practically jumped with glee when he learned that she was actually a chef.

“He’s really funny!” Olivia laughed over the phone a few days a later- on Valentine’s Day.

“I’m glad you think so.” I chuckled and looked around the apartment. I found a note from Sunshine and Cyan saying that they and their respective skeletons would be stepping out. Blake and Snuggle were engrossed in a new book, and the bitties under three inches were drawing under the couch.

“He said that you and his brother are fri- Hiro!” Olivia’s phone dropped.

“Livvy? Livvy! Is Hiro okay?”

She picked the phone up again laughing.
“He’s fine. Nearly gave me a heart attack trying to reach some glitter.” Olivia took a deep breath, “Anyways, you and his older brother are friends?”

I could hear it in her voice.


“But you were cuddling with him in public!”

“I do that to all of my friends.”

“Nuh uh!”

“Quit sounding like your ten and go get ready for your date.” I groused, completely ready to just hang up and put my phone on silent. I needed to find Tinsel.

“But you two looked adorable together!” Olivia protested.

“To begin, I’m a human. He’d probably prefer something a little closer to home,” I could hear the gears turning in her head, “Also, I’ll be adopting Nadia’s son soon. Not many people want to get involved in a relationship with someone with kids.”

“He didn’t seem to mind the bitties crawling all over him yesterday.”

“The bitties are mostly mentally mature and capable of communication,” I pointed out, “Unlike infants who can’t talk or express themselves properly until they get older.”

“You just want to be alone forever don’t you?”

“No. I just don’t want you to make things awkward between Sans and I. I sincerely doubt he thinks of me like that.” I rolled my eyes at her hyperbole. What person wanted to be alone forever? Humans were a social species, so the very idea was ridiculous. I just don’t want to mess up again. Besides, I’ve known Sans for a few weeks at best. Olivia- despite her normal sweetness- could be pushy when it came to being alone, “Listen Livvy, I’ve already decided to go on some dating website if I’m still single at 40, but I don’t want to rush into something that I’ll regret in the future. Now quit pushing it.”

“Okay.” Olivia sighed petulantly.

“Where did I go wrong?” I pondered aloud, “Did I spoil you too much? Or did I let too much back talk slide? Hmm…”

“You love me.” Olivia teased.

“Most days. Anyways, I need to go find my hybrid. He’s not in his normal places. Bye sweetheart. Love you.”

“Love you too Sissy! Oh! Happy Valentine’s Day!” I held my phone away from my ear to avoid her blasting my eardrums.

“You too.”

I snapped my phone shut and began looking for Tinsel in earnest.

The little guy was curled up in one of the piles of pillows in the bitty room.
“Tinsel?” I sat down beside him.

“Mmm…?” Tinsel quietly raised his head an rubbed the side of his skull absentmindedly.

“You okay?” Was he sick? Did he not get enough sleep the night before?

“GJ?” Tinsel sat up and stretched while mentally processing my question, “I’m…fine.”

“Don’t lie to me Tinny,” I warned him. He scowled at me some. I glared back. He caved first.

“My ribs hurt a lot today.” Tinsel coughed a bit before continuing on, “I practiced with teleporting too much, so I feel very sore.”

“Do you need me to go get Snuggle?” I cocked my head.

“No.” Tinsel shook his head, “It’ll pass. The pain never stays for long.”

I'll book an appointment to see if we can do anything. I decided then and there. Tinsel curled back up and drifted off once more. It's sad that he has so much potential only for it to be hindered by his physical pains.

I left him to rest in the bitty room. Granny had told me she was coming over the day before, so I had gotten dressed in some appropriate clothing. It'd been a while since we sat down and spoke. We really hadn’t talked much since the whole dinner fiasco despite Olivia and Nadia trying to get us to talk. She'd forgiven me for losing my cool, but otherwise...radio silence.

“jo-j-jo.” Idjit quietly hurried out from beneath the couch when I entered the living room, “look.”

The drawing was a bright crayon vomit in various shapes that resembled me and the bitties. It was perfect.

“Awww…” I squatted down and took the piece of paper from his hand. December quietly shuffled behind him and peered up at me rather anxiously, “This is adorable boys. I’m glad to see I’ve got some aspiring artists.”

They both blushed. Then December tapped Idjit on the shoulder. Idjit was confused until December tugged on the air near his wrist.

“o-oh.” Idjit tugged out the two charms I had taken off from my bracelet from his jacket hood, “he-er-re….th-these f-fell o-off.”

If only that's what happened…

“Thanks baby. I wondered where these went.” I clipped them back on. They still made my bracelet feel heavier, but the burden wasn’t as bad as it had been, “Though if you don’t mind me asking, what makes the space beneath the couch so interesting?”

“the others…they…” December paused, “can’t fit.”

I nodded my head in understanding. The tiny space beneath the couch was a tough squeeze for Waltzer, Blake, and Cyan, so that meant Sunshine, Snuggle, Tinsel, and Raze couldn’t even begin to get beneath it comfortably. A small sanctuary in a house filled with other people was probably a blessing to my two little introverts.
“they don’t always hide under there though,” Blake assured me without looking up from his book, “i’ll cut the legs off of the couch if they try to.”

“b-bla-a-a-ak-k-ke!” Idjit stammered flushing bright red. The older bitty just grinned at the smaller one. Idjit pouted and began to snuffle.

“Idjit,” I sighed, “Blake.”

“not apologizing for trying to make sure idjit doesn’t regress emotionally.” Blake held a hand up, “we can argue about this after I finish reading this chapter.”

“Where’s Waltzer when I need him?” I grumbled.

Granny arrived in the twenty minutes it took me to calm Idjit down.

“Hey Granny.” I said awkwardly as I let her in. I cradled Idjit and December close, “Umm…what did you need?”

“Is something wrong with Idjit?” Granny asked plucking my two small bitties from my hands, “What’s wrong my little babies?”

“Uh well-“ I was about to answer when Granny literally shoved me out of the apartment and slammed the door, “GRANNY!”

“It’s Valentine’s Day darling.” Granny called through the door, “Go out and have some fun.”

Oh are you fucking kidding me!?

“Which one of them called you!?” I beat the door with my fists, “Olivia? Nadia? Leo!?”

“All of them.” Granny laughed at my anger, “Which is why I’m here to take drastic measures.”

“I could call the-“

“Your phone is in here Joey.”

Fuuuuucckkk you old woman!!

“Granny,” I lowered my voice and tried my best to be polite through gritted teeth, “Let me back into my apartment.”

“No.” With that, I could hear her boots leaving the door.

Dammit.

Technically, I could’ve made a big fuss and go get the landlady or use the lobby phone to call the police, but that felt rather unnecessary. It wasn’t like she was killing my bitties inside my apartment or anything. I basically just had someone shove me out of the house and offer to babysit in the same motion.

“You didn’t have to be rude about it!” I yelled through the door. She didn’t answer. I had a feeling the door probably wouldn’t unlock for a while, so I let out a weary sigh, “I’m going to the CC! Nobody locks me out of my own damn apartment there! Or slams a door in my face!”
My annoyance must’ve shown on my face if the amount of people avoiding me as I stopped towards the CC was anything to by. I was just so glad that I was actually wearing something decent to walk around in public in. If she had shown up a couple of hours earlier, she would’ve shoved me out in the world in a pair of underwear, a tank top, and mismatched socks.

“Miss Newmore?” Karli’s concerned voice pulled me from my plans of theoretical murder, “I didn’t expect to be seeing you today. I thought this was a holiday humans spent with their mates.”

“I’m single, so it tends to be a stay home and gorge myself on chocolate kind of day.” Karli gave me a look of sympathy, “I was going to spend time with my bitties today. Everything was all planned out to. Then my grandmother shows up and throws me out of my own apartment.”

“Mrs. Arietta has always seemed a bit stubborn,” Karli laughed before answering my unasked question, “She’s donated a lot of the money to the CC.”

“Ooooh….yeah. She’d do that.” I stretched some, “So are Sans and Papyrus up?”

“Yes. Dr. Alphys has also woken up.” Karli gestured to the elevator, “Please, go right down.”

B5 was buzzing with excitement when I got down there. The dinosaur monster I recognized as Dr. Alphys was scurrying up and down the hallways popping into rooms of still sick monsters before hurrying off into one of the labs. The sight was amusing to say the least. Papyrus also trailed after the slightly annoyed looking doctor while airing his concerns to the world.

Sans just stood beside the door to his room watching the whole thing. He looked back at me when he heard the elevator ding.

“hey newmore. figured on coming down?” Sans nodded towards the dinosaur monster, “alphys will probably want to chat with you.”

“I hadn’t planned on coming really.” I stood beside him and tucked my hands into my hoodie pocket, “Granny booted me out of the apartment because it’s Valentine’s Day.”

“valentine’s day?” Sans gave me a look of confusion.

“It’s a holiday to celebrate love.” I explained, “Couples go out on dates and what not. It’s a terrible holiday for single gals like me, but I’ve learned to let it go.”

“you don’t have anyone to celebrate with?” Sans asked turning his gaze back to where Papyrus and Dr. Alphys were.

“Nope.” I stretched some, “I think Granny hopes I’ll to a bar and pick someone up to have some fun with or something- which is so not happening.”

“huh.” Sans said simply.

Before our conversation could continue, Dr. Alphys finally noticed me. She froze so quickly Papyrus ended up running into her.

“Is that her Sans?” Dr. Alphys asked.

“AH! OLIVIA’S SISTER HAS COME TO VIST!” Papyrus quickly walked over to me and gave me a hug. He was dressed in what I could only describe as cosplay. It really looked different from the hospital pajamas he had on the first time we met, “TELL ME HUMAN. WHAT
DO YOU THINK OF MY BATTLE BODY? OLIVIA SAID IT LOOKED SPECTACULAR!

“It’s definitely err…awe inspiring.” I offered weakly. I leaned over and whispered to Sans, “How has he and Livvy been talking?”

“he basically stole one of the phones.” Sans whispered back, “got have that standard connection after all. at this point, pap might as well be at her every beck and call.”

“Oh.” I straightened up as Dr. Alphys approached. She was slightly taller than me and rather sturdy looking for a scientist, “Hello Dr. Alphys. I’m Josephine Newmore. It’s nice to meet you.”

“It’s great to meet you too!” Dr. Alphys shook my offered hand excitedly, “I heard that you were the human who’s determination sample woke up Sans?”

“I am.” I nodded.

“His HP increased!” Dr. Alphys exclaimed. I shot Sans a look.

“only up to 3.” Sans clarified.

“Do you mind if I take a sample from you? All of the others were used up to create the treatments being used on King Asgore and Queen Toriel.” Dr. Alphys explained.

“Suurree….” I shrugged, “Why not?”

Spending Valentine’s Day in an underground laboratory being poked and prodded by a curious dinosaur scientists was not in my plan for the day. Still, Dr. Alphys seemed sweet. She spoke fondly of Undyne, and she had been throwing all of her efforts into helping the other afflicted monsters after she woke up. The young scientist also seemed to have a fascination with some anime that added a little bit of eccentricity to her as well.

“I still can’t believe it.” Dr. Alphys marveled, “Sans has only had 1 HP ever since-“ She cut herself off before continuing, “It’s amazing. Thank you for letting me take this sample.”

“No problem.” My arm was sore from being poked so many times, so it was kind of a problem. I didn’t want to hurt her endearingly sweet mood, “How soon do you think the other monsters will wake up now that they’re tackling more than one case at once.”

“Soon. More than likely before the end of the month.” Dr. Alphys carefully put my determination samples into a small container, “Though I…don’t know how Sans is going to take the news of some of our patients.”

“People he’s not friends with?”

“You could say that.”

Dr. Alphys wouldn’t elaborate further. The most powerful monsters would soon be able to get up and help their fellows. It would be great for-

A loud bang filled the hallways.

I hurried to the door only to have a large vine nearly take my nose off when I began to head outside. Dr. Alphys tried to get past me, but I pushed her back protectively as more vines flooded the hallways.
Sans slid past my line of sight pushing back the vines moving him away from their source with his magic. The strain was obviously getting to him some as he was forced to move away from the vines. A yellow blur shot across the hallway and up a vent near the elevator.

“dammit flowey!” Sans snarled.

“Sans?” I hurried to him as the vines collapsed around me, “What’s going on?”

“stupid weed. always has to leaf a mess behind for me to clean up.” Sans grumbled, “that was one of the patients here….shit. i have to go. Now.”

“Sans!” I grabbed his arm roughly, “What the hell is wrong with you? You’re barely recovered as it is! You can’t go stomping off looking ready to fight someone.”

“you don’t know what that little shit wants to do.” Sans protested yanking his arm away from me, “you also don’t know what he’s done.”

“Sans.” I firmly planted a hand on his skull.

I saw something that made my heart stop when I turned his head to face me. It wasn’t anger that filled his eyes. It was fear. Unbridled, bare fear boiled in those dark black pools. Whatever power this monster had scared him.

_Fucking hell._

“BROTHER!?” Papyrus exited from Undyne’s hospital room with a confused look on his face, “WHAT EVER WAS THAT LOUD BANG?”

“Nothing Papyrus.” Dr. Alphys smoothly lied while Sans tried to collect himself, “Someone just dropped something in one of the labs.”

“Yeah Pap.” I smiled politely at the taller skeleton while wrapping an arm around Sans’s shoulders, “Actually bud, Sans and I were about to step out for a bit. Okay? We need to go run an do something real quick like.”

“OH? OKAY! BE SAFE!” Papyrus waved excitedly before heading back into Undyne’s room. Dr. Alphys gave us a worried look.

“I’ll keep this knucklehead from doing anything stupid.” I promised her. She nodded. I looked back at Sans, “Alright. Where are we going?”

“we?” Sans gave me a bitter look, “you make a lot of assumptions.”

“I’m going with you whether you like it or not.” I wrapped my other arm around him as well, “So shut up and tell me where we’re going to.”

Sans hesitated.

I could see indecision mixed with anxiety blur across his face. Finally he sighed and gave me a sad smile.

“mt. ebbot.” He finally answered, “before that weed potentially ruins everything you’ve done for us.”

“Huh?”
Sans grinned and wrapped his arms around my waist. The world around me began to vibrate and twist. Colors blended into a crazed painting, and I began to feel weightless.

“better hang on.”

“SHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH
Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except Tinsel) Full disclaimer/ links in Ch1

Annd this two parter arc is done. It's mostly an explanation of some things and some more Sans and Jo bonding time. I'll be seeing you guys sometime next week!

I don’t think I had previously or ever since mixed languages together out of fear in such a way.

“HolyfuckingshitthatwasthemostterrifyingIthinkI'veeverhadtoendurehowcanthebittiesstandallthattwistingandaahhh…”

The garbled English, French, Japanese, German, and Italian made Sans look at me like I had lost my goddamn mind. My arms were locked in a death grip around his body while my legs struggled to remember how to work.

“newmore?” Sans carefully helped me stand up, “sorry, didn’t mean to scare you.”

“It’s fine.” I forced a laugh. Sans looked at me confused, “I’m fine. Sorry. I lose the ability to speak properly when I’m startled too much.”

“can you stand up on your own?” He asked, still supporting a good bit of my weight.

“Give me a second.” I took a few deep steadying breaths while leaning against him. After calming down and regaining my ability to think and move properly, I stood up straight and gave Sans a kind smile, “I’m good now.”

“are you sure?” Sans looked at my shaking legs.

“Positive butthead.”

“bonehead.” He corrected.

“Whatever man,” It was then that I was able to look around, “Holy shit.”

Snow came up to my mid-calf. Off in the distance, I could see a small, empty village that was slowly falling apart. It was like I had been teleported to a whole other world. A dim sparkle caught my eye far up into the “sky” of this underground land.

“star crystals.” Sans explained, “they’re everywhere. welcome to snowdin.”

“It’s beautiful.” My breath frosted in front of my place, “Is this where you grew up?”

“no. pap and i lived closer to hotlands- another area of the underground- because that was where the lab was. i took pap and moved here after our mother was killed by the sixth human.” Sans paused and clicked his teeth together. He looked angry at himself for letting that much slip out.

“Your mother was murdered?” My eyes widened. Sans nodded sharply.
“pap doesn’t know though. dad and i disagreed over whether or not to tell him, and, in the end, the old bastard was too caught up in her work to notice or care when i ran off with him.” Sans gritted his teeth, “anyways, we didn’t come here for a trip down memory lane. if frisk is dead, then that weed could reset. grayridge is closer to the hole the humans fall down, so i know where the little shit is going.”

“Reset?” I asked.

Sans began to trudge through the snow with his hand wrapped around mine. His shoulders were tense with hesitation.

“Sans.” I warned him, “I can’t help out much if you don’t tell me what’s going on.”

“have you ever thought about there being other timelines?”

“Not really. Why the sudden metaphysical question?”

“because they’re real- down here at least.” Sans sighed at my incredulous look, “i knew you’d look at me like that.”

“You just told me that other realities existed.”

“its not like that. the timeline is kind of like a movie you can let play then go back and change things. the entire thing resets itself. it doesn’t just create an offshoot. it’s a permanent loop that starts over mostly fresh with a few exceptions. monsters like me- ones who could see the magic not behaving correctly- knew something was up. we began to make records, and eventually discovered this ability to reset. the ability can only be utilized by beings with determination and-” Sans paused in front of a small pale star on the path, “-look as you can see- what?”

Sans’s hand hovered over the yellow star. Two buttons dimly lit up- broken, sickly looking.

RESET
SAVE

Like those things I saw…after the accident?

“what the…? they’ve never done this before.”

“Hey you!”

Sans tensed and turned his head.

A small, panting flower snarled at us from the snow. Vicious vines whipped around angrily.

“What did you do trash bag!”

“i should be asking you that.” Sans snarled.

“Woah boys.” I stood between the two, “The human is a bit confused.”

“A human?” The flower said blandly before perking up, “Oh! Why don’t you try?”

“no.” Sans said firmly, “you just want her to reset everything!”

“I can’t find Frisk anywhere, or I’d have them do it. Good job hiding them trash bag.” The

“frisk is dead flowey.”

“WHAT!?” Flowey roared, “Impossible! Chara and Frisk could reset! They can’t die!”

“Frisk and Chara? The human is very confused right now,” I said loudly, “I can however assure all present that Frisk is dead. I saw the body at the wake.”

“What?” Flowey’s face fell into genuine shock. His voice became quieter, “…gone again?”

“I’m sorry little guy.” I stepped closer.

“newmore!” Sans’s magic tugged me out of the way of some vines that shot at me with deadly intent.

“Don’t pretend to pity me!” Flowey howled.

“Sans!” I scowled, “Put me down.”

“newmore, you really don’t get how stron-“

“Now.” I glared at him. Sans reluctantly put me down. Before Flowey could act, I raced forward and snatched him from the ground. He tried his best to wriggle free of my grasp, but the pain of his vines digging into my arm and pellets smacking against my flesh wasn’t as bad as he thought they were. Really, in his weakened state, he could only give me a bad case of Indian burn, “Flowey. Enough.”

He tuckered out quickly. Despite being thoroughly exhausted, he still managed to give me a pretty good angry look.

“I’m sorry about Frisk, and I’m sorry that whatever those things are supposed to do,” I pointed to the buttons, “isn’t working. You need to calm down some though. You’ll hurt yourself at this rate.”

Flowey growled rather pathetically before drooping against my arm.

“newmore.” Sans walked over and gritted his teeth at the bruising on my face from pellets.

“Sans,” I rapped the top of his skull with the hand that wasn’t holding the demented flower, “I’ve had a 6’8 body builder crack me in the face before. These little things don’t even count as love taps.” Didn’t stop him from glaring at Flowey however, “I take it you two don’t get along then?”

“nope.”

“With this terrible comedian?” Flowey laughed cruelly, “Not a chance.”

“But you both were friends with Frisk?” Talk about confusing.

“No. I was friends with Chara.”

Uuuggghhh...

“Okay, you know what, just…the buttons.” I gestured to the buttons, “I’m done trying to sort out what the hell you two have done to each other, so what is wrong with these things?”
“They aren’t working.” Flowey groused.

“you already tried to reset then?” Sans’s eye glowed angrily.

“Multiple times! Nothing worked though.” Flowey looked at me again, “You’re a human. You try.”

I walked over to the buttons with Flowey in hand and Sans a few paces behind. I rested my hand on the SAVE button. It felt solid underneath my touch, but nothing happened no matter how hard I pressed on it. I even leaned my full body weight against it. Nothing.

“They really don’t work.” Flowey sighed, “This is it then. No more SAVEs. No more RESETs.”

“good.”

“Not good!” Flowey snarled, “Unless your forgetting, fate has a tendency to suck ass! Frisk and Chara kept having to hit the RESET button because of all the bad things that would happen in the good endings!”

“frisk did. your maniac of a best friend would go on a killing spree.” Sans got up into Flowey’s face, “unless you’ve forgotten all the times your supposed sibling slashed you to death.”

“That wasn’t Chara!” Flowey snarled, unintentionally tightening his grip on my arm without meaning to, “Chara would never act that way.”

“then why did we have to keep going through that over and over until this happened?” Sans roared. He’s getting worked up. Shit.

“Sans,” I put my free hand on his shoulder, “Calm down. Neither of you are in fit physical condition to be rough housing or getting worked up. I heard mentions of a killing spree?”

“in some timelines, frisk was a good, sweet kid. in others, something else possessed him and killed just about every innocent monster in the underground.” Sans explained dully, “i think that inner struggle is what led him to just….curl up and die.”

“You mean Frisk just rejected his role after the last time he reset?” Flowey thought about it.

“everyone’s magic became unstable in this timeline. i think frisk and chara might’ve….i don’t know, reset one to many times. it made everything break, so frisk decided to just end it all.”

They’re talking about this so seriously. I’m actually starting to believe them.

“Why would it cause the buttons to break though?” Flowey frowned, “Wait…how long were we out?”

“A little over a year.” I answered.

“that might be why. we’d get to maybe three months out on the surface before a reset would happen,” Sans crossed his arms and tapped on his fingers absentmindedly against his upper arm, “the resets worked because frisk and chara were directly forcing all of the magic within mt. ebbot to change and twist. maybe all of the magic down here has ebbed out onto the surface…”

“Meaning there’s nothing for the buttons to control anymore.” Flowey scowled at the disabled buttons, “Dammit!”
He struck at the buttons blindly.

“Flowey,” I scolded him, “Calm down.”

“I will not!” His vines tightened on my arm once more.

“You just woke up from being in a coma,” I pinched some of his petals, “You’re going to hurt yourself if you keep stressing your body. What’s done is done.”

“You can only say that because you’ve been up on the surface.” He spat, “You didn’t even know these buttons existed.”

“Well…I didn’t know they were buttons,” I frowned, “They were still kind of gold the last time I saw them though.”

Sans and Flowey stared at me blankly.

“What?”

“WHAT!?"

“I was hurt in November. I saw these buttons while I was drifting in and out of consciousness.” I explained, “I didn’t know what they were though.”

“Did the ability transfer to her somehow?” Flowey’s head bobbed around my body while he tried to piece everything together.

“it’s possible,” Sans paused, “her family has unnaturally high levels of determination, and if mt. ebbot’s magic slowly trickled out onto the surface, it might’ve given the ability to the nearest human with high enough levels of determination.”

“The ‘Her’ is standing right here.”

“sorry,” Sans blushed, “you have the highest level of determination in your family, and your family is already filled with outliers.”

“Well shit.” I grumbled, “You learn something new every day.”

I shivered as a particularly cold blast of wind pierced through my thick hoodie. Sans angled himself to act as a kind of windbreak, but I was still uncomfortable.

“We should really head back to the CC.” I said, “Both of you need to continue your treatments to get better.”

“What? So I can be shoved in some dark room and forgotten about?” Flowey snarled, “Not a chance. I’ll take my chances down here.”

“well, he’s spoken. let’s ditch the weed and get out of here before he gets a rose out of me.” Sans tried to tug Flowey out of my hands.

“No Sans.” I pushed him back and held him at bay with one hand, “We’re not leaving the flower behind. Listen Flowey, if it bugs you that much, comes stay with me then. You won’t be thrown into a dark place or anything.”

“no.” Sans protested.
“Yes.”

Flowey stayed silent while Sans and I bickered.

“You’d actually let a homicidal daisy into your house?” Flowey began to laugh, “How fucking stupid are you!?”

“Flowey.” I squeezed his stem tightly, “I’ve been shot twice, stabbed four times, and been nearly beaten to death about fifteen times. A small flower doesn’t even register on my threat radar. You’ve got two options: go back to the CC or come with me. Either way, you’re not staying down here to die.”

It took me about fifteen minutes of back and forth to get Sans or Flowey to agree to anything.

In the end, Flowey would stay at the Bitty CC while his treatments continued, but he’d be coming to live with me afterwards. That seemed to really annoy Sans.

My more adventurous side wanted to explore the Underground some more. I had never realized how big it was. This was a whole other civilization beneath the surface that was equal parts amazing and terrifying. Sadly, Sans and Flowey were starting to show signs of fatigue from the day’s excitement, so we teleported back to B5.

Sans practically collapsed the instant we touched the ground. I caught him in my arms quickly despite the fact my own legs were wobbly from the trip.

*I’ll never get used to that.*

“Sans?” I carefully positioned him in my other arm to avoid crushing the sleepy flower wrapped around my other arm, “Sweetheart are you okay?”

Sans blearily blinked at me.

“sweetheart?” He grinned. I rolled my eyes and lightly head butted him.

“Miss Newmore?” Dr. Alphys approached us warily eyeing Flowey, “I’m glad to see that things didn’t go poorly…”

“Yeah. These two are exhausted though.”

Flowey and Sans were quickly separated into their own rooms. Flowey was now the only occupant in his room since he wasn’t the only one to make a jail break. Dr. Alphys didn’t seem too keen on telling Sans about the other monster, so I figured that it was a nonissue.

“stupid weed,” Sans groused crankily while I carefully double checked his arms from his brief scuffle with Flowey earlier, “always getting me wrapped up in things.”

“Enough Sans,” I sighed and rubbed the top of his skull soothingly. It worked on Waltzer, so why wouldn’t it work on the larger version?

“that feels surprisingly good.” Sans leaned into my touch.

“Holy shit it does.” I laughed.

“huh?”
“Nothing.” I bit back my laughter, “Nothing at all.”

Comfortable silence filled the room as Sans’s eyes slowly began to drift shut. I was getting ready to leave when he spoke.

“Sorry that your valentine’s day was probably ruined by all of this monster drama.” One of Sans’s eyes cracked open, “I doubt you signed up for all of this.”

“Kind of did.” I stood up straight and stretched, “I don’t mind it at all. I mean… It’s not every day you go a crazy mini adventure. Still wish I could’ve seen more of the Underground though.”

“I’ll take you sometime.” Sans offered before yawning.

“That’d be awesome, but only after you’ve recovered completely.” I tapped the space in between his eyes. He frowned at me without opening his eyes, “Anyways, I need to go. It’s been a few hours. Granny should be willing to let me back into the apartment now.”

“Mmmm…”

I was halfway out the door when his sleepy voice called after me.

“Happy valentine’s day Newmore.”

I smiled.

“You too.”
“You know guys…” I rested my head against Karli’s desk, “I support you in everything, but goddamn…why are my skeletons so fucking fertile? Seriously, we had discussion about two weeks ago, and bitty number ten is already on the way. Fuck me with a cactus.”

“eh?” Waltzer shrugged while Cyan blushed deep blue.

Karli tried her best to hide her laughter behind her paw. She failed.

“wait you guys discussed this?” Blake glared at me from where he stood by Snuggle. The meek was carefully examining a still embarrass Cyan.

“There’s going to be another bitty!” Tinsel said excitedly before turning to Idjit, “Iddy! What was I liked when I was little? Daddy and Papa say I was a handful.”

“u-um-m…gr-a-ab-by.” Idjit thought about it. December peered around the cherry’s body to look at Cyan and Waltzer, “you…wh-whim-m-mpered a l-lot too.”

“seriously ari,” Blake reached up and tugged on some of my stray hair, “you discussed this without us!?"

“it was a private conversation blake.” Waltzer nudged the blake with his shoulder, “cy was pretty embarrassed about even talking about it with just her.”

“I’m surprised you managed to keep it from me,” Sunshine sounded a bit hurt.

“It was just embarrassing.” Cyan’s blush deepened, “I didn’t even realize it could happen this quickly.”

Snuggle finally quit examining Cyan and paused to think a minute. Then he looked at me.

‘The same problem shouldn’t happen again.’

“Good.” I sighed in relief.

“Well, I’m glad to see that everyone seems supportive.” Karli cleared her throat, “Though Tinsel, you need to limit your teleportation and telekinesis. Your body can’t handle the stronger edgy magic in you, so please be more careful.”

“oh he will be.” Raze glowered at his son, “even if i gotta tape ‘im to the floor.”

“Daddy.” Tinsel whined.

“You collapsed Tinsel.” Sunshine pinched the cheek underneath Tinsel’s good eye, “No
more unwatched magic training.”

“if you can’t be mature enough to pace yourself, you’re going to be babied little man.” Blake agreed.

Tinsel did not like that. He didn’t like it all.

Cyan kept his arms wrapped around himself. He looked up at me.

“Everything is fine Cyan.” I assured him. Waltzer wrapped his arm around Cyan’s waist protectively, “Quit worrying.”

“Sorry.” Cyan tried his best to give me a relaxed smile. I didn’t buy.

“Oh by the way Miss Newmore,” Karli clapped her paws together as she suddenly remembered something, “Velour says that Flowey has finished all of his treatments. You apparently agreed to house him afterwards?”

“That was quick. He really finished up in a week?” I cocked my head.

“He’s the smallest of the afflicted after all.” Karli chuckled, “He’s still a bit fatigued, but it won’t hinder him too much.”

“Well…guess we’re taking a flower home today.” I looked around trying to find Velour, “Do we need to go down to B5?”

“No,” Karli shook her head and picked up the phone, “I can just tell Dr. Alphys to bring him up…well…if I can get her to quit spending her time staring at royal guard captain Undyne.”

“Undyne’s awake?” I asked while she called B5.

“Cranky too,” Karli snorted. Then her ears perked up a little, “Dr. Alphys! Miss Newmore is currently in the lobby if Flowey wishes to leave today.” She paused, “Great! Thank you doctor.”

“so…we’re taking homicidal flowers now?” Waltzer frowned, “how is that a good thing?”

“There’s more to a story than meets the eye,” I said as Karli hung up the phone, “Besides, what damage can a flower do?”

“n-o-ot m-much if w-we-e-e c-cut of-f-f his s-st-stem.” Idjit quietly observed.

“true.” Blake’s eyes glimmered with naughty ideas.

“No maiming the flower.” I warned.

A couple of minutes later, my bitties and I stood off to the side of the counter so Karli could answer some couple’s questions about bitties. I found it a bit ridiculous they didn’t do their research beforehand, but not everyone can be super prepared.

“Miss Newmore.” Dr. Alphys greeted me quietly shuffling past the couple. Flowey sat sullenly in a pot. He bristled at the sight of my bitties.

“So they do exist.” He grumbled, “Mini versions of the comedian. How fan-fucking-tastic.”

“Please refrain from swearing,” Sunshine asked politely as Dr. Alphys sat Flowey down.
“I’ll do what I fucking what. Don’t tell me what to do.” Flowey spat.

Raze quickly ducked behind my arm. Sunshine calmly wrapped a hand around Flowey’s stem. Sunshine still had an eerie smile plastered on his face, and his voice was still sickeningly sweet.

“Flowey,” Sunshine’s grip tightened on his stem, “Please. Refrain. From. Swearing. It’s bad enough Raze and Jo swear as much as they do. You won’t be adding to the mix.”

Flowey stared at Sunshine dumbly for a few seconds. Brief flickers off offended rage and annoyed paranoia ran across his face. Sunshine just met his stare with a placid smile. Idjit and December peered up at Flowey from different sides of Sunshine.

“we could…cut all of his leaves off….or….hmmm…” December murmured quietly.

Idjit looked lost in thought.

Flowey finally looked up at me.

“Alright.” I carefully rescued the little guy from my murderous bitties, “Enough.”

“I thought rays were supposed to be sweet.” The whiney bitch talking to Karli complained, “He seems mean.”

“He’s special.” It was so hard to keep myself from snapping at them, “Don’t judge the entire type by one example, and Sunshine is not mean. Now, if you want mean, you can keep talking crap and end up meeting his mate.”

Raze stepped out from behind my arm and growled at the couple. They flinched.

“Anyways. Time to go Flowey.” I shook Dr. Alphys’s hand and smiled at Karli, “You guys have a good day alright?”

“Thank you Miss Newmore.” Dr. Alphys paused, “You need to come visit sometime.”

“I will.” I promised.

The walk home was a bit more awkward than usual. All of my sans type bitties seemed ready to dice and burn Flowey. Luckily, Snuggle seemed fond of the little bastard. Cyan didn’t really seem to have much of an opinion, but Sunshine was displeased with the cursing flower. Tinsel just seemed fascinated.

“Do you have to be in soil?” Tinsel asked scotching closer to my neck to get a better look at the flower monster carefully cradled in my arms.

“At some point.” Flowey groused from where he was slumped away from Raze and Sunshine. He had angled himself closer to Snuggle- someone recognized as an ally- while trying to avoid Blake’s blatant glare.

“Does it make you sick to not be in soil for a long period of time?”

“Yes.”

Tinsel continued to prod the little guy the entire trip home. I could tell the childish questioning was driving Flowey a bit batty, but the dark glares most of my bitties were giving him kept his words polite.
“Miss Newmore?” My landlady called out to me in the lobby, “We don’t allow plants here. A lot of our residents have allergies.”

“Flowey…do you have pollen?” I looked down at the monster.

“Not unless I want some.” Flowey got a sick kick out watching the color drain from my landlady’s face.

“flowey…” Waltzer slid a little closer to the front of my head. His eye flickered blue in warning.

“Pollen is sticky though.” Flowey scowled and shrunk even further away from Waltzer’s gaze, “I don’t like having it on me, so it won’t be an issue.”

“Is that okay?” I asked my landlady, “I already promised to take him in.”

“O-Of course! I’m sorry. I didn’t…didn’t realize he was um…”

“Alive?” Flowey’s leaves unfurled and furled up mockingly, “Don’t feel to bad. Most people tend to think I’m just any other butter cup.”

My landlady continued to apologize profusely for the next ten minutes. Eventually, a long yawn from Snuggle prompted her to finally release us.

“Are all humans that stupid?” Flowey asked inside the elevator.

“Some.” I answered before any of my sans type bitties got any ideas, “I forgot about the no plants thing. We got a couple of small scale celebrities in the building who are horribly allergic to flower pollen though, and I’m pretty sure their kind “donations” help the landlady out in a pinch. Can’t blame her for wanting to keep her start residents happy.”

“Hmph.” Flowey quietly observed everything with a rather intimidating level of focus. I expected him to rip my apartment’s rather sparse décor when I saw his mouth twist into a frown. He said nothing though. I sat him down on the coffee table in front of the couch and began helping bitties get off of me.

“remember to behave yourself weed.” Blake said with a dangerous kindness before teleporting himself and Snuggle onto the couch to continue reading their last book.

Tinsel looked ready to question Flowey more, but Raze just grabbed him and hauled him to the bedroom. December and Idjit gave the flower a long, cold look before heading off to do their own thing.

“Flowey?” Cyan quietly asked after I sat him on the floor, “Did you eat lunch before leaving the CC?”

“No.” Flowey narrowed his eyes at him.

*Does the little shit think my curly is going to poison him or something?*

“Are you hungry?” Cyan laced his fingers together, “Sunshine and I could make you something.”

Sunshine didn’t comment on being included in Cyan’s generosity.

Flowey looked torn between being an asshole and accepting Cyan’s polite offer.
"I’m fine." Flowey finally said looking away from Cyan, “It’d be weird to be the only one eating.”

“Okay then.” Cyan nodded.

“We need to figure out what we’re doing for dinner anyways.” Sunshine tugged on Cyan’s wrist. “What do you think you can stomach without puking it back up?”

“Umm…that’s the question isn’t it?” Cyan laughed weakly.

Flowey looked around my apartment with dull eyes until I picked him back up.

“Nadia is coming over soon,” I reminded Blake, “Let me know when she gets here.”

“okay.” Blake nodded.

“Where are we going?” Flowey questioned me.

“My office. I figured you wouldn’t want to be left alone with Blake. Snuggle’s deaf, so he wouldn’t be able to help you if Blake tried to kill you out of sight.” I chuckled at Flowey’s look of pure disbelief at my nonchalance, “No one is going to hurt you Flowey. Promise. I just have a feeling it’ll take a sans type a while to get used to you.”

“You’re not as stupid as you look.”

I shrugged. A lot of people mistook me for a simpleton. It was hard to get annoyed at it anymore. Inside my office, I sat Flowey next to my computer. He marveled at all of the shit in my office in silence.

“You have a sister?” Flowey finally asked to fill the void. I had the distinct feeling he wasn’t used to small talk.

“Two sisters. Nadia’s the one visiting,” I explained while booting up my computers, “I’m adopting her son after he’s born, so we’re going to be talking about a couple of things.”

“Nine bitties and a baby.” Flowey observed, “You don’t have much of a life do you?”

“Not particularly. It’s ten bitties by the way. Cyan is having a little one in April.”

Flowey gave me a blank look.

“You seriously brought me into a house that will soon have two small, defenseless creatures in it?”

“Flowey, if you try anything my bitties will curb stomp you to the ground.” I laughed and patted his head. He bit me. The little shit actually bit me, “Besides, you don’t exactly have many options.”

Flowey bit me a bit harder for a couple of minutes before finally releasing me.

I spent the next thirty minutes arguing with a buttercup flower about whether or not I was going to let him die in my apartment or let him kill important members of my family. In the end, he realized that his attempts at getting a rise out of me weren’t working, so he turned his attention to my computer screen instead. He watched with mute fascination as I worked. Then he began to question literally every decision I made while trying to work.
Kill him with kindness...kindness...kindness...dammit...I’m so glad I don’t have any weed killer to tempt me.

Nadia arrived without Cesar for a change. Apparently, his eye had begun to bother him enough to warrant complaints, so he was being examined at the CC. She looked rather vulnerable without Cesar perched on her arms. The bitty’s absence obviously had a negative effect on her wellbeing. Someone who only knew her in passing would think she was still the same ice queen, but I was her twin. I recognized the slight tap of her foot and subtle picking of her stocks as anxiety driven motions. Her hair also was in a stylish looking loose bun.

My sister never left the house without her hair sprayed to Barbie doll levels of stiffness. She was worried.

“Is that a bitty?” Nadia frowned at Flowey, who was sitting on my lap.

“No.” He growled.

“He’s a monster.” I covered his mouth before he could say anything else, “He’s new, adjusting, and an asshole.”

He bit me.

“I have an edgy Flowey. That doesn’t hurt much.” I gave him a lazy look before settling back into the couch and turning my attention back to my sister, “How’s everything going?”

“Smoothly.” Nadia shifted uncomfortably in her seat, “My emotions have been a bit everywhere since I’m off of my antidepressant, but it’s manageable….when Cesar’s around. I just can’t wait for the morning sickness to be over.”

“Mmm…” I felt Waltzer teleport on top of my head. He tapped my forehead twice to make sure I knew he was there before beginning to snore.

“I also needed to mention something else.” Nadia began quietly, “I’ll be moving to Greenridge about a month after I give birth.”

Greenridge was north of Mt. Ebbot and close to the big barrier. It was why a lot of monsters like to live there.

It was also a good two to three hour drive from Grayridge.

“Um…what?” I blinked. I knew that Nadia would probably want very little to do with her son or want to watch him be raised by someone else, but to completely uproot herself seemed….off.

“I’ve been offered a better paying position at my current workplace’s sister company in Greenridge.” Nadia shrugged, “I’m trying to start over, so why not head somewhere new to try and wipe the slate clean?”

“Well…guess I can’t argue that.” Logically, I couldn’t.

When I wanted a new life away from the Newmore name, I went to college in Oliverdale two hours southwest of the city. I did keep in contact with Olivia and Granny though, but I could only hope Nadia wouldn’t completely cut all ties with Olivia. As much as my twin made Olivia want to scream sometimes, my sister was a little fluffy ball of sunshine and goodness. It would hurt her to be rejected by her own sister.
“This doesn’t bother you?” Nadia tugged on her hair some.

“Nope.” I responded.

“Really?” Flowey looked up at me like I was dumbass.

“Really.” I pinched on of his petals.

“Alright.” Nadia nodded.

After five minutes of talking, Nadia quietly left my apartment.

“That’s your twin? I don’t see much of a resemblance.” Flowey sighed while tapping his chin, “She doesn’t look bad enough to break mirrors.”

“I only break mirrors with my fists actually.” I rolled my shoulders some, “Think up some better material bud.”

Flowey tried to.

Jabs at my appearance, my skills, my love life, my background, my bitties, etc.

My bitties would just give him a look that kept him from getting too loud, and the rest had all been made fun of by more clever people in the past.

In other words, he quickly learned that Josephine Newmore doesn’t give a fuck, and that seemed to both piss him off and leave him defeated at the same time.
Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except for Tinsel). Full disclaimer/links can be found in Ch1

And all of the monsters are awake. For anyone wondering why Mettaton isn't being loud in this chapter it's quite simply because he and Napstablook were the last two awake, so they're both still a bit out of it.

Further clarification on the Arietta side of Jo's family: Granny's name is Persephone and her twin sister is Juno. Granny went on to have Clara (Jo's mom) and Catherine while Juno had a daughter Sophia who then had twin sons Dante and Caspian. So our main cast of sisters, Caspian, and Dante are all cousins, but Caspian and Dante tend to stay as close to their mother as they can. Thus, they rarely leave Europe.

“She’s doing better now.” Caspian’s tart voice made my want to roll my eyes. My Italian was rougher than my French, German, Japanese, and Russian, but I could still speak and understand it well enough to have a conversation, “You should remember that Aunt Persephone isn’t as young as she used to be. Quit worrying her so much.”

“Yes Caspian, of course Caspian.” I resisted the urge to growl, “I realize you work with Granny, but if you keep harassing me over things I can’t control, I’ll call Aunt Juno.”

“Leave my Grandmother out of this.” Caspian sighed, “Enough Phelia. We shouldn’t be squabbling like this.”

“Whatever you say bud. Where’s the twin I actually like?” I need to speak with Dante about a small scale dresser and wall shelf he was making for me in his spare time, “Is he with you or do I need to call him separately?”

“He’s currently with our mother visiting father’s grave.” Caspian explained, “I’ll tell him to call you though.”

“Okay. Thank you Caspian. Keep me updated on Granny’s condition.”

“I will. Good-bye Phelia.”

“Bye Cas.”

I hung and leaned back into my chair with a groan. Flowey twitched from where he had been listening on my conversation while wrapped around my arm. He put his face level with mine. I could see the confused scowl on his face.

“What the hell was that?” He questioned, “You were speaking gibberish.”

“Italian.” I corrected, “My Granny is a half-French half-German woman who married an American business mogul while her twin sister married an Italian man. Caspian can speak French, but he doesn’t like doing it if he can find a workaround.”
“why have i never heard of caspian?” Waltzer asked from where he sat drinking a cup of coffee on my desk, “or of family members outside of our immediate circle?”

“We all live in different parts of the world.” I shrugged, “My parents, Olivia, Nadia, and I all live in Grayridge. Aunt Catherine, Bobby, and Thomas live in Greenridge. Dante and Caspian live with their mother in Ravenna. My grandfather on my father’s side lives somewhere in Nevada, and my babushka died when I was ten. I still talk with my cousin Artur- my babushka’s great nephew- whenever he needs advice because he’s still pretty young.”

“Babu-what?” Flowey stared at me like I had intentionally made up a word to piss him off.

“Grandmother.” I forgot that Flowey was only used to hearing humans speak English. That inexperience was why this conversation is happening in the first place Jo, “It’s how Olivia, Nadia, and I would tell Granny and her apart. She was a quiet woman who got trapped in a marriage with my grandfather. Her family didn’t forgive her for running off with some strange man after only knowing him for five months until after she died. Now we sometimes get post cards and stuff from time to time.”

“huh.” Waltzer tapped his chin, “didn’t realize you had so much family out of grayridge.”

“Not many people do. Clara and Daniel Newmore have made enough of a name for themselves that their past heritages don’t matter.” I shrugged, “Besides, Granny’s not in town often enough for people to start to wonder. It doesn’t really matter.”

“it does matter.” Waltzer tossed a paperclip at my forehead, “you should’ve told us you have more family. we don’t exactly have experience with massive family trees.”

“True. Sorry Waltz.” I rubbed the top of his skull with my thumb.

“Oh so the mini trash bag and the Rob Dyrdek wanna be can talk back without any problems, but I get pinched?” Flowey grumbled.

“I let you get away with just as much as they do Flowey. You just have a tendency to mouth off about Livvy, and that won’t be stood for.” I frowned at him.

It was one thing to mouth off to me, Waltzer, Cyan, Sunshine, Raze, Blake, and- hell- Idjit. Most of us either don’t react or threaten to cut his goddamn stem open (Idjit and Raze seem to favor the latter). My precious Olivia will not be disrespected in front of me without consequence. That was something a lot of kids had to learn the hard way when my little sister was growing up.

“lia.” December poked his head into my office.

He hadn’t been fond of Flowey before- borderline scared of the flower monster. After about a week and a half of Flowey learning that the Newmores don’t crack under a little weight, December had gotten more used to the new housemate, but he still wasn’t eager to be around him without some of the other bitties with him despite Idjit's more murderous tendencies beginning to rub off on him.

“Hey Dec,” I sat up straight and smiled at the buttonberry, “Did you need something?”

“velour called.” He quietly informed me, “tinsel…i think…has the phone.”

“Alright.” Standing up and grabbing Waltzer, I quickly saved my work. If it was Velour calling and not Sans, that meant something had gone down with the other monsters.

It took me a couple of minutes to find an excited Tinsel chatting away with Velour in the
kitchen while Sunshine and Cyan listened in closely. Really, our little squirrel had great news.

All of the monsters were awake. Most were still in recovery, but they had all finally regained consciousness.

“King Asgore would like to personally thank the bitties Miss Newmore.” Velour explained, “We were all wondering if you could stop by sometime? I know Sans would enjoy the quieter company after all the hubbub on B5 these past few days.”

“I don’t think anyone has plans.” Really, my little house of extroverts just passed through life working, exploring hobbies, and trying to not kill each other, “When would be a good time to come over?”

“Tomorrow preferably. We’re still trying to catch everyone up on what’s happened since they fell unconscious.”

“We’ll be there then.” I smiled.

“Really?” Flowey griped.

“Really.” I flicked the back of his head. He hissed and tightened his grip on my arm, “Quit squeezing the arm that feeds you.”

“Cyan and Sunshine are the ones who cook.” Flowey pointed out.

“Yeah, but I’m the one who works to buy the food for them to cook in the first place.” I prodded at his face annoyingly, “I swear…your worse than a younger Olivia, and she was a spoiled little shit when we were younger.”

Well…before I cracked down and learned how to raise her properly. She’s still a bit spoiled, but She’s a hell of a lot more mature than people give her credit for.

“Well…I’m glad to hear your voice Flowey.” Velour awkwardly laughed, “After what happened and all…”

“It’ll take more than that stupid comedian to kill me.” Flowey spat.

“Sans tried to kill you again?” I sighed.

“Of course he did.” Flowey rolled his eyes, “I tried to kill him too.”

“Bad Flowey.” I pinched the flower’s cheek, “I’m going to be having a long conversation with both of you tomorrow aren’t I?”

Flowey growled.

Velour stumbled her way through an awkward good-bye.

“Flowey,” Cyan chided the young monster from where he was making sure that a pot didn’t boil over, “You can’t keep acting out like this.”

“I’ll do what I want.” Flowey snorted. Waltzer’s magic quickly popped across his face, “HEY!”

“What?” Waltzer didn’t turn his attention from where he watched Cyan work.
“You.” Flowey’s vines bristled.

Dinner thankfully survived the resulting Flowey versus Waltzer fight that busted one of the cabinet doors and got both parties confined to separate corners of the living room by a very angry Blake. Blake, despite blatantly wanting to chuck Flowey out of a window, controlled himself because of Snuggle’s obvious attachment to the monster. There was a reason why Flowey stuck near Snuggle when he wasn’t with me after all.

The next day, we came to find the Bitty CC flooded with life. Excited humans were enjoying the lowered adoption rates and chalked up the monster’s enthusiasm for that alone. The monsters on the other hand were chatting quietly about their success before continuing to help their human adopters find the right bitties. All of the monsters who noticed my bitties and I walking through the lobby gave us kind, warm, bright smiles that just screamed ‘thank you’ whenever they could. They didn’t have to worry about some of the most powerful monsters in the Underground dying on them at any moment. They didn’t have to worry about not being able to cure the magical disease plaguing them. They could finally just focus on their jobs in peace.

More excitement could be found on B5.

Though…not necessarily the good kind.

The instant we stepped out onto B5 a spear of pure glimmering blue water raced towards my face with a jagged tip. It took Waltzer, Tinsel, Raze, Blake, and Idjit combined to narrowly send the spear safely away from my head.

“Human!” A tall blue fish monster with long, loose red hair prepped another spear in hand.

“W-What?” Dr. Alphys was trying to push through the crowd.

“A human’s found its way to the lab Alphys! Stay back!” Undyne- how in the hell I briefly forgot her name was beyond me- protectively stepped in front of the doctor.

Sans appeared between Undyne and me right as she launched another spear. Sans caught it with one hand before giving Undyne a blank look mixed with a little bit of annoyance.

“HUMAN!” Papyrus excitedly pushed past a stunned Undyne, “UNDYNE! THIS HUMAN IS RELATED TO THE KIND ONE I MENTIONED BEFORE!"

“her bitties are also the ones that saved all of our asses blue.” Sans forced a lazy smile, “treat her kindly okay?”

“whoah.” Blake’s eyes widened in partial awe, “your magic so strong!”

Undyne barely hid a flinch when the tiny sans type skeleton appeared in front of her feet.

“There really are tiny Sans copies.” Undyne’s spear- blunted a bit by her hesitation- prodded at Blake some. He chuckled and tapped the spear.

“that tickles dude.”

“Undyne?” A weary but cheerful voice cut through the hallway. A tall goat man- King Asgore- strode through the halls with his reluctant- wife? Ex-wife? It’s complicated- companion the former queen Toriel, “What’s all this fuss abou- Oh my.”

“How adorable.” Toriel’s dim eyes sparkled when she saw all of the little bitties sitting on
my shoulders and head, “These must be the bitties who worked so hard to put us back together again.”

“Yes ma’am!” Tinsel raised his hand happily before coughing some, “We are!”

“I see.” King Asgore motioned for Undyne to put the spear away, “Then we of the Underground owe you a great deal of thanks. You restored us when our own people could not.”

“no problem.” Waltzer waved away the thank-you, “not like we had much else going on at the time.”

“We’re happy to help.” Sunshine smoothly added.

“Undyne.” Toriel said quietly, “Apologize to the human for almost taking her head off.”

“But-“

Toriel glared at the fishwoman.

“Sorry human. The last time I was awake humans were still my enemy, so…hmph.”

Undyne looked away.

“It’s fine. I still have my head after all.” I tapped the side of my head.

“You won’t have it for long if you don’t learn how to dodge.” Flowey huffed.

“I knew my bitties could move it.” I smiled at the cranky flower monster, “Besides, don’t think I didn’t notice the vines gearing up to protect me.”

Flowey blushed in his pot quietly after that remark.

We were taken to one of the cleaner, emptier labs to talk after that. Remnants of a celebration- streamers stuck on pipes and trash not so discreetly hidden in back corners- marked the beginning of a longer victory.

My bitties grouped off to speak with various monsters. Toriel found December and Idjit very charming while King Asgore spoke quietly with Waltzer. Tinsel- carefully watched by Raze- played around with Papyrus as Blake, who was accompanied by Snuggle, learned some magical fighting tips from Undyne. The two cutest to me was Cyan quietly talking with Dr. Alphys about what he was currently going through while the scientist took notes, and Sunshine speaking with Grillby about the kinds of food he liked to prepare.

“still got the weed i see.” Sans said shuffling over to where I sat with Flowey.

“Still don’t have any brains I see.” Flowey snapped back.

“One second.” I stood up with Flowey, “You will be going with Tinsel and Papyrus.”

Flowey hissed at me before a dark glower from Raze- that came with a burst of red magic sliding around his flower pot- kept him silent. Papyrus seemed happy to see the flower at least.

“Why do you have to antagonize him so?” I sighed while sitting down next to Sans once more.

“he’s a sociopathic little shit that’s killed my friends over and over. i think i’m allowed a little bit of resentment.”
“Well, I guess you can’t exactly forget shit like that overnight.” I couldn’t ask him to just forgive and forget- even if I was still a bit skeptical about the whole reset thing still, “I won’t ask you to, but I will ask that you quit trying to kill him. Your main source of conflict- constant resets- is gone right? There’s no more reason to keep fighting then.”

“is that so?” Sans’s eyes were black with anger.

“I’m not saying you have to be best friends.” I flicked his forehead. He seemed stunned that the dark pools of anger didn’t phase me, “Just quit trying to kill each other. He might be a weed, but he’s my weed now.”

“fine. i’ll leave the annoying little flower bee.” Sans sighed dramatically before resting his head against my shoulder, “if you rub my head again.”

“Oh my god.” I laughed loud enough to draw people’s attention.

“what? it feels nice.” Sans poked at my side, “besides, your little request is going to end up giving he headaches some times. a little r and r would help out.”

“I see your point.” My rough hands began to stroke calm circles on top of his head. Sans sighed into the motions before leaning closer to me, “Jeez.”

“Miss Newmore?” King Asgore sat down beside me with Waltzer sitting next to one of his horns, “If I might have a mo…” He paused seeing Sans getting a head rub, “…moment of your… time…”?

“Of course your majesty.” I nodded politely.

“I’m afraid that we know very little about…what was this city called again…Grayridge.” He quickly remembered before I had to remind him, “I was wondering if you could help us find places to live. We cannot stay down here forever after all, and most of my injured people will require new work…any form of direction would be welcome.”

“I’ve got you covered.” I whipped out my cellphone and began to text people, “I can have some houses and positions in a couple of hours if you guys give me some details on what needs to be done.”

The one and only plus side of my last name was how quickly I could get strings pulled if need be. It felt wrong to do it for myself, but these guys needed help. I’d feel even dirtier not using all of my resources.

The rest of our day with the newly awakened monsters was spent trouble shooting a couple of issues and planning for the futures. Undyne would definitely need some therapy before she could work around humans, so Dr. Alphys- the sly little dinosaur- offered to share an apartment with the fishwoman until she would be able to work with humans. Papyrus already had a job lined up at Olivia’s restaurant, and Sans would be able to find work easily with his amount of knowledge at hand.

After a couple of hours of calling people and arranging things, some of the hidden tension in the room began to relax. These monsters had a human who could really help them, and that fact alone took a lot of weight off of their shoulders. Eventually, Toriel pulled me aside from the group to speak with me.

“Thank you Miss Newmore.” Toriel said, “For everything. I’m glad to see Sans wasn’t lying about you.”
“Sans talks about me?” I cocked an eyebrow.

“Often.” Toriel and I both glanced over at the shorter skeleton who currently had a curious December exploring one of his eye sockets, “Though he’d probably deny it if you asked. Papyrus and Dr. Alphys have also mentioned you, but mostly to say how much they…”ship” you with Sans.”

Wait.

WHAT!?

Could someone help me find my jaw, my train of thought, and my ability to comprehend things? I think they fell out of my head somewhere near Whattheactualfuckville when I was trying my best to leave Notachanceinhellcity!

“I think they’re kind of blowing things out of proportion here.” I blushed, “I mean, Sans and I talk of course, but uh…I don’t think Sans sees me quite like they think he does.”

“I see. I apologize if I’ve embarrassed you.” Toriel chuckled at my bumbling speech.

“Eh…it’s fine your majesty.” Toriel frowned at the title.

“Please just call me Toriel.” She insisted.

“Then please just call me Josephine or any variant of Josephine Ophelia Arietta.”

She was happy to oblige.

All in all, the monsters were a great people to be around. They all had their issues- I mean there was a set of ghost cousins who didn’t really speak to anyone after all. Still, they mostly seemed to be positive and caring.

If only their human counterparts could be halfway as kind.
Sooooo.....umm...this chapter accidentally mushed together a couple of events that weren't supposed to happen yet, so guess who needs to go outline again...dammit (gotta reorganize depressing shit to happen after the spring break fluff in the two chapters after this one, and gotta figure out which to tackle first: anti-monster groups or Clara & Daniel) XD Still, I'll have the date chapter up sometime today.

To say that humans reacted negatively to the Dreemurr family emerging after being out of the limelight for a year would be an understatement.

Riots broke out across the world. People were trying to start a war against them for no other reason than fear. The monsters were bigger, stronger, and more magically gifted. There was a reason they were locked in the Underground instead of being killed off completely after all.

The worst part about to me was what happened with my parents in the resulting two weeks. They went from people I hated to people I outright despised in less than thirty seconds. The instant I saw them with the tagline “Monsters should go back into the Underground” beneath them on the news, I knew that I would have to say something.

“Miss Newmore!” A group of reporter’s was waiting for me outside of my apartment, “Have you heard your parents’ recent comments about-“

“I’m aware of what my parents have said.” I held my hand up, “I think they’re wrong. It’s one thing to fear what you don’t understand, but instead of acting like grown adults and facing their fears, they want to force some of the kindest people I’ve ever met back into imprisonment.”

“What about the recent rash of monster retaliation?”

“There are saints and sinners in all groups.” The monsters lashing out against humans disgusted me just as much as the humans lashing out at monsters did. It was one thing to get into a fist fight over your values. It was another to kill four innocent humans because they looked at you the wrong way, or permanently crippling a monster because they were in “your” neighborhood, “King Asgore has publicly denounced these monsters, and they are facing the brunt of both monster and human law- something their human counterparts aren’t having to deal with. My parents have misguided, vile views that shouldn’t be encouraged by your media matrix. Do me a favor would you? Fuck off. Meet some good monsters and show the world the side of monster kind that won’t get your ratings up.”

With a final flip of two birds, I headed back into the lobby. The guards outside blocked the reporters from entering and disturbing other guests.

“You.” A hand clamped down on my shoulder. I recognized the guy as one of the anti-monster propaganda mouth pieces who lived in my building, “You’ve just betrayed all of humankind with those words! You should be ashamed of yourself.”
“Hands off me, or I’ll rip your cock off and shove it up your ass before super gluing your ass cheeks shut.” I forced through gritted teeth. My shoulder was sore from me tripping in the apartment and slamming my shoulder into the kitchen counter hard enough to dislocate the damn thing.

“You are a disgra-“ The man’s fingers tightened on my aching shoulder. I saw his hand curl into a fist as his face began to turn a bit red. I snapped my other hand hard down on his elbow joint. The unexpected blow- while mostly painless- shocked him enough to make his grip loosen. I slid out of his grasp and took a few healthy steps back. My eyes stayed trained on him while he tried to decide what to do. I waited until he finally shook his head, spat at me, and left.

*Jeez. He’s almost as bad as those harpies that tried to corner me a few days ago right after Daniel’s big anti-monster speech.* I rubbed my sore shoulder. *They only clawed my face up a little though.*

I could only count my blessings that the security guards in the apartment were more than willing to keep the paparazzi away from my floor. A couple of lazy ones had let a few people through, but I just ignored the bastards until the rotation sent up some newer, eager to please ones. *My life would suck even more if I still lived back in the old shitty apartment.* The media presence already made it more difficult to get out and get groceries. I couldn’t even go visit the Bitty CC in peace anymore! *All of this just needs to blow over already. Monsters are back. That’s a fact. Deal with it assholes.*

Once back in my apartment, I tugged off my hoodie to let my skin breathe. My bra was also tempting me to take it off, but someone clearing their throat made me pause.

Sans was stretched out on my couch in only a tank top with his jacket laying on the coffee table, leaning against one of the arms. Blake and Snuggle, who Flowey had wrapped himself around, sat against the other arm finishing up their latest novel.

“Hey man.” I decided to keep my bra on at that point. Sans blushed a little bit as I shuffled over to stand beside him. He didn’t comment however, “Didn’t expect to see you today. Get off work early?”

“Yup.” Sans stretched some in an attempt to relax, “I saw the circus outside and thought you might want a visit from your resident clown. Sorry for just barging in though.”

“It’s fine.” I shrugged, narrowing my eyes at him, “You’re in my spot on the couch though.”

“Oh really?” Sans’s eyes widened, but he just tried his best to take up more of the couch, “you want me to move or something?”

“Yes.” I said simply, flicking his collar bone.

“*Couch.* that hurt me- right here.” Sans dramatically patted his chest, “you couldn’t cushion the blow a little bit?”

“Nope. Move.” I nudged his head with my fingers.

“What are you going to do about it?” Mischief glinted in his eyes. A soft chuckle made my cut my gaze over to where Flowey was burying his head into a pillow- little bastard needs to quit destroying the damn things- while Blake struggled to contain his laughter.

That was when it hit me.
For the first time in about five years, I was flirting- not even low-key, subtle flirting either!

“newmore?” Sans cocked his head. Shit, my silent revelation was about to kill the mood. I need to test this out. Olivia, Pap, and Dr. Alphys might not all be talking out of their asses after all...Think brain....

A dark grin crawled across my face.

“I could always do this...”

“hu- what!?” Sans desperately grabbed onto my shoulders when I hefted the short skeleton up into my arms, “what the hell!?"

“Ha ha!” I laughed while plopping myself back down on the couch with Sans on my lap.

“jeez, you just marrowly scared the life out of me.” Sans leaned back against my struggling to comprehend the fact I just picked his bony ass up and moved him. He flinched when his shoulder blades pressed against the front of my chest.

**Huh.**

“You’re warmer than I remember.” I frowned and pressed the back of my hand to his forehead. His entire arms and upper back were exposed without the jacket on, so every inch of those bones were in some way pressed against my skin, “Do you have a fever?”

“ah no.” A dark blue flush had spread just enough to where I could see them.

“You uncomfortable?” It’s one thing to flirt. It’s another to over step someone’s boundaries, “I can move if you’d like.”

“no, no.” Sans hunkered down, “not what i meant. perfectly fine with this. just…it’s the first time i’ve ever been pressed up against a human before.”

“Well, it’s my first time cuddling a normal sized skeleton, so I guess we’re kind of even.” Leaning back against the arm of the couch, I stretched my legs out and settled down. It took Sans a couple of seconds to relax, but ultimately, he must’ve found me somewhat comfortable to lay on.

“Oh my fucking stars.” Flowey groaned, “Someone kill me.”

“hush man.” Blake chided him, “it’s cute.”

“Augggh.” Flowey buried his head deeper into the pillow he began chewing into.

“i think we’re snapping your flower’s mind in a few places newmore.” Sans observed lazily.

“Probably are.” I shrugged, “Anyways, I was actually going to call you later tonight.”

“about wh...a...” Sans looked down at my leg before sitting up some to get a better look at it, “what the hell was that?”

“Hmm?” I angled my head to look at my leg. Ah...he must’ve felt my BCC scarring. I curled my leg up into his lap, allowing him to look at the nasty collection of old scarring, “It’s my BCC scarring.”

“did you get this at the center?” Sans’s voice had gone quiet. His fingers carefully brushed
against the old wounds.

“The cent- OH! Not BCC as in Bitty Care Center.” I laughed, “BCC is short hand for basal cell carcinoma. It’s a type of skin cancer that almost killed me in my early twenties. I let it get out of hand, so the scarring is pretty gross looking. Sorry.”

“cancer?” Sans asked while prodding a deeper rent into my skin.

“Similar to what you guys were going through. The simplest way to describe it is that my skin cells were making more and more of themselves because of some break in their coding. It caused tumors to form, and I had to have the flesh of my leg ripped into a couple of dozen or so times to get rid of all the broken cells. Thankfully, it wasn’t too late. It could’ve spread and killed me by infecting my lungs or my liver or any other major organ.”

“that…sounds terrifying.” Sans frowned.

“It was, but it was a long time ago.” I rubbed the top of his head, “Left those ugly scars though.”

“They aren’t ugly.” Sans said quietly, “they shocked me a little bit, but they aren’t ugly.”

*Great. Now I’m blushing too.*

“Kill me…” Flowey whined from where he had popped his head out of the other side of the pillow.

“do we have any weed killer for the mood killer?” Sans questioned, his eye glowing.

“No Sans.” I laughed and tugged him back down to keep his pelvic bone from cutting off any ore circulation to my right leg, “No hurting Flowey- no matter how obnoxious he gets.”

“ugh.” Sans let his head fall back against my collarbone. He looked up at me with fatigued eyes, “your nose is at a weird angle.”

“Been broken too many times.” I shrugged. The familiar sound of my chandelier swinging made me look up. Waltzer had the most annoying shit eating grin on his face as he looked between Sans, me, and Sans again, “Shut it Waltzer.”

“haven’t said anything though.”

“You were thinking it.” I scowled, “Shoo. Go bother Cyan.”

“and let him bite my head off in a hormone induced rage?” Waltzer tapped his chin, “no thanks.”

“Then stay up there quietly.” I warned. Waltzer shrugged before crawling over to where he had one of my bras strung up as a hammock, “Hmph. *Anymways*, how’s work been? The humans had better be treating you nicely.”

“They have.” Sans said while marveling at the grand mixture of scarves and bras Waltzer had pieced together on the chandelier to create his mess of hammocks and beds, “there are still a few jackasses, but that’s to be expected anywhere.”

“Sad, but true.” I sighed, “Still, I tried to find a place that wouldn’t be too terrible.”

“it isn’t. they treat alph and me fine newmore.” Sans patted my arm, “don’t get your panties
in a twist. well…if they aren’t all up there.”

“They aren’t. He mostly steals my bras.” Waltzer just waved down at me.

Sans and I began to chat more about the work he and Dr. Alphys had begun. The two had worked together before, so their project didn’t have too many bumps in the beginning. He expected for the project to get harder once they had to get more humans involved though. More than a few had been skeptical about the chances of success, but he was hoping to win them over with results in the end. Our conversation eventually turned to more mundane topics- mostly about Papyrus and Olivia getting some good reviews at the restaurant. Sans was just relieved the Olivia had managed to teach Papyrus how to actually cook for a change.

We’d begun to doze off when I heard my door swing open.

“Thank you Blake.” Nadia’s voice was crisp and polite, “Josephine. I need to- Oh my god.”

I groaned into the back of Sans’s head before raising my gaze to glare at Nadia. Cesar sat perched on her arms with an eyepatch over his left eye. I could see the red flush crawling across Nadia’s neck peeking through some cracks in her otherwise perfect make-up.

“hmm?” Sans sleepily blinked his eyes open. He blushed dark blue upon realizing that there was yet another witness to what the hell was going on, “uhhh…hi.”

“Josephine?” Nadia’s strained voice warbled a bit before raising in volume, “What the hell are you doing!?”

“Cuddling a cute skeleton.” Sans twitched in my arms, “Just cuddling, so get your head out of the gutter. We’re not about to start fucking in my goddamn living room you stupid bitch.”

I could only imagine how dark Sans’s blush had gotten.

“Oh my god.” Nadia sighed an raised on hand to pinch the bridge of her nose, “I didn’t need to see you practically topless, and I most certainly didn’t desire to!”

“Blame Blake.” I shrugged.

“huh?” Blake gave me an offended look, “why’s it my fault?”

“you opened the door before jo could pull a hoodie on or something.” Waltzer chimed in from my chandelier.

“dude, it’s not my fault you’re a partial nudist.” Blake frowned at me.

“Still, quit answering the door when my top’s off. We’ve scared off more than a few mailmen that way.” Nudging Sans off of me, I finally stood up and stretched my legs out. The buzzed with blood and relief. Sans had crossed his legs on my couch, and his blush reminded me of a blueberry, “Did you need something Nadia?”

“PUT A SHIRT ON FIRST YOU SIMPLETON.” Cesar hissed.

“Oh for the love of…"

“So that’s the other sister’s bitty?” Flowey had poked his head back out the other side of the pillow. Wait a minute…is that the pillow Idjit and December made? Ah shi…”there’s going to be a very angry cherry tonight…Flowey cocked his head, “I expected him to be a little more impressive.
He just looks like Papyrus fell into a Hot Topic.”

“EXCUSE ME!” Cesar roared.

“n-noise c-cc-ea-easar.” Idjit peered out from the bitty room, “yo-o-ou’ll s-sca-are c-cyan.”

Cesar growled, but his sharp teeth clicked shut. Idjit glared at Flowey for destroying one of the pillows. He didn’t disappear back into the bitty room until the buttercup hid in the pillow again.

“Nadia.” I snapped my fingers to get my sister’s attention, “What the hell do you want?”

“Our parents contacted me about what you said this morning.” Nadia made a point to not look at me while I didn’t have a top on, “They’re calling a family dinner.”

“Not going to another dinner Nadia.”

“I mean to say a family gathering.” Nadia finally looked at me, “Aunt Catherine, Bobby, and Thomas will be present.”

“Oh so I get to be yelled at by more people.” I huffed and crossed my arms.

“I don’t think that’s it.” Nadia shook her head and bit her lip, “Josephine, the Newmore company was already suffering after Edgar took over its sister company. It’s death was slow enough they could try to avert it, but you’ve publicly called them out on being anti-monster.”

“You’re point?” I was just a web designer who liked art.

“You have friends in high places you idiot!” Nadia finally lost her temper, “They’ve all begun to practically boycott the Newmore company! I think our parents are afraid of what is going to happen next.”

“Ah, they want to do some damage control- try to strong arm me into agreeing with them?” I cocked my head. Nadia nodded.

“They can’t get to you, so they contacted me….Are we going Josephine?”

Nadia’s slightly wild eyes and worried tics let me know she sure as hell didn’t want to go.

“Why the fuck would we go somewhere just to talk in circles?” I snorted, “Sounds pointless to me. We’re not going.”

“Oh thank goodness…” Nadia sighed in relief before frowning, “They’ll want an excuse though.”

Ah shit. An excuse…hmm…

“she’ll have a date.” Sans said from the couch.

WHAT!?

I turned my head sharply to give the cocky skeleton a dark glare.

“A date?” Nadia looked at me with confused eyes, “You have a date? Someone actually wants to take you out on a date?”

"Oww Dia. That hurts. Right here." I shot her a dirty look before turning my attention back
you wanted to see more of the underground right?" Sans shrugged, "why don’t we go then?"

"A date though?" My heart raced a bit.

"Yeah, date implies a sense of privacy right? it’ll give your sis the excuse she needs to bail out too because someone has to look after your little bitties and the pest." Sans’s happy look waned just a little bit, “unless you don’t want to go.”

"Of course I want to go you dense as fuck mother fucker.” A spoon flew out of the kitchen to hit me in the back of the head, “Ouch! Sunny!”

"ah…good…” A small, genuine smile appeared on Sans’s face.

Nadia cleared her throat to get our attention. She looked between the two of us for a couple of minutes before fixing her hair and sighing.

“That would work.” She said simply, “though… I… must admit to never expecting you to like older men Josephine.”

“he’s actually younger.” Blake laughed, “by half a decade.”

“Younger men?” Nadia’s brow raised, “Really?”

“Oh so being a gold digger is fine, but I can’t go on a date with someone who’s 26? Funny double standard.” I snorted.

“Hmm…. A sharp, sinister smile sent a concerned shiver down my spine, “I guess this means after May you’ll be a MILF.”

“You little- Wait…” I paused, “Can I still be a mom someone would like to fuck if I adopted the kid, or does it have to come out of my vag for it to count?”

Nadia turned bright red at her attempt at needling me backfiring. She quickly thanked Sans for the excuse and scurried off after telling us that the date would need to be this upcoming Saturday.

“what’s a MILF?” Sans cocked his head.

“Mom I’d Like to Fuck.” I rubbed my shoulder when pain lanced through it, “It fits since I’m adopting Nadia’s baby, but still….”

“Hmm…” Sans rubbed the top of his head.

“So Mr. Smooth.” I walked over and tilted his head up to look at me, “Where are going to during our romp in the Underground?”

“uh… secret.” Sans said after a few minutes of thought, “i think you’ll like it though.”

“GJ and Sans kissing in a tree K-I-S-S-I-N- TINNY!” I threw a pillow at the bitty room bed bright red, “Not cool!”

“oh so you can sit here and cuddle me somewhat naked, but an elementary school rhyme makes you blush like a virgin?” Sans grinned. I grabbed a pillow and popped him over the head,
“guess I make you feel young again huh?”

I wouldn’t tell him the truth for a while- because I honestly didn’t know the truth myself back then-

...but....

He really did make me feel younger. It was almost like I could regain some of the years from my early twenties whenever he was around.

Still, his head was already big enough back then. He didn't need me adding to it.
“Are you sure you’ll be okay?” Olivia’s voice dripped with genuinely offending concern.

“Livvy,” I said through gritted teeth as worked to get my hair to obey me, “I might not have gone on a date in a while, but even I know how to fucking dress.”

“Umm…” Olivia might’ve been on the other side of a phone call, but I could imagine her face wrinkling with disgust as she remembered my usual wardrobe, “Are you sure?”

“Bye Livvy.” I hung the phone up and fought the urge to throw it into the toilet.

My first date- well, one I actually wanted to go on- in years was about to happen. My date was a respectable guy that I didn’t know much about, but dates were typically used to solve that kind of problem in the first place. Still, anxiety chewed at my stomach. I wasn’t afraid that I wouldn’t look good enough. Sans was a monster, so I sincerely doubted he would have human beauty standards. I was afraid I’d say something stupid and ruin the evening.

“lia?” December knocked politely on the bathroom door.

“You can come in December. I’m dressed.” I called back while finally managing to get my hair into a loose, not frizzy curl. Some part of me had been tempted to go all out like I was some kind of peacock, but common sense spoke up loud enough to remind me I would be wandering through the Underground. Needless to say, I opted for a nice pair of jeans, comfortable sneakers, and clean turtle neck instead of the more Olivia/Nadia like get-up I initially had planned on wearing.

“j-jo..jojo…” Idjit’s voice trailed off as the door completely opened. All of my bitties- and Flowey- were outside. They gawked at me. The little shits actually gawked at me, “y-you’re s-s-o pr- e-et-t-ty…”

“wow ophie.” Waltzer chuckled crossing his arms, “when you actually give a damn you can pass for a model.”

“I’m 5’2 Waltzer. I won’t be a model any time soon.” I snorted while glaring at the make-up on my counter. Should I? Hmmm….Nah. I don’t know how much I’ll be sweating wandering around the Underground, and the last thing I need to leave Sans with tonight is nightmares of my face melting off.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen you dress up this much.” Cyan’s face couldn’t decide if it wanted to express happiness or concern.
“I’ve never actually wanted to make a good impression before.” My arm had thankfully recovered completely, so it no longer ached whenever I moved it too much, “I take it Nadia hasn’t shown up yet?”

“nope, but she’s not running late either.” Blake said after quietly ushering the others out of the way to let me get out of the bathroom, “she should be here any minute though.”

“Why do I have to stay here?” Flowey griped.

“I could always send you to Olivia’s. I hear that she and Pap are having a slumber party to help improve Papyrus’s cooking more…they could always use a Guinea pig for their more experimental dishes.”

“Not a chance in-“ Sunshine glared at him, “heck.”

“We could watch horror movies together Flowey!” Tinsel offered tugging on one of the plant’s loose vines to get his attention, “Snuggle doesn’t care about horror movies.”

Snuggle- who at this point had become Flowey’s favorite thing to perch on besides my arm- didn’t seem to care either way. Please for the love of whatever god is listen, don’t let my bitties end up killing this little shit tonight.

“you betta bring a jacket dumbass.” Raze said throwing one at me, “ya wearing an undershirt in case it gets hot? there’s a lotta differen’ kinds of temps in the underground.”

“Got a thin camisole with a built in bra underneath just in case we go to Hotland or anywhere else really hot.” I showed my bitties the soft gray material, “Didn’t think of a jacket though.”

It took ten minutes of my bitties and I going back and forth on a couple of topics for Nadia to show up. Those ten minutes allowed me to establish that a) Flowey wasn’t to be bullied all night and b) Nadia and Cesar weren’t to be bullied either. As sweet and gentle as my bitties could be to some people, I knew they had vicious sides that could come out.

“Jose…phine….” Nadia looked me up and down the instant I opened the door, “You’re… dressed appropriately for once….did you actually do your hair?”

“No, you took LSD and are having a terrifying hallucination.” I rolled my eyes, “Yes Nadia, I’m dressed in more than ratty sweatpants and an old hoodie. Pick your jaw up and get your ass inside already.”

I quickly texted Sans to let him know that Nadia had arrived, so he could come pick me up. We’d decided to teleport despite my distaste for the method of getting around. People with cameras still created a little, near impenetrable moat around the apartment complex. I didn’t have any plans to ruin my night by getting into a fist fight with a nosy reporter. Thus, I’d bite my tongue and teleport.

“I didn’t realize Sans was Papyrus’s older brother.” Nadia said in the silence that had filled the apartment after the initial excitement for the evening had worn down. Tinsel, Snuggle, Blake, and Flowey were in the bitty room watching a horror movie while Cyan, Waltzer, Sunshine, and Raze were off doing who knows what who knows where. Idjit and December were also under the couch with a little flashlight doing…something involving knitting. Raze isn’t going to be happy they got into his knitting supplies.

“Did I forget to tell you that?” I cocked my head, “Oh I did…well…he is.”
“How did you meet Sans- if you don’t mind me asking.”

Ahhh fuck…got to come up with a lie real quick.

“We were both at the Bitty CC at the same time. He and Dr. Alphys sometimes help the bitty techs learn more about bitties.” I fought the urge to grin at the decent lie. It wasn’t as smooth as it could’ve been, but it made more sense than the other ones whirling around in my head.

“I see.” A sad look crossed Nadia’s face before she forced a bland smile, “Well, I’m glad your life has been good lately.”

“Nadia…”

Any further conversation was interrupted by someone knocking on the door. The look in Nadia’s eyes let me know that a conversation needed to be had at some point, and it damn well would happen eventually.

“We’ll talk later.” I said firmly before grabbing my keys and tucking them into my pockets, “Look after the bitties. If you get hungry, ask Cyan and Sunshine to make you something.”

“Alright.” Nadia nodded.

Sans stood outside my apartment with his hands in his pockets. He didn’t dress up for the trip either, but the black button up he had on looked really good. I- Goddamit Jo, you’re 30 turning 31 not 12 turning 13. No flowery descriptions of bone boy.

“hey newmore.” Sans smiled at me, a slight blush appearing on his cheeks, “your hair is down for once.”

“Yeah.” My hands wanted to run through my hair out of habit, but I didn’t want to undo 47 minutes of work, “We’re gone Nadia.”

“Stay safe.” Nadia ordered quietly.

I stepped out into the hallway and shut the door. Now that I had a little bit more privacy, I could actually not be quite so embarrassed about the fact my mind couldn’t seem to remember that I wasn’t a peppy teenage girl going on her first date. So much for making a good first impression Jo. Dammit!

“you look good.” Sans looked me up and down quickly.

“You too. Though I think that top of yours would look better on my floor.” I winked at him.

“huh, you a mind reader? ’cause i was thinking the same thing, but i didn’t know how to tile you.” Sans offered me his hand, “ready to go? i know teleporting isn’t exactly your favorite thing.”

“It isn’t, but it could be worse.” I bypassed his hand to thrown an arm around his shoulder, “As long as we both show up in once piece, I’ll be fine.”

“that i can do.” Sans wrapped his arms around my waist.

My world began to twist and warp. I quickly closed my eyes and was relieved to find that not taking in the visual distortions made it a little bit easier. My human body still rejected the idea of moving through space and time like it was nothing, but I didn’t feel as terrible as I had the first time Sans and I took one of his ‘shortcuts’.
“we’re here newmore.” Sans said squeezing my waist a little bit, “you okay? need a couple of seconds?”

“Just let my stomach remember where it’s supposed to be.” My eyes opened to find Sans looking up at me. I smiled at the mixture of fear, anxiety, and hope in his eyes. Closing my eyes once more I rested my forehead against his, “You know, I never would’ve thought that I’d end up on a date with a skeleton monster who was unconscious in our first meeting and who slammed me against a wall the first time we actually met.”

“if it helps, i never thought i’d end up on a date with a human.” Sans laughed, “still, could be worse. you could be down here with jerry.”

“Jerry?” I pulled my head back to give him a confused look.

“oh you’ve gotta learn about jerry!” Sans looked like he was about to talk about one of those “so bad it’s good” movies, “trust me. this’ll crack you up.”

“I can’t wait to he..hear about it.” I finally got my first look of where we were. Dark empty space created a void around us. Only the stones beneath our feet glowed with a beautiful blue shimmer, “Holy shit…this is….beautiful.”

“and a bit limited. we should hustle before the floor dims.” Sans kept one arm around my waist, “this way.”

“Right beside you.”

The Underground was as breath taking as I remembered it being despite the shortness of my previous visit. I knew that a roof of rock separated us from the rest of the world. I knew that only about a hundred or so monsters had ever experienced this beautiful world. It saddened me that these natural wonders came with the added baggage of being the prison that separated monsters from the rest of the world. This place could've easily become the next hot vacationing spot in the world.

Sans showed me around some of the more breath taking places. The castle still retained some of the ornate yet humble charm of its king despite falling into disrepair. Waterfall shimmered with beauty in every inch of the glistening gray rock. Even the Ruins had a sense of ancientness that made my breath stop. So much history had been under my feet all this time, and I had never known.

“This place is amazing.” I finally said after Sans teleported us back into an area in Waterfall, “I’m going to be doing a lot of painting when I get home.”

“i’m glad you like it.” Sans wrapped one of his hands around mind while he quickly grabbed an umbrella, “we’ll be needing this.”

“Why?” I cocked my head.

“you’ll see miss impatient.” Sans tucked the umbrella under his arm and began a leisurely pace through the pathways, “honestly, i’d forgotten how beautiful this place could be. too many resets and deaths kind of stained everything gray. now….i can actually appreciate the place I grew up. it’s just sad that in this timeline, frisk might as well have never existed. pap, tori, alph, undyne, asgore, mettatton…there were a lot of people in his life, but now they wouldn’t even recognize their name.”

“It’s not all that bad though.” I rested my head against his skull, “You and Flowey remember him right?”
“true.” Sans squeezed my hand gently. I knew I needed to change the topic, and I knew that I should’ve probably changed it to something lighter. I had questions though. I needed answers.

“So, if you don’t mind me asking of course, what’s your story Sans? Before the resets I mean.” I quickly covered before he could find a loophole, “Between all my chatter while you were in a coma and my recent family drama kicking up, I’d say that you’ve got me a disadvantage in the knowledge department.”

“ah…that’s true.” Sans frowned, “..hmm..”

I waited for him to make his mind up as we walked through the halls. We passed a statue with an umbrella that made something akin to music. Sans’s frown only seemed to deepen as he thought. Way to go Josephine. You might as well have blow torched the nice mood you guys had going.

My self-scolding was interrupted by us approaching an area where rain seemed to fall from nowhere. Sans smiled at my dropped jaw.

“It just…starts in a perfect line…What the fuck?” I looked at him, “Is this why we needed the umbrella?”

“yup.” I was glad Sans didn’t poke fun at my obvious blonde moment. He opened the umbrella, but there was no way from him to comfortably hold it high enough for it to not be a hat on my head, “uhh….well….forgot you’re taller than me.”

“I’ve got it.” I took the umbrella from him and stepped a little bit closer. Sans froze up a little bit, “Dude,” I’m going to kill Blake for adding that word to my vocabulary, “Come closer or you’re going to get soaked.”

“you’re right.” Sans dropped my hand to wrap and arm around my waist, “i’m just thinking about how to answer your question.”

“If it bothers you, don’t answer.” We began to walk under the water. The rain and umbrella seemed to make music for us, “I don’t want to make you uncomfortable.”

“it’s not that.” Sans shook his head, “i just haven’t talked about it in a while. even pap and i just prefer to not talk about it. well, i guess i should start with the simple bits. my mother was a kind skeleton woman named verdana and my father was wing ding gaster- though he typically just went by w.d. gaster.”

“Quick question sweetheart.” I said before he continued, “What is it with your family and font names. I have a feeling it’s a monster thing I’m not getting.”

“skeletons all have font first names because that’s what we sound like to other monsters. humans can’t hear the difference, but someone like undyne or asgore can tell if its me or pap speaking- if we’re both muffled to be at the same volume- because of our different font types.” Sans paused and sighed, “my full name is comic sans gaster, but pap and i dropped gaster as our last name after we moved out of our dad’s house.”

“Comic Sans Gaster….” I grinned as I realized something, “I take it you don’t like your first name?”

“who in their right mind wants to be named comic? wait. don’t tell me. i don’t ever want to know their type.” Sans got a bit wet when I nudged him roughly for the joke.
“You said your mother was killed by the sixth human?” I quietly asked after a couple of heartbeats of silence.

“Mom was a lot like pap—kind, sweet, and painfully naïve. She hoped a bit of kindness would help, but the kid was just too far gone at that point. Dad found her dusted near the lab in Hotland.” Sans’s eyes darkened, “After that, he kind of went off the deep end. He focused so much on his research that Pap and I had to start caring for ourselves, or we’d have ended up dead somewhere. Eventually, we moved to Snowdin because we couldn’t take the verbal abuse he’d dish out after coming home. Though…I still wish I could’ve made up with him. I went to visit him to talk about the future and what not. He tried to shoo me off, so I got in his way. That…ended poorly for all parties. My HP went from a healthy, young 15 to .5 in the resulting magical explosion. He…he took the brunt of it for me. To this day, we don’t know where his dust is, and my HP had risen to 1 after a lot of medical treatments. Your determination brought it up to 3, so I’m as healthy as I’ve ever been since the accident.” Sans and I finally exited the rainy room. We were on a mountain ledge with the most beautiful view I’d seen that day, “So that’s it. That’s my story. Sorry if it’s a bit too heavy.”

“Sans,” I placed the umbrella aside and tugged the skeleton towards me by his shoulders, “I asked because I wanted to know. I want to know all about you bone head.”

“I doubt that.” Sans chuckled.

“Then you’re a dumbass.” I said simply. He frowned, “Thankfully, you’re still an adorable dumbass, so I don’t mind putting up with your nihilistic attitude and self-deprecation.”

“Oh, so I’m adorable now?” Sans raised a brow.

“Yeah…Comic.” I leaned forward and pressed a kiss to his cheek, “Besides, dates are private events to let the two people get to know about each other in the first place. I’d rather go ahead and air all of our dirty laundry from the get go.”

Sans had flushed to a nearly alarming shade of dark blue. Then a wicked grin crossed his face. His arms wrapped around my waist, and he tugged me forward hard enough to make me stumble into him. I wrapped my arms around his neck to steady myself.

“Sans?” My voice had lowered some.

“Not too much?”

“More like not enough.” I snorted, “You’d better swing if you’re going to getting to the batter’s box.”

“Guess I can only hope this is a home run then.”

Cold teeth pressed against my lips. It was a simple, chaste kiss. He didn’t exactly have much to work with after all.

My heart still raced a mile a minute though.

* I thought the toe curling, internal fireworks thing was only found in the movies…shit. All of my exes can go fuck a donkey. This hands down wins best kiss of my goddamn life.

It was a new experience for both of us—fresh, foreign, and a bit scary. I had no idea how to properly kiss a skeleton back, and Sans didn’t really know how to kiss in the first place. If anything, a love guru would probably rate our kiss as sub-par. The small hearts in Sans’s eyes spoke otherwise.
“well?” Sans’s voice had a slight gravelly quality to it. *Fuuucckkk…I will be taking a long shower tonight.*

“It was quite the curve ball.” I finally said, “…I think I need to see it again though.”

Sans seemed happy to commit to a repeat performance.

We left the Underground after a nice dinner Sans had teleported off to set up while I had been playing with the echo flowers in Waterfall. I recognized my sister’s handiwork in the small mixture, so I made a mental note to thank her. Sans and I spoke about simpler, less heavy topics over dinner. All of our skeletons were out for the world to see. There wasn’t much else for us to hide. Thus, we could appreciate the little things.

“led zeppelin…umm….never heard of it.” Sans scratched his skull.

“Oh that will be remedied quickly.” I began to sing way off key. Sans began to laugh, but he didn’t cover his ears, “Holy shit you didn’t cringe.”

“hard to cringe at a cute human.”

“Jeez Comic.” I blushed, “Trying to make me feel like I’m fifteen again?”

“if it’s a good thing,” Sans winked at me, “how come i have the feeling you aren’t dropping my first name any time soon?”

“Because I’m not. Does it bug you?”

“not really.”

“Good.” I winked, “By the way, Olivia, Leo, and I were talking about going somewhere over spring break if you and Pap want to come. We were thinking about going to a beach.”

Sans actually seemed excited at the idea. *He might've never seen an actual ocean before...*

After Sans and I cleaned everything up, he took me home.

My bitties had tried to pry small details out of me after the whole experience. Idjit, Cyan, and December had caught our chaste kiss in the hallway, so the boys had a lot of ammo to run with. Nadia really only agitated the situation by asking what base Sans got to.

I don’t think my face had ever been that red in my life, and I was including anger induced red in that observation.

Still…

That had been one of the best evenings of my life, and it marked a new chapter in my life. It would quickly become a chapter I equally loved and hated.
A Rough Twelve Hours

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except for Tinsel) Full disclaimer/ links can be found in Ch1

Josie Jo can't catch a break can she?

Also, I'm thinking about doing a shorter story for Olivia before starting Burned Family because Burned starts a solid year after the events of Patchwork, and I don't want new relationships coming out of nowhere. I'll let you guys know when I have a more solid plan. Right now, I just need to get the last 11 chapters of Patchwork written up.

The bar Tyrone chose to drag Leo and I to practically simmered with tension.

It had been a few good weeks since King Asgore really begun to hammer the humans with the bloody history that led to the wrongful imprisonment of the good monsters with the bad, and people still struggled to come to terms with the new facts about the part of human history everyone seemed to want to forget. Anti-monster groups- especially ones backed by my parents- were increasing the amount of trouble they were making for any monster or pro-monster human that crossed their path. A couple of people had tried to jump me after my brief statement about my parents. Most of the “jumps” were pathetic at best and didn’t really inspire fear into me.

“You’re sure that you’re safe in the apartment?” Tyrone asked for what felt like the seventeenth time that evening. His hand cradled a beer bottle that was still over halfway full.

“Yes Ty. The guards are all armed and trained to protect the rich celebrities and public government officials that live in the complex.” I sipped on my water carefully. Even if I hadn’t promised Idjit to never drink again, I wouldn’t have been able to enjoy a bit of vodka. All of the glares on my back acted as the worst kind of mood killer. My teeth gritted at my inability to see what was going on behind me, but I wasn’t about to have Leo or Tyrone take the seat that would be in the most danger if the other people in the bar decided to do something stupid.

“Papyrus seems blissfully unaware at least.” Leo sighed running a hand through his hair. Ember sat on his human’s arm with his eyes trained on the people behind me, “I spoke with him and Olivia after eating dinner at her restaurant, and I think Sans has been trying to keep Pap out of all this mess.”

“He is.” I remembered Papyrus’s displeasure at being teleported to and from work every day. It wasn’t a pretty time for the skeleton brother’s relationship, but Sans’s paranoia was justified. Monster assaults increased in number with each passing day. Sadly, monster retaliation also increased, “The whole world is freaking out over nothing. Just let them become citizens already.”

“If only the world worked like that.” Tyrone sighed, “How is your bone baby doing now that I think about it.”

“You are never going to let me live down calling him that a couple of days ago are you?”

“He’d be a terrible friend if he did.” Leo grinned for the first time that evening.
“I hate you both.” I groaned before biting my lip and thinking. Eventually, my concerns found their way into our conversation, “He’s pretending everything’s fine, and he can’t exactly be jumped because he doesn’t walk anywhere. Still, his constant hovering over Papyrus is starting to wear him down. I don’t know what to do at this point.”

It wasn’t like I could tell a guy who I had only been really dating for about a week to relax about something like this. Hell, I was constantly checking in on Olivia and Nadia every day to make sure they made it to and from wherever they were going safely. Granny had actually hired some of her old body guards to look after Olivia’s restaurant and the Bitty CC day and night. Thankfully, the police were keeping a protective eye on the monster neighborhoods around the clock, so Kidd and his parents and other monster families- these stupid bastards don’t realize that they’re hurting and killing someone’s mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, UGH- from being hurt in the sanctuary of their homes.

“Do you mind if we bring some more monsters with us Leo?” I questioned my short friend, “I want to give them all a bit of a break from this bullshit if I can.”

“Sure. I don’t care.” Leo shrugged, “I mean we’re going to a public…wait….we’re going to the Arietta private beach aren’t we?”

_How is it he can read my mind._

“I thought you had to have your parent’s permission to go to the private beach?” Tyrone took a swig from his drink.

“Actually, Bobby controls the beach now. He told me he doesn’t care as long as we don’t make a mess or anything.” The Arietta private beach was a family heirloom of my late great grandmother that was passed down to Aunt Catherine’s second son. It was heavily guarded to prevent trespassers, and it’s main use was to throw galas, family weddings and other major events, and essentially act as a sanctuary for the Arietta family, “Technically, it should be Dante’s, but since he lives in Italy, he gave it to Bobby.”

“Your family is so weird with all of the properties it owns.” Tyrone chuckles, “You just hand them around like candy.”

“We fight over them like candy to. Good land is good money.” Between the Newmore and Arietta side of my family, there was enough land and property to start a small country….well…there had been. My dad was running the Newmore company into the ground, and the Arietta sister company in the hands of my incompetent mother and aunt was a couple of breaths away from dying. Only Granny’s separate company, my business, and Olivia’s restaurant were the thriving at this point, “I honestly think my family is going to start selling a lot of shit soon. My folks are bleeding themselves dry.”

“They also won’t be getting anything from Granny’s inheritance either.” Leo was chewing on the inside of his cheek, “I’m really starting to wonder how they’re still alive at this point.”

“Intimidation, scamming, and blackmail.” Tyrone answered simply, “Daniel and Clara Newmore could get away with a lot of shit when their company was at its prime, but now that it’s starting to crumble, people are coming out of the woodwork to press charges.”

“How long until it all falls apart?” I had nothing to fear in this matter. My reputation was carefully cultivated over time and independent of my family name, so my business had more to fear from me being shot by an anti-monster protesters than anything else.
“A couple of months- a year if they’re lucky.” Tyrone speculated.

All of the hard work- that I must begrudgingly applaud my piece of shit grandfather Stephen for- was going to be rendered useless by my stupid father. The legacy that he had poured his soul into would crash and burn because my parents couldn’t get their greedy heads out of their own asses to look at the world. Granny would survive fine, and the Arietta name would continue with Bobby’s steady work hidden behind Thomas’s womanizing infamy.

In short, I thought about actually convincing my sisters to just change our maiden names to Arietta because the Newmore name was about to be destroyed utterly and complete. I couldn’t though. I’d almost done it once when I was younger and more rebellious, and if I couldn’t do it then, I couldn’t do it now. The name was a badge of pride I wore to piss my parents off.

Josephine Ophelia Arietta Newmore would look at her parents’ downfall briefly before walking forward. The irony was delicious. Our conversation had turned to a lighter topic during my brief mental celebration.

“Are you sure you can’t get time off Ty?” Leo cocked his head.

“Nope. I’m going to be really busy over spring break, but you guys had better go out and enjoy yourselves.” Tyrone ruffled his hair affectionately before giving me a steady look, “It’d be good for you to be out of the line of fire for a little while.”

“You know me Ty. I’m a bad luck charm.” I shrugged dramatically, “Got to help those gray hairs of yours come out somehow.”

“I’d prefer it if you didn’t.” He grumbled and patted his neatly cropped hair. I kept wanting to see him with dreadlocks, but he wanted to keep a “professional” look that didn’t make him look like a professional pimp, “Though if we want to talk about age, how about we talk about how teenage your texts sound whenever you’re talking about your new boyfriend.”

“Ha.” Leo snickered, “I don’t think I’ve ever heard someone wax poetry about a skeleton in such an immature way before.”

“Shut up.” I blushed bright red.

“No. No. This needs to-“

“Miss Joan!” Ember shot up immediately.

The hair on the back of my neck rose. I dove down in time to avoid having a beer bottle cracked over the top of my head. A surly looking drunk with blood shot eyes spat at me as he raised the bottle again. The booze had slowed him down some, so my fist connected with his jaw long before he could take another swing. I felt the satisfying snap of his jaw break. He screamed out in pain dropping the bottle to cradle his jaw. The instant his guard was down, I ribbed Tyrone’s beer bottle from his hand and slammed down on the bastard’s head. A knife tumbled out of his pocket as he went down.

Panting, wild, and alert, adrenaline ran through my veins like fire as all hell broke loose.

I didn’t know what set all of these guys off, but they weren’t happy with me.

“Josie!”

“Etta!”
I could see Tyrone looking ready to pummel someone.

“Go get the cops.” I snapped at the both of them. My resulting break in concentration earned me a lovely shiner, “Now! You’re just in the way!”

Reluctantly, they escaped with Ember while I flipped a guy over my shoulder.

*My back slammed against the ground painfully. A group of older, stronger athletes sneered down at me.*

“Little girls shouldn’t fight. Don’t you know? You’ll never be pretty acting like this.”

“Really?” I spat out some blood, “Because all I’ve got in front of me are a pair of bitches.”

*I got pummeled a lot more for that.*

*Pain followed by more pain. More pain followed by humiliation. Humiliation accompanied by shame. Shame eventually beaten by pride when I managed to finally get skilled enough to beat someone’s ass myself. Years of taking the brunt of Leo’s bullying along with my own left my body sturdy and my mind clear enough to handle just about any intense situation.*

Now…

My nose was bleeding like crazy. My shoulder had been dislocated again, and all of the punches I threw tore off a good bit of flesh from my knuckles. I had a nasty black eye. A ringing sound fucked with my balance a little after I relocated my shoulder with a wall before throwing another punch. My stomach was covered in bruises.

Fuck.

I probably looked like shit.

After what felt like forever of taking lesser hits, dodging more lethal ones, and delivering a few crippling blows of my own, the police finally showed up and tugged the remaining four men off of my finally beaten down body. I couldn’t remember how I ended up on the ground, but I remembered the one rule I had learned: the instant you can’t get up in a heartbeat after being thrown down, you’re fucked. Instinctively, I had curled in on myself to protect vital organs and my head.

I still managed to KO about five guys, pummel another three, and break the arms of two more before becoming the one being beaten up.

*I think…I have a concu…concusio…*

I blacked out when the medics began to question me.

Later, I would learn that I had successfully protected my organs from the brutal jabs that left my legs covered in bruises. I did have a concussion, but a little bit of Toriel’s healing magic quickly solved that.

The goat woman—who had been contacted by Leo—fretted over me.

“I don’t want your body to get to used to being healed by monster magic, but…” She trailed off. Magic, while extremely useful in a pinch, could cause human bodies to not heal as fast or as efficiently if it was over used.

“My face looks like shit?” My lips were a bit swollen.
“Yes…” Her warm paw cradled my face carefully.

“It’s fine Toriel. Just give me some ice and some painkillers. This isn’t my first rodeo.” I waved a way her concern with my sprained wrist, “By the way, has Sans or Papyrus talked about all of us going to be beach over spring break? I thought you might like to come. Get away from all of this doom and gloom and violence for a while.”

“Josephine.” Toriel glared at me, “Now isn’t the time to be worrying about me off all people.”

“But I always worry about my friends.” I laughed and regretted it immediately when the bruises on my torso reminded me they were there, “Ow. Shit. Eh, I’m fine Toriel. Really. This isn’t anything compared to what I’ve been through.”

“Is that supposed to make me feel better?” She asked wryly.

“It was, but I can tell it didn’t.”

In the end, Toriel patched up my lips and jaw a bit before making sure one final time my spine was okay. I still had a broken nose, black eye, sprained wrist, formerly dislocated shoulder, and bruises everywhere, but injuries like those would heal relatively easily.

Tyrone already had one of his contacts ready to get the guys who attacked me thrown behind bars. He’d do it himself, but he’d prefer to make sure there was one steady witness that couldn’t be turned into mincemeat by the defense.

It was about two in the morning when I finally returned home.

“jojo/ophie/Miss Josie/Josephine/ari/lia/GJ/speck/you!”

I had a small group of bitties slamming into the bruises on my legs. Flowey wrapped himself around my uninjured shoulder.

“Ow. Ow. Ow. I love you guys, but please no. My painkillers aren’t kicking in fully.” I winced. They all immediately released me, “Sorry boys.”

“you were attacked?” Blake asked as he guided me to the couch, “why? what asshole would just randomly try to get into a fistfight with some woman!?”

“I’ll go get some ice.” Cyan said, “Sunshine, why don’t you and Tinsel go get some blankets. I don’t think she’s going to be moving any time soon.”

“ophie?” Waltzer teleported onto the couch behind my shoulder. His chilled bone hands ran through my hair, “how bad are you feeling.”

“Roughed up a bit. Nothing too bad. Just give me a couple of days to let the bruising go down, and I’ll be right as rain.” I tried my best to assure them.

They weren’t swayed. Flowey hissed at me for the statement.

“Just shut up and stay still you idiot.” He groused. He glowed faintly. The stiffness in my shoulder didn’t feel as bad.

“Flowey, my body doesn’t need to get to used to monster heal-“

“Shut it. I’m not healing you. You said your painkillers aren’t working.”
“Okay then…” I didn't want to know.

“lia…” December whimpered from where he and Idjit had a death grip on my bandaged hands.

Snuggle was double checking all of my bandages and braces.

“To answer your question Blake, the guys said they were pissed off I was dating a monster.” My back ached like a mother fucker as I tried to settle down more comfortably, “That and they recognized me from that news cast a few days ago.”

“that’s so stupid.” Blake fumed.

“Humans are stupid sweetie.” I wriggled one of my hands free to pick Blake up and press a kiss to his lips, “It’s just a part of life. Still, I've got you guys to help me out whenever I get like this right?”

The next morning, I woke up to strong hands brushing my hair back from my face. My eye that wasn’t swollen shut opened to look at Sans. There were faint lines running down his face. My bitties- and Flowey- were scattered about the apartment, but from the snippets of conversation I could hear, they were still fussing about my condition. This is like November all over again. That thought made me chuckle a bit.

“penny for your thoughts?” Sans asked hoarsely, “because i’d love to know what makes this so funny.”

“Reminds me of last November. You were still out, so you won’t get the humor.” My voice cracked from my sleep, “Good morning Comic.”

“how can you be so casual about this?” Sans gritted his teeth, “leo told me ahead of time that you’re a bit of an idiot when it comes to your physical health, but…damn…”

“What was I supposed to do Sans? Lay down and get beaten up more?” I struggled to sit up because of the screaming stiffness in my body. He quickly moved to help me, but I held up a hand, “I defended myself as best I could. I couldn’t do much obviously, but I didn’t exactly go picking this fight. Hell, I’d probably have glass shards in my head if Ember hadn’t called out to me in time.”

Sans watched with a pained expression as I hefted myself into an upright position.

“you could’ve just run.” Sans’s hand reached out for mine, but he seemed unsure as to whether or not I was angry at him. I wasn’t. I tugged him into a close hug, “why didn’t you?”

“Because I needed to make sure that Leo and Tyrone could get out before they got hurt.”

“why not after that then?”

“I was knee deep in guys trying to punch a hole in my face Sans.” I rubbed the top of his skull soothingly, “All I could really focus on was trying to not get hit.”

“leo said that the guys lost it because…you guys started talking about us?”

Oh hell no mister. No “It’s all my fault” angst will occur dammit!

“They also recognized me as being pro-monster.” I pulled Sans into a tighter hug. My bruises were trying to kill me with pain for the action, but Sans seemed really shaken up by this.
“what if you had died though? there’s no way for me to get you back…ever.”

Ahh…

“You’d still have part of me.” I chided him pulling back to poke his forehead, “So don’t be so stupid.”

Sans looked at me like I was a madwoman.

“Anyways.” I nonchalantly tugged Sans onto my lap. Was he always this heavy or are my injuries just making me feel like he’s heavy? It was nice to have something to cuddle however, “I managed to get Toriel to agree to go hang out with us over spring break, so the line-up will be me, Leo, Olivia, Nadia, our bitties, you, Pap, Toriel, Asgore, Dr. Alphys, Undyne, someone named Mettaton, and Flowey.”

Sans continued to look at me like I was crazy before finally breaking down into tear filled laughter.


“you’re right. you’re right.” He laughed pitifully, “you still probably took a couple of years off my lifespan though. jeez…”

Sans’s arms wrapped around me and he held me close.

“Hey comedian!” Flowey spat the instant he peered out the bedroom…to…check on me I guess, “Get your fat pelvic bone off of the injured party.”

“make me weed.”

“Yooouuu…” Flowey’s face morphed into something a wee bit horrifying.

Huh…well…I’ll be adding that sketch to my nightmare collection.

“for once i agree with the weed.” Waltzer said teleporting in front of the couch, “move it sans. i don’t play games when it comes to my human.”

“don’t wanna.” Sans sagged against me. It hurt, but it also made me laugh.

Suddenly, vines wrapped around him.

“gah shit.”

The resulting fight broke my coffee table- my good one.

I also got a phone call from my landlady….

Yeah…I had had a rough twelve hours.
Beach Break

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except Tinsel who is now and adoptable on my tumblr). Full disclaimer/links can be found in Ch1.

Sooo...I'm trying to keep this as general as possible, so no sex will occur in this story. I might do something in the Addendum- which I will be heavily updating sometime soon. I've got a lot of stuff to add to it, and I'll be taking the time this weekend to sit down and write it all out.

Crystal blue waters gently crashed into white sand. An evening sunrise painted the sky every color from blood red to dark blue.

“Wow.” Cyan marveled at the expansive beach front, “This is amazing.”

“Worth the drive?” I asked while trying to wake up one of my feet.

“yup.” Waltzer accidentally slip down in front of my face in his awe, "it's beautiful."

The other members of our little group were finishing their unpacking while Flowey, my bitties, and I took a look at the beach. My main concern was making damn sure that no one could bother us, but the boys seemed more interested in actually trying to explore the sand. The security guards were close enough to keep an eye on things. Luckily, they weren't close enough to be an eyesore. We were trying to forget all of the troubles in Grayridge after all.

“Which house are the girls staying in again?” Toriel called out to me.

“Left.” I called back.

The beach front had two small houses on it- one made for Granny and her family, one made for Aunt Juno and her family. Toriel and I decided it would probably be best to separate the guys into a different house to avoid overcrowding. Sans seemed put out by the decision, but there were other places I could take him for a bit of privacy.

“how’s your bruising doing ari?” Blake questioned glancing down at the hoodie and jeans I wore.

“Not as bad as they once were.” My eye was still slightly swollen though. Overall, the stiffness in my body wasn’t as bad as it had been. Between some carefully planned magical healing sessions and Sans distracting me with cuddles, my body had gotten the down time it needed to mostly recover, “My knuckles still sting like crazy though.”

“Do you need more healing GJ?” Tinsel glanced down at my bandaged hand.

“Nah.” I shook my head, gently to avoid dislocating Waltzer from his perch.

“Hey human!” Undyne’s loud call quickly caught my attention, “The queen wants to know what bedroom your taking!”
“Coming.” I called back to her before promising my bitties, “We’ll get to see more tomorrow. Okay?”

It took everyone a little while to settle in- mostly because there was a limited number of rooms. I ended up bunking with Toriel to let Dr. Alphys room with Undyne like she wanted to. Olivia and Nadia were sleeping in the final room of the house, and all six of us had already begun debating what to eat.

“Should be see if the guys want to eat together?” Olivia asked.

“Leo already ordered some take-out.” Cyan made a disgusted face. I doubted he would be able to eat any form of fast food or take-out after all the time he and Sunshine spent making food themselves, “They’re fine.”

“Cyan and I can cook a variety of things.” Sunshine chimed in, “We just need to know what you’d like.”

“Hmmm…” Toriel raised her chin to her paw, “What do we have in the fridge?”

“A variety of things. I asked Bobby to have someone deliver some food before our arrival.” Nadia carefully examined Cesar’s eye from where she sat with him on the couch, “We could probably make just about anything.”

“Lasagna!” Oliva finally decided to break the silence, “I want to help cook it though.”

“I could make some pie for dessert.” Toriel offered.

“pie?” Hiro’s eyes turned into bright stars, “pie sounds AMAZING!”

“u-uh o-oh…” Idjit carefully moved December to stand behind Raze some more as Hiro got more and more excited, “he’s…g-ge-et-t-t-ing al-l-l w-worked u-up…”

“Lasagna and pie.” Dr. Alphys chuckled, “That’s fine by me…um…Undyne?”

“That’s fine! I want to have a crack at it too though!” Undyne warned.

“Oh dear.” Toriel murmured.

“Well, while you guys destroy the kitchen, I’m grabbing a shower.” My hair was tangled from the car ride, “I need to work all of this mess out. Make sure to not splash Sunshine or Tinsel!”

“i’ll make sure to keep them out of splashing range.” Blake promised me.

“don’t slip ya stupid bi-“ Sunshine glared at his mate, “-human.”

Snuggle tugged on one of Flowey’s petals to get the flower’s attention. He slowly signed, ‘Do you want to go look out some of the windows?’

“Fine.” Flowey sighed.

Since I was the first one to grab a shower, I made sure to hog all of the hot water. The warm currents felt great against my healing bruises. All of the stiffness from the card ride faded away.

*Oh. Forgot my clothes.... Whatever. We're all grown women.*

I wrapped a towel around my waist and wrapped my hair up in a towel to keep from
dripping water everywhere. Once I was certain I wouldn’t leave trails of water drops everywhere, I exited the bathroom to go grab some cloth-

**BANG! THUMP! CRASH!**

“What in the hell?” I hurried to the living room kitchen fusion.

“Queen Toriel!” Dr. Alphys squeaked, “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine.” Toriel laughed, “I just slipped on some butter that fell to the floor.”

“Sorry about that.” Waltzer rubbed the back of his skull, “didn’t realize i hadn’t gotten all of it up.”

“Do I want to know?” I called out to get their attention.

They all turned to look at me. Immediately, almost all of them flushed bright red and looked away.

“Sissy!” Olivia whined while quickly grabbing Hiro and Harley to hide me from their line of sight, “Why are you naked!?”

“I have a towel on.” I rolled my eyes, “Toriel? Did you hurt yourself when you fell?”

“N-No my dear.” Toriel kept her paws in front of her eyes, “As glad as I am to see that your body is recovering…it is a bit awkward to see…so much of it.”

“ari, quit streaking in the beach house.” Blake tossed a pillow at me, “you almost scarred Flowey for life.”

Said buttercup was making a point of staring right out the window.

“You’ve actually got good muscles.” Undyne randomly commented.

“Huh?” I looked down and realized that she wasn’t lying, “Oh yeah. The schedule Blake and the others made for me included time for me to exercise since my job isn’t physically demanding. I guess it’s been working. I don’t think I’ve looked this good since I was diagnosed with cancer.”

My physical prime had most certainly been in college. I could easily carry Leo back then, and that vitality is what gave me a slight edge in my following battle with cancer. After the diagnosis and treatment, I began to fear the sun, and I was also busy trying to get my business off the ground. In other words, I had less time for exercise. To make matter worse, my mood tended to make me not care about how my body was health wise. Then…the bitties came, and I started caring because I wanted to protect them. Now…I was getting back in shape, and I liked it a lot more than I thought I would.

“I wonder if I could pick up Leo now?” I flexed my muscles experimentally. My routine included a lot of upper body training to help keep my arms in shape and make fighting a little bit easier.

“Please ponder this after you go put a shirt on!” Nadia growled while protectively covering Cesar’s eyes. The following chorus of agreement followed me out of the living room.

“I gotta ask you something.” Undyne said, also following me back to my shared room with Toriel.
“Shoot.”

“Can I work out with you!?” The request came out in a hurry. She blushed a little bit, “Most human gyms don’t want me in there…”

“Of course Undyne,” I smiled at her, “I got my work out stuff under my bed back at my apartment. Swing by sometime, and we can work out together.”

For the first time since I met her, I think I actually succeeded in making Undyne smile.

“You’re not so bad human.” Undyne pulled me into a rough noogie, “For a human at least.”

“Whatsoever you say.” I shrugged.

The rest of our evening was a little less slapstick and more- surprisingly- gossip girl like. Nadia, Toriel, and I tended to just sit back while Dr. Alphys, Undyne, and Olivia chattered on about various things. Every now and then Olivia would try to pry into my relationship with Sans, but my lips stayed sealed. We decided to turn in early- unlike the guys who were still doing something in the other beach house- that way we could wake up earlier to enjoy the beach.

“Excuse me Flowey,” Toriel said politely stepping over some of his vines, “I almost didn’t see your…feet there.”

“Huh?” Flowey avoided looking at Toriel, “Can’t feel much if they’re far away from me, so it’s fine if they get stepped on.”

“ugghhh….” Waltzer was flopped on the rim of Flowey’s flower pot. The buttercup hissed at him, but he just tugged on one of Flowey’s petals roughly to shut the little monster up, “your cooking is sooo good Toriel.”

“You really need to show us some of your tricks sometime.” Sunshine pleaded quietly.

“Of course my dear,” Toriel rubbed the top of his head.

The next morning, everyone woke up pretty early to get dressed. The first time I saw the skimpy, scarlet bikini Granny had snuck into my closet, I wanted to burn it. Now, I was glad I kept the damn thing. It was still a bit more skin than I was used to showing in public, but I didn’t really care. We were on a private beach for fuck’s sake.

“what the fuck.” Raze narrowed his eyes at me.

“This is my swimsuit.” I shrugged.

“did they run out of invisible ones?” Blake cocked his head with a slight disapproving look.

“guys.” Waltzer hit both of them, “she’s not some teenager to push around you know.”

“You look pretty GJ!” Tinsel smiled up at me.

“I wonder what Papa is going to say…” Cyan trailed off.

“Honestly.” These guys have seen me walk around in less. Come on.

It was still a bit cold when Toriel- dressed in a nice one piece- and I joined the others outside. Nadia’s baby bump actually showed in her simple off-white one piece. Olivia looked as amazing as always in some frilly pink bikini.
“Sissy!” Olivia gasped, “You look hot!”

“Thanks Livvy.” I said dryly while settling my bitties down on some of the towels, “Make sure to swat at any birds that try to grab you guys, and you’d better not go swimming without a human or monster with you.”

My bitties all nodded. Cyan and Waltzer settled down on the towel together while Tinsel-followed by his parents- hurried around to examine the sands. Idjit, December, and Blake began to experiment with the sand while Flowey and Snuggle quietly began to read a book.

Undyne had already begun to enjoy the salt water by the time I began to wade into the chilly water.

“Ahh…” I sighed after I got used to the temperature, “I need to come swim more often.”

I had been enjoying my brief reprieve when my feet were ripped out from under me. I caught myself before I got seriously hurt, and I didn’t come up swinging once I heard Undyne’s laughter.

“Is that how it’s going to be fishwoman?” I raised a brow threateningly.

“What are you going to do about it?” She retorted putting a fist on her hip.

Cue a man/lesbian’s wet dream: slippery women wrestling…well…it probably would’ve been more appealing if we were two bimbos with tits the size of our heads, but I like to imagine we would’ve gotten at least a few people off.

“Don’t aggravate your injuries Josephine!” Toriel called out to me.

“I’m fine Toriel! She’s been in a coma for-“ I was dunked under water briefly, “-a while! All of her muscles have atrophied over time.”

“I’ll show you!” Undyne then proceeded to throw me into deeper waters.

“Ooohh…you’re going to pay for that!” I said the instant my head got above water again.

“LOOK BROTHER! THE GIRLS AND WOMEN ARE ALREADY OUTSIDE!”

Undyne and I paused our water wrestling to look at the men who finally decided to join us.

“Hey guys.” I began to wade back up to shore. That was when I noticed another male monster had joined the party, “Grillby? When did you get here?”

“he arrived last…” Sans paused finally getting a quick look at me. He recovered quickly, “-night. He had to make sure his niece was okay at her friend’s house before he could show up.”

“I’m glad you made it man.” I waved politely. Fearing for his safety, I didn’t get too close, “Nadia, Olivia, this is Grillby. Grillby, these two are my sister’s Nadia and Olivia.”

“Hi!” Olivia waved from where she and Hiro were playing in the shallows.

“Greetings.” Nadia was sprawled out on one of the towels reading a magazine. She looked up and politely smiled at the flame monster.

“Woah! Joan.” Leo blinked looking me up and down, “This isn’t a Playboy audition you know.”
“I know, but you need the right kind of uniform to play baseball.” I winked at Leo. Only the humans and Sans got that reference. Nadia choked on her drink while Sans flushed dark blue, “Anyways, King Asgore! Quit hiding back there! Undyne and I were wrestling earlier, and I want to see how I’d got up against you!”

“Ah…I’m not one for avoidable conflict…” He murmured quietly. Toriel gave him a brief, scathing looking.

The awkward ex-couple in our group aside, the rest of our day on the beach was spent in harmony. A few media groups had tried to enter the private beach, but the security guards hauled their asses off quickly. We also had a few splash scares with Grillby, Tinsel, Ember, and Sunshine, but everyone was on their toes enough to avoid hurting them.

It was later that day- early evening- when Sans finally managed to pull me aside from the friendly group gathering on the beach.

“so uh…hmmm…” Sans’s hands were on my waist, “i don’t know if i should say thank you for the good show or be jealous that all the other guys out here also got an eyeful.”

“The other guys are a man who’s ex-wife was here, my best friend who’s seen me naked, your close friend who obviously seemed more interested in Nadia, and your cinnamon roll of a brother.” I laughed, “Trust me when I say they weren’t paying me too much attention. Honestly Comic, you’ve seen me in just a bra and sweat pants before.”

“yeah, but there was a bra and sweatpants.” Sans chuckled, “this doesn’t leave much to the imagination.”

“Kind of the point.” I winked at him before pulling him into an innocent looking embrace, “Bikinis are what make some fantasies reality…kind of like the interesting things I have in my dresser at home.”

Sans’s arms wrapped tightly around my waist.

“you are a tease.”

“Don’t have to be. There’s a cove nearby.”

I forgot how awkward it was to come up with excuses to get some privacy in a group setting, but thankfully, Asgore recognized what the hell was going on and helped us get out there with a deep blush on his face. Blake and Waltzer also gave me a knowing look- the former face palming and the latter giving me two thumbs up.

If the other women found my late return to the beach house suspicious, they didn’t say anything. Toriel also didn’t comment on the already fading new additions to my bruising either.

I boned a skeleton.

Well….that’s something I can check off of my nonexistent bucket list.

The rest of our spring break was spent relaxing and not turning on the news. It was nice to not have to worry about being shot at, hounded by the paparazzi, or beaten up for no goddamn reason beyond the fact I was romantically and sexually involved with a skeleton. The brief period of little stress worked wonders on the stress furrowing Asgore’s brow and weighing down Nadia’s shoulders. Though we did have a day of trying to locate the fluffy younger siblings when they wandered into town without telling everybody, causing a massive panic when we all finally noticed
that the two cinnamon fluff balls couldn’t be located anywhere.

I’ll be honest.

I didn’t want to go back to Grayridge.

If I could’ve stayed on that beach with everyone forever, I would have done so in a heartbeat. It was peaceful, serene, and nowhere near as difficult as life in the city was. I didn’t have to worry about being jumped on the streets or fret about my friends’ safety. They were all within rescuing distance, happy and peaceful.

Real life doesn’t allow for people to have too much of a good thing though.

Asgore had already gotten calls from his associates at work. Olivia and Papyrus were losing money every day they had the restaurant- while it was extremely popular- closed. Dr. Alphys and Sans had research to continue, and Undyne’s therapist wasn’t happy she was missing sessions. Leo also had to be back in time to make sure the rest of his schedule was okay for the rest of the school year.

We had to go back.

“we need to come back here some time.” Sans said. He and I stood on the beach while everyone else finished gathering their things. My bitties had found various perches on the both of us. For once, none of my bitties had to squeeze tightly together on my shoulders or be tucked away in my hoodie. Idjit and December sat perched on one of Sans’s shoulders while Cyan sat on top of his head. It was cute to look at to say the least.

“We can.” I wrapped my hand around his stealthily. He shot me a sly grin.

“you sure your cousin won’t be a beach about it- i didn’t actually swear sunshine. please don’t kill me.” Sans hurriedly held up a hand as though to ward off Sunshine’s angry gaze.

“Bobby won’t care. This place is collecting dust for the most part.”

“hey, maybe we should bring the kid when he gets older.”

“Kid?”

“He means your nephew stupid.” Flowey grumbled, wrapped around the arm that wasn’t close to sans.

“Ah…that would be good.” I agreed breezily. Then, it hit me.

He said that we should take him here.

WE

I didn’t want to go back to Grayridge, but I did….

And I went back with a massive ass smile that scared a lot of people because I still had an only slightly faded black eye.
Flames of Madness and Fear

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except Tinsel) Full disclaimer/ links can be found in Ch1

So game plan:
Patchwork Family is ending this week.
Next week I’ll be posting the first half of Found Family, and the next week I’ll post the second half (It's a short 20 chapter bridge between Patchwork and Burned that follows Olivia)
Then I'll be taking a hiatus December 18-December 29 to work out Burned Family, and I might post the first few chapters of that during the hiatus if they get written.

“oi, stupid,” Raze tugged on some of my hair hard, “why the fuck are you grabbing that cheap shit?”

“Because it’s the same damn thing.” A mother glowered at me while covering her child’s ears. Now that I think about it…I’m going to have to reign in the cursing soon aren’t I?

“It’s not what Sunshine and Cyan put on the list.” Flowey observed, “They’ll get angry.”

“Fine. Fine.” I quickly placed the cheaper box of noodles back on the shelf and grabbed the more expensive brand, “I really don’t want to waste time arguing.”

“hmph.” Raze settled back down on my shoulder, smug with victory.

“What’s next on the list Flowey?” I began to navigate my way through the crowded aisle.

“A variety of spices.” Flowey answered, “How the hell do you pronounce half of this crap?”

“Let me see?” Flowey held the list up to where I could see it, “They’re Italian Flowey.”

“I’m not Italian.” He smacked me upside the head, “So that doesn’t help.”

“Don’t make me take you over to Olivia’s to be fed Hiro’s cooking Flowey.” I warned. The buttercup paled and quieted down immediately.

I'm just glad that I can finally go shopping in peace again.

A lot of issues between monsters and humans had recently been addressed, so progress finally began to arrive in the form of more politicians taking a pro-monster stance. Monsters still had it rough of course. After a year of basically being sixth class citizens, they still had a variety of issues to grapple with and face. Monster related violence- be they victims or aggressors themselves- had dropped to an all-time low- in no small part to the brave efforts of King Asgore.

“That’s her.” I heard someone whisper.

Oh great…
“That’s Clara Newmore!”

**Hold up.**

My head whipped around immediately to locate the people speaking. I saw a pair of older women sneering down an aisle. Sneakily avoiding attention, I managed to get myself at the other end of the aisle.

“What are you doing you idiot?” Flowey griped, “Spices are-“

“shut it weed.” Raze said standing up, “is that…?”

“Yup.” I nodded, nearly mute in horrified fascination.

Clara Newmore- a cocky CEO who thought that laundry was beneath her- stood in the grocery store like a normal woman would do looking at her surprisingly small shopping list like it was Latin or something. I couldn’t remember the last time I remembered her actually buying something herself. After the company she and dad started took off, they quit caring about the smaller things, opting to leave them in the hands of incompetent staff.

“Mother?” My voice was inquisitive, but clipped. Clara froze and turn to me ashen faced, “It is you.”

“Josephine.” Her voice was equally icy, “How wonderful to see you.”

“More like surprised.” I switched my basket of groceries over to my other hand in order to give my right arm a break, “I thought you left stuff like this to your maids.”

“We’ve decided to cut back on such frivolous expenses.” The obvious cover up made me want to cringe for her, “We’re getting older, so we’ll eventually be spending more time at home after the company is taken over.”

“By who?” I somehow managed to keep my voice polite, “You’ve alienated all obvious heirs. Thomas and Bobby have their own lives, and the old blood Arietta family doesn’t want anything to do with the new blood Newmore clan if it can avoid it- remember?”

Clara’s face turned bright red.

“Nadia will come back.” She finally said. Flipping her hair like she was twenty, she forced a somewhat positive attitude, “After all of the stress of a bastard-“

“My nephew was conceived in wedlock even if he won’t be born in it.”

“- baby gets to her. She can’t handle anything. She’s too weak.” Clara sniffed, “Always desperate for someone’s approval, someone’s attention. I’m glad we kept that feature.”

**Feature. Like we’re cars or cellphones.** Speaking of cellphones, Raze was fiddling with mine.

“Hate to break it to you bitch,” Flowey gave my mother a bland look, “But the pretty twin already has someone’s approval.”

“No she doesn’t.” Clara laughed like Flowey made a joke.

“She does. She has Cesar.” I grinned when my mother’s face twisted in confusion, “Her bitty mother. She has Cesar’s approval and affection. She doesn’t need yours anymore.”
It took Clara a while to come to terms with that.

“So yeah…” I cocked my head innocently, “What are you going to do again? You don’t have anyone to come running.”

“Shut up.” Clara stormed up to me. Her face was inches from mine, “Don’t make me have to silence you Josephine.”

“Is that a threat? I think that’s a threat.” I looked at Raze, “Got that on film?”

“yup.” He nodded, “still recording too.”

My mother resembled corpse more than a living human being.

“Mother, just leave us alone.” I said after letting her simmer for a few seconds, “That’s all we want- really.”

With that, I took some solid blackmail, my bitties, and my grocery list out of that aisle to continue shopping. We needed to get home at an appropriate time after all. Cyan’s due date was supposedly in the middle of April, but we all suspected that this would be another premature bitty baby if his rampant mood swings were anything to go by. He would probably chew us out for already taking as much time as we already had.

“That was your mother?” Flowey asked absentmindedly after listing off the final spices on our list.

“Yup.”

“You look nothing like her.”

“she looks like ‘er granny,” Raze explained after a yawn, “a lot like ‘er granny actually… even gettin’ the gray hairs to pop out.”

“Put a sock in it Mr. Hot Topic.” I warned.

“Pfft…” Flowey laughed at that. Raze hissed at me.

We managed to get everything we needed despite Raze making himself into a heavy earring. No one else seemed to pay me any attention- much to my relief. The cashier seemed to recognize me at the counter, but he just stared at me wide eyed while checking me out. I really hate being the limelight….

“Has Comic texted me yet?” I asked Raze while we left the store with a few bags of groceries in tow.

“no…which is weird.” Raze fiddled with my phone, “that sack of lazy shit don’t ever leave ya alone.”

“Yes he does.” I chuckled. Fear lanced through my stomach though. Things had been tense before we all left for the beach, and our return had been too silent for my liking. Something was going to break soon- be it the anti-monster humans pushing it to far or the monsters growing tired of their antics, “Why don’t we swing by his lab then? I’d feel better knowing he was safe.”

“You could just text him.” Flowey griped.

“He has his phone off in the lab to avoid sudden noises disrupting everyone.” Sans and I
had a brief argument one night over him not answering me, but he explained that he was working with a volatile chemical that night. He had his phone off to avoid it startling him which made me the asshole that time around, “We can just ask one of the ladies up front.”

“i’ll tex’ the hobo an’ tell ‘im we’ll be late.” Raze yawned lazily.

“Well, guess it’s a good thing we didn’t have to get anything that would melt.” I grinned.

Walking to Sans’s lab took longer than I expected. There seemed to be a lot of people heading to that part of the city for some reason. I had people scurrying around me to get through the crowd, and more than a few assholes shoved me around in the crowd. Anger was starting to build up at the rough treatment. Jeez, I can understand being in a hurry, but even I’m not this rough when I move through a crowd. Not to mention someone must’ve been burning some leaves in the park or something. The smell of flames seemed to grow stronger. I could’ve sworn we had a permanent burn ban in effect after the last of the crazy weather blew through. Honestly, someone could get hurt if that fire gets out of…

Sans's lab was an inferno.

Firefighters desperately tried to douse the roaring flames that had engulfed the building. Police officers had man people detained and screaming in joy over their “victory”. The crowd around seemed numb as they watched and heard the sounds of labs deep within the complex exploding because of the chemicals. Chaos reigned king in the media swarm that had pushed its way around the ambulances with the scientists, students, and staff that worked in the building recovering from smoke inhalation. Dr. Alphys was easy to spot given her larger frame.

I couldn’t find Sans.

His white skull and blue jacket were nowhere to be seen as I forced my way through the crowd like a madwoman on a mission. The groceries fell from my arms to get rid of the dead weight. More than a few people got knocked out of my way.

“Dr. Alphys!” My voice was harsh with fear, but I struggled to keep some semblance of sanity, “Are you alright? What happened? Where’s Comic!?”

“Miss Newmore?” Dr. Alphys coughed slightly, “Some humans firebombed the back of the lab. Most of us are fine. We were in the front in a meeting, but there were still a couple of people in the back. Sans…he teleported back in there to get some people out.”

To say that I lost my mind would be an understatement.

That dumbass piece of shit hero complex world savior wanna be arrogant insufferable asshole!

I quickly deposited Raze and Flowey in Dr. Alphys’s hands before turning my attention back to the building. My mood deteriorated further once I realized that the flames had just about every entrance blocked.

DAMMIT.

“Miss please step back.” One of the police officers held his arms up to try and ward me away, “We don’t know-“

“There are still people inside.” How am I speaking English right now?

“Miss I can’t understand you.”
I’m not speaking English right now. Right. Shit. Dammit! I can’t do anything if people can’t understand a damn thing I’m saying.

“There are still people inside.” I struggled to make sure that everything came out correctly, “My boyfriend is still inside.”

“No one has been able to enter the building since the-“

“My boyfriend is a monster, and he c-“

A loud thud and the crowd gasping drew my attention away from the officer trying to placate me. Two students were sprawled out awkwardly on the ground from the rough trip, and I spotted a familiar frame in between them.

“Comic!”

I dodged past the cop to grab Sans. A couple of the medics had already picked up the humans, so I felt no guilt about just grabbing my precious monster and scrambling away from the building as another volatile chemical exploded, causing a couple of the windows to bust out.

“newmore?” Sans’s voice was hoarse from the smoke, “what are you doing here?”

“Hush.” I pressed a kiss to his soot covered forehead, “You inhaled a lot of smoke. I’ll explain later.”

Sans was taken by some of the EMTs. His HP had dropped some, but a little bit of monster candy and some fresh oxygen did him a lot of good while the firefighters finally managed to begin wrangling the flames.

Since my skeleton was no longer in the fucking burning building, I could think clearly and ask some questions. In hindsight, I should’ve waited until after my adrenaline had worn off because the answers I got took the fight or flight response and pressed my “fight” button. The culprits had firebombed the building with little care in the world for the innocent lives inside or the other humans who could be hurt. They kept insisting that they were cleansing the world of monster scum, and that their trapped guardian angel told them from her wrongful imprisonment to take drastic action now that the monsters had the strength to fight back.

“It’s her! The traitor to her own kind!” One of the men- did he…he was a human volunteer at the CC around the same time as…FUCK ME- recognized me, “She’s the one who gave the monsters the key they needed to grow stronger! Look at her now boys! Cuddling up with a monster-probably its whore. She’s just another one of those worthless, servile bitches that thinks that these demons are heaven sent. Look at how they walked away from the flames unscathed- unlike the humans who followed them. These freaks of nature must be purged from existence.“

My fist flew before I could really stop it.

I didn’t care that he called me a whore. I didn’t care that he insulted my independence. I cared that he dared to insinuate that monsters- my friends-deserved to die just because they weren’t human. That blind prejudice brought on by fear and hatred made me ready to kill these bastards for almost destroying what was precious to me.

These monsters are my family. They’ve cared more about me in our short time together than most humans have cared about me. How dare these bastards blindly paint all of them with the same brush! How dare they disgrace the good intentions of King Asgore and worsen the conditions of struggling survivors like Undyne.
My punch was intercepted by some sympathetic officers. They could understand my fury at the situation, but I was also being very disruptive and threatening the safety of one of the culprits who were protected from such actions because well…I was going assault a bunch of guys who couldn’t fight back.

“Miss Newmore?” Dr. Alphys was alarmed when I was put in the back of a patrol car.

“It’s fine doctor.” I smiled at her wanly. My adrenaline was starting to wind down, “Could you make sure that Raze and Flowey get back to the apartment okay?”

“O-Of course but…” Dr. Alphys trailed off.

“I fucked up bit- that’s all.” I was probably going to end up spending the night in a jail cell, but that was better than going to prison for a couple of years. *The next time I see my therapist, we really need to discuss my anger issues.*

I ended up staying in the jail that night- like I thought I would. Since I didn’t actually complete my assault (and no one want to take a Newmore into a court room), I was just going to be given a warning for the would be offense. My therapist also called and played the mental instability card to help me out some. The head doctor also told me that my appointment had been moved up to discuss all of this mess. Thankfully, a lot people could understand that a person wouldn’t exactly be thinking straight after their boyfriend came out of a burning building.

So….It really wasn’t too terrible. My cellmate- some prostitute- saw my muscles and decided to just stay out of my way. The silence of the cell brought back a few of my demons-

*He’s going to be disgusted by your temper. He knows you can get angry, but this will probably be the red flag that keeps him far away from you. Like always you’ve failed- always. When’s the last time you’ve managed to hold your head up high? You’re nothing but a petulant, whiny child that should just go kill herself and save the world the trouble. Why else would the universe keep torturing you this way? It wants you to die too.*

-to play.

Using the mental exercises my therapist recommended for me, I managed to contain the swirling mess of emotions. I didn’t snap at the officers on guard when they tried to joke to lighten my mood some, and I didn’t get angry at the prostitute for tripping on top of me. *Maybe the head doctor was a good idea.*

I worried about my bitties- obviously. Concern for the little creatures and my family and my friends kept me up pacing all night, mumbling to myself. A few of the other people in other cells all whispered that I was insane before cracking jokes about “another rich bitch” being in there with them. I’m quite proud of myself for not slamming my fist into the wall to shut them up.

The next morning came to see me fatigued, grumpy, and ready to just go home.

I was given a stern lecture about my behavior and a few other legal things I would leave to Tyrone- who had freaked out when he came to visit me the evening before. *This is why I’m so glad that cranky asshole is in my life.* A couple dozen news reporters jumped me the instant I got out of the jail. They all asked a bunch of stupid questions and tried to paint it like I was a member of the extremist pro-monster group that went around intentionally assaulting anyone who breathed a little bit of anti-monster sentiment.

“I didn’t react for any political reason.” My voice was stone cold, “Someone I love was in
that goddamn fire, and that’s not counting my other friends that had been in that building. Besides the people I care for, there were other lives- neutral lives- thrown in to this chaos because of duty and expectation. The actions of all extremist groups are disgusting. Just leave the monsters to live in peace.”

Then I put my stronger legs to good use in running the fuck away. *Working out with Undyne has really helped out*…

As I strolled through the city, I looked at the various propaganda plastered to buildings, street posts, and even some cars.

Very little of it- from both sides- was positive.

Almost all of the colorful posters I saw promoted everything that King Asgore and his people stood against. They begged for violence and bloodshed to promote their twisted idea of a utopia.

*Why can’t people just sit down and talk?* I griped mentally. *I know that actions speak louder than words, but the action of sitting down to listen and speak can do a lot more for your cause instead of going all gung ho and hurting other people in the process. Do you guys want change, or do you just want an excuse to cause a ruckus?*

My landlady wasn’t happy about the media surrounding her apartment complex again, but one quick look at my annoyed, sleepy face sent her sprinting in the opposite direction. I couldn’t wait to see my bitties again. I needed their cuddles more than anything in that moment.

“What the fucking hell in Cleopatra’s vagina is going on?”

“As vulgar as ever.” Nadia huffed, taking a step back, “I heard about what happened. Are you alright?”

“Who are you and what have you done with my sister?”

Nadia smacked me.

“I wanted to make sure the person who will be adopting my child is alright.”

*Ahhh. That makes sense.*

It took me about five minutes to insist I was fine and get Nadia off of my back. I was her only real plan for her kid after all.

The instant I was back home, I sagged in relief against the door. *Will my life quit being so crazy already?*
“GJ!”

Tinsel hurried over to me. He looked up at me with concern in his little eyes. My other bitties also hurried over.

“Are you alright?” Sunshine asked looking me up and down. Snuggle immediately latched onto my leg.

“they didn’t hurt you did they?” Waltzer’s face was a bit wet, but no one was pointing it out.

“dr. alphys came by with raze and flowey and we just…we didn’t know what to do ari!” Blake grabbed onto my flip flop with a death grip, “please don’t ever go back to jail again. we can’t go with you!”


They were all so distressed. It broke my heart to see them look so frazzled.

“Guys…” I sighed and gathered them all up into my arms, “Come on.”

They all finally calmed down after about twenty minutes of soothing them and letting Snuggle examine me for injuries. I think what really got to them was the fact that they hadn’t been there to help out. Obviously, Raze and Flowey had been there, so I think that they were bothered by how little they had actually been able to do. Powerlessness can drive people mad easily. The group also seemed particularly infuriated about how the fire had started.

“What idiot thinks it’s a good idea to endanger the lives of dozens of people?” Blake fumed on my lap.

“stupid people.” Waltzer sighed and tugged Cyan close out of habit. It had become a nervous tic of his, “though you’re just as stupid for almost getting in everyone’s way ophie. if you’d run into that building, it would’ve just caused a lot more problems for other people.”

“I know. I know.” Now at least. In the moment I wanted to rip the building apart with my bare hands to get to him or die trying.

“What did they hope to accomplish?” Cyan pondered, “All they’ve done is built up more momentum against their movement.”
“the guys were talkn’ crazy.” Raze snorted, “i doubt they care about anythin’ but themselves.”

“They sounded like a bunch of cultists.” Flowey agreed, “They almost made you look sane Josephine.”

“I’m not in the mood Flowey.” Sunshine warned. The buttercup hid behind my knee.

“lia…you were okay alone?” December’s voice fell into a small squeak at the last bit. He and idjit were curled around my neck, sitting on my shoulders. I didn’t need to see his face to know he was remembering some of my earlier outbursts, “you…well..umm…”

“You get suicidal when you’re alone.” Waltzer finished. His eyes searched mine for anything to go off of, “were you alright?”

“I spent most of the evening worrying about you guys.” I laughed, “I didn’t really have much time to worry about myself.”

Ah…lying to these guys always sucks, but they’re already stressed out over the whole thing.

“Was your cellmate scary?” Tinsel asked tugging on my sleeve a little bit from where he sat on my elbow.

“She was a painted up whore who couldn’t count past ten without a man’s cock in her mouth.” Sunshine smacked me, “What? It’s the truth?”

“Honestly.” Sunshine sniffed, looking away from me, “Why do you always have to be so vulgar?”

“Because I’m a vulgar person with the humor of a twelve year old Call of Duty addict.” I admitted, “I’ve also got a few screws loose…”

“more like a few dozen.” Waltzer chuckled.

“Hey.” I whined before a large yawn interrupted me, “Sorry about that. I really didn’t get any sleep last night.”

“Go rest Miss Josie.” Cyan said firmly, “Take a nap at the very least. Sunshine and I can get started on making you something to eat when you wake up.”

“Being thrown into a jail cell for the night kind of put me behind schedule with some-“

“Yer restin’ you stupid bitch.” Raze’s magic tugged on my wrist sharply. I jerked forward just a little bit, “now c’moon already.”

“It’d be a pain in the ass to have to drag you to the hospital.” Flowey agreed, wrapping some of his vines around my other wrist, “So nappy time for the big baby.”

“Guys.” I groaned, “You’re all such worry warts.”

I allowed them to drag me off to bed in the end. Having me home, safe and breathing seemed to comfort them more than any of my words could. My bed was a welcome sight after a couple of hours pacing in a tiny jail cell.

Ugh…Gotta control my impulses better before I adopt my nephew…definitely got to get that under control.
My thoughts blurred quickly after I curled up in bed. Blake popped in to check on me, but a sleepy smile let him leave with a light conscious. I never realized how nice this bed is…

I awoke sometime later because someone was tugging me against their chest. At first, my body tensed, preparing to punch someone for grabbing me, but once the familiar bony rib cage pressed against my body, I calmed down.

I tugged Sans closer and buried my head under his chin.

“You scared me.” I murmured quietly, “I couldn’t find you, and the building was getting ready to collapse.”

“sorry.” He didn’t sound sorry at all, “i remembered that a couple of our interns were still in the back. i couldn’t just leave them to burn.”

“I can understand why you did it.” I grumbled, biting down on his collar bone lightly for the stupidity. I felt tears- ones of relief that didn’t get to fall sooner- pool up in my eyes, “I was trying to run in after you once I realized you weren’t coming out. Jesus…”

“not going to demand that i never do that again?” Sans’s hand stroked up and down my back lovingly.

“I can’t ask you to do that.” I didn’t want to draw attention to my crying, so my hands stayed curled around or against his bones. No matter how close I held him to me, it didn’t seem to be enough, “That’d be like asking Superman to stop saving people because he could get hurt. You can do a lot of good with your abilities Comic. I just…i don’t want to lose you, the bitties, or any of the other monsters in my life. You guys mean so much to me.”

I got a second chance at life when I saved Idjit from his previous owners.

I’m just glad I didn’t squander the opportunity.

“you know…” Sans rested his head against mine, “i actually managed to catch the lunch time news-‘” I had apparently slept longer than I thought, “- and…you said something kind of interesting to the reporters.”

“And what was that?” I yawned, feeling sleep calling me back.

“you said that ‘someone you love was in that goddamn fire’ to be exact.”

“Mmmhmm? What about it?”

Sans fell silent.

Ah great. I must’ve let the L word slip too soon then. I’ve always been a bit too affectionate with the people I actually like.

“Sans.” I raised my head up and leveled my eyes with his.

“ah…the name i go by…this can’t be good.” I knew he could see the tear stains on my face despite the darkness of the room because I could see the bags under his eyes.

“I’ve come to care about you a lot.” I said simply, “Still, I want to take this at your pace, so I’ll match the tempo you set.”

I kissed him gently. He seemed fine after the whole thing, but his low HP naturally made
me wary. Sans’s hand tangled in my hair. Resting my forehead against his, I let out a deep breath. He chuckled beneath me.

“you say that i scared you, but do you have any idea how terrifying it was watching you be driven away in a patrol car?” Sans’s hand tightened in my hair some, “i didn’t know what was going on at first. alph had to keep me from following you and trying to recuse you.”

“That wouldn’t have been good.” I snickered, “You could’ve ended up in a lot of trouble trying to be my dashing prince.”

“yeah…it was good she was there.” Sans agreed. I yawned loudly, “you didn’t get any sleep last night did you?”

“You didn’t either.” I pressed a soft kiss against the bags under his left eye.

“true.”

“sans,” Waltzer’s clipped voice interrupted us. I raised my head from Sans’s to find Waltzer standing on my nightstand glaring at us, “i said you could come in here and sleep with ophie, but the thing is…you aren’t sleeping.”

“He accidentally woke me up sliding into bed Waltz.” I reached over and picked him up. Waltzer tried his best to remain cranky, but a quick snuggle and kiss on top of his skull had the grumpy outside melting away, “We’ll go to sleep now. Okay?”

“fine.” Waltzer relented. He pressed a kiss against my cheek. He teleported out of my hand soon after.

“It’s still so weird.” Sans sighed rubbing at his face, “he’s a tiny version of me. there are dozens of those tiny versions of me, and you even have a version of me that’s been cross bred with a tiny version of my best friend.”

“Don’t think about it too much Comic.” I snuggled back down against his chest, “You’ll end up burning what few brain cells you have left.”

“At least i’ll still have my smoking good looks.”

“Pfft.”

“ouch, that was far from a warm reception.”

“Comic.” I tugged on one of his ribs just right. His spine stiffened, “Sleep.”

“Of course you say that right after intentionally doing something that works me up.” His petulant whining was accompanied by his arms wrapping around me.

“Later bone baby, later. When I can actually keep up and do something.” I promised, “So, just hold me now?”

“Sure.” He grinned against the top of my head, “it’s rare that i get to be the one doing the cradling.”

“Sorry you’re so short.”

Our back and forth continued until-
“OI!” A sneaker flew through my cracked door to hit the wall, “shut up and go to sleep that both of ya!”

“Uh oh…angry Raze.” I chuckled.

“don’ make me come in there!”

The two of us fell asleep chuckling.

I woke up sometime later because my pillow was trembling—no shaking. Sans had a death grip on my arms, and I could actually see his SOUL. The small, white upside down heart throbbed with his anxiety. *Monster SOULS only come out during certain situations like death, mating, or… fighting.*

“Comic?” I carefully pushed up against his arm. He abruptly slammed me back down against his rib cage. *Ouch. Be glad you’re cute.* Sighing, I decided to gamble with my life and reached up into his rib cage. His SOUL felt soft and warm in my hand. The blunt tips of his fingers dug into my skin harshly for half a second, but the pressure left in a few seconds once I calmly began to rub circles into his SOUL. Pressing kisses against his collar bone, I murmured soft, sweet nothings in an attempt to calm him down. He relaxed, and his SOUL faded from my hand, “Sweetie?”

“newmore?” Sans’s eyes opened. He looked at me confused before sitting up, “shit, i bruised you.”

“Just a little bit sweetheart.” I patted his chest from where I had begun to stretch out on the bed, “I grabbed your SOUL though, so the reaction was justified.”

“my soul?” Sans obviously struggled to shake off the rest of his sleep. He blushed a deep blue, “wait…you didn’t…see or feel anything did you?”

“I’m human Sans. I can’t tell a damn thing about SOULs.” I reminded him, sitting up myself. Someone had shut the door to my bedroom, “Sorry if I just committed a monster faux pas.”

“you…kind of did, but i don’t really mind.” Sans’s shoulders had sagged in relief, “monsters can read other SOULs easily when they touch them. it’s a big deal to do it though, so usually only couples do it.”

*Fuuuucckkkk.*

“I’m sorry. Uh…want to touch mine for revenge?” I offered. Sans nearly choked on air.

“i just said that-“

“It’s something couples do. We’re a couple.” I tapped his nose bone gently, “Remember? Besides, you practically know everything about me already because you’ve had my determination in you before.”

“that was just simple stuff…i’d be able to know every little thing if i touched your soul.”

“So you don’t want to do it?” I wasn’t exactly eager to do it myself, but I did feel bad about groping his SOUL.

“of course i want to do it.” Sans lightly smacked my arm, “i just don’t think you realize what you’re asking.”
“You’ll know all the little details about me.” I shrugged, “If you’ve wanted to do something with my SOUL, you just had to ask.”

Sans seemed at a loss for words. He raised his hands and opened his mouth as though he was going to speak, but he couldn’t form the words. In the end, he turned to face me on the bed.

“c’mere.” He motioned for me. I sat on his lap facing him and stretched my legs out on either side of him, “this shouldn’t hurt.”

A chilled, empty feeling hit me when his hands sunk into my chest.

“it’s still so beautiful.” He murmured.

I felt something in my chest stir when it was stroked.

“You said it’s got a lot of colors right?” My voice cracked a little bit. I couldn’t really breathe properly.

“It does…” Sans seemed enraptured with whatever he was seeing, "this is the first time it's ever been open to me though..."

I wonder...

Leaning forward, I rested my forehead against his.

Comic...here.

I wrapped him in a tight hug and let my feelings leave the little compartment I had just for him. I heard his breath catch. Laughing, I kissed the side of his head. His arms slid out of my chest to wrap around me.

“Enjoy poking around?” My chest panged when weight suddenly returned to it, but I wasn’t going to tell him that.

“well...let me try to get to my main point.” I grinned at how breathless he sounded, “shit, i can’t even think straight.”

“Don’t worry about it. We’ve got time.” Rubbing his head, I leaned into him a bit harder.

“are you two done in there?” Blake’s voice interrupted us, “cy and sunny say dinner’s ready, so get your butts out here.”

“I think I’m going to start calling him Mr. Moodkiller.” I grumbled and leaned back despite Sans’s death grip on my waist. I called out louder, “One second Blake!”

Sans didn’t want to let me go at first.

“Comic?” I poked at his skull, “Food honey.”

Still no motion.

“Hmph.” I pushed my hand underneath his shirt and quickly raced it up and down his spine. He jerked away from me in a heartbeat, laughing a bit, “Aha. Free at last.”

My legs felt like jelly when I walked out of the room. Sans trailed behind me.
“jojo.”

Idjit tugged on my feet. I picked him and December up with a big flourish before kissing both of them on the head.

“Hello my babies. I’m sorry I slept all day.” The two bitties giggled and pressed kisses of their own into my cheek. “It seems like you guys were fine without me.”

“We’re not incompetents.” Flowey threw a pillow at my head. Sans caught it before it came within five inches of me, “Granny called by the way. She’s calling a meeting of sorts.”

Okay, FLOWEY gets the Mr. Moodkiller nickname now.

“Well this is going to be just lovely.” I sighed, “When?”

“two days from now.” Waltzer answered carrying some plates of food into the living room for Sans and I, “we going?”

“Can’t ignore Granny’s summons.” I placed Idjit and December onto my shoulders, “This is still going to suck though.”

“need me to come with you?” Sans offered taking the plates from Waltzer. He didn’t jump when Snuggle climbed up his leg and shirt to get to his shoulder.

“No, but thank you for offering.” I kissed him.

“Gross.” Flowey stuck his tongue out. Raze seemed to agree with him.

“shut it weed.” Sans’s eye glowed with warning.

I sat down and began to eat as the two monsters began to argue back and forth.

This is so cute.

Then they broke my coffee table again.

But way to expensive.

“Guys.” My voice dropped low. Flowey and Sans both froze, “I hope you like rebuilding things.”

It took them two hours to rebuild a cheap, tiny coffee table. I hoped they had learned their lesson, but I had the distinct feeling that a lot of my furniture was destined to break with them in my apartment together.
“so…we’re going to granny’s house?” Waltzer asked while fixing his bow tie.

“Yup.” I tried my best to get my mascara as even as possible. Damn, I suck at make-up. Olivia had warned me earlier in the day that Aunt Catherine would be there, so I needed to look a bit more presentable than usual. Thomas and Bobby were busy with some company gala in Greenridge-thankfully.

“let’s just hope this doesn’t end up like the past few times we’ve gone to a family dinner.” Blake made a face at the memories.

“g-granny w-wi-ill be there r-ri-i-ght?” Idjit straightened December’s scarf, “s-so…?”

“Granny…..” Flowey’s voice was dull, “That’s the old bitch in the photos right?”

“Yup.” I nodded while Raze began to strangle the buttercup, “I’ve called her worse Raze, and trust me when I say she’s done the same.”

Things get ugly when we argue.

“I just hope that we can get there this time around.” Cyan anxiously tugged at his turtle neck’s sleeves, “I…November was horrible last year.”

“You can say that again.” Sunshine tugged Raze away from a coughing Flowey. Snuggle wrapped the angry flower monster into a hug before he could snap at the edgy, “It’ll be good to see Granny again.”

“It might be.” The sinking feeling in my stomach wouldn’t leave me be, “Anyways, everyone ready? Leo said that he found us a ride.”

“he did.” A new voice interrupted eyes. Sans’s eyes twinkled in amusement at all of us startling, “i’ll be teleporting you all there. you look good by the way.”

“Huh?” I didn’t know whether to question the insanity of him teleporting me to my Granny’s house or blush at his compliment. My attempt at both resulted in failure, “But…we…how…you-“

“stop newmore.” Sans held his hands up, “you’re going to break something if you try to
think that hard.”

“Be glad I like you numbskull.” The jab brought my sanity back. Still a little embarrassed, I tugged on the neat, simple gray dress I wore, “You haven’t even been to Granny’s house. How are you going to teleport us there?”

“google maps is a wonderful thing. i can teleport anywhere i can find the exact latitude and longitude for.” Sans winked at me.

“uh buddy.” Waltzer scratched the back of his head, “you remember that her folks are kind of… big time anti-monster people right?”

“You aren’t attempting to sneak your way into the dinner are you?” Sunshine’s eyes narrowed.

“…please quit glaring at me like that sunny. it’s scary.” Sans chuckled, “leo mentioned you got into a car accident last year, so he’s worried about you driving around anywhere. i always wondered why you didn’t have a car.”

“we were shot off the road last year dumbass.” Raze threw a remote at him. Sans blinked in confusion while swatting the controller away, “anti-monster idiots almost killed her with the resulting crash. her throat got ripped into by debris, and she almost bled out on my goddamn shirt. i’d appreciate it if you didn’t joke about that.”

For once, Blake and Waltzer agreed with him.

“Sans was still unconscious guys.” I reminded them while picking up an obviously worked up Raze, “Snuggle patched my throat up Raze. Remember?”

“hmph.” He bit my hand.

“shit, i didn’t know. leo didn’t tell me that.” I saw Sans’s eyes trace my neck for a scar.

“You can’t see it in this light.” I walked over to Sans and picked his hand up. His finger felt cold against the thread thin scar, “Leo probably doesn’t want to remember it in all honesty, so it’s understandable he kept quiet about it.”

“shit.” Sans’s thumb traced up and down the scar, “i just thought this was a wrinkle or something.”

“She isn’t that old Sans.” Cyan sighed raising his hand to his face like he was getting a migraine.

“I’d contest that.” Flowey said, one of his vines tugging on my hair some, “All that gray…”

“I should’ve let Raze strangle you.” I griped, “Anyways, Sans- oh for the love of..Raze let my hand go- I’m not really certain if you teleporting me is a good idea, and you’re definitely not coming with me. my parents aren’t the best, and i don’t want them putting ideas into your head.”

“like what?” Sans asked.

“Like you’re not good enough or something. They’re master manipulators. I’ve seen them tear some of the most powerful people in the state down a few pegs.” Tinsel managed to pull his Daddy of my hand at last, “I care about you too much to just let you stumble right into that kind of treatment.”
“how about this then? i’ll teleport a couple of blocks away from the house. no one will see me then, and you won’t have to worry about your family seeing you with a monster.”

“Excuse me?” My voice took on a pointed edge.

“you just seem pretty eager to pretend i don’t exist.” Sans shrugged with a dull, annoyed look on his face, “i mean, you’ve been involved in just about every aspect of my life since i woke up, but the instant i want to reciprocate, you clam up.”

“Are you trying to imply I’m ashamed of our relationship?”

Sans just gave me a flat look.

“umm….” Blake looked between us awkwardly.

“Guys.” Tinsel whine standing between the two of us, “Please don’t fight!”

“Living room.” Sunshine said, grabbing son, “Now.”

The bitties reluctantly left Sans and I alone in the room.

“how am i supposed to interpret this newmore?” Sans’s following chuckle rang hollow, “you haven’t even been with me since the fire at the lab, and i’ve only met your sisters when you have tons of other family i should be meeting. we’re a couple right? couples meet each other’s families. you’ve met all of mine.”

“Comic,” I resisted the urge to snap about how his parents were dead. Struggling to keep myself calm, I continued in a quiet voice, “My family isn’t nice, and our baggage isn’t buried yet. If my family was normal, I wouldn’t mind taking you to see them, but they’re some of the most vicious, petty people out there. I don’t want our relationship to be put in jeopardy because of them.”

“oh, so our relationship is so weak that they can just blow it over?” Anger induced trembling let me know that my way of handling things wasn’t working.

“Of course not!” I spat. My volume raised accidentally, “I care about you more than that! You know this you ass. I’m trying to save us a lot of trouble. Why the hell does this even matter? My parents and my Aunt Catherine don’t have any effect on our relationship!”

“but they do!” Sans took a step closer to me, “tell me, if it was just me, you, your sisters, and your grandmother would you care so much about me going?”

“No, but that-“

“that’s my point.” Sans stressed, “you’ve let me in on just about everything else in your life. i’ve literally held the very core of your being in my hand. i’ve seen just about every nook and cranny of your life through your soul and determination, but when i want to experience the dark parts with you, you shove me out of the equation! i’m not going to dust myself because your parents are mean to me. i’m not going to walk away if tonight sucks ass. you keep acting like i’m just going to up and move on out of your life. then add to that all of the news stories calling our relationship a scandal. i’ll ask again: how am i supposed to interpret this?”

“News stories?” I drew a mental blank until…, “Wait, do you mean all of those stupid gossip columns Comic? Those are just a bunch of catty reporters that are capitalizing on the human-monster drama unfolding right now. There’s nothing scandalous about this relationship. I’m not trying to hide anything! I’m not ashamed of you at all. I love you- even when you get set off about
“this random shit!”

“it’s not random.” Sans’s eyes had gone completely black, “fine, so you aren’t hiding our relationship from the world.”

“Exactly.” I crossed my arms.

“but you’re still hiding the rest of your life from me.” Sans pointed out, “you’ve let me see the good, the great, the little bit annoying, and the sad, but not once have you ever let me see or experience the bad. i love you too. that’s why i want to be there for all of it.”

“Comic…” I trailed off, thinking about what he was saying, “Do you have any idea how scary tonight is? Out of the blue, Granny summons just about every single one of her children and grandchildren. She doesn’t give us a reason, just a time and date to show up. I don’t know what’s going to happen tonight. I don’t know what’s going to be said. All I have to go off of are past experiences, and those aren’t pretty. They’ve destroyed a lot of my previous relationships. Some I cared about. Some I didn’t care about. This one I care about more than anything.” I sighed and stepped close. Resting my hand against his face, I spoke honestly, “My world’s grown big enough for me to really fly in Comic. I don’t want it to shrink anytime soon.”

“i don’t want it to either.” Sans’s hand came up to cradle mine, “i need to see all of it though newmore. i need to experience as much of it as i can, so i can be there for you better. why is that so hard for you to understand?”

“I get it Comic.” I bit the inside of my lip while thinking, “It means that much to you?”

“yes.”

“Fine.” I relented, “You had better have meant it when you said that you won’t leave after tonight. I have a feeling it’s going to be horrible.”

“i’ve been through worse.” Sans promised, “i don’t plan on leaving unless you show me the door.”

“Good.”

Sans brought me into a tight hug.

“hey newmore.” Sans murmured quietly into my shoulder, “could you say it again?”

“Say what?” A grin came across my face. I knew exactly what he wanted me to say.

“you know.” I could feel Sans’s cheeks heat up against my collar bone.

“No, I don’t.”

“newmore…” Exasperation mixed with fondness in his voice, “could you tell me you love me again.”

“Ti amo. Je t’aime. Ich liebe dich.”

“please say it in a language i can understand.” He grumbled.

“I love you.” My cheeks reddened. It’s one thing to say it when he can’t understand a word I’m saying, but like this….A shudder ran down my spine, “Got something to say back?”
“…ditto.”

“HEY!” I pulled back from him to glare at him, “It’s your turn now.”

Sans was bright blue.

“You didn’t have to say it to my face.” He protested.

“I love you.” I stated bluntly, “Your turn.”

“ah…” Sans rubbed the back of his head before murmuring, “..too.”

“Louder baby.” I leaned closer.

“I love you too.” He cringed just a little bit when he saw my eyes light up, “jeez, newmore. you really know how to run me through.”

“Oh hush.” I pulled him into a kiss, “You love it.” I couldn’t help but tease him.

“i’m already regretting this.” Sans sighed.

“Ha.” I wrapped my arms around his shoulder and cuddled him close, “Liar.”

Sans made a slightly annoyed sound before sagging against me.

“umm…knock knock?” Waltzer knocked on the door, “we heard the yelling die down…do we need to get a vacuum ophie?”

“No Waltzer.” I laughed, “We ended the argument amicably.”

My bitties quietly peered into the room.

“Dammit.” Flowey grumbled.

“you owe me thirty bucks buttercup.” Blake grinned at the monster.

“of course the weed would bet against me. i guess i should be happy he didn’t poker-ound while we were arguing, but still…” Sans grumbled crankily into my shoulder, “he can’t just be a good little flower and wilt right out of my life leafing not a seed behind.”

“Uh oh…” Tinsel looked up at Sans with concern, “Did GDS break?”

“gds?” Sans raised his head from my shoulder to look at Tinsel, “what?”

“Grandaddy Sans.” Tinsel said with an innocent tilt of his head. I think my bitties and I all noticed the mischievous glint in the hybrid’s eyes. Sans didn’t, “After all, Granny Jo is Granny Jo, so that means that Sans is Grandaddy Sans.”

Sans stared at him blankly.

“Oh dear.” Sunshine sighed, “Our son broke Sans.”

“pussy.” Raze snorted, “it ain’t that big a deal.”

“Let him have this moment Raze.” Cyan scowled at the edgy.

“well….as sweet as this moment is, we’re already a wee bit late.” Blake shrugged a little bit.
“Hey comedian.” Flowey’s vines snapped at Sans’s legs, “We need to goooo.. Honestly, how stupid can you get?”

“i swear i’ll leave you in the void.” Sans threatened him before picking Tinsel up. He gave the hybrid a flat look for a couple of seconds before butting him on his shoulder, “granddaddy sans….sheesh.”

One plus side to Sans coming along- besides the obvious ones- was that it was easier to carry everyone. Sans carried Raze, Sunshine, Tinsel, Blake, and Snuggle on his shoulders while Waltzer, Cyan, Idjit, and December sat carefully on mine.

“hang on tight.” Sans warned the bitties. Flowey crawled onto my arm and stayed as far away from Sans as possible, “i won’t be able to let newmore go without risking her safety, so if you fall off…it was nice knowing you.”

With that, the familiar world shifting warp took place. I felt my bitties grab onto my hair and dress sleeves with a death grip. Closing my eyes seemed to help with the nausea the last time I teleported, so I kept my eyes closed and held my breath. The worst part about the whole thing had to be the brief weightless period where all I had to cling to was Sans’s body. Most guys would probably use this as an excuse to get their girlfriends all snuggled up close.

Gravity returned with vengeance. My legs felt like jelly as always, and I didn’t dare to open my eyes until I could hold myself up straight.

“Check.” I called out.

“blake and snuggle.”

“waltzer.”

“Cyan.”

“Sunshine.”

“i-id-d-ji-it.”

“dec…ember.”

“hmph.”

“Tinny!”

“Flowey.”

I opened my eyes and met Sans’s comforting gaze. He gave me a sympathetic smile, supporting my weight for me when my balance seemed to waver some.

I looked to my right and saw the neat, colorful, familiar flower garden in front of the recognizable cabin like miniature mansion. Granny preferred simpler things compared to my parents, so the small little wooded area had called to her easily. The inside of the house was a bit tight, but it could fit Granny, Aunt Juno, all their children, and their grandchildren with minimal complaining. Curtains of various colors and designs hung in wide windows. I could smell a couple of pies cooling from a kitchen window.

“Ahh…” I took a deep breath and enjoyed the intense pine and oak smell that made Mt.
Ebbot so special, “This had been home for a while.”

“really?” Sans looked at it with an appreciative eye, “how does the apartment compare?”

“probably not very good.” Waltzer’s jaw had dropped, “holy sh-“

“Waltzer.” Sunshine politely glared daggers into his head.

“shoot….” Waltzer finished lamely.

“Eh,” I shrugged carefully, “That’s not my home.”

“h-huh?” Idjit furrowed his brow.

“My home is wherever you guys are. I’m not particularly attached to material goods you know.”

“Oh my god.” Flowey drooped limply from my arm, “That was so cheesy.”

“well, i’m glad i know how to grate on your nerves some more.” Sans grinned at Flowey viciously before tugging me closer for a second to press a kiss to my cheek, “i hope i’m included in that grouping.”

“Of course you are bone head.” I shoved Sans just a little bit, “Come on. Time to face the dragons.”

“no.” Blake shook his head, “time to eat the knights.”

“What?” I raised a brow as my bitties laughed a bit.

“An in joke Miss Josie.” Cyan patted my neck, “You wouldn’t get it.”

“I don’t want to know.” I held my hands up.

Granny’s door was unlocked, so we entered with no problem.

The interior of the house was a little more cramped than I remembered it being. Pictures of me, Olivia, Nadia, Bobby, Thomas, Caspian, Dante, Sophia, Aunt Juno, Aunt Catherine, Mom, and a couple of Granny’s old pets lined the walls in no particular order. Some were old. Some were new. The frames were all mismatched like the furniture, but everything seemed to have a sacred weight to it. Granny kept things that were important to her around. Nothing in this house was junk.

“You must be joking mother!”

“Ah…” I sighed wearily at the sound of my own egg donor’s shrieking, “It’s starting this early?”

Granny’s response was at softer volume, so all Sans, the bitties and Flowey, and I caught were my mother’s protests of unfairness and cruelty.

“We bust our asses for about twenty-four years just for you to turn on us like this!” My father spat across the dining room table at my Granny. She sat at the head of the table with the confidence of a queen. My parents and Aunt Catherine sat on one side of the table while my sisters sat on the other.

Cesar stood in front of Nadia protectively. Harley had Hiro tucked under one arm with an
uninterested posture, but his eyes were glued to my parents. Nadia had her hands clasped together in an almost prayer. Olivia seemed to have decided to try to learn how to melt through objects.

“Hello.” I called out before anyone else could yell, “Could we lower the volume for Cy? Loud noises make him anxious.”

“Sissy!” Olivia practically gasped in relief. Nadia looked up at me with an odd look in her eyes.

My parents turned their icy gazes to me for half a second. The two immediately became infuriated upon noticing the monster holding my hand. My Aunt Catherine- a plump woman with wide eyes, too much make up, and a bob ten years too late- looked me and Sans up and down critically.

“What the hell is your pet monster doing here?” Daniel spat.

“Now, now.” I scowled some, “Flowey isn’t a pet despite his small size.”

“Excuse me!?” Flowey balked, “It’s obvious he was talking about the comedian!”

“Oh, this must be Sans.” Granny stood up politely and walked over to us with a big smile on her face, “I’m Persephone Arietta-Baker. I’m the face of Arietta North while my sister is the backbone, and I’m also my little Joey’s grandmother. You can just call me Granny dear.”

“It’s nice to meet you ma’am.” Sans said dropping my hand to shake hers, “you’ve uh… already heard of me?”

“Papyrus mentions you often.” Granny grinned, “He seemed most fascinated with some of my home recipe pasta dishes. Olivia’s brought him over with their friend Undyne to cook before.”

“Oh.” Sans tangled his hand around mine again, “sorry for just kind of barging in like this, but i figured now was a better time to meet jo’s family than never.”

“It’s no trouble at all dear.” Granny waved his concerns away, “I haven’t even begun to serve dinner yet. Take a seat while I go get everything. Joey darling, come help me get more china would you?”

*Grandmother Code for: We’re talking now.*

“Sure Granny.” I sat Sans in the very last seat on the side with my sisters. I at my bitties down at the other head of the table opposite of Granny. The more distance I could place between Sans and my undesirable family members the better. I helped the bitties get down, “You guys stay with Comic.”

“Sure.” Waltzer kept an arm around Cyan’s waist. Idjit and December immediately dove to hide behind Sans’s arms, “we’ll all be here waiting for you.”

I followed Granny into the kitchen. The china cabinet was cracked open, so I quickly located all of the things I would need since I sat Sans down at the last spot that had been prepared for a guest.

“You didn’t tell me you were bringing your boyfriend.” Granny scolded me quietly.

“I didn’t know I was bringing him until he insisted on coming and we had an argument.” I protested, “By then, we were late.”
“You two argued?” Granny’s brow furrowed in concern.

“We argue Granny.” I rolled my eyes like a teenager, “Every couple argues. We made up though…” I was tempted to tell her that he told me he loved me, but I wanted to keep that little peace of heaven to myself, “It’s no big deal.”

“You break my heart with your callousness. I want to know all the details about my granddaughter’s life.” Granny bopped me in the nose, “I was very cross to have to learn about your decision to adopt my great-grandson from Juno of all people.”

“Sorry Granny.”

“Hmph.” Granny sniffed.

The lightheartedness of the kitchen vanished the instant we returned with the food. Everyone sat in tense silence. The second time Granny went back to the kitchen, I followed out of habit. That was when Aunt Catherine chose to strike.

“So you’re a scientist?” She questioned in that obviously fake, sugary voice of hers.

“yes ma’am.”

“I never would’ve thought there’d be monster scientists.” Aunt Catherine mused.

“there are quite a few actually. we had to adapt to living in the underground, so technological advancement was a must.” No puns. Thank god. I loved all of Sans. My parents and Aunt Catherine wouldn’t appreciate his sense of humor, “i’m enjoying working on the surface though. there are many issues up top that we never had below”

“It must be hard working with new things.” The fake pity in Aunt Catherine’s voice almost made me puke into the coleslaw.

“no, actually. it’s the opposite. every new challenge is amazing.” Sans’s eyes glittered with thought, “what we currently working- confidential i’m afraid- is brilliant. my co-workers and i can barely tear ourselves away from our lab sometimes.”

“You seem to have no trouble butting in where you aren’t needed.” Clara scoffed.

“Hush.” Granny snapped with a smile. The two of us settled down, “I don’t think Catherine and Sans included you in that discussion Clara. You always did run your mouth too much.”

“Mother.” Clara’s mouth sat agape.

“I’m only speaking the truth dear.” Granny looked at the rest of us, “Now, would anyone feel uncomfortable joining me in saying grace? I was raised Christian, so it’s a bit of a habit.”

No one did.

Silence filled the table for a few minutes while everyone began to pick at the small feast Granny had prepared for all of us. Then Aunt Catherine started up again.

“How did you two meet dear?” Aunt Catherine looked at me.

“At the Bitty CC.” I said before offering December a grape from my plate.

“Well Sans,” Aunt Catherine turned her attention back to my lover. I could tell that Olivia
and Nadia were glad that the attention wasn’t on them, but they gave me pitying looks, “What do you like about my dear niece? She’s quite the character. Most people think she’s too hard to get along with.”

“they didn’t try very hard then.” Sans smiled at my aunt. He was quietly grinding the back of his teeth together, “she’s actually the best kind of person to involve yourself with- kind, loyal, smart. i’m a lucky bonehead.”

“I see.” The genuine shock on Aunt Catherine’s face should’ve offended me, but knowing her shallow nature made the blow hit a little bit softer.

Aunt Catherine then began to pry into Olivia and Nadia’s lives as well. She kept alternating between sickeningly sweet “concerned” questions and needling back handed compliments/comments. My parents seemed to grow sick of her as well.

“Enough of this Persephone.” Daniel firmly smacked his hand against the table, “Just sign the damn check already!”

“No.” Granny said simply.

“Mother.” Clara hissed, “We’re going to go bankrupt at this rate!”

“My, my….as incompetent as ever Clara.” Aunt Catherine tsked, “I told you this would happen if you married into a new blue blood family like his. Honestly, you didn’t even keep your last name in any way!”

“It’s only proper for a wife to take her husband’s last name.” Daniel seethed, “I don’t need my company to constantly be nothing more than just a mimicry of the Arietta clan’s multi-trillion dollar success.”

“It is nothing but that.” Aunt Catherine laughed, “Though, at this point, it’s even less. Why did you ever give that boy control of your sister company? He completely ruined it.”

“I knew he would.” Nadia muttered softly.

“What was that?” Clara growled at Nadia. My sister flinched, but Cesar just stood up straighter.

“SHE KNEW THAT EDGAR WOULD FAIL. PERHAPS YOU SHOULD LEARN TO LISTEN TO YOUR BETTERS.” Cesar sneered back at my mother’s furious face, “IT’S LITTLE WONDER YOUR ABOUT TO LOSE EVERYTHING.”

“Karma’s a bitch huh?” Harley yawned, “I say it’s fitting.”

“That can’t be everything.” Olivia interrupted, “Granny, you wouldn’t just call us here if it was just about the Newmore company.”

“I did actually.” Granny took a bite of her ham before clearing her throat, “More importantly, I came to inform you all that I’ve come to a decision. The Arietta family will never be associated with the Newmore family again- with the exception of my granddaughters of course.” Granny smiled at us, “Clara, you’ve been removed from my will entirely. Daniel, you and your business associates- what few you have left- will find it difficult to find partners as I’ve warned all of my friends in the field about your inability to run your own company. The Newmore company is done, but I’m willing to be kind if you agree to give Nadia the CEO position with no strings attached in less than ten years.”
“Never!” My parents hissed.

“Well, this conversation was over quickly. Catherine, I called you here to let you know that no you are not receiving Clara’s inheritance. I’ve decided to split it evenly among my granddaughters.”

“Oh well…” Aunt Catherine pouted, “I still have Arietta Southwest.”

“No heir.” Nadia mumbled, “Thomas can barely wipe his ass without dry humping his hand, and Bobby is too plain to succeed.”

“Excuse me?” Aunt Catherine glared at Nadia.

“That’s true.” Granny agreed, “I hope one of your grandchildren will be able to take over the company because you are not allowed to give the CEO position to either of your sons. If you can’t find one, it’ll be left to Nadia’s child.”

Nadia almost choked on her salad.

“But Mama-“ Aunt Catherine began.

“I won’t have them sinking the company I poured sweat, blood, and tears into.” Granny held up her hand to silence further dissent. Aunt Catherine pouted pitifully, “My mind has been made up.”

“You can’t do this to me mother!” Clara insisted, “I’ll be homeless! I’m your daughter aren’t I!!?”

“Are you a Newmore or an Arietta?” Granny’s brow raised.

“I’m Clara Newmore!”

“Then you aren’t my daughter.” Granny shrugged, “Deal with it.”

“Fuck you old woman.” Daniel stood up in a huff, “You’ve never been good to us!”

“I’ve given you the world.” Granny took a sip of wine, “It’s not my fault you squandered the opportunity.”

With that, Clara and Daniel Newmore walked out of my life forever after insulting my boyfriend to all hell and back first., and I was glad to see them go. The shadow they cast over me burned away in the light of my new day. Without money, they were without power. Without power, they couldn’t hurt me. Still, I worried about the hateful slurs- “dusty” “subterranean” to name a few- they threw Sans’s way.

“you okay?” Sans asked raising a hand to my cheek.

“Yup.” My voice cracked just a little bit.

“GJ!” Tinsel clung to my hand, “Lying is bad!”

“Relieved then.” I said quietly, “Very relieved. Sorry you had to listen to that Comic.”

“still not going anywhere.” He whispered into my ear before giving me a kiss on my cheek, “um..teh ama? However the fuck you say that.”
“Te amo.” I giggled, “Your Italian is horrible.”

“hey, i can work on it.”

“Ohmygodsissy!” Olivia was coughing up her drink, “Does he know what he just said!?”

“he’s a bit dumb looking livvy, but he isn’t that stupid.” Waltzer winked at her, “promise.”

Sans flicked the back of his head.

“Oh my.” Granny gave me a look that was somewhere between interested and irritated, “It seems there’s more going on than you told me Joey.”

“Keep your nose out of my sex life and my love life.” I picked up my spoon and prepared to flick some peas at her, “Or face the consequences.”

“Really Josephine-“ Aunt Catherine sighed like I was a child.

“Bring it.” Granny grabbed some rice.

Aunt Catherine left after the food war began. She avoided becoming a casualty by sheer luck. Nadia was taken out first by a stray piece of ham to the face, and I’m sad to say that Olivia was the second to fall by accidental friendly fire of mandarin oranges. One by one the bitties fell either to direct confrontation or accidental mishaps. I stood victorious in the end with my foot in a bowl of mash potatoes that let gravy flood into my black flats.

Yeah we fucked the dining room up. I never knew that honeyed ham could stick to the ceiling so well….

“For the love of…” Nadia rubbed her temples in frustration while Granny, Sans, and I cleaned up the dining room with my bitties.

“Breathe Nadia.” Olivia patted her back. Harley and Hiro were still laughing about the whole thing.

“It’s not my fault you didn’t learn how to dodge.” Granny pointed a spoon at her, “Otherwise the ham wouldn’t have taken off the left half of your face.”

“Please don’t remind me of how bad my make-up is right now.” Nadia forced through gritted teeth, “Do you need any help cleaning up?”

“nah,” Sans wet his rag once more before scrubbing more sauce off of the wooden floor, “we’ve got nine bitties, a flower, two humans, and monster working on it. it’ll get done eventually.”

“Are you sure?” Olivia questioned, “It’ll be getting dark soon.”

“We can teleport you know.” I reminded her while using a broom to get a chicken drumstick from off of the ornate chandelier.

“yup.” Sans nodded, “we can be home in a pinch.”

“Nonsense.” Granny scoffed, “If I’m putting you to work, the least I can do is offer you some pie in the morning! You should stay the night. Besides, I want to show Raze and December my latest cross stitch pattern.”

Raze perked up at the idea.
“I also need to get to know this little guy better.” Granny pinched one of Flowey’s cheeks.

“Great.” He grumbled.

“Alright.” Olivia sighed before blowing us kisses, “See you soon! I love you!”

“I love you too sweethear/Love you too baby boo.” Granny and I chorused at the same time. We shared a grin.

“Please don’t destroy more of the house.” Nadia wagged her finger at us, “Good night.”

The two left with their bitties in tow.

It took us about an hour and a half to get the dining room back in order. There were still a few stains Granny would have to get professionally scrubbed out, but I was as proud of the end result as I had been of the mess.

“You mentioned us staying the night?” I bit back a yawn.

“Yes my darling.” Granny pinched my cheeks, planting a kiss on my forehead, “Sleepy baby?”

“Mmhmm…” I nodded.

“she’s been working hard the past two days.” Blake explained teleporting onto Granny’s shoulder.

“I see.” Granny ruffled my hair, “Go get some sleep then. I want to spend time with my grandbitties anyways. Cyan darling, you must tell me what kind of blanket you want me to make the baby.”

Granny became absorbed in my bitties within seconds, completely forgetting about Sans and I.

“mind if i join you?” Sans looked up at me.

“We’re not having sex in my grandmother’s house.” I warned him before heading up the stairs to my familiar room.

“wasn’t going to suggest it.”

“Good.”

Sans began to dig out something for us to sleep in while I scrubbed my face clean and the hair spray out of my hair. It took me longer than expected, so I should’ve realized Sans would get into mischief while I was gone.

I returned to the room- decorated with old drawings and paintings of mine- to find Sans in my old, floral print night gown. He fell back onto the bed laughing at my incredulous expression. He quit laughing the instant I took a photo.

“gimme.”

“No.”

“newmore.”
“It’s too cute! Do you have any idea how adorable you are in that outfit?”

“it was a joke, a joke.”

“It failed, but it was the cutest thing ever!”

Sans jumped on top of me.

We wrestled for the phone until he managed to get my phone from me- without cheating by using magic.

“aha!” He exclaimed victoriously holding the phone with the deleted picture.

“dude.” Blake laughed while Waltzer took a picture, “we were worried that you two were um…ya know…but..ha…”

“granny!” Waltzer yelled out hurrying downstairs with the bitty phone, “you’ve got to see this.”

“dammit.”

Sans dropped onto the bed beside me in defeat.

Downstairs, I heard Granny and the others begin to laugh uncontrollably.

“Well….you make a very cute little night gown model.” I kissed his cheek.

“i hate you.”

“Je t’aime.”

“i mean it.”

“Don’t believe it.”

“…good.”
“Come on human!” Undyne’s rough encouragement cut through the pain of my limbs, “Just twenty more!”

“Uggghhhh…” I pushed through the pain and continued through the exercises, “I hate… you…so…much….Undyne.”

“I was in a coma for a year and half, but I can do this! So can you!” Undyne protested, “Come on! Put some back bone into it!”

“Kill me…” I whined.

Eventually, I reached two hundred. My body practically collapsed against my cold floor in relief. Undyne sat down beside me after dropping her own weights a couple of inches further away than I had dropped mine. Both of us were sweating up a river and panting like crazy.

“You finished it!” Undyne roughly slapped my aching back, “Good job Squish!”

“I hate you.” I weakly struck out at her knee, “My body hates you. My entire being right now just wants to clock you in the face.”

“If you can work up the energy to do that, you should do two hundred squats.” Undyne grinned.

“Noooooo….”

Undyne laughed. We rested for a couple of minutes before we began to put the weights back under my bed. Undyne was excited about her new gig as a bodyguard, but I could tell she was still a bit anxious about working around so many humans. She still tensed up anytime I held a sharp object in my hand. Loud humans made her practically grind her fangs down flat. A crowd of humans made her almost nauseous.

“You sure this little celebrity won’t mind me begin a monster?” Undyne asked as she toweled her hair.

“She won’t.” I called back from my tepid shower. Hurrying to prevent getting a nice blast of ice water on my face, I cleaned the sweat off I record time, “Pass me a towel?”
Undyne tossed one to me.

“You sure…?"

“Undyne.” I stepped out of the shower and glared at the fishwoman, “He’s completely pro-monster and anti-anti-monster. He’s practically salivating at the idea of having a monster bodyguard.”

_Though I did tell him that Dr. Alphys has dibs on you._

“Thanks for hooking me up by the way.” Undyne reluctantly said. I could tell it hurt her pride to have to rely on me, “I probably wouldn’t have found a job without your help.”

“You would’ve. It just would’ve taken forever.” I patted her on the back, “Now, let’s get our hair dry and enjoy whatever snack Sunshine and Cyan have whipped up for the day!”

“Hey can you braid my hair like you did that last time? Alphys really seemed to like it!”

“Sure thing.”

Undyne’s hair was a bit shorter than it had been during her coma, but a lot of split ends needed to go after she woke up. Luckily, she had a tough scalp. It’d been years since I had to sit down and do any braiding, so I was a bit rough at times.

“lia?” December knocked on the bathroom door.

“Yes sweetheart?” I called around the ponytail holder I had in my mouth.

“Miss Toriel was wondering if you want to have lunch together!” Tinsel answered.

“Sure. We’ll be there in ten. You guys tell the others to make themselves presentable.” I quickly tied off the end of the French braid, “There we go.”

“Lunch with former queens.” Undyne checked her hair in the mirror, “Aren’t you a lucky human?”

“She’s probably wondering about some human school traditions.” _I’m not important or anything._ I had helped Miss Toriel get into an online college class to let her earn her teaching degree. Apparently, monster children tended to be homeschooled, so she was kind of a fish out of water in this scenario, “I’ll give her Leo’s number. He could help her out a lot.”

“Oh, did you hear about Pap?” Undyne turned her head to face me.

“Papyrus?” I cocked my head to the side, “Comic has mentioned anything, but I haven’t actually spoken to him in about two days. We’ve both been busy this week.”

“Pap is moving in with your sister.” Undyne frowned, “How did neither of them tell you?”

_Seriously. I’m going to beat that child for not telling me these kinds of things._

“Why?”

“He and Olivia are apparently going to split an apartment closer to the restaurant.” Undyne shrugged, “It’s apparently a lot cheaper, and it’ll make it easier for them to get to and from work.”

“Huh.” _I need to check on Sans about this- definitely need to._ I smiled up at Undyne,
“Thanks for letting me know. Oh, by the way, did you know Dr. Alphys has this anime she really wants?”

“Really?” Undyne’s eyes brightened. These two love birds were going to kill me, “What is it! Tell me Squish!”

“Okay, okay.” I laughed when Undyne picked me up and jostled me around in an attempt to ‘force’ the answer out of me.

Fifteen minutes later, I was parting with Undyne outside of my building.

“Stay safe walking home.” Waltzer said from his perch on my head, “don’t go into any alleys.”

“Stay away from 10th and 35th street.” Sunshine added with a sad look, “The anti-monster groups have taken those streets over. There’s no telling what might happen.”

“I’ll stay safe.” Undyne promised before fist bumping Blake.

“She’s not made of bubbles or anything.” Flowey scoffed, “Trust me, she’s hard to kill.”

“Glad to have your vote of confidence string bean!” Undyne grinned.

“i…think that was an insult.” December whispered inside my hood.

“s-sh-h-h.” Idjit squeaked.

Undyne was already heading away from us.

“i’m starting to think this buttercup doesn’t have any survival instinct.” Blake glared at the flower monster. Flowey just grinned and ducked behind Snuggle, “little shit.”

“Please no fighting while we’re walking.” I sighed, tucking my hands into my hoodie pockets, “People already stare at us enough. We don’t need to add to the gossip columns.”

“Gossip columns…those are the things that said mean stuff about you and GDS right?” Tinsel scowled a little bit, “I read some of them. They weren’t nice at all.”

“Gossip columns are used to cause trouble and give people grief.” I chuckled, “It’s not the first time some local wanna be hotshot reporter decided to write about the Newmore outcast. It probably won’t be the last time either.”

“hmph.” Raze snorted, “the assholes should jus’ shut the fuck up and screw righ’ off.”

“For once, I agree.” Sunshine sagged against his mate some, “You should see some of the articles about monsters and pro-monster humans they’re trying to push.”

“You made headlines Miss Josie.” Cyan chimed in. His voice was soft because he felt particularly ill that day, but I managed to hear him over the din of the city.

“I know.” I really need to apologize to King Asgore for that too. I probably made a lot of work for him.

“Hey freak!”

My bitties, Flowey, and I turned our heads right as a bottle flew towards my face. Blake
swatted it aside with ease. A group of drunk bitches tottered about in broad daylight looking like their make-up had tried to run away. They hunched together around the loudmouth who threw her half empty beer bottle at my head.

“Did that bitch just throw a beer bottle at you?” Waltzer’s hands tightened in my hair.

“You’re on our list whore! Dirty skeleton fucker!”

“Take pictures of them please.” I asked Blake.

“On it.”

“Text them to Ty. They’re insinuating a threat to my safety, so I want them arrested.” I was going to be adopting my nephew soon, so I really needed to let the police do their job instead of flying off the handle like I usually did.

“Sent.” Blake said.

The women continued to pursue me from across the street, yelling at me and throwing various items at me. Once they threw some guy’s iphone at me. His fury bought be enough time to get out of the way.

Physical relief made my shoulder’s sag when I found myself at Olivia’s restaurant. It technically right after lunch rush, so the place wasn’t packed. The people in it all seemed to be pro-monster or indifferent monsters entirely because no one batted an eye at the monster customers or staff. Once again, pride nearing maternal levels filled my chest. My little sister did this. I’m so proud of her.

“Josephine!” Toriel called out to me from one of the back booths, “Over here.”

“Hey Toriel.” I slid into the booth with a grin. My bitties hurried to get off of me and find comfortable spots on the table, “How’s everything going?”

“Well enough.” Toriel smiled, but it faltered, “My divorce with Asgore was finalized.”

“I’m…not certain if I should say congratulations or sorry.” The two obvious had a long, painful history that neither wanted to go into. I liked both of them a lot though, so I tried my best to stay neutral about the whole thing.

“I suppose it’s a bit of both.” Toriel’s smile was sad, “Still, I don’t think our relationship was reparable after everything that happened.”

“Doesn’t meant it’s a painless process.” I patted the back of her hand, “Is this why you called me out here?”

“Well, I did need a bit of a distraction.” Toriel chuckled. Tinsel examined her beaded bracelet with an unnatural amount of interest, “You all are quite pleasant to be around.”

“I find that hard to believe.” Flowey grumbled, avoiding Toriel’s direct line of sight as best he could.

“It’s the truth- I assure you.” Toriel told the buttercup firmly, “So, Josephine, I was wondering if you heard about Papyrus and Olivia moving into an apartment closer to the restaurant? The two were telling me all about it. They seemed quite excited.”
“You know more than me then.” I caught sight of Olivia greeting some customers. We locked eyes and I gave her a ‘come here ASAP’ look, “I had to find out from Undyne.”

“Oh my.”

Conversation with Toriel came and went naturally. She actually did have a few questions about the school system, so I made sure to give her Leo’s number. We tried our best to keep conversation light and cheerful. This whole lunch was supposed to help her feel better after all. Then, Waltzer asked if Toriel had made it to the restaurant okay, and things devolved into dark, scary conversations about the state of the city. Things were going to reach a boiling point eventually. One way or another, monsters would either gain the world or lose it all. Sadly, there was nothing but a brutal history we could use to try and piece together a prediction. Toriel was sadly optimistic. My bitties, Flowey, and I were a bit more cynical and realistic.

“huh? king asgore.” Blake blurted out suddenly.

Sure enough, the king of monsters had entered the restaurant with a couple of monsters asking him some questions to his right and left. He looked more haggard compared to the last time I saw him. The weight of his people must’ve been slowly wearing him down on the inside. Somehow, he managed to give the monsters and humans in the restaurant a tired, cheerful smile before asking to be left alone to enjoy a late lunch with his thoughts.

“Hey Toriel.” I gave the goatwoman a guilty look, “How much would you hate me if I said I need to speak with King Asgore?”

“Not much.” Toriel reluctantly replied, “Do you want me to watch the bitties?”

“Please?”

“Go on then.” Toriel sighed.

“Miss Toriel.” Cyan tapped her hand some, “That tea you recommended for the nausea has worked wonders the past few days.”

“I’m glad to hear that Cyan.” Toriel smiled.

King Asgore waited in the small, lobby area rather awkwardly. Everyone gawked at him like he was a god among men. I noticed a few of the servers begin to whisper to each other.

“Your majesty.” I called out to the tall goatman.

“Miss Newmore.” King Asgore stood up politely, “I almost didn’t expect to see you here, but then I remembered that your sister owns this restaurant.” He laughed awkwardly, “Did you need something?”

“Just a moment of your time?” I gestured to the door, “Away from prying eyes.”

I can see the gossip columns now. Dirty Skeleton Fucker has Brief Liaison with Goatman King!

“Of course.” King Asgore nodded, “I assume that this isn’t a friendly chat then?”

“Eh, it’s technically an apology.” I opened the door for him.

We stepped into the side alley right beside the restaurant. I made sure we were in open view
of the streets still, but the tight area gave us some semblance of privacy.

“An apology?” King Asgore cocked his head as he looked down at me with a patient, tired gaze.

“Sorry about my freak out after the fire at the lab. That probably didn’t help things in the slightest. I was just so angry that Comic or Dr. Alphys could’ve been hurt…” I shook my head, “No, I’m not here to make excuses. I just want to say that I’m sorry for any inconvenience my actions may have caused you.”

“Please Miss Newmore.” King Asgore held up his paws, “There’s no need for such words. If I had been there, I honestly doubt I would’ve been much better.”

“I find that hard to believe.” I laughed, “You’re a stern politician your majesty, but I know you can be a real softie too. It’s kind of hard to imagine you losing your temper or hurting someone.”

“You have no idea how happy I am to hear that.” King Asgore’s voice dropped to low misery, “If only others could give me such leniency.”

“Toriel?”

King Asgore nodded solemnly.

“Listen your majesty, it’s probably for the best.” I patted him on the arm, “Would you rather be stuck in a relationship where neither of you were happy? You both can move on now. Who knows? Maybe you’ll become friends later on.”

“I would like that more than I can say.” King Asgore sighed. He lost himself to his thoughts for a couple of seconds before giving me a warm, genuinely happy smile, “You’ve done much for all of us Miss Newmore. I can see why Sans and the others are so fond of you. You’re a good woman.”

“Ah, stop it.” I blushed bright red, “I’m just any other Grayridge born and raised jackass. No need to try and make me think otherwise.”

King Asgore frowned and stood up straighter. I had the distinct feeling we were about to argue over whether or not I was a good person.

That argument never happened however.

As we talked, our positions had left us with King Asgore standing with his back to the streets, and my back was facing the alley way. I wanted to try and protect him as much as possible. All of my effort almost didn’t work however.

The idiot who tried to stab the king of monsters walked a little too suspiciously and drew his knife much too soon. The sun glinted off the fresh metal as he moved to strike.

My options were limited. King Asgore was much bigger than me in size and mass. I couldn’t just shove him out of the way. At the same time however, I couldn’t let this asshole stab him. That left me one option- the painful option.

I quickly shoved my way between the knife and King Asgore. I tried my best to attack the would be stabber, but he had longer arms. My fists didn’t connect. His knife did.

Pain lanced in my left side. I’d been stabbed before- muggings at knife point were common around my old apartment. My previous experiences sadly didn’t make the pain hurt less. Agony
came out in the form of a muffle grunt when the assailant drew the knife out of my flesh with a harsh, sharp yank.

“Miss Newmore!” King Asgore immediately backhanded the assailant into the cement wall of Olivia’s restaurant. The guy crumbled at the impact, “Miss Newmore, how bad is your injury.”

“Shit.” My hands desperately clutched at the wound, “Get Snuggle.”

Pandemonium broke out when people saw the blood dripping from my hands onto the ground. A small pool of red reflected my pained expression back at me. Some good Samaritans helped me staunch the wound while King Asgore hurried to grab Toriel and Snuggle.

I struggled to keep my focus.

Sharp pain cut through me again when Toriel’s warm paws pressed against the injury.

“Please stay with me Josephine.” She begged as I was laid out on the ground.

“Sissy!” Olivia whimpered.

“ah shit. cy!”

My head angled to check on my bitties. Cyan had doubled over in pain.

“Raze…” I panted, “Waltz. Cy. CC. NOW.”

The image of Raze carefully cradling Cyan in one arm and grabbing Waltzer with another was the last thing I saw before I closed my eyes to try and ward off the pain.

Well, shit.

I guess I’m making headlines again.
“Are you certain you should be standing?” Toriel hovered at my side protectively, “The doctors at the hospital seemed concerned about your tendency to bust stitches.”

“I don’t think the magical glue holding my body is going to break anytime soon Toriel.” I moved around a blob of people on the sidewalk while holding my hand over the patched up injury, “It’s just going to hurt like hell for a long time.”

“I’m sorry we can’t just heal you up, but….”

“Determination- which controls a humans will to live an ability to heal- weakens when monster magic is constantly introduced into the body to heal injuries.” I patted her shoulder, “I know Toriel. I’m just glad I don’t have stitches this time around. Besides, the numbing effect of the magic makes it to where I don’t need painkillers to walk, so thank you for your help.”

“I still can’t believe you got stabbed for Asgore.” Toriel sighed.

“He’s the king of monsters. If monsters are ever going to get the rights they need, they need a figurehead to speak for them. Just be glad that we’re in a pretty politically minded city…well….I guess Grayridge is just ambitious. Still.” I shrugged, “There’s a lot of good that can be done here, and there are a lot of pro-monster humans here as well. It might not be safe yet. It might be a long time before it’s ever truly safe. Until then, I’ll just take the hits for you guys and roll with it.”

I meant that.

Monsters were in a precarious position with anti-human monsters violently lashing out every time another monster was killed. That meant that they were starting to look just as bad as the anti-monster groups to the public, and every small act of violence- even in self-defense- could damage their movement. I just hope that I haven’t made things worse again.

“You’re too kind Josephine.” Toriel rested a paw on my hand, “Please don’t get injured for our sakes. We’d never be able to forgive ourselves.”

And let you guys get hurt instead? No way in hell.

“Anyways,” I wrapped an arm around Toriel’s waist to steady myself some. She was on my uninjured side thankfully, “I can’t wait to see the little bitty baby. Blake says that there was something wrong with his eyes though….I’m just glad he wasn’t too premature like Tinsel had...
“Josephine.” Toriel sighed.

“They named him Atlantic. Don’t ask me why. I have no clue. Still, from what Idjit and
December say, he’s absolutely adorable. A small little skeleton shaped collection of water with
Cyan’s unruly curls.” I continued to chatter on about Atlantic to try and brighten Toriel’s mood
some.

She struggled to keep the concerned look on her face. The older, wiser monster probably
realized that my dumb ass would probably walk out in front of a firing squad to save all of them if it
was within my power to do so. The idea seemed to both worry and relieve her at the same time. I’m
actually affecting someone else’s life for good. For once. Put a sock in it asshole.

Toriel was just going to walk home after dropping me off, but I wasn’t about to take a risk. I
made some calls and found one of my artist buddies who would be willing to take her hope safely.
He was a pro-monster, burly sculptor that would more than likely ward off any would be attackers.
The formal kind of guy, he politely nodded his head and offered a handshake to Toriel.

“Good day. Van, I assume this vision is Miss Toriel?”

Oh my god, he’s flirting.

Toriel seemed a bit shocked. Then she blushed.

“Why yes, she is.” Toriel shook his hand. She gave me a look. I shrugged and mouthed
behind my hand ‘He’s a good guy.’

I think I just set the former queen of monsters up with a guy on accident. I wonder how
King Asgore is going to react…

I shook my head. Their relationship wouldn’t be my problem unless they brought it up with
me. Otherwise, my broken nose was staying out of it.

“oi, speck!”

A magazine in the lobby flew at my head. I managed to catch it with the hand that wasn’t
holding my side.

“I see that they sent a welcoming party downstairs this time.” I gave Raze a flat look before
setting the magazine back down on the coffee table, “Don’t tell me you’re going to get mad about me
getting stabbed.”

“…..” Raze hissed a curse under his breath, “quit throwin’ yerself in the line of fire. you
worry m- everyone when ya do that! jeez, even the buttercup got feisty after all this mess.”

“Did I worry you?” He turned bright red and threw a pen at me, “Awww…I did. I’m sorry
Raze.”

“shaddap!”

He’s cute when he gets all worked up like this. Ah. No. No biting my hand you little shit.

“Miss Newmore!” My landlady’s voice was slightly clipped, “I’m glad to see that your
alright.”
“Barely, but yeah.” I gathered Raze up in my arms. He bit me roughly, but stopped upon noticing that we were being focused on. Immediately, he climbed onto my shoulder and faced backwards, “You need something?”

She needed me gone apparently. I was “bringing too much trouble” to her doorstep in the form of journalists and protestors. Her fear was understandable. I mean, I’d been shot off the road, thrown in jail for a night, and just recently stabbed. My record didn’t scream: safe, capable resident. Not to mention the Newmore family going under took a lot of weight from my last name.

“That fuckin’ bitch.” Raze snarled, “I’ll burn her shitty little building to the ground.”

“Shhh....” I patted the top of his head comfortingly, “It makes sense. We’ll need a new house for the kid anyways. The little tyke won’t be satisfied in our apartment- even though it’s bigger than most.”

“an’ how are we going to fuckin’ get a house on such short notice jackass?” Raze bit my finger.

“We have a month and a half to find a place. The hard part will be finding one in a decent location.” I bit my lip as I tried to think of open houses close to the various schools in Grayridge. Grayridge wasn’t a college town like Greenridge, but there were still two public high schools and one private school that barely managed to contain the younger generation, “We’ll figure something out though.”

“When did you become an optimist?” Raze huffed.

“I’m being realistic.” I argued, “There’s no point in getting all pissy about it. I mean... I don’t know if I could take her to court over it, but even if I could, why bother? When the kid turns about five he’s going to need more room to play. What’s the point in fighting for a space we’d probably only be in for about four more years? We should just start planning for the long term. Besides, I’m going to be on bedrest for the next couple of days to weeks while my innards fix themselves. It’ll give me something to do.”

Raze just grunted.

My bitties swarmed me the second I set foot in the door. The typical questions- “How are you feeling?” “Are you in pain?” “Why the hell are you walking!?”- were quickly dealt with.

“Okay, okay.” I held up a hand, “Enough about me. I want to see the bitty baby.”

“Miss Josie.” Cyan sighed. He looked towards the couch where Waltzer sat cradling a small form in his arms, “You should rest.”

“she won’t listen until she sees him.” Waltzer chuckled. The soft sound quickly died off as he glared at me, “you’ll be going to bed right after though.”

“Fine.” I agreed.

Atlantic was tinier than I expected. Then I remembered, that Tinsel’s parents were all 5 inches tall or taller, so the size difference was to be expected. The small little skeleton shaped bundle of water had a permanent blank stare. His eyes- glassy and marble like- bulged out their sockets and swirled with various shades of blue and silver. I honestly couldn’t tell whether he was awake until one of his tiny hands reached up for my finger.

“Aww...” I cooed. He pulled his hand back against his chest, “He’s so cute.”
“we’re going to have to keep a careful eye on his eyes though.” Blake sighed putting his hands on his hips, “they look tough, but they’re kind of like bubbles- too much pressure and they’ll pop.”

“Okay, that’s just creepy.” I shuddered.

“I can’t wait until he’s big like me!” Tinsel grinned, “We can play together then.”

“Be careful not to touch him.” Sunshine reminded his son, “He could hurt you on accident.”

“I’ll be careful.” Tinsel swore.

*I’m just glad that this delivery wasn’t as traumatizing as the previous one.*

“Do you know why you went into labor early Cy?” I questioned him. He gave me a flat, unamused look.

“My human was bleeding out on the sidewalk. I think it was stress.” He scowled at me, crossing his arms.

“Oh…sorry.” I rubbed my injured side some.

“it’s not your fault there are crazy people out there ophie. he’s just cranky we had to rely on blake and the others to relay us information while you were down.” Waltzer carefully turned Atlantic around in his arms to give his right arm a break, “it was rough. we made it through though.”

“all of us…” December chimed in. He fiddled with the tassel on my flip flops, “i was scared lia.”

“p-ple-ease q-quit g-ge-et-t-ting h-hurt.” Idjit sniffled.

“Idjit, baby.” I went to bend down and pick him up. My side screamed, “Ouch.”

“no bending.” December frowned.

‘You’re going into the bedroom. Now.’ Snuggle signed quickly.

“But-“

‘Now.’

“Fine.”

My bitties helped me change to the best of their abilities with their telekinesis. I couldn’t exactly bend and twist after all. They all stared at the bandage on my torso with unique mixtures of fear, anger, and sadness. *I hope they don’t feel guilty about this…It’s not their fault I’m too physically weak to move a 6’10 goatman out of the way.*

“Guys, I’m fine. Really.” I said, settling down on my bed, “Please quit fretting over this. It’s not the first time I’ve been injured. I really doubt it’ll be the last either.”

“It had better be.” Sunshine groused, “You mean too much for us to lose you because you wake up one morning and decide to save the world.”

“Miss Josie, please be more careful in the future.” Cyan agreed, “I don’t know what we, or the others, would do with out you.”
“d-don’t die j-jo-jojo.” Idjit tried his best to keep his crying under some semblance of control on my nightstand. December quietly patted his back.

“seriously, ari. you’re giving me dust rents.” Blake sighed, “i can’t tell you how often i watch you walk out of the door and wonder if you’re coming back or not.”

“You’re my GJ!” Tinsel added roughly putting his hands onto mine, “We’re all family because of you! Please be more careful.”

“I see…” I thought about it for a couple of minutes.

Did I really make us a family?

In a way, I suppose I had. After all, my decisions were the ones that led to each of them eventually coming to live with me. My choices were what led them all to form their little clan, and at some point during the formation process, they all began to look at me as the mostly defacto head of household.

“I’ll be more careful.” I promised them, “I can’t say that I won’t protect the people I care about though.”

‘We’d never ask you to forsake that.’ Snuggle smiled at me faintly.

That was when Atlantic began to whimper some.

“Ah, he’s hungry.” Cyan rubbed his temples, “Come on everyone. Miss Josie needs to res-“

“newmore!” The worried shout was very loud in the relatively quiet apartment, “newmore!”

“Oh for the love of.” Cyan groaned.

“she’s in here man!” Blake called out before grabbing Snuggle, “we should probably give them some privacy.”

Idjit and December seemed reluctant to leave, but ultimately, they left with Cyan and Waltzer.

Sans flew into the room, careful to not step on the bitties exiting. His eyes zeroed in on me in less than heartbeat. He sagged in relief upon seeing me safe and sound tucked in bed. Then, anger turned his eyes black.

“what the hell were you thinking?” Sans struggled to keep his voice calm.

“That there was knife, a guy trying to use the knife, and a very important monster that would become his victim if I didn’t act.” I patted the area of the bed near me, “It was just one little stab. The knife was a bit big, but it’s not the worst thing that’s ever happened to me.”

“You’re just a magnet for misfortune aren’t you?” Sans sat down beside me. Once he was close enough, I could see him vibrating in fury, “what happened? i heard bits and pieces from everyone, but no one was coherent enough to give me a solid picture beyond you bleeding on a sidewalk.”

“I was talking with King Asgore outside of Olivia’s restaurant. Some guy went to stab King Asgore, and I knew that I wouldn’t be able to physically move the king out of the way. I couldn’t just let him get stabbed though.”
“so you threw yourself in front of the knife.” Sans held his skull in his hands, “stars, you’re just trying to make me crack a few bones here aren’t you?”

“Sorry bone baby.” I tugged Sans a bit closer to me, “Comic, I’m fine. Sore, a bit hungry, and a bit wonky from the painkillers wearing off isn’t anywhere near me bleeding out somewhere.”

Sans sighed and rested his head against my shoulder. It hurt a bit to have to angle myself to hold him better. Seeing the stress bleed off of his shoulders made the discomfort worth it.

“I’ve already promised to be more careful.” I kissed the top of his head.

“the bitties beat me to it huh?” Sans chuckled. Then he paused, “where’s the weed?”

Now that he mentions it…Where is Flowey?

“Guys!?” I called out, “Where’s Flowey!”

“umm…out.” Blake called back.

“What?” I sat up a bit straighter.

“Flowey?” Tinsel asked.

“Yeah!”

“Oh!” Tinsel laughed, “He went to bully the friends of the human who hurt you!”

“tinsel!” Idjit protested.

“gah, kid!” Waltzer groaned.

“What!? I straightened up quick enough to make the glue strain.

“newmore, newmore.” Sans hurriedly pressed me against the bed once more, “i’ll go grab the weed okay? just keep resting.”

“Flowey is in danger Comic!”

“trust me, he’s harder to kill than you’d think.” Sans rolled his eyes. He kissed my forehead, “please, let me handle this one- okay?”

HELL NO!

“….fine.” I spat out, crossing my arms like a child. I knew I wasn’t in any condition to go out seeking a fight with some assholes, but that didn’t mean my pride wasn’t injured by the very idea of leaving one of my charges alone, “Please be quick?”

“alright.” Sans ran one of his hands through my hair. He was getting distracted. Some part of me was willing to bet he was doing it on purpose.

“Go find Flowey, or I’ll shave it all off.” I warned.

Sans quickly went to get intel from the bitties.

For the next thirty minutes, I glared at my ceiling. I should’ve been sleeping, but I couldn’t rest properly without all of the members of my household present.
“DAMMIT COMEDIAN!” Flowey’s roar cut through the scolding I was planning for him, “I almost hand that guy completely blue!”

“you ran off. newmore worried. i went to get you.” Sans snapped back, “deal with it.”

Sans walked into my room with a very unhappy Flowey struggling to break free of his grasp. He fell limp the instant he saw me glaring holes into his petals. The buttercup tried his best to pull a forced smile onto his face.

“Ummm….hi?”

“Flowey.”

He cringed.

“Do you have any idea how dangerous running of is!?”

“Oh that’s a great line coming from you!” He hissed back.

Sans ended up playing the biased mediator for our argument.

Snuggle, Idjit, and December tried their hardest to keep me laying down, but mid-way through the argument, I was sitting up right to glared at him properly. Eventually, Sans simply let Raze drag Flowey away from the argument.

“Hey!” I protested, panting, ignoring the pain.

“you need to rest now.” Sans crawled onto the bed beside me, “no more yelling.”

“p-please jojo.” Idjit gave me those puppy dog eyes.

_Shit._

December added his delicate, concerned frown to the mix.

_Double shit._

“You all fight dirty.” I declared, laying back down on the bed. Idjit and December cuddled against my neck.

“only when the fight matters.” Sans carefully wrapped an arm around me.

_Jeez. These guys are so cheesy._

…..

_I love them for it though._
Celebration Large and Small

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except Tinsel and Atlantic) Full disclaimer/ links can be found in Ch1

A big thing happens.
4 more to go :)

If there was one thing I didn’t notice at first, it was that Sans and Leo were the same height.

The instant I made this discovery in the middle of April, I found myself fascinated by it. The two noticed my spacing and tried to get me to focus, but I just couldn't stop comparing them.

The largest difference was their weight. Sans didn’t have the extra weight of fat, muscle, innards, and so on, so he weighed much less than Leo. Then there was- of course- the fact that Leo had skin while Sans was literally just bones.

The two also carried themselves differently. Sans looked like your normal lazy guy at first glance. He had a natural confident façade that could fool most people, but he also had this sad look that would cross his face when he thought no one was looking. Leo on the other hand, radiated slight nervousness poorly hidden behind a snarky armor. He kept his body hunched in on itself as though to avoid directing attention to himself. Really, it was just amazing to watch the slight change in their motions because of their different ways of hiding insecurity. Leo tried to keep conversation going with a bubbly attitude while Sans simply tried to blend in with the background.

“Hey.” Flowey tugged on some of my hair, “Human bitch.”

The way they spoke was also slightly different. Leo spoke quickly with little thought most of the time. Sans spoke slowly, carefully measuring each word’s meaning to see if it fit what he needed it to do. Both were using diversion tactics, but they were on opposite ends of the spectrum.

“QUIT LOOKING LIKE YOU WANT A THREESOME AND ANSWER ME ALREADY!” Flowey roared smacking the back of my head roughly.

“Huh?” I angled my head back to find Flowey had his petals painted with nail polish, “Umm… trying to start a new fashion trend?”

“NO!” His face warped into nightmare fuel, “Those little bitty brats did this too me!”

Idjit and December peered out from my bedroom door. I saw bright red nail polish half dried on top of Idjit’s skull.

“Josie?” Leo and Sans exited the kitchen with a collection of food and drink, “Is something wrong? Why is Flowey- Oh….you poor thing.”

“heh…looks like idjit and december didn’t appreciate you tearing up their quilt last night.” Sans chuckled setting the tray of coffee on the poorly fixed coffee table. I counted my blessings the crumbling thing didn’t completely collapse, “that’s what you get you little shit.”
“Mister Sans.” Ember sighed adjusting his glasses, “Please don’t antagonize Flowey. He’s already disrupted Father’s birthday enough.”

“True enough.” I nodded in agreement, “Would you mind helping Flowey find something to get the paint off his petals Ember?”

“Of course Miss Joan.” Ember somewhat bowed politely, “I believe we can make something in her office Flowey. This way.”

“Quit trying to boss me around-“

Ember cut Flowey off by yanking one of his petals roughly. Flowey winced as he was dragged away from us.

“You don’t adopt push overs do you?” I grinned at Leo.

“Your bitties are bullies.” Leo sniffed, “I had to make sure that any new bitty could handle their teasing and the typical dicking around of high school kids. Are you going to put Idjit and December in time out for this or…?”

“Huh?”

“ha.” Sans chuckled settling on the couch beside me by my uninjured side. He rested his head on my shoulder and slid a hand around my waist, “she lets them all get away with a lot of shit.”

“I….” Really couldn’t argue with that, “I mostly let them sort out their own problems. I only get involved when they break shit.”

“Are you sure it’s good to encourage this kind of behavior?” Leo frowned, sitting on my other side.

“Eh…they haven’t killed each other yet.” I shrugged, “Besides, they all get back at each other at some point. You should’ve seen what Blake did to Waltzer’s junk collection after the little bastard covered his half-pipe in glue.”

Leo looked very concerned. Sans just waved it away.

“it’s all in good fun man.” He assured him.

“It didn’t really get this bad until you guys moved in here though.” Leo began flicking through the channels while Sans handed me a blueberry tart Sunshine had made, “Think it’ll change once you move again?”

“huh?” Sans angled his head to glare at me, “you’re moving too?”

“Getting the boot.” I said around the nice, warm tart in my mouth, “Still got to find a place to stay though.” I swallowed, “I’m trying to find a place that’ll last me long term. A house with a decent backyard for a kid to play in near one of the schools. The last part is where my issue comes in. There aren’t many open houses in those neighborhoods, so I’ve got my realtor clients keeping an eye out if anything opens.”

“So you think you’ll find one before the end of May?” Leo frowned, “You’re not exactly doing well on time….”

“If the worse comes to pass, I’ll find another apartment.” I shrugged, “The kid won’t be big
enough to really enjoy a backyard for a few years after all. I just hate moving all of my shit around without a plan.”

“seems like everyone’s getting their move on.” Sans’s face seemed relaxed, but I heard the quiet anxiety in his voice, “grilby’s moving to greenridge to let his niece go to college. pap’s moving out. toriel’s moving to blackridge by the end of the year. now, you’re moving too?”

“Not out of the city though.” I reminded him, tapping the side of his skull, “No matter where I go, my door is always open to you.” I kissed his cheekbone.

“Aww…” Leo teased, “Joan and Sans kissing in a tree-“

I punched his arm.

“Ow.” He nudged me back gently. My injury was doing okay, but I still couldn’t be handled too roughly, “I haven’t seen you this enraptured since our high school years.”

“I graduated early asshole.” I scowled.

“You still salivated all over Henry though. Isn’t he a celebrity now?”

“henry…that’s the celebrity undyne’s working for.” Suspicion crept into Sans’s voice.

“He never gave me the time of day beyond designing his business card. I swear.” I held my hand up as though I was taking an oath, “Besides, I apparently like younger, skinnier men.”

“Which is a total 180 from her usual type.” Leo- the little shit- chimed in again, “She typically likes the hunky pretty boys, so you’re a very obvious exception.”

“huh.” Sans seemed lost in thought.

I swear if your teasing makes Sans insecure Leo…I’ll bust your balls. I love you, but NO.

“You are the first one she’s ever told ‘I love you’ to though, so you’re a special, exception.” Leo smoothly added. Sans seemed to relax in relief- just a hair though.

“I thought we were supposed to be you celebrating turning 31!?” I interrupted before Leo could bring up more of my past relationships. Some were stupid. Some had been bad. Others had ended peacefully. I still had a long list of exes, and I didn’t want my best friend to go through every last one of them.

“I’m celebrating.” Leo defended, “I’m having fun teasing you.”

“I will shove your Asian flat ass onto the floor.”

“Bitch, your ass is flatter than mine.”

“That’s cause I’m jock not a twink.”

“Wanna go?” Leo cocked a brow.

“no.” Sans picked me up with his telekinesis and placed himself between Leo and I, “no roughhousing until she’s recovered nagihiko.”

“Dammit.” Both of us grumbled.
“i’m not having you go back to the hospital because you decided to wrestle and bust your insides open.” Sans tapped my nose, “now, i thought we were going to enjoy a movie and some snacks while cyan and sunshine make a cake. can we please get back to that, or are you going to keep making me wonder how you’re best friends with all the insults you give each other.”

“Awww….” I kissed his head, “We’re just assholes out of love bone baby.”

“We were worse when we were younger.” Leo laughed, “One time, she flipped me out of an open window into Granny’s daisy bushes.”

“What?” Sans’s eyes widened.

“It was on the first floor.” I quickly added.

“Oh…” Sans sighed in relief, “i was about to fly off the handle and window if that was your usual response to arguing.”

“We weren’t arguing actually.” Leo tapped his chin, “I think we were actually just playing ninja warriors…we were twelve sooo…”

“Granny was watching Olivia, so I went a bit wild with the freedom.” I smiled at the memory. It was one of the few good ones I had of my childhood, “Anyways, Leo, why did you want me to get two tickets to Japan? I mean, you usual go visit them alone in the summer.”

“Umm…well….there’s this girl at work and-“

“you want to go to the bone zone underneath a cherry blossom tree?”

“No!” Leo grabbed one of the pillows on the couch and swatted Sans with it, “She’s very nice, and she wants to see Japan! I also somewhat like her, so her meeting my grandparents is an added bonus!”

“Please tell me she’s not like Annie.” I questioned in Japanese.

“Promise she isn’t. I think I’ve mentioned her before…” Leo paused and frowned, “Eh. She’s a nice girl Josie.”

“ummm….skeleton who only speaks english is very confused.”

“Just having a quick exchange Comic.” I snuggled close to him, making him blush bright blue when my hand subtly slid under his shirt, “Anyways…”

We began to look for movies to watch.

As we were looking however, we discovered news that thoroughly made Leo’s birthday national holiday worthy.

The Monster Rights Bill was passed.

Apparently, my stabbing had given the movement the momentum it needed to show the world just how crazy the anti-monster groups were getting. They attacked a fellow human while trying to assault one of the most prominent figures in monsters society. To call it bad press would be an understatement.

“Hell yeah!” I jumped up from the couch happily. My side felt like I had been stabbed again, “OOOOWWWWWW….fuck yeah!”
“Josie.” Leo groaned with a smile on his face, “You’re going to hurt yourself.”

“it’s done.” Sans stared at the screen blankly. He also sprung up and pulled me into a hug, “it’s actuall done, holy shit, holy shit.”

“There had better be a reason for such foul language!” Sunshine popped into the living room. Cyan, followed by Waltzer who was carrying Atlantic, trailed behind him with a bits of flour stuck to him here and there.

“Monsters have earned their rights.” Leo informed them.

Sans and I were too busy just hugging to really be of much help.

“You can vote now. You’re completely protected to the full extent of the law.” I whispered against his skull, “Holy shit. Comic…”

“i know.” Sans laughed, “i know.”

Our attention turned to the TV screen when we heard King Asgore begin to speak.

“I’m glad that my people have finally received the protection we need.” He stood up a little bit straighter because of their success, “For so long, we’ve struggled. For so long, we’ve been nothing more than a footnote in human history. Now, we’re finally able to walk among our fellow creatures with our heads held high. We can give back to those who have helped us and cared for us. There are so many people who willingly came to our aid in our time of need, I cannot even begin to list them all. Thus, I will chose to let my actions speak for me in the coming weeks.

I can only speak for those who support me, but I can assure you that we intend to utilize this new freedom to the best of our abilities. We will help humans just as they have helped us. We will work hard to make the efforts of this movement worth it. We will strive to become close allies and friends with all who are willing to accept us. In this new chapter of human and monster history, we will take strides to make sure that the Human-Monster war never repeats itself. A new age has begun. I hope that we all can find happiness within it.”

“Woooh! Go King Asgore.” I whooped, “Hoooollllyyy shiiiiittt!”

“what?” Blake and the other bitties came out.

Our little birthday celebration turned into a brief bigger celebration.

Then my landlady, icy voiced, called to tell me that people were complaining about the noise.

We got quieter after that.

We had all settled down with the tray of treats- the cake long forgotten- to watch more news coverage of the big event.

Flowey for the most part remained snarky throughout most of the human’s ramblings, but any time King Asgore and his brief little speech came up, he fell silent. A sad, mournful look would paint his face as he angled his head away from the screen. *I have the distinct feeling that there’s something there I’m missing.....He’d probably yell if I pried into it though.*

“I can’t believe this.” Leo laughed taking a bite of a cannoli, “This is amazing! The universe just gave me the best birthday present ever.”
“you know, you’ll probably have to share your birthday with this event for the rest of your life right?” Sans cocked his head.

“I won’t mind- not one bit.” Leo released a happy sigh, “I can now not worry about your and my Joan’s relationship so much.”

“you were worried?” Blake cocked his head.

“I always worry.” Leo snorted, “I was just particularly worried because of Sans being a monster, and all of the violence that brought along with it.”

“Leo-" He held up a hand to cut me off.

“I know he makes you happy.” Leo grinned at Sans, “Happier than I’ve seen her in a while actually man. Still, I was worried that monsters wouldn’t get their rights in this lifetime, keeping a target on your back. Now….I can breathe easier. I mean, sure there will probably still be some assholes who try to pick fights with you, but ugh…I can give my full, unhindered blessing now.”

“thanks.” Sans smiled back at him.

“fer the love of…” Raze threw a chocolate drop at Leo’s head, “quit bein’ so damn cliché asshole.”

“Raze.” Cyan wielded a fork, “Apologize.”

“’ell no!”

“Then pay the consequences of getting chocolate all over my Papa’s nice white shirt!”

“uh oh…” Sans chuckled.

Raze barely managed to teleport out of range in time. Cyan could be lightning fast when he wanted to be.

“Cyan.” Leo laughed, “It was just a bit of chocolate.”

“i think he’s still recovering from the pregnancy hormones.” Waltzer whispered.

Atlantic was poking at December’s buttons. Thankfully, the little guy seemed to realize that he wasn’t supposed to tug on them.

“i-i th-think h-he l-l-li-likes you.” Idjit rubbed the top of Atlantic’s head affectionately.

“he’s cute.” December observed quietly.

“He is cute.” Leo agreed, “Then again, he’s the kid of an adorable curly!”

Ember glowed with jealousy.

“Ever thought of getting Ember a companion?” Sunshine asked, not caring that his best friend was trying to kill his mate in the slightest. Tinsel at least seemed a little worried. Blake was laughing his ass of while Snuggled tried his best to cheer up Flowey.

“I have actually.” Leo nodded, “We should go some time Em.”

“If you wish it Father.” Ember said quietly.
Leo began a cheerful banter with the various bitties around us.

Sans leaned against me and kissed my ear.

“i love you.”

“I love you too.” I kissed him back.

“Eww.” Flowey threw a muffin at us, “Get a room!”

“Huh?” Leo looked at us.

“Nothing/nothing.” We both looked away from him to hide our grins. The day really had been great, and for once, I felt like it was only going to get better.
Moving Around

Chapter Notes

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Annnnddd this plot point happened before it was supposed to, but at this point my last outline kind of already fucked itself. *throws metaphorical outline out metaphorical window* Fuck it. I know where we need to go. We'll get there. promise. 3 more to go ;)

“Sissy!” Olivia pouted taking some of the heavier boxes from my arms, “Quit working so hard. We can move the heavier stuff.”

“You invited me over to help you move.” I argued.

“I invited the bitties and Flowey over.” She corrected me, bopping my nose in the process, “I don’t want you to hurt yourself.”

“Well then,” I huffed.

Moving Olivia and Papyrus’s things from the van to their apartment on the first floor of a small, nice building was made a bit difficult by the beautiful gardens, but it didn’t stop our progress too much. I couldn’t believe all of the little knickknacks and random objects the two had decided to bring to their new home. Don’t get me wrong. The new apartment was more than large enough for all of it, and they seemed to have a plan for where everything would be placed.

“IET.”

“Yeah Pap?” I carefully let the box of blankets fall to the ground. It landed correctly.

“MY BROTHER WOULD PREFER IT IF YOU WOULD SIMPLY TAKE A SEAT.” Papyrus frowned at me, “I WOULD TOO HONESTLY. YOUR SQUISHY HUMAN BODY IS STILL RECOVERING YES?”

“My squishy human body is stronger than people think.” I patted Pap’s upper arm as best I could given our height difference, “I’m not going to rip open like they all think. At this point, I just have an inch deep, small incision.”

“You still need to be careful.” Harley dropped a small box labeled “Pictures” next to my box of knickknacks, “Idjit and December keep watching you like you’re going to drop to the floor dead.”

Sure enough, my little bitties were indeed constantly monitoring me. The two were watching a slightly fussy Atlantic while the rest of us worked.

“I’m okay guys.” I promised them, “Really, quit fretting. Your faces will get stuck like that.”
December’s hands flew up to his face. Idjit sighed before rocking Atlantic gently in an attempt to calm the annoyed bitty down.

“you most certainly didn’t look okay when you were bleeding out on the sidewalk.” Blake said. He, Waltzer, Raze, and Tinsel were helping Sans move in a couch. Their magic managed to hold the couch up at just the right angle to get it through the door, “humor us and rest.”

“Guys.” I groaned.

“please?” Waltzer shot me a pitiful look.

“You guys…” They sat the couch down in the living room, “I’m not about to collapse or anything.”

“you could still tear it open and start bleeding again.” Sans walked over to me. *Oh he’s about to cheat like the nasty little bugger he is isn’t he?* Pressing a quick kiss against my cheek, he asked gently, “please newmore? it’d make me worry less.”

“You are a manipulative little shithead.” I groused.

“will you?” He barely managed to suppress a confident smirk.

“Fine.” I kissed his forehead, “I’ll be absolutely useless on the couch then.”

“thank you.” The smirk slid out before he could catch it.

“AMAZING BROTHER!” Papyrus applauded Sans, “LIVI SAYS THAT IET IS VERY STUBBORN, SO HAVING SOMEONE AROUND WHO CAN TAME HER WILL BE GOOD!”

“oh really?” I frowned, “she doesn’t seem to wild about the idea bro.”

“SANS!”

“Papyrus.” Sunshine quietly called from the hallway, “You’re startling Cyan dear. Could you please quiet down just a little?”

“OH. OF COURSE! PLEASE LET LITTLE CYAN KNOW THAT I'M SORRY.” A guilty look crossed Papyrus’s face.

“It’s not your fault dear.” Sunshine smiled at him before heading back into the bedroom to help Cyan sort out all of Olivia’s clothes.

“Sissy.” Olivia appeared in the living room with her phone tucked under her ear, “Do you not have your phone?”

“Nope. It got destroyed after a certain buttercup and bone head got into a fight in my living room again.” I glowered at Flowey who had just entered the room with a variety of boxes tangled up in his vines.

“I’m not the one who threw the TV!” Flowey protested.

“you’re the one who broke the couch in half.” Sans growled.

“Enough.” I clapped my hands together, “No fighting in Oliva and Papyrus’s new apartment.”
The two reluctantly stood down.

“She doesn’t have her phone on her Nadia.” Olivia said, “Do you want to speak with her?”
A pause, “Alright. Sissy?” Olivia held the phone out to me, “Nadia needs to speak with you.”

_Huh?

“Hello?” I awkwardly greeted my twin. The others went back to moving things around, “Nadia?”

“I’ve been trying to get in contact with you for the past hour.” Nadia’s voice was irritated, “I tried texting you. Then, I stopped by your apartment. Honestly-“

“My phone is literally in pieces Nadia. Why didn’t you call the bitty phone?” December was currently sitting on it actually.

“I don’t have that number.” Nadia sighed, “I had that doctor’s appointment today.”

“Yeah. Did everything look okay?” For a moment, anxiety ate at my stomach.

“Everything was fine. I just remembered to get pictures of the ultrasound this time. Do you want t- Cesar?” Nadia briefly turned her attention away from the phone. She returned quickly however, “Anyways, do you want the pictures? I just realized that you haven’t see what he looks like.”

“Sure.” Actual excitement buzzed in me, “I’m at Olivia and Papyrus’s new apartment. Do you need me to meet you somewhere?”

“No, no. Cesar and I will just head that way. We need to go make sure that all of our furniture in Greenridge has been purchased properly anyways. I’ll see you in about twenty minutes?”

“Fine by me.” I nodded.

“Good-bye.”

“Bye.”

I hung up the phone. A happy smile crawled across my face. Sans spotted it when he came into grab some boxes that were supposed to into Papyrus’s room.

“what’s going on?” He tilted his head to the left some, “you’re smiling.”

“What? I’m not allowed to smile now?” I scowled.

“no.” Sans held his hands up defensively, “you just don’t smile _often._”

“Hmph.” I yawned, “Nadia’s going to swing by with ultrasound pictures of the kid. That makes me happy I guess.”

“really?” Sans stood up a little bit straighter.

“No it’s all an elaborate lie I cooked up.” I rolled my eyes.

“j-jojo.” Idjit walked over, cradling a snoozing Atlantic, with December following closely behind, “c-can w-we-e s-see t-too?”
“Of course baby.” Liked I’d ever tell him no.

“What’s an ultrasound?” Flowey asked curling around the couch to rest some.

“It’s a way for humans to see the baby as it grows in the mother’s stomach.” I explained.

“Ew.” Flowey made a face.

“It’s no grosser than the actual baby right after it comes out.”

“Stooooopp.” Flowey swatted my head.

“But you’re reacting so perfectly…” I pouted at him. He bit my nose.

Olivia and Papyrus had been equally excited to hear the news. Everyone waited a little bit impatiently for Nadia to finally arrive. At first, I tried to get them all to get back to moving everything around, but I quickly realized that there was little point in trying. They all wanted to see the pictures. They were going to stay until they saw the damn things.

Nadia was more than a little…startled…to be greeted by a herd of bitties and a pair of immature young adults swarming her. I knew that other mothers had to envy how little baby weight Nadia had put on. The kid was bound to be tiny for fuck’s sake! She still had the slightest bulge in her dress suit however.

“DO NOT CROWD!” Sharp bones bristled from the ground in front of Nadia protectively.

“I didn’t expect such a greeting.” Nadia cleared her throat, “Do you mind if I take a seat Olivia?”

“Of course not!” Olivia gestured for Nadia to sit down enthusiastically, “Here.”

“Sup?” I greeted her plainly as she sat down. The bitch actually glared at me, “I tried getting them to not crowd the door. Sadly, there are fourteen of them and one of me.”

Nadia just gave me a bitter stare for a few minutes before taking the envelop out from underneath her armpit.

“Here.” She handed them to me, “The pictures.”

The images were- obviously- not perfect. I could see that he was indeed very small. He also seemed to have inherited the Arietta clan’s strong nose. Olivia and my gentler bitties cooed over the images while Sans, Papyrus, and Flowey stared at them in fascination.

“Have you thought of a name?” Nadia asked me, “You’ll be the one adopting him after all.”

“Huh?” A look of pure ignorant stupidity crossed my face.

“A name.” Nadia spoke slowly, like I’d mishear her otherwise.

“Ummmm…. .”

“Sissy!” Olivia swatted my shoulder, “You haven’t been thinking about a name this entire time!”

“I’ve been kind of busy!” I argued.
“HE MOST CERTAINLY WILL NEED A NAME!” Papyrus declared, “PERHAPS HE SHOULD BE NAMED AFTER A TRUE HERO! PAPYRUS THE SECOND SEEMS LIKE A VALID OPTION.”

“that’d get kind of awkward really fast pap.” Sans patted his brother’s hand, “so uh…i’m going to veto that one right off the bat.”

“AWWW…” Papyrus pouted.

“ophie really isn’t the best at naming things.” Waltzer rubbed the back of his skull and eyed December, “i mean…” He gestured to the small bitty.

“i like my name.” December frowned.

“It’s still not very original Dec.” Cyan patted the top of his head gently.

“I’ll come up with something!” I threw my hands up, “Jeez, I just need a couple of days.”

“You have about two weeks.” Nadia reminded me.

*I also have about three or so until I’m booted out of my apartment.*

“I know. I know.” I bit the inside of my cheek, “I’ve got all of the stuff I’ll need in storage. I’ve just got bigger issues right now.”

Nadia arched a perfect brow.

“I’ll be set before he arrives.” I flicked her forehead. She looked genuinely offended, “I’ve hit you harder bitch.”

“Josephine.” Sunshine swatted my thigh.

“Vulgar, violent…” Nadia grumbled, “Why did I think this was a good idea again?”

“Well… I turned out alright!” Olivia pointed to herself, “So…point her favor?”

“Hmph.” Nadia gathered Cesar up, “We need to make sure that our move is going smoothly, so I’m afraid I have to cut this little meeting short. Good-bye everyone.”

There was a brief chorus of good-byes.

Olivia and Papyrus returned to unpacking their belongings.

“You seriously haven’t thought of a name?” Flowey grinned maliciously, “How lame are you?”

“I’m a busy woman.” I shrugged, “I’ve also been stabbed recently, so that might’ve been a bit of a distraction.”

“You’re going to have to cut into your work hours a lot.” Sunshine tapped his chin worriedly.

“Don’t worry Sunny. I’ve got enough saved up. Besides, we’ve got to move eventually. I just can’t find a fucking place to go.” I bit my lip, “That’s worrying me more than anything else.”

“nothing has opened up?” Sans frowned.
“Nope.” I sighed, “I need to get a new place and set up for the kid too.”

“huh.” Sans crossed his arms.

“BROTHER!” Papyrus skidded into the living room, “I LEFT MY PRECIOUS APRON BACK IN OUR OLD HOME. WOULD YOU MIND RUNNING TO GET IT?”

“sure thing pap.” Sans nodded, “newmore, want to come with? just sitting around doing nothing has to be more than a little boring.”

“I love-” I immediately hopped up from the couch and tugged him to a hug, “you! Flowey, don’t be an ass, or Harley will feed you to a paper shredder. Idjit, tell Waltzer he’s in charge of the bitties. We’ll be back in a few.”

“o-ok-kay.” Idjit nodded.

“THANK YOU BROTHER.” Papyrus beamed happily as Sans and I walked out the door hand in hand.

People stared at us as we passed. More than a few were whispering at me almost getting gutted, but others were snarling insults at us beneath their breaths. Only Sans’s tight grip on my hand kept me from walking over to those people and teaching them some manners.

“What are you going to do newmore?” Sans pulled me a bit closer, helping me maneuver my way through the crowd, “you need a stable place to stay.”

“I know.” I honestly had no idea. I supposed I could move into another apartment, but- like Sunshine pointed out- I’d be a lot busier with the baby in my life than I currently was, “Seriously? I have no clue.”

“i uh…have a suggestion actually.” Sans’s voice was so quiet I almost missed it.

“Shoot. I don’t have many options.” I shrugged.

“…in a few minutes. let’s just get to mine and pap’s- my place.” Sans shook his head as though to clear away stray thoughts.

“Okay…” I gave him a concerned look, but he seemed to be lost on cloud -99. He seemed to be warring with himself the entire walk to his place.

That war lasted even as we approached the small condo.

It wasn’t anything particularly spectacular. The small, two bedroom condo had a nice attic that they’d used to store Papyrus’s junk. It also had a small but decent backyard. Sadly, there only about three feet separated the condo from the other two condos on either side of it.

“You guys don’t really have much privacy huh?” I chuckled, “How often did the neighbors complain about Pap?”

“pretty often.” Sans finally let out a soft snicker, “he drove them crazy. his new neighbors will probably start ripping into their couch cushions eventually.”

The inside of the condo was surprisingly clean. That must have been Papyrus’s little touch. It was noticeably sparse, but- given their lower incomes- it was understandable.

“I’m going to try and find pap’s apron. you can look around if you want.” Sans blushed a
little bit once he noticed I zeroed in on what seemed to be an old family phot, “i’m going to regret that aren’t i?”

“Probably.”

The pictures was of two young skeleton boys and their parents. A tall, almost sinister looking skeleton man stood with his arm wrapped protectively around a frailer looking skeleton woman. She had a pained smile, and I could see the various cracks in her bones. Huh…I wondered how she could’ve died when monsters had magic, but I guess there isn’t much someone can do if previous health complications rear their ugly head.

I explored the rest of the condo. Finally, I began to notice little piles of litter and stray paper here and there. Papyrus would probably lose his mind if he spotted them.

“found it.” Sans walked back out with an apron thrown over his shoulder, “um…so…what do you think?”

“It’s a good place, but…are you going to be okay with Pap’s income leaving?”

“not really.” Sans said honestly, “i could definitely use a living partner.”

“Hmm…we could put up ads.” My mind raced with solutions to help him out.

“or you could move in with the bitties and the baby?....and the weed too i suppose.”

My brain froze. Sans flinched at how sharply my head turned to face him

“What?”

“i…uh…was wondering if maybe you wanted to move in?” He offered again, a bit weaker than the first time, “i mean, you need a place to go. i need a roommate, the attic could easily be made into an office space, so we could have a room for the kid, and the bitties can all find their own little sanctuaries. it’s just a suggestion though. sorry, guess i kind of jumped th-”

I pulled him into a deep kiss.

Sans froze at first before wrapping his arms around my waist and pulling me closer.

“You are a genius.” I murmured against his teeth.

“glad you think so.” He leaned against me in relief while raising a hand to my hair to pull me closer.

Hmm…

Living with my boyfriend, bitties, a baby, and flower monster…..

Can’t say I ever expected my life to go this way, but fuck it. I’ll take it.
Jo moves in.
2 more to go :D

My landlady was happy to see me go. In fact, she was “kind” enough to help us locate some movers to help me get my shit out of the apartment.

“It’s kind of sad to see this place go.” Cyan murmured, looking out at the cityscape one last time.

“We most certainly spent a lot of time here.” Sunshine agreed, “It’s not the first time we’ve moved though.”

“won’t be the last either.” Blake sighed, “once the kid’s big enough, we’ll probably need a better house.”

“I’m still saving up for my retirement cabin on a lake somewhere.” I taped a box shut, “As sweet and somber as this moment is, will you three get off your asses and help us finish packing!??”

Sans was busy in the lab, so my bitties and I were having to move on our own. He said he was fine with us moving anything around in the condo though. Thus, we had leeway to fuck up.

“GJ!” Tinsel showed me a bare cardboard ring, “I ran out of tape.”

“there’s more in the office.” Raze answered before I could. He was neatly packing their clothing into small boxes.

“Thank you Daddy.” Tinsel kissed Raze’s cheek before racing off into the office.

“sorry my hands are a bit full.” Waltzer said sheepishly. Atlantic clung to his jacket.

“it’s fine man.” Blake patted him on the back, “we’ve got this. right guys!”

Idjit and December almost jumped out of their skin when Blake pointed at them. Shyly, the two bitties nodded before they continued to carefully pack picture frames into a box. Snuggle tugged on my big toe to get my attention.

‘Your side isn’t hurting right?’

“Nope.” I smiled at him, “It’s doing fine bud. See?”

I tugged my shirt up to reveal the thin cut on my side. Magic really was amazing.

‘Alright.’ Snuggle paused before signing, ‘Still be careful.’
“Sure.” I relented. Snuggle was by far the worst of them when it came to his blunt opinions about how I was doing things, “Flowey? How goes getting all of our plates and shit together? You haven’t dropped anymore right?”

“I only dropped one!” Flowey’s head popped out from the kitchen, “I’m almost done.” He stuck his tongue out at me before returning to his work.

“Good!” I called back. A plastic spoon flew out of the kitchen and hit me, “Thanks Flowey.”

It took us a couple of hours to finish packing everything up. We’d been working on it since the day we returned from helping Olivia and Papyrus move into their place, so there wasn’t much else to do besides get everything loaded up and over to his house.

“I get to live with the comedian.” Flowey said humorlessly, wrapped around my arm. My bitties and I were helping the movers get some of the boxes downstairs, “Lovely.”

“It could be worse.”

“No. It really couldn’t.” He hissed.

I shrugged.

Who would’ve thought that short jackass introverted bitty lady would end up with a very charming and kind skeleton monster? I most certainly didn’t.

My life had changed after the bitties came into it. The tiny little world of bitter hurt I had locked myself in seemed so small in comparison to the vibrant new one I currently walked through with my head held high. It marveled me how much my life could change. I went from having a handful of people who were truly important to me to having more than I could count. I had dozens of people who were worried about me.

“lia.” December tapped my foot, “you’re in their way.”

“Oh sorry.” I apologized to the men trying to bring the baby stuff in. I’d sold a good bit of my furniture, so I mostly brought smaller things. “Spaced out a bit there.”

“It’s fine ma’am.” One of the men nodded at me politely.

“oi,” Raze threw a paperclip at me, “it’s for you.”

He handed me the phone.

“Hello?”

“newmore?” Sans sounded vaguely tired, “how’s the move going?”

“Good. We’re getting everything brought into the condo now. We’ll start unpacking it. Hopefully there won’t be too much junk laying around when you get home.” I smiled once I noticed that Idjit and December were working together with Tinsel to hang some of the pictures up.

“That’s great.” He brightened, “i’m sorry i couldn’t be there to help out.”

“It’s fine bone baby.” My hand snapped out to catch December before he stumbled off of a coffee table, “We’re not going to fall apart because you aren’t here.”
“no, but the house might.”

“Hey. You and Flowey are the ones who constantly break shit.” I reminded him.

“….i can’t really argue with that.” Sans laughed, “i’ll try and wrap up quickly though. see you when i get home.”

“Yeah.” Why did that simple sentence render me breathless? I was turning into one of those cliché women in general fiction romance novels. Really, that wasn’t such a bad thing in the end. My life was changing after all.

My bitties, Flowey, and I spent about two hours getting everything unpacked. I worked on getting all of my computers running in the attic while they all tried to organize their things. The bitty doll house was tucked safely in the back corner of the living room. A neat bookshelf that housed books and movies alike was tucked in the other. Cyan’s little sound proof room went in an empty cabinet in the kitchen. Our colorful plates filled the cabinets that had been emptied with Papyrus moving out. Pictures were hung up everywhere. Blake and Waltzer got the bitty dresser set up in the other side of the attic along with various pallets and what not. Thankfully, the attic had a small staircase in the back corner of the house to use to get to it instead of a ladder. We just took the door down to make the bitties’ lives a bit easier in the long run.

Once all of my computers were up and running, I went to what used to be Papyrus’s room. The walls were a bright orange color, so I had painted all of the baby furniture in whites and reds to make them match better. The crib, changing table, and dresser had all been made by a wood carving friend of mine. The beautiful paintings on the walls were done by various artists friends as well. Hell, a couple of my crafty friends had made various plush toys for the kid to snuggle with as he grew up.

“wow.” Sans’s voice tugged me away from where I was fixing the sheets on the mattress in the crib, “it looks good newmore.”

“Comic,” I turned to find a sleepy looking Sans scratching the side of his face lazily, “You’re home!”

“told you i’d try to wrap things up quickly.” Sans walked over and pulled me into a loose embrace, “you and the bitties can work magic can’t you?”

“Bitties have magic bone baby.” I reminded him quietly. He yawned against my shoulder, “Did you not get much sleep last night?”

“mhmm…or the night before…or before…” Sans paused, “really, i haven’t slept well since i offered for you to move into my place. i kept waiting for you to call and say you found something else.”

“Why would I do that?”

Sans shrugged.

“my head comes up with some crazy shit sometimes.” He mumbled into my shoulder, “i’m just glad that the waits over. it was killing me.”

“Well, it’s over and done with. Now you get the lovely pleasure of cuddling with me constantly and having Flowey in your house.” I teased.

“ugh.” Sans grunted, squeezing me for it, “don’t remind me about the weed. this is a supposed to be a happy moment.”
“Couldn’t help it. Sorry.”

“Hey you two.” Flowey peered into the baby room, “Cyan and Sunshine say that they’re going to get dinner started, so no snacking.”

“Okay Flowey.” I nodded, “Thanks for telling us.”

The buttercup made a rude gesture at me before heading off to annoy the bitties some. I had the distinct feeling that the prank wars would begin anew in this new home. All I could do was hope that they wouldn’t destroy our house in the process.

…

“Our house.” I said aloud, quietly.

“hm?” Sans’s voice was slurred with his desire to sleep.

“I just thought of this place as our house.” I pursed my lips.

“…it is our house.” Sans pulled his head back to look at me, “at least, to me it is. this is our house, our home.”

Home.

“You’re right.” I kissed him, “Our house, our home. Though, the kitchen probably belongs to Cyan and Sunshine now. Just warning you.”

“i know what i’m getting into newmore.” Sans laughed, “i’ve been to your place on more than one occasion you know.”

“Oh really? I just thought an invisible gremlin was eating my food and sleeping on my furniture.” I retorted dryly, “Anyways, I need to finish getting my stuff up to the attic.”

“let me help?”

“Sure.” I shrugged.

It was most certainly a hell of a lot easier to move boxes around with someone closer to my height. My bitties could get the job done in a pinch, but there was always a little extra caution. One wrong move and a heavy box could squish one of them.

“atlantic looked cheerful.” Sans commented helping me organize the filing cabinet he teleported up into the attic for me, “for once.”

“I’m honestly starting to worry.” I sneezed when we kicked up some dust, “He’s so quiet… I don’t know what to do with him half of the time.”

“he’ll probably get louder before you know it.” Sans brushed some dust off of my shoulders.

“Honestly? I hope so.”

Cyan and Sunshine hadn’t been able to cook a massive award winning feast like they had wanted to, but our dinner had been nice all the same. It was a bit rougher for them to get used to the smaller, slightly more outdated kitchen. They were adapting quickly however.
“I can’t believe you didn’t buy any more plates after Papyrus moved out.” Cyan sniffed, scrubbing a plate clean in the sink.

“I bought paper plates.” Sans defended weakly.

“Paper plates don’t exactly make the best first impressions.” Sunshine huffed as he put away dry plates.

“eh.” Sans shrugged.

I watched the exchange from the small nook that acted as a dining room of sorts within the kitchen. Blake and Snuggle had already wandered off to read. Raze was knitting something for the kid, and Idjit and December were recreating their little hidey hole under Sans’s couch. Tinsel was napping in the bedroom.

“come on.” Waltzer came to Sans’s defense with a soft voice. Atlantic snoozed in his arms, “give the guy a break.”

“I will not.” Cyan tilted his head up defiantly.

“cy.” Waltzer sighed.

“Waltz.” Cyan retorted.

The two began to bicker slightly. Sans shot me a loving look. Flowey dried plates in cranky silence.

This is going to be my new normal. I thought. This is home now.

“hey newmore, i’m going to grab a shower. care to join me?” Sans stood up and offered me his hand.

“Happily.”

“Ewwww…..” Flowey made a face.

I rolled my eyes. Sans was obviously way too tired for anything.

In the shower, he almost fell asleep against my chest when I scrubbed soft circles into his skull. He murmured in some bizarre popping language.

“Ummmm….Comic? Care to explain why you sound like a busted car radio?” I asked running my hands down his spine comfortingly. He responded with the same noises, “In a language I can comprehend bone baby.”

“huh?” Sans’s eyes blinked open quickly. He blushed slightly, “sorry, that was case.”

“Case?”

“the language of skeletons.” Sans explained while I began to put some shampoo in my hair, “humans aren’t able to hear what we hear though, so sorry for slipping into it.”

“Sans, I slip in and out of English often. It’s no big deal.” I almost fucking purred when he began to scrub the shampoo into my scalp. His fingers had tiny, almost dull points on them that felt so good against my head, “I love your hands so much…..”
“ditto.”

“What were you saying?” I asked. Sans helped me rinse the shampoo out of my hair.

“mostly about how nice it felt for you to be scrubbing my skull.” Sans explained, “a few other, cheesy things too.”

“Oh really?” I opened one of my eyes to look at him.

“not repeating it.” He said firmly.

“Awww.” I wrapped my arms around his shoulders, “Really?”

“really.” His teeth ground together, “even if you keep shoving your breasts into my face.”

“Alright.” I relented. Sans blinked in confusion, “You’re tired Comic. We can mess around after you’re all the way out of sleepy land.”

His blush returned.

“sorry.”

“Quit apologizing so much.” I grumbled, kissing him briefly, “Nothing’s wrong.”

“you’re right…” Sans finally smiled, “everything right for once.”

*I couldn’t agree more.*

My new home wasn’t as fancy or big as my high rise apartment.

Everything was a little bit cramped, and the bitties seemed to get under foot more.

It was still one of the best damn things that ever happened to me.

All of us- even Flowey- brought our own touches to the condo. Sans and I ended up filling the place with scrapped paperwork. Cyan and Sunshine quickly reorganized the kitchen to their liking. Tinsel found all kinds of nook and crannies for him and the bitties to use as private areas. Everything was almost perfect.

“You sound very happy Joey.” Granny said before coughing briefly. She was in South Korea fighting off a cold, “I can’t tell you how much this warms my little heart.”

“I’m glad you can see it that way Granny.” I scratched my back absentmindedly. “Everything’s ready for when the kid comes, and I’ve got someone to lean on for help.”

“Sans seems like a nice boy darling. I wouldn’t lose him if I were you.” Granny advised me.

“Trust me when I say that’s on the top of my “not happening” list.” I promised her. I growled in annoyance when the itch on my back moved to a place I couldn’t reach.

“need some help?” Sans asked sleepily.

“Oh, did we wake you?” I couldn’t turn to face Sans. Snuggle was sleeping on top of my head.

“no, nightmare.” Sans’s hand slid up my tank-top and began to scratch my back.
“Need to talk about it?” I asked.

“no.”

“Alright.” We would be talking about it when it wasn’t around two in the morning. “Anyways Granny, keep yourself in bed and take your medicine alright?”

“Honestly, you’re just as bad as Caspian.” Granny sighed, “I will though darling. Thank you for keeping me up to date.”

“Sure thing.”

“Good-bye. I love you.”

“Love you too Granny.” I shuddered when Sans managed to get the itch. I hung up the phone, “I should’ve mentioned the late night phone calls.”

“it’s fine.” Sans insisted, “i’m the one who keeps stumbling in at midnight or one in the morning. it’s a give and take, adapt and react scenario.”

“I guess that’s what a home is like.” I laughed quietly.

I felt Sans shift closer. Blake, who had fallen between us on the bed, was carefully moved to be behind Sans. He slid his arm around my waist and buried his face in my shoulder blades.

“mmm….i’m glad to be here then.”

“Me too.” I agreed.

We just had one more thing to add before we’d become a complete little patchwork family.
Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except Tinsel and Atlantic) Full disclaimer/ links in chapter one.

Oh. My. God.
I can see the finish line, and it looks bootiful.
1 more to go XD

I never realized how nerve-wracking childbirth could be for the people waiting out in the waiting area. When Olivia had been born, Nadia and I were sent off to a friend’s house to avoid us learning awkward things at a young age. Thus, my knowledge on what to expect was very limited.

“jojo.” Idjit was braiding some of her hair as I absentmindedly paced back and forth, “a-are you o-k-k-ka-kay?”

“No.” I replied honestly, “I’m going to rip my hair out of this kid just doesn’t come out already.”

Ironically, the kid was being born a week before my own birthday. Our family does have a bit of a spring pattern….minus Olivia of course. One of Nadia’s coworkers had informed me that she went into labor while working on a project, so I hurried over to the hospital with my bitties and Flowey in tow. Sans had joined me at some point as well.

Now that I think about it…where did he go with some of my bitties?

I paused.

“Finally.” Flowey groaned, “All that pacing was making me human sick.”

“lia?” December tugged on my ear to get my attention. Tinsel had Atlantic— who was wrapped in a blanket to protect both bitties from harm- in his arms sleeping in my hoodie, “what’s… wrong?”

“I’m just wondering where the hell Comic ran off too with the other bitties.” I crossed my arms, careful to not jostle a snoozing Snuggle off of my shoulder, “He said they were just going to get drinks…”

“The idiot probably got lost.” Flowey snorted.

“h-he ca-a-an t-t-tele-e-e-p-port.” Idjit rolled his eyes.

“trouble?” December frowned.

“Maybe…” My eyes narrowed. I went downstairs to the lobby in pursuit of my missing bone baby.

“You can’t stop me from going where I please!” A familiar voice spat.
My back straightened as I rounded the corner to find my mother and father staring down a very unhappy looking Sans. My bitties bristled when my parents took a step forward. Sans remained surprisingly calm, not moving a muscle despite my tall father looming over him threateningly.

“i know for a fact that nadia won’t want you here.” Sans’s voice had a glassy quality to it that sent shivers down my spine- the bad kind, “so i’m politely informing you of this fact. i already know my girl is going to be far from happy just hearing about this.”

“Your girl?” Daniel sneered, “Hmph. Josephine’s lost the last bit of common sense she has.”

“I hear she’s moved in with the damn thing.” Clara snorted, “Disgusting. We should’ve just tossed her over to Catherine when she was born.”

“that’s your daughter you’re talking about.” Waltzer’s teeth clicked together loudly, “and she’s my mom, so if i were you, i’d shut the fuck up.”

“Hello.” I loudly interrupted before anyone else could join in. They all turned their eyes towards me, “I was wondering what was taking you so long Comic. We were starting to wonder if you got lost.” Purposefully, I walked over and pressed a gentle kiss to Sans’s cheek, “I’ll handle this. Will you take the bitties and Flowey back up to the second floor?”

Sans hesitantly looked between my parents and me a couple of times. Concern kept him in place more than pride, but I still didn’t want him to get involved any further. My parents wouldn’t listen to him. He wouldn’t back down. In the end, he’d probably get himself thrown out of the hospital.

“are you sure?” He murmured into my ear. Idjit, December, and Snuggle crawled over to him. Flowey helped Tinsel and Atlantic out of my hood before crossing over himself.

“I’ll be fine.” I promised him. I leaned by his ear, avoiding a very angry Raze and Sunshine, to whisper, “They’re toothless now Comic. This will be quick, but one of us needs to be upstairs when Nadia gives birth. Please?”

“fine.” Sans relented. His eyes flicked over to my parents. Then he pressed a kiss to my lips just to piss them off. They were still fuming a couple of seconds after he left the lobby.

“Nadia’s already said that she doesn’t want either of you involved in this.” I crossed my arms. My voice had taken on the rougher texture that only came out when I was annoyed, “Leave.”

“We have a right to see our grandson.” Clara sniffed, flipping her hair back, “We’ll need him to be the hei-“

“My son will have nothing to do with the Newmore Company.” I interrupted.

“Your son?” Daniel’s eyes narrowed.

“Honestly, how out of the loop are you?” I laughed, “I’m adopting Nadia’s kid, so guess who will have the ultimate say so in his upbringing. If you guessed Josephine Ophelia Arietta Newmore, you guessed correctly!” My parents both flushed bright red, “So, as the kid’s future mother, I’m asking you to politely fuck off and away.”

That was the last time I ever saw my parents.

They stormed out of the building and were never seen in the U.S. again. Nobody is really sure where they ran off too, but we all believe to this day that they took what little money they had
left and fled the country and took new names. That was the only way they were ever going to really find work again after the new Newmore Company and her sister company fell to pieces in less than three decades. I was happy to see them go, and I’m still happy that they’re no longer in my life at all.

After making sure my parents weren’t going to resurface, I returned to the second floor to wait with Sans. Olivia and Granny eventually joined us. Papyrus was sad he couldn’t come, but someone had to act as head chef while Olivia was away. We all simply talked back and forth while we waited.

Then the news came.

“You can come see him as he’s being cleaned.” A nurse with a beaming smile told us happily, “Come this way.”

We watched as the tiny little baby boy was cared for by the nurse. The little guy had a head of dark hair that had to be from Edgar’s side of the family. He definitely had the Arietta nose his mother had. In all honesty, looking at him through the window, he looked more like me than Nadia. Poor little bastard.

“He’s so small!” Tinsel gasped leaning forward, almost tumbling off of Sans’s shoulder in the process.

“He’s adorable!” Olivia cooed. Granny had gone to check on Nadia, so we didn’t have her commentary to add to the moment, “He actually looks a lot like you Jojo!”

“I know right?” I laughed, “Well, I am his mom’s fraternal twin, so…maybe that has something to do with it? I don’t know.”

“Did you ever think of a name?” Harley asked while trying to keep Hiro from falling off of Olivia’s shoulder in his hurry to get closer to the window.

“Greyson Marcellus Newmore.” I said.

“Huh?” Olivia turned and gave me a confused and wirred look, “What kind of name is that!”

“A perfectly fine one!” I argued.

“We all talked about it for a long time.” Cyan chuckled while tending to Atlantic, “Greyson is a good name, and we’ve already decided we’d probably call him Grey for short. Sans was the one who decided to throw in another Hamlet connection with Marcellus. Trust me when I say that is a much better name than the ones we were originally throwing around.”

“it needed to be unique.” Blake added, “…but we also wanted to make sure it was something people could say easily.”

“You have no idea how long these idiots debated over a name.” Flowey huffed.

“weren’t you the one who threw out the name greyson in the first place?” Sans tapped his chin like he was in thought, “I think you were…”

“SHUT IT!” Flowey snarled from where he was wrapped around my arm.

“Awww…” Olivia cooed.
“You too!” Flowey hissed. Then he promptly buried himself under my armpit.

“Quit picking on Flowey.” I sighed and patted the back of his head, “He’s obnoxious, but even he deserves a little bit of sweetness.”

He bit me for that.

I might’ve deserved it, but in the moment it just made me want to strangle the little shit.

The time spent waiting to get Greyson back to the condo was annoying and worrying.

I watched as Nadia stared at her son with a blank look. She pursed her lips. As loathe as I was to do it, I knew what needed to be said.

“You can still take him you know. The paperwork hasn’t gone through yet.” Thankfully, it was just the two of us in the room. Granny and the others had gone to get lunch. I chose to stay with the moody formerly pregnant lady.

“And give him what kind of life?” Nadia snorted, looking away from him, “He’d be miserable with me for a mother.”

“You don’t know that.”

“You don’t know I’d be a good one either.” Nadia snapped back, “I’m going to be working rough hours trying to climb my way to the top again. I won’t be able to give any child the kind of attention they’d need. Hell, you even have a second income now!”

“Nadia.” I hissed when Greyson twitched in his little crib, “Volume.”

She reclined back and laughed.

“This is what I mean.” She sighed. Sadness crawled across her face, “He should be my son, but…”

“But?”

“You’ll think me a monster for saying it.” Nadia avoided my gaze.

“No I won’t Nadia.” I crossed my arms, “But what?”

“He’s the final part of my life that our parents and Edgar controlled….the last chain in a way.”

That did sound terrible, but considering the fact my sister was on medicine for depression and more than a few other issues to work out, it was understandable.

“I can understand that.” I walked over to Greyson. He was quiet in his crib, “Besides, he’s going to end up looking a bit like Edgar in the end too.”

Nadia flinched.

“I already agreed to take him Nadia. I just wanted to make sure you were certain about your decision. I won’t just hand him over twelve years from now if you ask you know. I apparently have a tendency to get attached to small creatures that come into my life.” How else would a person like me end up with ten bitties, a cranky buttercup, and a monster boyfriend?
“I know what I’m doing.” Nadia bit her lip, “Cesar and I argued about this back and forth so many times….I could probably justify it in my sleep.”

“He wanted you to keep the kid?” I didn’t know the boss that well since he tended to be quiet whenever Idjit was in the room, but he hardly seemed the time to care about kids in the slightest, “Why?”

“I think he wanted it to be a step for me or something.” Nadia sighed, “…I’m not ready for that kind of step yet.”

Her life had been a planned course until all of this went down. She’d follow the plan our parents had for her until her death. She’d jump if they asked. She’d killer herself if they told her to. Now, she had no one making the decisions for her. She was on her own with only her own morals and quick thinking to help her through her darkest hour.

“Your life is scary.” I said bluntly. I had my bitties and Olivia to guide my actions. Anything I did would either be for their benefit or for their enemy’s detriment, “I wish you the best of luck in Greenridge though. Try to find some friends. Maybe snag a man or two if you can.”

“Josephine.” Nadia blushed, “Can you ever get your head out of the gutter?”

“What? Sometimes you need some stress relief. I have one in the form of a cuddly skeleton, but you can always get those one use ones you find in bars.” I shrugged, “It’s not that hard.”

Nadia threw her hospital pillow at me for the remark.

She was released from the hospital first, but Greyson was under the watchful eye of doctors and nurses for a little bit longer because of his small size. It felt like an eternity before they finally gave him the stamp of approval to go home.

The first time I ever got to really hold Greyson was when Sans was getting the car seat prepped. I’d let Olivia and Granny do most of the holding before that point. I knew that I would be getting to hold him a lot was he grew up, so it was easy to not get jealous.

He felt so fragile in my arms. I could easily just squeeze a little bit, and he’d suffocate without even being able to defend himself. That blatant vulnerability kept my touches gentle as I rocked him back and forth. His little heart beat gently against my chest.

“He’s precious.” Sunshine sighed. He and the rest of my bitties were perched or hanging precariously on my shoulders and head to look at Greyson properly.

“oi, dumbass.” Raze called out to Sans, “ya gonna get that seat workin’ or is the kid going to wake-up mid-car ride howling ‘is lungs out?”

“i’m working on it.” Sans grumbled, “this thing is so confusion.”

“a great scientist stumped by a simple construction.” Blake shook his head. Then he teleported down to help Sans out, “this goes here idiot.”

“What?” Sans narrowed his eyes at where Blake was pointing, “ooooohhhh.”

Eventually, after a long time of the bitties ribbing Sans for his inability to get the carrier to work properly, we were settled into Tyrone’s car in the back seat.

“Is that the little one?” Ty asked from the front.
“Yup.” I grinned.

“He’s quiet.” Ty observed.

“He’s asleep man.” Sans yawned, “you should’ve heard him screaming earlier. i think he broke one of the interns.”

“He definitely almost broke cy.” Waltzer nuzzled his cheek against his mate’s.

“He’s so much louder than I expected.” Cyan sighed, “I’ll be fine once I can get into my quiet room to relax.”

“He wasn’t a premie right?” Tyrone subtly hid a curse under his breath when someone cut us off.

“Nope. He’s just really tiny.” I made a ‘tiny’ hand gesture to emphasize that fact, “Thanks for giving us a ride back to the condo.”

“No problem. It gives me an excuse to step out of the office for a bit.” Tyrone rolled his head in an attempt to pop his neck.

“monster rights violation cases flooding your desk?” Sans raised a brow.

“Don’t you know it.” Tyrone made a face, “I can’t tell you how many bigots I’ve wanted to punch in the last few days. Thankfully, they’re all being punished to the full extent of the law.”

“Good.” I sighed in relief, “The last thing Grayridge needs is more vigilantes running around and ruining things.”

Tyrone drove us back to the condo and kept asking us questions about Greyson the entire way back. He was trying to guess what the kid looked like from the front seat. Some of his guesses were way off base, but they made everyone laugh at least.

“I was way off.” Tyrone cocked his head, looking at Greyson carefully, “He looks a lot like you in your old baby photos.”

“I know!” I threw my hands up, “Granny said the same thing too.”

“He’s sadly got his dad’s hair though.” Tyrone paused to think, “You could always bleach it when he’s old enough.”

“you never know.” Sans carried Greyson into the condo, “he might like his hair black.”

“It’ll be his choice.” I agreed, “Though, it’ll be a bit disarming to keep seeing Edgar every time I look at him.”

We got Greyson situated in the baby room quickly. He woke up hungry, but we managed to cut his crying off with a bottle soon enough. Tyrone had to leave to handle a case sadly. He told us to hit him up when we needed to take Greyson to his check-ups.

‘He’s cute.’ Snuggle signed, ‘Though a little too small for my liking.’

“he’s…going to be short.” December murmured, “really short….leo short.”

“Probably.” How he could be short with Edgar and Nadia as parents was something that stumped me, but he was obviously going to be a little bean.
“hey newmore, come here.” Sans waved me out into the hallway.

“Yeah?” I asked, leaving the door to the baby room cracked open a hair.

“Your birthday is next week right?” Sans wrapped his arms around my waist.

“Uh huh.” I nodded, “Turning 31.”

“i asked granny, and she agreed to look after everyone on your birthday.” Sans squeezed me when I went to argue, “let me finish. i figured you deserve one last hurrah before we’re both swamped with the baby, work, and the bitties. it’d only be for the day.”

“Only the one day?” I cocked my head.

“this time around.” Sans grinned, “i can’t wait for him to get older. then we can really go out and do things.”

“You’re going to keep insisting until I say yes won’t you?”

“mmhmmm.”

“Fine, one last hurrah. Then it’s on to our hopefully boring life with a baby, ten bitties, and Flowey.” I kissed his forehead.

Boring sounded nice after my hellish year.
Fin

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing (Except Tinsel and Atlantic) Full disclaimer/ links can be found in Chapter One.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“You guys going to be okay while I’m gone?” I rubbed a little bit of syrup off of Idjit’s cheeks. He and December shared a look before nodding quietly, “We’ll be back before midnight. I promise.”

The two smiled at me.

“s-st-ta-ay s-s-a-af-f-fe.” Idjit pressed a kiss to my cheek. December nodded his head in agreement.

“I will.” I chuckled.

“ari!” Blake teleported onto my shoulder and gave me a tight squeeze, “happy birthday! make sure to have some fun.”

“Thank you Blake.” I patted his back, “I will.”

“Miss Josie.” Cyan called out to me from the living room, “Sans should be back any minute. Are you ready?”

“Yeah.” I didn’t know where Sans was taking me, so I opted to wear a nice pair of skinny jeans and a white blouse with flats instead of dressing up too much, “How’s Granny doing with Greyson?”

Cyan walked into the kitchen with Atlantic toddling alongside him, holding his hand. The young bitty hybrid was capable of slurred words at this point, but he rarely spoke.

“She’s doing fine. He’s still a bit fussy from last night though.” Cyan shook his head, “He’ll be fine though. Raze, Sunshine, and Tinsel are in there with her….oh! Happy Birthday Miss Josie.”

“Thanks bud.” I squatted down awkwardly in my skinny jeans to pat his head. I gently caressed Atlantic’s too, “You’re looking better every day scamp.”

Atlantic’s grip on his father’s hand tightened just a little bit before he relaxed and smiled up at me sweetly.

Snuggle padded into the room with Flowey arguing with him.

‘I thought the book had a nice ending.’

“There’s no such thing as a happy ending though.” Flowey protested.

‘Yes there is.’ Snuggle let a breath out like he was arguing with an idiot, ‘Happy endings
happen all the time in real life.’

“But Claudia could’ve had so much more if she just-“

‘She was happy with the way her life turned out Flowey. Not everyone wants to pursue some crazy goal.’ Snuggle interrupted. He then pinched Flowey’s cheek just to bug him a little.

“Snoooggeallll…” Flowey whined.

“I’m glad to see you two are up and about. You stayed up until midnight to read again didn’t you?”

“DUUuuhhHH.” Flowey tried his best to say around Snuggle pull at his cheeks, “Staappphh Snooggeaeal.”

“pffft…” Blake laughed, tumbling off my shoulder. I caught him before he could hurt himself.

“thanks ari.” I set Blake down on the ground gently. Snuggle released Flowey and looked up at me.

‘Happy Birthday. I love you.’

“Awww…I love you too.” I kissed the top of his skull carefully. Flowey nipped at my ear for getting into his personal space, “And you too Flowey.”

The buttercup hissed and tried his best to avoid the kiss to the top of his head. He failed, so he chose to swat me with his vines.

“ophie.” Waltzer yawned, scratching his ribcage as he entered the kitchen, “…first off… happy birthday. turning over to the big 3-1 huh? sorry.” I flicked a bottle cap at him. Waltzer easily brushed it aside, “anyways, granny wanted to see you about something.”

“Thanks for telling me.” I stood up straight and stretched, “Alright guys. I’ll see you later more than likely. Don’t destroy the condo. Be good for Granny.”

With that, I left them all to finish breakfast. I could hear Granny cooing over Greyson in-between moments of chatting with my little skeleton-flame family.

“He’s going to be tiny.” Tinsel crossed his arms and stood up a little straighter, “That means we’ll need to protect him right? Like how we take care of Idjit and December.”

“Well…like how we take care of December.” Sunshine patted his son’s back, “Idjit can take care of himself.”

“Oh…You’re right Papa!” Tinsel grinned at his father. Raze sat on Granny’s head, angled to the side to knit…something, “Daddy! Could you help me learn more about magic so I can protect the baby?”

“sure.” Raze’s voice only got that soft quality when he was talking to Tinsel…and presumably when he was alone with Sunshine, “whatever you want to learn.”

“Well, I’m glad that my great-grandson will have an enthusiastic bunch of protectors.” Granny laughed which made Greyson stir a little bit.

“Hey Granny.” I knocked on the door, “Hey guys.”
“Josephine.” Sunshine brightened upon seeing me, “Happy Birthday.”

“Happy Birthday GJ!” Tinsel added, almost falling off of Granny’s shoulder in the process.

Raze stayed silent.

“Daddy.” Tinsel whined.

“happy birthday ya fuckin’ bitch.” He grumbled.

“Language.” Sunshine sighed.

“Good luck with that sweetie pie.” Granny nuzzled Sunshine’s cheek affectionately, “Happy Birthday Joey. Is Sans not back yet?”

“Nope.” I shook my head, “He’s a bit of a perfectionist though, so it’s not out of the ordinary for him to do stuff like this. Besides, Cyan said he’d be back soon.”

“Have fun today Joey.” Granny narrowed her eyes at me, “I mean it. Don’t worry about what’s going on back here. I’ve got everything under control. Enjoy yourself.”

“I will. I will.” I walked over and kissed Granny’s cheek. Raze kicked me in the head, but I just grabbed his barefoot and kissed it. He blushed bright red, “Anyways, you needed me for something?”

“I was wondering where you put the baby wipes. We couldn’t find them.” Granny gestured to the changing table.

“Because they’re in the living room.” I gently rubbed my thumb across Greyson’s face, “This little guy decided to not let us sleep at all last night, so Sans and I went into the living room to try and give the bitties some peace. I’ll go grab them.”

My phone rang as I walked out of the room.

“He-“

“Happy Birthday!” I held my phone away from my ear. Olivia’s bright voice often made my day, but damn she was loud that particular morning.

“Don’t you have a restaurant to run?” I questioned.

“I do. That’s why this is going to be a bit short.” Olivia laughed, “Nadia said happy birthday too. She’s swamped today, so she won’t be able to tell you herself.”

“Ah okay.” I’d already received a text from Ty- who was also swamped- and a variety of my clients. Karli and Velour had also called from the CC to wish me a happy birthday as well. Leo had called me up to painfully perform the song “Happy Birthday” before running off to grade some papers, “Thanks baby boo.”

“You’re going out with Sans right?”

“Uh huh.”

“Stay safe! Have fun!” Olivia commanded, “Seriously, don’t go getting injured on your birthday.”
“I’ll try not to.” I promised. Some loud drew Olivia’s attention away from me, “Got to go?”

“Yeah.” She said apologetically, “Harley and Hiro say Happy Birthday as well- Pap too. We all love you! Byyyeee!”

“I love you guys too. Bye.” She hung up the phone to go deal with whatever chaos was happening on her end.

I got Granny the baby wipes. Then, I decided to wait in the living room since it was the place Sans preferred to teleport into. It was a bit bigger than the rest of the house, so he didn’t have to worry about crushing objects or getting stuck in anything.

The condo buzzed with life as the bitties went on about their day around me.

The slightly dingy wallpaper and chips in the wood floors reminded me off my old apartment.

It was fascinating to sit and just think about my life. I’d gone from a hermit who lived in a shitty little apartment in the fucking ghetto to this. The screws loose in my brain made their presence known sometimes, but someone was always there for me now- be it a pair of smaller hands, a couple of vines, or the strong hands that knew every inch of my body.

The list of people I had to care about was longer than my arm now. It warmed me to think about it, but at the same time cold dread would set into my bones. What if something happened to one of them while I was busy taking care of someone else? How can a single person possible protect everyone she cares about? The answer was she couldn’t. That didn’t mean I wasn’t going to try though. I would always worry about my family and friends- even when the rest of the world didn’t. We were a cobbled little collection of broken souls that were trying to move forward one step at a time, so the least I could do to repay the people who brought the skies back into my world was worry about them.

“newmore.” Sans snapped his fingers to get my attention, “i don’t think i have a ladder tall enough to yank you off of cloud nine, so um…ahhh…there she is. hey there birthday girl.”

“I haven’t been a girl since I was twelve Comic.” I snorted. Sans tugged me off of the couch into a warm embrace, “I’ll let it slide this once since you mean so much to me.”

“sorry i took so long. i know you probably want to clock me over the head because i’m late, but i hope you can forgive me.” Sans pulled back. One of his hands ran through my hair, “…you flat ironed your hair.”

“I had the extra time.” I shrugged. My hair was already long, but without the wild curls to keep it a few inches taller, I could feel it brush against my ass, “So Comic…where are you taking me?”

“somewhere you didn’t see the last time we went.” Sans smiled at my confused look.

The world distortion still bugged the shit out of me, but it wasn’t as bad as it had been when we first started going out.

The first thing I noticed once we were on solid ground again was that it was freezing.

“Snowdin?” I edged a little bit closer to Sans for some warmth, “You should’ve told me to bring a jacket ass.”
“we won’t be staying out here. this way.” Sans guided me to a house that had its lights on.

The first time Sans brought me here, this place just seemed entirely sad. Now one house was lit up from the inside, bringing life back to the small little town in a tiny little spot.

It was warm inside- thank goodness. Just a brief exposure to that chill had made me shiver like crazy. The house was a simple design with two doors upstairs that probably led to bedrooms. A kitchen was tucked in a back corner, but the table for two set up looked newer compared to the rest of the furniture in the living room.

“this was where pap and i used to live.” Sans explained, “you’ve always expressed interest in knowing a lot about my past, so i figured why not bring you to my old place.”

“Which room is yours?” I asked.

“.huh?...last do-” I bolted up the stairs, “newmore…”

Sans’s room was very messy. Then again, Raze was constantly throwing shit at him for being messy, so I supposed it was to be expected.

“Hmmm…” I watched in fascination as a self-sustaining trash tornado whirled around in one corner of the room, “This is very fitting.”

“jeez.” Sans huffed, “you just had to come pok….you broke my door down.”

“Just took one kick bone baby.” I winked. A strange look crossed Sans’s face before he just laughed, “Anyways, you can learn a lot about a person from their room. I figured I’d come up here and see what it was like.”

“it’s just a mess.” Sans shrugged, still chuckling some, “there really isn’t much to see.”

“Oh I learned a lot.” My eyes crawled across the room. The obvious signs of depression and nihilism bled through every stray bit of trash that was simply tossed aside. He’s never going to have to live like this again. Not if I have anything to say about it.

“come on newmore.” Sans offered his hand, “we’re eating lunch downstairs.”

We weren’t supposed to eat lunch at all, but his morning plans must’ve crumbled in on themselves.

“Did Olivia and Pap cook this?” I asked while sitting down at the table.

“i can cook you know.” Sans said as he entered the kitchen to go grab food. It was still hot, “so, this was all my doing this time around.”

“It looks good.” I smiled at him. I just hope it tastes good….

It did.

“Huh.”

“i have the feeling i should be offended by that genuine shock on your face.” Sans raised a brow.

“No.” I held my hand up, “Well…maybe a little bit, but it’s not that bad. I just didn’t realize you could cook at all to begin with.”
“you did taste some of pap’s food before he started hanging out with olivia more often right?” San cocked his head, “i had to learn to cook. it would’ve been bad for my health otherwise.”

“His cooking wasn’t bad….you just…one does not put glitter in pasta.”

“that’s my point.”

Sans and I spent the rest of the day wandering through the Underground once more. This time we just strolled about with no plan or sense of direction. Sans didn’t have anywhere in particular to show me, but that didn’t mean our trip was boring.

“I love these things.” I murmured, gently brushing the top of an echo flower. It quietly murmured what I said back to me, “And those stones….they’re just beautiful.”

“i hear that they might make this place into a museum or vacation place.” Sans walked up to me and wrapped an arm around my waist, “it’ll be a bit harder to get some privacy in here then, but well…my shortcuts should solve that problem.”

“Oh, so we’re going to break and enter now?” I chuckled.

“why not?” Sans shrugged.

“I can give you a list bone boy.”

“ah,” Sans pulled away from me. I knew I must’ve looked very confused. Then he pulled something out of his pocket. It was two small charms. One charm was a simple gray glass orb, but one of the stones that glimmered in the high ceiling above us was suspended within it. The other was a small little circle with the word ‘mom’ carved into it with and emerald replacing the ‘o’, “here. happy birthday.”

“Sans.” My hand trembled just a little bit as I clasped the charms onto the bracelet I always wore. The charms easily filled in the holes that had been sitting empty since Christmas, “These are beautiful. Thank you.”

“i’m glad you like them.” Sans rubbed the back of his neck, “none of the charms match, so i figured you wouldn’t mind if they were a bit different.”

“I don’t.” I pulled Sans into a tight hug. My bracelet hung heavily on my wrist. It didn’t feel like a lead weight or anything. It was more like an anchor that kept me grounded or a chain that bound me to the people I loved, “I love them.”

“good.” He sighed in relief, hugging me tightly.

“How did you even get this stone?” I questioned.

“er…a lot of work.” Sans avoided, “…and falling….let’s just not talk about it.”

“I see.” I laughed, “Well, it’s a good thing we got these before they started making anything out of this place. People are going to try to kill each other to get these stones. I love them though.”

“They’re just magically infused rocks.” Sans pulled back to look at me, “i mean, i’m pretty sure all of the human gems on the surface are worth so much more.”

“That might control some people’s decision.” I shrugged, “For me, they’re priceless. After all, the first time I saw them was when you brought me here and opened up to me. Call me
sentimental, but that makes them worth more than gold.”

“you’re definitely sentimental, but that’s one of your more charming qualities.” Sans nuzzled my cheek, “…hopefully you’ll have a matching ring someday.”

My heart skipped a beat.

Life would always throw hardships my way. I would never really catch a break. I already knew that I wasn’t and would never be alone. I had my bitties. I had Greyson. I even had Flowey… but…

I’ll admit that I had been humoring ideas of a small wedding on a beach at some point, dreams of waking up next to the monster I love every morning for the rest of my life.

Do happy endings really exist?

I say that depends on your definition of happiness, and right now it seemed like the things that made me happy were going to be more constant than my life than ever.

“I can wait to see what it looks like.”

Sans gave me a heavy look.

“Seriously.” I pulled him into a kiss. He relaxed a little bit.

It would take about a year for him to work up the nerve to actually pop the big question.

The wait time didn’t matter at all though.

I knew from that day until the day it happened that I would most certainly say “Yes”.

Chapter End Notes

OHMYGODIT'SDONE :D :D :D :D :D :D
*deep breath*
Thank you all so much for your time, kudos, and comments! They've all seriously brightened my day while I've worked on this. You guys always make me smile, and I love you so much!
Jo's story has ended, but there are still other stories I'd like to tell starting with Olivia and Nadia's respective stories. I'll see you soon with the short 20 chapter piece Found Family! For now, I'm going to take a breather to prevent burn out.
Again, I love you guys. Hopefully I'll see you all again! :)
Thank you!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!