Red Echos

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Summary

A broken reset sends Sans back to the very beginning. With only Sans and Flowey containing memories of previous timelines, they struggle to survive in a new, even harsher Underground. While Sans fights to stay alive, he looks for a way to get back to his brother. But living in a timeline where Papyrus doesn't even know Sans exists makes things much more difficult.
Heavy footsteps crunched through the soft powder of freshly fallen snow while the clanking of metal echoed across the barren forests of Snowdin. A small band of soldiers made their way through the brisk cold on patrol for both humans and any forms of troublemakers.

The underground was a harsh place. Food was scarce, monsters were underpaid, and death ran ramped among the oppressed citizens. It was a world of kill or be killed, only the toughest survived these unforgiving conditions. The only thing keeping the underground from having an overpopulation problem was the fact that monsters kept killing one another. Murder was a sport and was celebrated among the elite. Monsters rose through the ranks with LV, the fight for dominance an ever constant struggle.

One of the highest ranking monsters stood at the front of the small patrol group, his firm stance and tall height adding to his already menacing aura. To kill any one of the members of the Royal Guard was a sure fire way to skyrocket your LV high enough and land you in a comphy position in the capital. It was a rare sought after accomplishment that any monster would be a fool to pass up. The battle for head of the Royal Guard was a deadly rat race among the best of the best fighters in the underground.

The leader of the group suddenly paused causing the other two guards to halt close behind him. After giving each other curious glances, the two looked back at their leader as they lifted the visors to their helmets. “Why did we stop, Papyrus?” A roughed up looking dog monster asked as he sniffed the air around them.

“Shh! Quiet morons!” A long bone spear quickly materialized in Papyrus’ hand, his grip firm and his magic tingling at his fingertips. Slowly the leader scanned around the barren, quiet trees of Snowdin forest, listening patently for any sounds to break the silence.

A small, almost minuscule snap of a tree branch bounced across the frozen bark of the large ferns.

With lighting fast reflexes Papyrus lunged his spear like a javelin. The bone pierced through the half dead leaves and branches till it landed with a slicing *slash* on its mark.

“P-papyrus?” The dog monster asked with hesitation. The other dog warrior made their way up to their partner, sharing a curious glance at Papyrus.
After a moment of silence among the three, a soft rustling sound broke out from deep within the forest.

The dog monsters straightened their stance and pulled out their matching axes in preparation for an attack.

The rustling sound grew louder as it trailed closer and closer to the trio. It continued till a rabbit monster stumbled out into the open, Papyrus’ red bone spear piercing through its chest. Blood poured from the rabbit monster's gaping wound and mouth, staining the dull grey snow with a vibrant pool of red. With their last remaining ounces of strength, the monster weakly tossed a dagger in Papyrus’ direction.

Papyrus easily blocked the attack, barely having to move his new bone spear in order to deflect the dagger.

The blade vanished in the powder of snow next to Papyrus’ foot. The two dog monsters watched in awe at their leader’s ability to spot and strike down a would-be assassin so easily.

The rabbit monster glared harshly at the leader of the Royal Guard patrol group before his eyes slowly closed and his body dissolved to dust, adding to the layer of grey that coated the snow in Snowdin.

Papyrus stepped forward and knelt down to the recently deceased monster. He reached up and removed his helmet, revealing his scarred up skull as he inspected the monster’s dust. The single crack that ran across his left socket creaked ever so slightly as Papyrus’ sockets narrowed and his piercing red eye lights scanned across the grainy surface.

There was no traces of poison. Good. Meaning they wouldn’t have to quarantine the town.

Poison in a monster’s dust was becoming an increasing problem in the underground. So many have fallen victim to the violent cass system of power that monsters had begun drinking poison before going into battle. The thought was that even if they failed and died, they could still kill their opponent with their dust, and thus die in glory. Once they were killed off, the wind would carry their poison filled dust across the land, often killing off entire towns in the process.

“That was amazing.” The female dog monster commented as she and her partner relaxed their
stances, letting their weapon drop to their side.

Papyrus didn’t reply. He stayed quiet in thought as he continued to scan their surroundings. None of this made sense. No monster, no matter how stupid, would ever try and take on three members of the Royal Guard solo. It had to be a trap… shit.

Before Papyrus could call back to the hounds to keep their guard up, a flurry of knives shot out from the shadows. The three monsters maneuvered their weapons just in time to deflect half of the blades, their quick movements allowing them to dodge the rest. Papyrus and the dogs were pressed back to back as a gang of monsters revealed themselves from their hiding spots.

All rabbit monsters.

The Hare Gang.

Papyrus glared as he took in the situation. There were eight monsters surrounding them from all angles. They were easily outnumbered, but not out skilled.

The leader of the Hare Gang, a scarred up bulk rabbit monster stepped forward. He looked much cleaner than the rest of his mates. His new, untarnished black leather jacket showed not only his rank, but his wealth. Money was rare in the underground, so for someone to be able to purchase a brand new piece of clothing meant he was high up on the leader board. This gang leader was obviously well respected and had a large following. There was most likely more members to the gang than what they were seeing here. The gang leader lifted his weapon to his shoulder. It was a bat wrapped with sharp, serrated barb wire. Papyrus could only eye the bat with caution. This monster liked making a mess when killing his enemies, that much could be discerned from his weapon of choice.

“Well well well, what do we have here? Not one, but three elite members of the Royal Guard. All prancing around my neck of the woods.” The monster gave a toothy smile, showing his fangs. “Name’s Nigel. And I do believe you’re trespassing in my territory.”

The two dog monsters growled as they clutched their axes tighter. Papyrus huffed and held his bone spear towards Nigel. “Don’t make me laugh. By order of the Royal Guard you are ordered to stand down. Don’t be so foolish to think you’ll keep your little hold on this town for very long.” Papyrus knew very well there was no way the three of them could take them all into custody. The Hare Gang had two options at this point. Try to fight them and die, or run away with the knowledge that they will now be hunted down by the Royal Guard. Option two would eventually end in bloodshed, but at least that was for another time.
Nigel didn’t seem phased one bit, but he stayed quiet as if contemplating his options. Papyrus watched patiently while keeping tabs of the other members around him. It seemed that this gang leader wasn’t foolhardy like the rest of them. He had to be cunning to have gotten this far in the underground.

“Look… I’m gonna tell you this for your own benefit, not mine. Stay out of Snowdin, and stay out of my way. I’ve never had a problem with the Royal Guard and its Snowdin members before, and I don’t want to start now. I mean I don’t wanna burden King Asgore with so many funerals.” Nigel began to laugh and as if on que, the rest of the rabbit monsters began to laugh with their leader.

Papyrus glared at the monster before him. The message was hidden, but it was there. Other members of the Royal Guard have been bought off. It was the only way a gang could get so big. Normally the Royal Guard would have shut down such a rebellion before it would even start, but for Nigel to get such a strong standing meant he had time to build his reputation. Nigel was smart. He had yet to kill any members of the Guard in order to keep a low profile. Snowdin was out of the way and the furthest from the capital minus the ruins. It was the perfect spot to start a gang.

Papyrus stood his ground and with a wave of his hand summoned an army of bones that surrounded him and his fellow guard members. His eye flared with crimson magic, his power radiating off him in waves leaving most of the rabbit monsters trembling at the display. “Hear this you sniveling fool! The Royal Guard bows to no one! If you value your lives you’ll leave this instant! If not, then I’ll be glad to take your EXP donations.” Papyrus’ sharp teeth stretched into a devious grin as he eyed the weaker willed monsters causing them to step back and break their ranks.

Nigel glowered and huffed at his member’s cowardice. If his members were too afraid to attack they’d lose their advantage. This wasn’t a risk he was willing to take. It was too early in the game for him to take such a gamble. Nigel returned his gaze to Papyrus, his eyes narrowing at the skeleton monsters defiance. This guy was obviously someone that he couldn’t bribe. This was going to make things difficult. “You should know what you’ve just done… Good job bone head, you want a war, you got one.”

“With your pathetic soldiers, could you even call it a war?” Papyrus smirked and the two dog monsters growled in unison, moving up to Papyrus’ sides. It was obvious that even though they were outnumbered, they still had a power advantage.

Nigel tsked and glared at Papyrus. He didn’t like losing, but now wasn’t the time. He’d get the skeleton back soon enough. “You’ll regret the day you crossed me.” With a snap of his fingers, the rest of the rabbit monsters began to mobilize and retreat back in the shadows of Snowdin forest. In mere moments, the Hare Gang disappeared, the oncoming snow storm blowing fresh snow over their receding tracks.
“Dogamy, Dogaressa!” Papyrus yelled and the two dog monsters stood at attention.

“Yes sir!” They replied in unison.

“Go track those mongrels as far as you can. If we’re lucky we can get a lead on their hideout.”

“Sir!” They both saluted Papyrus with their fists to their chests before dashing off into the forest, using their noses to guide them.

Papyrus sighed as he watched the dogs disappear deeper into the forest. He knew that Dogamy and Dogaressa wouldn’t be able to track the rabbits for long. The snow storm was covering up the tracks and the wind was most likely blowing their scent all over the place. But still, if they could at least find out the general direction of the gang’s hideout it would be a start.

Papyrus looked around the snowy tundra with disdain. He was almost positive that new Royal Guard members would have to be placed in Snowdin in order to combat the Hare Gang. This wasn’t good news. King Asgore will not be pleased when he hears about a growing power house in the underground. Fear of a rebellion was the king’s number one concern. It didn’t take a genius to see that the king and the capital sucked up most of the undergrounds money and resources. Anger and unrest was bound to sprout in retaliation. A small hick town like Snowdin which was last on the supply line would obviously be hit the worst by such unfair taxes and lack of resources.

Papyrus reached down to the ground where he had placed his helmet, ready to head back to the capital and start the lengthy report process, when all of a sudden a tree trunk was thrown his way. Papyrus noticed the trunk out of the corner of his eye and had mere seconds to react. He ducked and rolled, the trunk barely missing his head. Papyrus immediately called forth another bone spear, ready for battle as he took a defensive stance.

Out from the forest tree line emerged and overly muscular rabbit monster. It was obvious this monster didn’t need any weapons, relying on the sheer strength alone to deal killing blows. Papyrus glared at his new opponent in front of him. The monster was from the Hare Gang. Nigel wasn’t wasting any time on his assault plan. He knew the dogs where trailing him and Papyrus was left alone. He must have figured he could sneak in a quick attack when Papyrus’ guard was down. Damn this gang leader was craftier than usual.

The rabbit monster let out a fierce battle roar as it charged at Papyrus. Papyrus was quick to react, dodging and rolling to the side to avoid the blow. The monster was big, but not fast. It ran into a
nearby tree, knocking it down in the process. The log tilted and fell sending snow flurries flying every which way as it landed with a loud thud. The rabbit monster took a moment to hold his aching head.

This was his chance! Papyrus lunged his bone spear at the rabbit monster, his magic glowing in his socket to help give the spear more force.

*thwack*

Papyrus watched with wide sockets as the ginormous rabbit monster snapped his bone spear in half before it could do even a single point of damage.

This wasn’t good.

The rabbit monster shook his head as he gained back his bearings from his previous failed attack. He growled at Papyrus as he grabbed the freshly fallen tree and swung it around in a large circle.

Papyrus quickly flattened himself against the soft snow as the tree whizzed by overhead.

The rabbit monster wasn’t done. Seeing Papyrus dodge his attack yet again, he began smashing the tree against the ground like a game of deadly whack a mole. Papyrus huffed as he rolled from side to side, having mere seconds between each blow.

The monster roared in frustration and lifted the tree high above his head.

Now!

Papyrus lunged forward throwing a row of bones at the beast. He called forth another bone spear and impaled the rabbit monsters right arm.

The bones knocked the rabbit monster back and the spear to his arm caused the monster to drop the tree as he cried out in pain.
Papyrus wasted no time as he called forth bones from the ground, tripping the monster. He summoned a sharp femur bone and pointed it directly at the huge monster’s throat. “This ends now!”

The rabbit monster chuckled, seemingly unfazed by his predicament. “Yeah this does end, for you!” With lightning fast speed, the rabbit monster leaned back and kicked Papyrus square in the rib cage.

Papyrus flew back and landed with an oomph.

The rabbit monster didn’t give Papyrus a chance to recover. He ripped the spear from his arm and lunged at the skeleton monster on the ground with murderous intent.

Papyrus got up just in time to be punched back to the ground. His skull throbbed and his vision swam from the force of the impact. He quickly checked his stats and realized the rabbit monster had taken one fourth of his health in a single blow.

Papyrus forced himself back to his feet and began an assault of bone attack after bone attack. His magic flared in his socket, not wanting a pathetic gang member to get the best of him.

The duel went on with Papyrus landing attack after attack. Unfortunately the rabbit monster was so big and his health pool was so large, the attacks were taking forever to shave away at his HP.

The rabbit monster huffed out of breath. It was clear that Papyrus had more stamina and better magic reserves. If he wanted to win this battle, he needed to end things now.

After punching through a wall of bones, the rabbit monster stampeded towards Papyrus at breakneck speed.

Caught off guard by the large monster’s sudden increase in speed, Papyrus could only hold up a bone spear in defense as the monster brought down a vicious right hook. The attack broke through the spear, landing square in Papyrus’ skull. Papyrus could hear a cracking sound as pain shot through his left socket. The assault was quickly followed by a left hook punch to the sternum, sending Papyrus back onto the snowy ground.

Papyrus groaned in pain as he tried to get back up, but the tank like monster’s blows had knocked the wind out of his nonexistent lungs.
“Now, time for your dust to join our buddies you killed earlier.” The rabbit monster grabbed the toppled tree trunk and lifted it high above his head yet again. This would be the final blow he needed to end the Royal Guard's life. He was sure to get tons of EXP from this kill. No one had lasted as long against him as Papyrus had. It had been fun. Papyrus had been a worthy opponent. But in the end, he would die just like all the others.

Papyrus put a hand against his skull, feeling a new second crack join his left socket next to the old one as his vision swam. He strained to look up at the Rabbit monster and his vision cleared just in time to see the massive tree log loom above him. His soul froze in his chest and his sockets widened.

Right as the log was coming down, a large beam of condensed, powerful, red magic shot out from the trees behind Papyrus. The attack was so strong the sheer power behind the magic was almost blinding. Papyrus raised an arm to shadow his sockets as he struggled to hold onto anything as the ground around them shook.

As the attack ended and the beam faded away, Papyrus was shocked to discover nothing was left of the massive rabbit monster except a small pile of charred dust. The entire tree had disintegrated in the attack as well, leaving nothing but a steaming pile of smoldering ash.

Papyrus quickly turned around just in time to see a demon dog like skull vanish and a shadow move in the trees deep within the forest.

What the hell was that? Was it another assassin?

Papyrus stood and quickly ran towards the direction of the shadow, a bone in his hand at the ready. He quickly scanned the surrounding forest and found fresh footprints in the snow. His sockets narrowed as he ran forward and followed the tracks. Like hell he was going to sit and wait for another attack. This time he was going to be on the offensive. It wasn’t uncommon for monsters to watch along the sidelines and pick off other monsters in the midst of battle. It was a cheap move, no honor at all. But monsters were desperate in the underground.

Papyrus saw movement up ahead and sped up. He quickly threw his spear forward narrowly missing the figure. Damn! How had he missed? Whoever this assailant was, they were fast. Papyrus continued in hot pursuit chasing the figure down through the winding trees of Snowdin forest. They were quickly approaching a thickening of trees, the only access was a single open of thick trunks and branches.
Papyrus’ socket flared to life as he summoned a wall of blue bones, blocking off the only exit.

The figure skidded to a stop just before touching the glowing blue bones and froze as Papyrus caught up, trapping the figure.

“There’s nowhere else to run. You’re cornered.” Papyrus summoned a bone and pointed it at the figure. Now that he was close enough, he could see that the monster was wearing a brown cloak with a hood. It was good at hiding that was for sure. The hooded figure made no move to face Papyrus nor speak. The silent behavior had Papyrus raising a brow ridge in question.

“Let me guess, you planned on killing me off after you killed that rabbit?” Papyrus held his stance keeping his bone spear pointed at the hooded figure.

The figure didn’t speak and kept its head down as to shield its face, but it did slowly shake its head ‘no’.

The answer threw Papyrus off guard a bit. What? It didn’t plan on killing him? What was this monsters angle? “So what, I’m supposed to believe that you were simply trying to help me?” Papyrus glared at the hooded finger, his magic brimming against his socket ready to manifest.

The figure before him stayed still for a while, then slowly nodded its head ‘yes’.

Impossible. Papyrus was no idiot. He knew how the underground worked and people did not help others for no reason. “Are you expecting some sort of reward? Diplomatic immunity? A favor?”

Once again the monster simply shook its head ‘no’.

“Lies! The Great and Terrible Papyrus is no fool! I’m not falling for whatever trick you’re trying to pull!” Papyrus readied his spear aiming it for the monsters chest where its soul should be.

But before Papyrus could throw the spear, the monster vanished in thin air.
Papyrus froze mid attack and looked around. There were no footprints and no trace of the monster. It literally vanished right before his eyes. Papyrus slowly lowered his spear as he realized he was completely alone in the forest.

Whatever monster that was, it was incredibly gifted. He had never seen a monster with such power before. The thought that the monster could have killed Papyrus if it wanted to unnerved him. But nothing unnerved him more that the fact that the monster hadn’t killed him. What kind of monster gave up on an easy kill? It made no sense.

But for some odd reason that monster didn’t attack. Instead, it had saved his life…

Papyrus let the bone spear vanish as he scanned his surroundings one last time to be sure he was completely alone. Once he deemed his surroundings safe, he slowly made his way out of the Snowdin forest and back to the capital.

This had been a long day, but it was also probably just the beginning of something bigger to come.

. . . .

From the shadows of the forest trees, the hooded figure watched Papyrus leave. It continued to watch the Royal Guard member until the monster reached the river person and safely head down the river towards the capital.

Once the skeleton monster was out of sight the hooded figure vanished.

The hooded figure suddenly reappeared in a small room deep in the depths of the true lab. It let out a relieved sigh as it slumped against a nearby wall.

“Hey buddy! You sure are cuttin’ it close! He’ll be back soon!” A potted talking flower barked as it wiggled itself to the edge of the desk it was perched on.
“Sorry Flowey, something came up.” The figure spoke as it pulled back its hood.

Sans gave Flowey a tired grin as he proceeded to remove the rest of the cloak. His gold tooth shined dimly in the fluorescent lights of the true lab, almost as dim as his red eye lights.

“I swear if you get caught…” Flowey growled in warning.

“I’ll be more careful next time! Sheesh! Tone it down a notch, weed.” Sans folded up his cloak and walked towards the single bed in the small room. He lifted the mattress up and placed the folded cloak onto the metal frame before placing the mattress back down, effectively hiding the garment.

“If he finds out the magic repressing collars are broken, there goes our chance at escaping.” Flowey continued as he wiggled his leaves, the movement mimicking a person flailing their arms in exasperation. The leaves then landed on the small metal ring that was latched around his stem just under his petals.

“Relax, I’m not going to let him find out.” Sans reached up and scratched at his own metal collar. The devices had been broken for years, but escaping wasn’t that simple. In the meantime Sans and Flowey enjoyed the freedom of using their magic in secret.

Flowey’s petals drooped once he finally realized they were in the clear and he no longer had a reason to worry. After a moment of awkward silence between the two, Flowey looked back up at the small skeleton monster who was now looking through a physics text book on his bed. “So… did you go see Papyrus again?”

“Yeah, where else would I go?” Sans rolled his eyes as he turned the page to his text book. Ever since the two first discovered their collars were broken, Sans had made it almost a daily ritual to go out to check on Papyrus. He had to watch his baby brother grow up without him. But Sans couldn’t keep away. He observed Papyrus from the shadows. Always making sure he had enough to eat. Sneaking him some new books or action figures now and then. Watching him grow to become a member of the Royal Guard. Always vigilant, always unseen. Well, except for today. Today he had fucked up big time. But Papyrus never saw his face, so he was pretty sure he was still in the clear.

“How is he?” Flowey asked with a little uncertainty in his voice. He knew Papyrus was a touchy subject for Sans, but he was honestly concerned himself.

“He’s good…” Sans frowned as he thought back to the encounter in the forest. He so badly wanted
to throw back his hood and just run up to his brother and hug him. It took all his strength not to break
down and tell him everything. Tell him that he has an older brother. Tell him that there’s a human
who resets the timeline. Tell him at one point they used to live together in Snowdin. Tell him that he
loves him…

This reset had been the most difficult yet. Normally when the human went on a homicidal killing
spree and reset, they would just reset a few months back. But this reset… something happened. Sans
wasn’t exactly sure, and both he and Flowey spent most of their free time trying to figure out what
went wrong with the timeline. This reset had set them all way back, back to when he was a kid.
Back to when Papyrus was just a little baby bones. Back to him…

This timeline was all sorts of fucked up. Nothing had happened like it had before. Everything was
new and completely unpredictable. A tiny, very tiny portion of Sans was excited for having
something new happen. The resets had gotten out of hand and Sans had been close to falling down
before. There was no reason to hold onto hope when nothing mattered and everything was
constantly reset. Life was hell living the same six months over and over and over again. Sans recalled
at his lowest point in the old resets that he had actually killed himself a few times.

It didn’t matter. After a few moments of darkness Sans would wake back up in his bed in Snowdin.
The previous months erased.

But that tiny bit of excitement was not worth it. It wasn’t worth this.

Sans would give anything to have the old resets back if it meant being with Papyrus again.

Growing up in a whole new timeline where his baby brother had been taken from him was torture.
The only thing keeping Sans going at this point was his rare visits outside the lab where he watched
Papyrus from the sidelines.

He missed his old life. He missed it so much. Sans would rather have Papyrus screaming at him to
wake up, his brothers angry shouts whenever Sans made a pun, Papyrus’ shitty spaghetti that he
made almost every night. He missed it. He missed every bit of it down to the threatening sticky notes
that would gather on the one sock in their living room.

Sans ground his teeth as he gripped the blanket on top of the mattress with shaking hands, tears
gathering at the corners of his sockets. He missed it all. He missed Papyrus…
This new timeline was literal torture.

A few swift knocks rang from the room’s metal door causing both Sans and Flowey to jump.

The guest didn’t wait for a reply as they opened the door and invited themselves in.

Flowey folded his petals over his face as he crouched down into his pot, trying to make himself disappear. Sans eye lights shrank to pinpricks as he looked up at the tall skeleton monster before him.

Speaking of torture…

“Sans, time for testing.” A wide, sinister smile spread across sharp teeth causing the connected cracks in the skull to creak with each movement. Purple eye lights brightened at the sight of Sans now trembling frame. The tall monster huffed in amusement as he shoved his hands into the pockets of his lab coat. “Come now, you don’t want to keep me waiting, do you?”

“N-no… Gaster…” Sans forced out, regretting how his voice trembled. Slowly, Sans moved and stood on shaky legs as he made his way out of the room. Flowey shot Sans a sorrowful glance as the small skeleton was led out and down the hall towards the lab.

Gaster adjusted his glasses as he walked causing the lenses to hide his eyes while two floating hands appeared next to him holding a clip board. “We have lots to do today. Hope you’re ready.”

Sans swallowed a lump that was forming in his throat as his bones began to rattle.

This timeline was hell.
The metal door to the small room suddenly swung open causing Flowey to jump in his pot. Soon after, two floating skeletal hands appeared carrying Sans' limp body into the room before dropping him unceremoniously onto the floor, not even bothering to place him onto the small bed in the room. Gaster stepped in while he continued to write on his clipboard, his expression completely unfazed by the marrow now seeping out of Sans’ bones, staining the floor with a sick crimson color. The tall, menacing skeleton monster turned and eyed Flowey with an impassive look, making Flowey flinch in the process. “Testing ran late with Sans. That means your testing will be postponed till tomorrow.”

Flowey let out a silent sigh of relief knowing that he was spared, at least for tonight. It wasn’t much, but any amount of time out of the lab was a miracle in itself. Although, he did feel bad knowing that Sans had to take more testing in order for him to be spared for the evening. Flowey felt guilt well up inside him. He may not have a soul, but this messed up timeline had shown he had somewhat of a conscience.

“Don’t get too comfortable Flowey.” Gaster mocked the name as he eyed the flower knowingly. “This only means we will have to make up for twice as much testing tomorrow.”

Flowey’s eyes shrank as his petals began to shake with fear.

So much for the small reprieve.

“Get your rest now.” The tall skeleton ordered as he stepped out of the room and slammed the metal door shut with more force than necessary.

Flowey waited quietly as he listened to Gaster’s footsteps get further and further away. Once he was sure the Royal Scientist was long gone, he let out a relieved breath.

Sans’ pained groans brought the flower’s attention back to the small skeleton on the floor.

“Hang on Sans.”
Flowey grunted as he lunged forward, scooting his pot across the table. He moved to the end where a first aid kit was stealthily hidden behind a set of carved out textbooks. Stretching a vine out of his pot, Flowey wrapped the appendage around the handle as he made the journey back to the other end of the table. With practiced skill and careful maneuvering, Flowey was able to use outstretched vines to ease him and his flower pot off the table and safely onto the floor next to Sans.

Flowey flinched when he noticed his pot had landed in a growing pool of red marrow. He watched as the liquid trailed down the grout lines of the floor, creating an intricate pattern of marrow. Flowey had to focus to keep from getting ill at the sight, now wasn’t the time to be weak. With much more vines and struggling, Flowey was able to sit Sans up against the side of the bed where he could see all the damage of Gaster’s experiments in all their terrifying glory. Now that Sans was sitting up, Flowey could see several cracked bones along with missing fingers and ribs. A large hole had been drilled into Sans skull which caused fissures of cracks to spread all the way to the top of his left eye socket.

“Uh, Sans do you-” Flowey had to take a moment to collect himself. The stench of rubbing alcohol, chemicals, and blood was threatening to make him gag. After a few deep breaths Flowey recovered and looked back up at Sans who was staring blankly at the floor, his eye lights completely vacant from his sockets. “Do you have the missing pieces?”

Sans didn’t answer. Instead, he shakily held up his hand and dropped the missing ribs, fingers, and skull flap onto the floor in front of Flowey.

Flowey grimaced at the scene but otherwise kept his reaction to a minimum. He knew this wasn’t Sans’ fault, and he understood how Sans had created a tolerance to these kinds of wounds. Seeing his limbs missing was no longer a shock to the smaller skeleton. It was just another day in their lives now.

Flowey wordlessly went to work on reattaching the fingers and ribs, being careful not to scratch Sans with his thorns. Flowey always hated patching Sans up after a difficult experimentation session. Even though he knew it wasn’t Sans’ fault, he couldn’t help but feel animosity towards the skeleton. After so many years of torture, both Sans and Flowey had created an apathetic attitude towards each other, almost as if they blamed each other for Gaster torturing them. Flowey inwardly cursed as he focused extra hard not to shred the precious gauze they had as he wrapped them around Sans’ broken bones. The only reason he was doing this was because they had a silent agreement regarding injuries. Flowey would patch up Sans so long as Sans patched up Flowey. They didn’t have to like each other, but the pact worked. This timeline may have forced them to become closer, but they still knew deep down there was too much bad blood in their history to really become friends.

Right as Flowey was getting ready to place the missing piece of skull back onto Sans’ head, there
was a softer knock at the metal door.

Regardless of the softness of the knock, both Flowey and Sans still flinched.

Flowey sighed after the moment of fear as he realized who was at the door. “Come in.” He replied.

Slowly, the metal door eased open and in peeked a small yellow lizard monster carrying two trays of food. “Hey, how you guys doing?”

“What do you think, Alphys?” Flowey rolled his eyes before nudging his head towards Sans broken form leaning against the bed. “Now get over here and help me!”

Alphys frowned but still entered the room. “Sheesh you’re a bossy shit.” Alphys set the trays of food on the desk next to the door before walking over to Sans and taking over the medical care for Flowey.

Flowey relaxed, glad that he didn’t have to worry about slipping up and hurting Sans further with one of his thorns.

“So… what the doc do to you this time?”

Flowey glared at Alphys as he crossed his petals across his stem while Sans simply moved his skull ever so slightly to look Alphys in the face, his eye lights still missing from his sockets. The silence in the room was answer enough.

“Right… Sorry…” Alphys felt a blush of embarrassment grow on her cheeks as she focused on patching Sans up.

Both Sans and Flowey refused to talk about the experiments Gaster performed on them. They didn’t want to relive the horrors, but it didn’t take a genius to figure out what ever Gaster was doing was completely unethical and immoral. Every staff member of the royal scientist had heard the gut wrenching screams of the two captives at least once in their careers. It was a widely known yet hushed up rule to never speak of the two monsters Gaster kept locked up in the labs. They were secret experiments that not even the royal family knew about. None of the staff dare rat Gaster out in fear of death. In a world where it was already kill or be killed, morals were easily thrown out the window when your life was on the line. It was the underground after all, it was every monster for
themselves.

“There, all patched up. Some food will help your magic reattach the broken bones. You should be whole again in a few days.” Alphys wiped her marrow soaked hands off on her already stained lab coat. She then set the trays of food in front of the two on the floor, figuring it would be easier for them to eat on the ground rather than moving across the room to the desk. Before reaching the metal door to the room, Alphys froze and turned around with a sorrowful look on her face. “I’ll see if I can sneak you two some more medical supplies… I see you guys are getting low…”

“We would appreciate that...” Flowey looked to the side, embarrassed that they had to rely on others for their survival. Putting your trust in anyone in the underground was a death sentence. Although, both Sans and Flowey soon discovered that Alphys hated Dr. Gaster almost as much as they did. So chances were she would do almost anything to secretly undermine his work. It was easy to see that Alphys was out for the position of royal scientist, but there was no chance in hell she could take the position from Gaster and live. Alphys herself was well aware of that.

With a curt nod, Alphys left the room, locking the metal door behind her.

Soon, Sans and Flowey were left to eat in silence.

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“I’m telling you, someone is going to end up being stationed in fucking hick town Snowdin due to that wretched Hare Gang and I bet you anything it’s going to be one of us!” Papyrus fumed as he stormed about the living room, throwing his arms in the air in exasperation.

Heavy boots plopped down onto the kitchen table, creating a loud thud which caught Papyrus’ attention, effectively distracting him from his rant.

“Heavy boots, get your fucking shoes off the table! We eat there! That’s disgusting!” Papyrus screeched as he glared at the blue skin fish monster lounging at the dining table.

“Undyne get your fucking shoes off the table! We eat there! That’s disgusting!” Papyrus screeched as he glared at the blue skin fish monster lounging at the dining table.

Undyne tucked her fiery red hair behind one of her fins before pulling the toothpick that she had been playing with out of her mouth. “Tone it down a notch Papyrus. Besides, if anyone is going to be stationed in Snowdin, it’s going to be you. Everyone knows I’m the obvious choice for the next head of the Royal Guard.” Undyne smirked as she crossed her arms behind her head.
Papyrus matched Undynes grin with one of his own as he crossed his arms over his chest. “That’s funny. If I recall the last several sparing matches we’ve had I’ve been the one to best you, leaving you a pile of worthless second place on the floor. Doesn’t sound like head of the Royal Guard material.”

Undyne immediately stood up, slamming her hands down onto the table as she glared daggers at Papyrus across the room. “You wanna have another go bone boy!?”

“Just name the time and place. I always enjoy putting you in your place.”

Papyrus and Undyne shared competitive smirks before the two burst into laughter.

“It’s funny how the only monster with enough balls to stand up to me happens to be a skeleton.” Undyne commented after she recovered from her joyful laughter. The fish monster then made her way across the living room to a room off on the side where she vanished, continuing to yell in order for Papyrus to hear her. “So, you going to be out on patrol again tomorrow?”

Papyrus decided to meander about the kitchen, looking through their pantries for ingredients for the night’s dinner as he shouted over his shoulder back to Undyne. “Yes. They have me and the dogs running Snowdin forest yet again.” Papyrus paused while reaching for the spaghetti noodles as he thought about the events of this morning. He was sure the Hare Gang would have more members patrolling the forest, and possibly even more traps. This set Papyrus on edge. He almost didn’t make it from the gang’s first assault, had it not been for that cloaked monster…

Papyrus was now completely still as he recalled the way the cloaked monster had saved his life. It was odd for a monster to risk their life for a complete stranger. He was certain the person was looking for a life debt. No one simply helped others out, especially if those ‘others’ were members of the Royal Guard. The guard was universally hated by all, Papyrus was well aware of that.

As Papyrus returned to the task at hand and set out all the ingredients for spaghetti, Undyne emerged wearing her pajama shorts and a lose blank tank top. The fish monster crossed her arms over her chest as she leaned against the kitchen wall, watching Papyrus work. “Hey, you seem distracted… what’s up?”

Papyrus paused for a moment before dumping the ingredients ungracefully into the large pot on the stove. “There was an incident during patrol today…”
“Oh? What happened?” Undyne cocked her head to the side, her long hair halfway covering her face.

“A monster… helped me. He… saved my life.” Papyrus whispered, almost as if it was painful for him to admit.

“You’re kidding right? No one helps people in the underground. I mean, yeah I would help you, but that’s because we grew up together. We’re practically siblings. Did you know this monster?”

“No. I couldn’t even see their face, they were hidden.” Papyrus began to slowly stir the ingredients much more gently than his normal aggressive cooking style.

“Papyrus, you know that was a trap right.” Undyne stiffened as she listened to Papyrus’ story. She immediately felt a surge of protective rush boil in her blood. Sure she and Papyrus bantered and were both fighting for the position of head of the royal guard, but Papyrus was the closest thing to family she had. She’d murder anyone who tried to black mail or trick him.

“I know that! I’m not a moron!” Papyrus turned and shouted in indignation.

Instead of retaliating, Undyne simply kept a worried stare. Papyrus had demons of his own that made him into the monster he was today. When she first met Papyrus, he was a sad, broken pile of toddler bones. His brother, his only blood relative, died at a young age leaving Papyrus a warden of the state. Asgore, who had already taken Undyne in as a pseudo child and had been training to become a strong warrior, decided to take Papyrus in as well and train him alongside Undyne. The two didn’t live in the castle, but they did live together in the capital. Being together for so many years meant they both knew a lot about one another. They knew their likes, dislikes, their strengths and their weaknesses; and Undyne knew that for some reason Papyrus still had a little bit of childish optimism. She wouldn’t put it past Papyrus to trust in the deceitful kindness of a monster. She never understood that part of Papyrus. It was like he constantly held onto hope that there was something better in the underground.

The sound of plates being set on the dinner table tore Undyne from her thoughts. The fish monster put on a casual smile before sitting down and joining Papyrus for dinner.

“Mmm spaghetti. Bleh! Tastes like shit!”

“Fuck you too, Undyne!”
The sound of metal armor clanking with each step echoed through the quiet trees of Snowdin forest. This time around, Papyrus and the hounds were on high alert, ready for any attack that may be thrown at them from Nigel or his Hare Gang.

“Keep on your toes.” Papyrus ordered as they reached the end of their patrol rout.

Something was wrong. The day’s patrol had been easy, too easy. There wasn’t a single assault or trap throughout the whole search. Papyrus didn’t know Nigel well, but he knew the cocky bastard enough to know that the leader of the gang wouldn’t back down just from one altercation. Nigel seemed pretty adamant on destroying Papyrus for busting open his stronghold in Snowdin to the king. Was this some sort of convoluted plan to lure him into a false sense of security?

“Sir, the coast seems clear. Does that mean we should head home for the day?” Dogamy questioned as he and his wife shared quizzical looks.

Papyrus stayed quiet as he scanned the forest one more time, yet again not seeing any signs of the Hare Gang. “I suppose so. Report back to the capital, but stay alert.”

“Yes sir!” The two said in unison as they made their departure, their axes out and ready.

Papyrus followed shortly after, taking his time in wondering around the town of Snowdin. He looked around the shops and buildings in disgust, dreading the thought of being stationed here. No decision had been made, but Papyrus was sure the king was going to do something drastic about the Hare Gang. King Asgore didn’t take rebellion lightly.

As Papyrus made his third round around the town, he sighed in annoyance. Truthfully, he had stayed behind in hopes of finding the cloaked monster. He didn’t like the thought of any monster thinking they had any hold on him, be it life debts or otherwise. If need be, he would kill the fool and rid himself of the strange, uneasy feelings he had been having since yesterday.

Once Papyrus confirmed that the cloaked monster was indeed nowhere to be found, he made his way to the river person. The boat should have been back by now, it had been some time since Dogamy and Dogressa had left for the capitol.
As Papyrus waited by the river for the River Person, he heard the rustling of leaves from the bush behind him. Quickly, Papyrus pulled out a bone spear and swung it at the bush. Right before the bone slashed through the shrub, a rabbit monster emerged swinging daggers from both hands.

“So you were waiting for me, were you?” Papyrus growled as he used the spear to block the onslaught of slashes.

As Papyrus moved to duck and dodge the attacks, he mentally berated himself for being so foolish. He knew Nigel wouldn’t sit back and take defeat, and he knew it was suspicious for the patrol to have gone so well. He should have known the gang would wait for him to be alone, just like last time. Damn! He made the same mistake twice now! Papyrus growled at himself for his careless mistake. All just to see if he could find that stupid cloaked monster.

As Papyrus ducked and rolled away from a few throwing knives, he had a moment to look around the town and his surroundings. Most of the town’s people either actively ignored the ongoing fight, or stood along the sidelines cheering for the gang member. Damn, no wonder the Hare Gang had no problem waiting for him to be alone by the river, the whole town was in on Nigel’s little rebellion! It didn’t matter if they ambushed him in public or not.

Papyrus glared at the town’s insubordination before focusing back on the fight with the skilled dagger wielder. After a few more blocks from the rabbit monster’s attacks, Papyrus was able to spot an opening in the rabbit’s defenses. Without waiting, Papyrus smacked his spear behind the gang member’s knees, effectively knocking the other monster to the ground.

“Goodbye filth.” Papyrus stared down the rabbit monster with emotionless eyes as he rose his pointed bone spear, ready to pierce the rabbit’s skull.

“Heh, sucker!” The rabbit monster snickered as he looked to the side.

Papyrus froze as he followed the monster’s stare and noticed the town’s people lighting a fuse and running away.

Before he had time to react, the rabbit monster ripped open his own shirt revealing a bomb strapped to his chest.

Papyrus’ sockets widened and he jumped back from the gang member. He knew Nigel was crazy,
but to have one of his own men commit suicide in order to take him out was beyond insane. Papyrus felt his soul beats begin to speed up as he realized the town’s people had lit a bomb behind him and the rabbit monster was a walking bomb in front of him.

He was trapped.

“If I go, I’m taking you with me!” The rabbit monster screamed with a crazed look in his eye.

The sound of explosives detonating behind him rang through Papyrus’ skull and the residual force sent him flying towards the rabbit monster who jumping towards him, arms open wide.

Papyrus shut his sockets waiting for the impact when he felt a pair of arms wrap around him, sure that the closeness from the explosive on the rabbit would kill him. Suddenly his body felt heavy, and in an instant, he was toppled over onto dusty old carpet.

Wait, carpet?

Papyrus’ sockets snapped open and he quickly scrambled to his feet.

His sockets narrowed as he looked around the dark, dusty interior of what he could only assume to be an abandoned house. The dark maroon wallpaper was peeling and the dirty purple and blue carpet showed signs of aging and decay as some spots opened up to large holes that showed the wood flooring underneath. Papyrus noticed several tiles missing from the checkered kitchen floor and the stairs to the second floor looked as though they would give way in any moment.

“Wh-where am I?” Papyrus question as he whipped his head around to quickly scan his surroundings.

A soft thunk caught the tall skeleton’s attention and he turned his head to a darkened corner of the house, spotting a figure leaning against the wall. A cloaked figure.

Wait a minute.

“You!” Papyrus shouted as he readied another bone spear. “You have nowhere to go this time!
Papyrus half expected the figure to vanish into thin air like it did last time, but to his surprise, the monster obeyed his orders and began limping out of the dark confines of the corner. Papyrus watched with skepticism as the hooded monster only made it a few steps before having to lean against the wall. He watched as the hooded monster panted heavily, showing obvious signs of weakness. This monster was nothing like it was before. The other day the hooded monster had shown immense amounts of power and strength, making it possibly the most dangerous monster in the underground. Yet now… the hooded monster looked as if it could hardly stand up.

Regardless, Papyrus kept his guard up as he kept his eyes trained on the figure before him. He had already messed up once today, he wasn’t going to do it again.

“So, you’ve come to conveniently save me yet again. You thought your plan was fool proof, but I see right through you! You’re working for Nigel, aren’t you!” Papyrus growled out as he stepped closer, keeping the sharp end of his spear aimed directly at the chest of the cloaked figure, right where the soul should be.

In response, the hooded figure weakly shook its head ‘no’.

This annoyed Papyrus to no end. Like hell he was going to fall for another one of Nigel’s tricks. This monster was out for life debts, he knew it. There was no way this random stranger showing up at exactly the right time wasn’t a setup. “What is your deal? Do you really expect me to believe some stranger would actually risk their life twice now to save a member of the Royal Guard? All for nothing in return?”

The figure didn’t respond. In fact, the hooded monster didn’t even move.

Did it figure it was caught in its lie? Did it give up on its plan already? Or… was it really just some stranger that was trying to protect him- no! Papyrus shook the thought from his head. He couldn’t be thinking such things. There was no such thing as kindness in the underground. The only kindness he’d ever known was from his older brother, and even that was taken from him. Taken before he even got a chance to know him. Papyrus forced himself to focus back on the hooded figure in front of him as he gave the creature the hardest glare he could.

The cloaked monster on the other hand seemed unaffected, still refusing to answer.
Papyrus began to feel on edge. This was another trap, it had to be. If this monster thought it could mess with his emotions then he had another thing coming. “I’m sick of these lies and games!” Papyrus growled as he lunged his spear forward.

Before it could make contact, the spear froze, just millimeters away from the cloaked figure.

Papyrus stared at the hooded monster with widened sockets. The stranger wasn’t going to move. He wasn’t even going to make an attempt to dodge. Had Papyrus moved just an inch further, this monster would have been dead.

Papyrus stared in disbelief as the hooded monster continued to pant heavily as it leaned against the wall for support.

This monster was obviously in no shape to fight, none the less defend themselves.

The cloaked figure… really wasn’t going to attack him. At least not right now.

Slowly, Papyrus lowered his spear as he stared at the monster with concern. Twice now, this mystery monster had saved his life. Both times he did not ask for anything in return, nor did he even try to defend himself when his life was threatened. Was this just some random suicidal monster trying to do some good deeds before it died?

After a moment of quiet contemplation, Papyrus looked down at the figure and frowned. “Are… are you alright?”

The figure was quick to nod its head ‘yes’ but the sudden movement caused a heavy coughing fit. The monsters legs finally gave way and the hooded figure slid to the ground.

Instinctively, Papyrus reached forward ready to help the creature.

“No!”

Papyrus froze. It was the first time hearing the monsters voice. He couldn’t exactly explain it, but for some reason hearing the monsters voice made his soul speed up.
“You’re obviously injured. At least let me help you get some medical attention. I can take you to the royal scientist—“

“NO! Uh, I mean no… Please, just get going. I’m fine.”

Papyrus’ brow bones frowned as he could easily hear the raspiness in the monsters voice. It was obvious the other monster was not fine, but who was he to care if this monster got help, or died right here in this dusty abandoned house?

A sudden ping of guilt in Papyrus’ soul reminded him that this monster had selflessly saved his life twice. He could at least do something for the poor soul.

“I don’t want you thinking you owe me anything… because you don’t… I did what I did because I wanted to. It was my choice. Now go, get out of here before those gang members find you.” The monster wheezed out as it hunched over even further.

Papyrus was torn with indecision. He didn’t like the idea of leaving the monster here, practically free EXP for the next monster to walk by, but at the same time he still didn’t completely trust this monster. After all, what was with the cloak, why all the secrecy? After a moment of consideration, Papyrus came to a somewhat agreeable decision with his battling conscience.

“I’ll tell you what, promise me I get to see you tomorrow to make sure you don’t keel over and dust, and I’ll leave.” Papyrus figured it was a reasonable request. He didn’t want the death of this monster on his shoulders. Seeing it alive would give him piece of mind.

The hooded figure was silent for a while before slowly nodding its head ‘yes’.

Papyrus nodded back, happy with this compromise.

“But before I go, I request one thing. I need to know who you are. I don’t like making arrangements with hooded suspicious monsters.” Papyrus narrowed his sockets as he stared at the monster before him with a harsh glare. He wanted to convey that this request was not up for debate. Papyrus was ready to rip the hood off if need be, he didn’t like the other monster keeping up this little charade.
The hooded figure flinched and Papyrus was almost certain the monster would disappear. The cloaked monster looked as though it was debating the request, but an impatient tapping of Papyrus’ spear seemed to persuade the monster.

After a moment of trepidation, the hooded figure finally lifted its hands to slowly pull back the hood of its cloak.

Papyrus’ sockets widened and he felt his soul freeze in his chest.

There before him, was the weary face of another skeleton monster.

Papyrus simply stared in shock as he looked over the smaller skeleton. This new skeleton had sharpened teeth just like him, and his eye lights were red, meaning he wielded red magic just like him. Papyrus’ mind was immediately flooded with a million questions he wanted to ask. Where was he from? Where had he been hiding all this time? Where were any other skeleton monsters? After a while of silent contemplation, Papyrus decided it was best not to bombard the skeleton too many questions. If he asked them all, he might scare the smaller skeleton off. Instead, Papyrus opted for one question.

“Who are you?”

Papyrus wasn’t sure, but he thought he saw hurt in the other skeleton’s face when he asked the question.

“I… I’m Sans…” The monster replied as he looked up at Papyrus with hopeful eye lights.

Papyrus felt a powerful ping in his soul. He didn’t understand the feeling and it threw him off guard for a moment. He didn’t quite understand why his soul felt lighter, or why he was suddenly flooded with emotions he couldn’t exactly pinpoint.

After Papyrus noticed Sans still staring at him with that weird hopeful look in his eye lights, he shook away the strange feelings from his soul and stole himself back to reality. “Well Sans, I’ll see you tomorrow then.”

Papyrus noticed Sans’ face and frame drop in disappointment. Why the other skeleton was disappointed, he didn’t know, and right now he didn’t have the time to care.
Not wanting to overstay and give the other skeleton a chance to back out on their agreement, Papyrus turned and left the abandoned house through the front door.

Once outside, Papyrus turned around to take a look at the house. It was a quaint two story house with a balcony on top and a shed off to the side. A thick layer of snow piled onto the roof, adding to the deserted look. Papyrus gave a small hum of approval. With a little love and care, that house could have been a decent home.

Without another thought on the matter, Papyrus continued on making his way out of Snowdin, being sure to avoid detection from the town’s people.

Once Papyrus was long gone and out of hearing range, Sans finally let himself collapse as tears streamed down his cheeks uncontrollably. Sans gripped at the dirty carpet as he screamed out in pain, his soul clenching as he recalled the way Papyrus looked at him without any emotion to seeing his face or hearing his name. Sans continued to cry as his soul felt like it was cracking. He knew Papyrus didn’t have any memory of him, but finally coming face to face with those realities was more painful than any experiment Gaster had ever done on him. “Why?” Sans whispered as he recalled previous timelines where he would play out in the snow with his little brother. “Why!” Memories of reading his brother to sleep flashed across his mind. “WHY!” Sans screamed as he ran through all the memories he had of him and Papyrus. All of them, gone. Every last one, vanished. His life with papyrus was now a lost data file, forever missing in the now broken timeline. Sans gave way to the pain as he laid down helplessly on the floor, sobbing at all the lost memories, clutching at his chest where his soul continued to throb painfully. “Papyrus...”

Chapter End Notes

It hurts me to hurt my poor skele babies like this.

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The Pact

Chapter Notes

It's been a while since I looked at this story. Missed this baby. (*´`*)

Impatient foot tapping filled the kitchen with its continuous rapid beats, each one ticking away at Undyne’s patience. After a few minutes of the constant sound, Undyne finally snapped and gave way to her rage as she slammed her newspaper down on the kitchen table. “Would you fucking knock it off, Papyrus! You’re driving me nuts!” Undyne screeched in exasperation. She had tried amicably to ignore Papyrus’ nervous ticks this morning, but she could only handle so much. Years of living with Papyrus had made her numb to his behaviors, but today she just couldn’t ignore it.

Papyrus had to bite his tongue to keep from immediately snapping back at Undyne. What was he supposed to say? That he was nervous about going on patrol today because he wanted to see if Sans was still alive? He knew Undyne didn’t approve of his arrangement, she had spoken to him at length about her opinions on the matter last night when he had come home from his patrol. He and Undyne were close, she was like a sister to him, so of course he would tell her about the events that transpired that afternoon. Honestly he was expecting Undyne to be happy to hear about a non-evil monster in the underground, but of course the fish warrior was skeptical and full of doubt. She spent the whole evening trying to convince him that this Sans character was just out to kill him once his guard was down. Papyrus huffed in annoyance towards the memory. He wasn’t a moron! He knew this new skeleton monster seemed sketchy and of course he would keep his guard up. He was the Great and Terrible Papyrus after all! He was a trained warrior, and to think she doubted his skills or judgement was fucking insulting! It was just… Sans was the first skeleton monster he had seen since he was a baby bones. He had so many questions to ask. His curiosity outweighed any possibility of threat. If it really came down to it, he would dust Sans just like any other monster. But for now, Papyrus just wanted to entertain the thought that maybe he wasn’t as alone in the underground as he had come to believe. Skeleton monsters were rare, he couldn’t afford to throw away a chance like this.

Undyne noticed Papyrus’ brooding glare and quickly eased her temper as she sighed in annoyance. “Papyrus… please reconsider about meeting up with that Sans guy today. Or at least take someone with you!” She pleaded as she slouched back into her chair. She didn’t like this one bit. Papyrus was practically her family, and of course she was going to be protective of him. Hearing about an incredibly powerful skeleton monster who shows up out of nowhere, who had been lurking around Snowdin forest, and had just so happen to be around in time to conveniently save Papyrus TWICE was beyond sketchy. Undyne looked up at Papyrus ready to speak her mind yet again only to stop herself as she stared at the skeleton’s unwavering glare at the table. Papyrus wasn’t stupid, she knew he was a well-trained warrior. Hell, probably the best! But… she knew that Papyrus was most likely making this whole situation personal. And honestly… she couldn’t blame him. That was the most infuriating part of all. Who was she to tell Papyrus not to meet up with possibly the only monster in the underground who could answer his questions about who he was?
“I don’t want to bring anyone with me. He was able to stealthily scout out me and my crew so I’m sure he’ll know if he’s being followed. I don’t want to scare him away. I’ve already done that once.” Papyrus sighed as he rested his skull against the back of his gloved hand. He would need to be careful around this strange and elusive monster. He had already scared Sans off with his hostility once, the distrust was set. If he wanted to get his questions answered he would need to play his cards right.

“I’m gonna say this again, I don’t like this situation one bit. But… I understand you gotta do what you gotta do. Just promise me one thing Papyrus!” Undyne glared and pointed her finger at Papyrus, holding his harsh stare with one of her own. The intensity of her gaze was message enough that Papyrus would not be able to refuse this request. “Promise me you’ll call me the second things get hairy!”

Papyrus thought over the request and how serious his friend looked. Having Undyne, another top member of the Royal Guard show up, might scare Sans off for good. Unfortunately, this was a risk he’d have to take. It was the only thing that would ease Undyne’s nerves. “I promise.” Papyrus finally agreed.

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Soft footsteps padded through the dark and barren house at the edge of Snowdin, causing the decaying floorboards creek loudly in protest. Sans couldn’t help but frown as memories of past timelines in his old home flooded him with each step. Everywhere he looked, there was another memory of him with his little brother. The broken banister spindles and scuffed walls of this timeline told a story of abandonment and neglect, instead of the comforting stories of playful roughhousing and homemade science experiments gone wrong. Sans slowly made his way to what would have been Papyrus’ room, his dim eye lights scanning the dusty, empty room. Sans skull was filled with memories of nighttime cuddles as he would read Papyrus a bedtime story in his bed till his little brother fell asleep. As Papyrus got older and his action figures were replaced with battle strategy books and his race car bed was replaced with a more mature, adult bed frame. He recalled that no matter what happened that day, or how angry Papyrus was with him, he would always demand his brother to say goodnight to him. Even if it wasn’t with a bedtime story. It was a tradition. Sans sighed and rubbed his phalanges gently over the old wood door frame which in this timeline was missing the marks where he would keep track of Papyrus’ growth.

Sans had all the memories in his head, but looking at the house… it was almost as if none of it ever happened.

“It didn’t happen…” Sans whispered, correcting his thoughts.

He had to keep reminding himself. He never got to be a family with Papyrus in this timeline. He
never got to watch his little brother grow from a hyper bundle of baby bones to a strong and feared warrior of the Royal Guard. He never got to give Papyrus his favorite scarf. He never got to experience his brother’s shitty cooking. He never got to act stupid and cocky in town towards the dumb canine squad. He never got the collar Papyrus made for him to show the dogs that he belonged to his younger brother. He never got to share those rare tender moments with Papyrus once he was older, those moments where he would delude himself into thinking Papyrus loved him more than just a brother…

It never happened.

All of it.

Sans had to quickly grab at his chest as his soul sent wave after wave of nauseating pain through his body. Each reminder of what he lost caused his soul to pulse painfully, the reverberating magic could be felt in every bone. Sans had to take a moment to breathe and force himself to think about something else. If not, he was sure his soul would shatter. The small magical organ already had a few cracks with even more hairline fractures.

It took all his strength to keep from falling down in this timeline. Sans didn’t know what would happen if he died this time around. Ever since the past reset, everything had been thrown off script. He hadn’t even seen any sign of the brat falling down into the underground. Sans wasn’t even sure there would be anymore resets after this. If the kid wasn’t here to reset the timeline… then what?

Sans hissed and bit back the flow of tears that were collecting at the edges of his sockets. Now wasn’t the fucking time to break down! Papyrus would be here soon. He needed to get himself together. He had already fucked up big time by showing his face and talking to him. Sans smacked his skull repeatedly as he berated himself over his own stupidity.

Why? Why did he have to go and fucking reveal himself to Papyrus?

What was he expecting? A miracle where Papyrus would magically remember him and all the past timelines they had together and come rescue him from the hell hole that was Gaster?

Sans finally stopped his assault on his own skull, rubbing the now growing red mark as he slid down the wall next to Papyrus’ room. He pulled his knees to his chest and buried his skull into the fabric of his cloak, letting the tears of his sorrow finally slip down his cheeks. It was fine, he’d let himself break down for a little bit. Just a quickie. Then he’d get ready for Papyrus.
As minutes ticked away to hours, Sans was finally able to calm himself down and wipe away the red tear streaks that stained his skull. He rubbed his sockets with the end of his cloak, making the dark red rims around his sockets ever more prominent. After taking a few deep breaths, Sans finally gained enough strength to force himself back on his feet. With a quick look around the house, Sans suddenly noticed the shadows of the underground’s “sun” were shining through the dirty windows at a different angle, indicating most of the day had gone by. Sans felt a sudden ping of fear hit his soul. If Papyrus didn’t come by soon, he would be late getting back to the lab. Gaster didn’t have a set schedule, but he was a creature of habit, coming down to his and Fowey’s room to take them out for experiments at almost the exact same time every day.

Sans gripped at his cloak in fear and uncertainty. If Papyrus didn’t hurry up, he risked exposing the broken magic represent collars to Gaster. But if he left before Papyrus could get here, Papyrus might think he died. The small skeleton began to mumble his options to himself as he started pacing the floor of the upstairs hallway. Surely Gaster would be a little late coming into the lab today, he had a long session with Flowey last night. Somewhere in the back of Sans’ panicked mind he felt a ping of regret for Flowey. Because he had been fussy and kept passing out the night before, causing the experiments to run long, Gaster had to take Flowey for the whole night last night to make up for lost time. He wasn’t exactly sure what kind of experiments the Royal Scientist performed on Flowey since they never talked about it, but he was sure it wasn’t good.

Suddenly, the loud creaking of the weather worn front door echoed through the empty house. Sans froze, his soul still as he watched over the banister a dark hooded figure enter the house. After a few breathless moments, the figure removed its hood, causing the small layer of snow that collected on top to fall to the floor.

Sans finally began to breathe again as he saw the familiar scarred skull of Papyrus.

Papyrus frowned at the dusty, dilapidated insides of the abandoned house. It was absolutely disgusting in here! But yet… there was something oddly homey and comforting about the building. Papyrus looked around some more, his eye lights scanning over the darkness. “Sans?” He called out, but his magic tickled at his fingertips, ready for a surprise attack.
“H-hey…” Sans responded softly, catching the taller skeleton’s attention.

Papyrus looked up and watched Sans descend the stairs slowly. He noticed the smaller skeleton still walked with a limp, and his voice still scratchy and hoarse, but he seemed a little better than the day before. Although, that wasn’t saying much.

Papyrus straightened as he eyed Sans skeptically. “You still seem weak.” He stated bluntly.

Sans felt a little magic flush on his face and he turned his head away, scratching at his arm awkwardly. “I’m not a strong monster to begin with.”

“Bullshit!”

Sans flinched and looked back at Papyrus.

“I saw you destroy a monster with a single shot. That monster had high LV with high stats. That quite easily makes you one of the strongest monsters in the underground.” Papyrus recounted as he crossed his arms over his chest, glaring at Sans, daring him to argue.

“It was nothing…” Sans looked down, fiddling with the opening of his cloak.

Papyrus raised a brow ridge and decided enough was enough. He was tired of dancing around the subject. He wanted to know how strong Sans was. He needed to know what kind of monster he was dealing with.

Without asking, Papyrus ran a check over the smaller skeleton.

What Papyrus saw made the Royal Guardsman back away in shock.

Sans’ stats did not show. What flashed under the monsters name was a series of flickering numbers that jumped around erratically. Occasionally the information would black out completely, almost as if it was some corrupted data file.
Sans flinched when he saw Papyrus back away from him, his face filled with shock and disgust. Sans couldn’t help but clench his chest as his soul throbbed painfully. He knew what Papyrus was seeing. He didn’t think it was possible to have worse stats than all 1’s, but somehow this timeline was able to top that. Since Gaster never disappeared in this timeline, he was free to continue his experiments on the helpless skeleton. As the experiments increased and worsened over time, Sans’ stats suffered. Eventually, Gaster’s experiments had caused a dangerous permanent effect. In a sense, Gaster had broken Sans.

“It’s not what you think…” Sans tried to placate his nervous brother.

“Have you killed so many monsters that your stats can no longer register your LV?” Papyrus asked as he manifested a bone spear behind his back. Undyne was right. This was a trap. There was no way a monster this evil would save his life for no reason. This skeleton was a vicious murderer. How else could one explain the weird phenomenon happening to his stats?

“No! I would never-“

“Step back!” Papyrus growled as he revealed his bone spear and pointed it at the now shaking skeleton.

Sans didn’t know what to do. How could he explain his situation to Papyrus without revealing everything to him? He knew Papyrus had a short temper, and that fact seemed to hold true even through this new messed up timeline. There was no way he could reason with him.

“Papyrus please…” Sans whispered. He didn’t want to die. He wanted to find a way to fix everything. He wanted to go back to the old timelines where Papyrus grew up with him. Where they lived together, content in their home in Snowdin. Where he could fall asleep on the couch cuddled with his younger bro, precious moments that no one in Snowdin knew the great and terrible Papyrus secretly loved.

Papyrus relaxed his stance, his harsh glare softening as he noticed red tear streaks running down the smaller skeleton’s face. His soul reflexively clenched, the sight making him want to run and comfort the stranger. It was an odd swell of feelings. Papyrus never felt this strongly even when Undyne was upset. The Royal Guardsman faltered, caught off guard by his own perplexing emotions.

“I can’t explain it… and I know that seems sketchy… but I promise, I’m not a threat. I won’t hurt you. Not now, not ever…”Sans bit down hard on his tongue to keep from pouring his heart out to
his little brother. One thing was for sure, no matter the timeline, was that Papyrus meant everything to him. He’d do anything to protect his little brother.

After a moment of silent contemplation Papyrus finally let the bone spear drop and his shoulders droop. He knew he was being a fool. He was ignoring all the training he’d received and he was putting himself in a dangerous position. But… he just couldn’t for the life of him feel threatened by the small skeleton before him. Sure this monster was powerful and their stats were quite literally off the charts… But, there was something about the strange skeleton monster that had Papyrus’ soul telling him it was okay to trust him.

Maybe, just maybe, there was a good monster in the underground.

Maybe.

“Alright, I’ll believe you… for now. But any sign of funny business and I’ll dust you!” Papyrus half relented, half threatened as he let his bone spear dematerialize.

Sans blinked back in shock. He wasn’t sure how he was able to get through to Papyrus, but seeing his little brother trust him, even if it was only a little bit, filled his soul with hope. Sans quickly nodded and wiped away the tear streaks, desperate to look somewhat composed in front of Papyrus.

Papyrus looked around the empty house awkwardly. He was relieved to see Sans had stopped crying. But then again, why did he even care in the first place? “Well… I see that you haven’t dusted. Even though you look like hell.” Papyrus commented, deciding to steer the conversation towards a different direction. He had asked Sans to come to prove he wouldn’t keel over and dust. So… at least he was good at keeping his promises.

Sans flinched at the sudden shift in conversation, but quickly catching on to what Papyrus was mentioning. “Oh right… Yeah, I’m still alive.” Sans laughed bitterly at the irony.

“So… where are you from?” Papyrus nervously tried to continue the conversation in a more casual tone. It felt forced and superficial considering he was pointing a weapon at the other skeleton just moments ago. “I’ve never seen any new skeleton monsters. Are there more of you hiding somewhere?”

Sans had to remind himself this was a new timeline, one where Papyrus was taken from him at too young an age to remember. Still, hearing that Papyrus didn’t even have a clue of who he was or
where they came from hit his soul hard. “I uh… I’m not from around here… and I don’t get out often. It’s just me…” Sans answered as vaguely as he could.

Papyrus raised a brow bone at the smaller skeleton. Well that answered nothing. Of course he knew this monster would be cautious and secretive, but still…

If Papyrus wanted answers out of this stranger, he would have to get closer to them, trick them into lowering their guard. It was obvious playing the part of a ‘friend’ was the safest tactic for acquiring information from the closed off skeleton.

“Another question. Mind answering how you know who I am? You knew my name even though I’ve never told you, and you always seem to know where I will be… Seems awfully suspicious.” Papyrus’ sockets narrowed as he stared down the smaller skeleton, daring him to try and give a vague answer like before.

Sans began to sweat under his hood, his cloak suddenly feeling too heavy and too hot. Like hell he was going to tell Papyrus the truth. There was just no way he would believe him even if he did break down and tell him about the timelines and resets.

“Well I uh… I mean it’s always been just me, so when I heard of another skeleton monster in the Royal Guard, I had to see for myself. Skeletons are rare, and I uh couldn’t just sit back and watch you get hurt if there was something I could do about it.” Sans answered. He kept his tone surprisingly clear and convincing. Even though he faltered a bit here and there, he was sure his lie had enough realistic reasoning to it to sound believable.

Papyrus hummed in agreement. What Sans said made sense. Papyrus was sure if he ever caught wind of another skeleton monster, he would go seek them out as well. The underground was a dangerous world where the one true law was kill or be killed. It would make sense that Sans would be wary about meeting him, regardless of his curiosity. Sans had to be careful about who he approached. Such was the world they lived in. Papyrus couldn’t fault him for that.

“I see.” Papyrus placed a bony finger on his chin as he thought to himself for a moment before focusing back on Sans. “What would you say to a small alliance then?” Papyrus asked as he observed the smaller skeleton closely.

“A what?” Sans cocked his head to the side in confusion.
“An alliance. Us skeleton monsters are rare, just like you said. You risked your life to protect mine, I believe it is only fair that I offer you my loyalty.”

Sans stared at Papyrus in mute shock. It took him a moment to process what Papyrus was asking. Honestly, it was a little strange having his little brother request a formal alliance. In previous timelines, there was no need to ask, Papyrus just knew he could count on Sans always being by his side. It was a silent understanding that his big brother would always be there for him. Sans had to ball his hands into fists to keep from shaking. Thinking about past timelines and how cold and indifferent the two were now made Sans’ soul ache. He wanted to break down again, he wanted to cry. He wanted things to go back to normal, but he knew that wouldn’t happen. And now wasn’t the time to wallow in past, forgotten memories.

“Uh sure, yeah. An alliance sounds fine.” Sans didn’t really know what to say. He’d never been in an alliance before. The only monster he ever trusted was his brother. But right now his brother was the one that didn’t really trust him.

“Splendid.” Papyrus smirked as he stood straighter. Phase one of tricking Sans into trusting him was complete. Slowly, he would be able to work his way through the smaller skeleton’s guard. “Well then, it’s late and I have to get going. I suppose we’ll be seeing each other again soon?” Papyrus turned and fixed his hood, readying himself for Snowdin’s harsh weather.

Sans flinched suddenly remembering the time. He was cutting it close. Gaster could have already checked his and Flowey’s room by now. He could be checking through the hidden cameras to find him. He would have a new magic represent collar ready and god knows what array of torture on hand to punish him with. Sans felt his throat tighten and his soul seize up in fear.

Sans didn’t trust his voice so he simply nodded back to Papyrus before quickly teleporting away, not even bothering to say goodbye. As much as he wanted to spend more time with Papyrus, if he didn’t make it back to the lab in time he would never see his little brother again.

Papyrus huffed at the sudden departure. He supposed that was just something he would have to get used to. Papyrus didn’t get around to specifying the particulars of their next meet up, or even if they would meet up again. But he assumed with such stealthy skills, Sans and he would cross paths eventually. He had no doubt that Sans would be watching him from now on, safely from the shadows.

Papyrus wasn’t sure if he trusted Sans yet. His stats screamed murderer, but… Sans assured him his safety. Papyrus was silent for a while, his mind plagued with thoughts of Sans. His instincts told him to dust Sans immediately, but his soul seemed content and safe around the strange skeleton…
Papyrus absentmindedly rubbed at his sternum where his soul abnormally fluttered. He ignored it as he exited the old abandon building and headed towards his home in the capitol.

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Sans landed on the floor of his and Flowey’s room with a harsh thud. His anxiety affecting his focus, causing him to misjudge the height of his teleport.

“Sans there you are! Where the hell have you been?” Flowey shouted in a hushed whisper. The small flower monster weakly scooted to the edge of the bed, his petals wilted, some torn and burnt.

“I was waiting for-“

“Never mind that! Hurry, take off the cloak! He’ll be here any second!” Flowey was shaking now, the threat of getting caught was paramount.

Sans flinched at Flowey’s words and quickly ripped at his cloak, throwing the garment off. He dove for his bed and stuffed the cloak under the mattress right as the door to their room was slammed open.

Sans froze with baited breath, worried that he had been caught. His soul was still, his bones still. Everything was still

“Sans, time for your experiments. Let’s get going.” Gaster’s tone sounded annoyed and impatient.

Sans chanced a peak at Gaster and saw the Royal Scientist glaring harshly at his clipboard, not once sparing a glance at the shaking bundle of bones on the floor.

“MOVE NOW!” Gaster shouted once he noticed Sans hadn’t moved from his room, still not taking his eyes off the clipboard as he continued to scribble on it.

“Y-yes sir!” Sans panicked and ran out of the room, not wanting to make Gaster any angrier than he was.
As soon as Sans moved, Flowey noticed a small piece of the brown cloak was sticking out from under the mattress. Flowey gasped and quickly glanced between the piece of cloth and Gaster.

Gaster was ready to close the door and follow Sans to the examination room when something small and brown caught his attention from the corner of his eye. Gaster finally took a moment to look up from his clipboard to stare at the lone bed in the room.

Other than the plain white sheet messily hanging off the bed, nothing else looked out of place in the white sterile room.

Gaster hummed to himself, chalking the mistake up to late nights in the lab. The Royal Scientist quickly turned and slammed the door shut, eager to get to the next phase of testing on Sans.

As Gaster’s footsteps echoed down the hall, Flowey finally relaxed and let out a long breath he had been holding. Slowly he retracted his vine from under the sheet. Thinking fast, he had quickly pulled down the bedding before Gaster could spot the piece of brown cloth poking out. The flower monster then fixed Sans’ half hazard mistake before collapsing tiredly in his small pot. Regardless how bad Sans was tortured tonight, he was going to lay into the ass hole when he got back. Sans was cutting it too close now.

It was only a matter of time till Gaster found out…
Prototype 1

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: If you don’t want to read, skip the first part of the chapter till you get to the line break.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It was just like any normal night down in the depths of the true lab. Scientists and assistants scurried, keeping their heads down as they walked past Gaster’s private experimentation room. No monster dared to look up or even acknowledge the blood curdling screams coming from those closed doors. Alphys did her best to focus on her robots as Sans’ screams penetrated the walls all the way to her office. The small yellow lizard monster chewed on her lip nervously. Sure she understood the underground was a harsh place. She knew it was kill or be killed. But to blackmail and torture… that was just plain barbaric. But then again, who was she to say anything about it? Resigned to the role of the willfully ignorant bystander, Alphys sighed as she turned on her stereo, blasting anime theme songs to drown out the desperate cries and pleas that fell on deaf ears. Alphys felt guilt well up in her soul, but she decided she would make it up to Sans by sneaking him and Flowey extra portions of food later on tonight. It was the best she could do.

Inside Gaster’s private lab room the lights shone annoyingly bright. The harsh fluorescents hummed dully, but was minute compared to the loud screeching saw on bone. The desperate screams of pain were almost just as loud, if not for the occasional hiccup and gasp of air.

“Sans you’re making this harder on yourself. Hold still and it will hurt less.” Gaster growled in annoyance as he tightened the arm and leg restraints holding Sans in place on the cold metal examination table.

Sans couldn’t stop his bones from rattling as tears streamed down his face. The marrow in his bones felt like broken glass and every breath he took burned in his non-existent lungs. Deep cuts littered his ribs, arms, and legs. The trails of fresh warm marrow dripping down his sternum felt like a warm relaxing bath compared to the drugs Gaster injected into his soul. Gaster was looking for the perfect formula. The perfect mix of human determination and a new original drug created by the royal scientist himself. The drug was supposed to make monsters immune to damage, or at least to pain. Yet… this batch made every pinch, every cut, every bruise burn with extra intensity. Sans could feel the new cut Gaster sawed into his sternum with vivid clarity. He could feel the cold lab air now touching the inside of his bone as marrow poured out, dripping down onto his spine. Sans tried his best to let himself fall unconscious, it would be worlds better than enduring Gaster’s experiments. He knew it would piss Gaster off, but whatever wrath he could put off today he could just deal with tomorrow.
“There’s a correct formula out there, we just have to keep trying.” Gaster mostly mumbled to himself as he turned to his table and mixed different colored liquids together in a beaker, ignoring Sans’ now gushing wound.

*That’s it, just a little more.* Sans thought to himself as he waited for the sweet release of unconsciousness. Sans could feel his marrow pooling underneath him and his soul beats began to slow. His sockets became heavy and he smiled weakly as he felt them close, unable to even focus his eye lights anymore. His body temperature dropped, but he didn’t care. All that mattered was the blissful darkness he was greeted with.

Suddenly, Sans’ mouth was being pried open and scoops of chalky foreign ingredients were being shoveled in. Sans gagged and choked on the substance, his throat forming quickly to swallow, but struggled with the consistency. Sans’ eye lights quickly reformed and his sockets snapped open as he looked at Gaster, desperate for an explanation as he coughed and struggled to breathe through the strange substance.

Gaster growled as he continued to shove spoonful after spoonful of the disgusting powdery substance down San’s throat. “You disrespectful vermin. I’ve come too far with these experiments to let you die from blood loss.”

What? What did Gaster just… Sans froze as realization struck him. He wasn’t about to pass out a second ago, he was falling down.

Tears began to gather at the corners of his sockets. How fucking stupid could he be?! Sure Gaster’s experiments were literal torture, but he couldn’t just give up! He still had no idea what would happen in this timeline if he died. And he still had to protect Papyrus… now more than ever.

“Focus! Your health is still too unstable. Keep eating.” Gaster snapped and caught Sans attention once again.

The smaller skeleton continued to gag as he choked down more spoonfuls of the disgusting powdery substance, each cough adding a layer of the grainy ingredient to his cheeks. “What is this?” Sans gasped between feedings.

“Nothing you need to concern yourself with.” Gaster muttered, his tone almost in a giggle.

Sans didn’t like the sound of that. The only thing worse than a pissed off Gaster was a sadistically
happy one. Sans quickly craned his head as far as his restraints would let him, his eyes roaming around the lab frantically.

Gaster noticed Sans suspicious glances and a wide smirk spread across his sharp, pointed teeth. Slowly, the Royal Scientist stepped to the side revealing a small urn on the table behind him.

Sans’ eye lights guttered out as he stared at the remains of a fallen monster. Almost instantaneously, his body rejected all the dust that had been force fed to him. Sans turned his head and leaned over as much as he could and heaved almost all the magic that was in his system. The small skeleton trembled as he muttered in shocked and disbelief. “Y-you f-fed m-me… y-you f-fed…m-me d-dus-”

“Don’t be so dramatic, Sans. It’s a widely known fact that if a monster consumes the dust of another it can stave off death for the time being. This just gives me enough time to heal your wounds till we can go for another round of testing.” Gaster almost sounded giddy at the mention of another series of tests. The Royal Scientist then abandoned the urn and returned to his table, distracted by more concoctions laid before him. Completely unfazed.

Sans on the other hand continued to shake violently, his throat burning as he gagged and dry heaved. There was no more excess magic in his system. The first few spoonfuls of dust had already dissolved into his magic, healing his wounds slowly. Sans couldn’t shake the feeling of utter disgust that washed over him. Sure in past timelines he had done some terrible things to survive, but it was all to keep Papyrus safe. And even then Sans had some shred of morals. But this… Sans couldn’t stop his thoughts from spiraling. Who was the monster? Did they have a family? Were they missing their loved ones urn? Did he just eat someone’s brother? As soon as the thought came to mind, Sans gagged and heaved again but unfortunately nothing came out. Sans’ bones shook uncontrollably as red tears streamed down his face. Stay strong… for Papyrus. Just think about seeing Papyrus. Sans repeated to himself. It was the only comfort he could find as he heard the power saw rev up again.

Papyrus sighed heavily for the umpteenth time as he stared at the letter in his hand, the all too familiar royal emblem gracing the outside of the envelope. His jaw clenched and he ground his sharpened teeth in frustration as he contemplated the complications of the new military order. Asgore had caught wind of the Hare Gang gaining support among the town’s folk in Snowdin. Word of such a strong resistance worried the king and the big wigs in the capitol. In response, Asgore had ordered more Royal guards to patrol Snowdin and its surrounding forests, and he appointed Papyrus their captain.

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Papyrus was thrilled that the king saw him as a competent leader, it only furthered his credentials for his upcoming application as head of the Royal Guard. But unfortunately, that meant Papyrus would be in charge of more guards. Guards he had never met. Guards who he didn’t know where their
loyalty stood. Guards he didn’t know if he could trust…

This was a problem.

The new members to his brigade were all dog monsters. Soldiers picked undoubtedly for their fur and ability to survive in such cold, harsh weather. The troublesome part was some of these soldiers had been previously stationed in Snowdin before, and as Papyrus recently learned, a few Royal Guardsmen had been bribed by Nigel. This could only mean that at least one or more new members of his unit were traitors.

Papyrus sighed once again. The situation didn’t look good. Not only did Papyrus have the Hare Gang after him, but the entire population of Snowdin would prefer to see him dead. And now he had to worry about his own men turning on him. With a flick of his wrist, Papyrus threw the letter onto the table then rubbed the bridge between his sockets.

Was there anyone in the underground he could trust?

“Yo bonehead, why don’t you just write to the king and tell him about the traitors? Then he’ll send you a new batch of idiots to follow you.” Undyne offered as she sauntered into the kitchen where Papyrus sat. The fish monster then turned towards the fridge and rummage around till she found a beer.

“With what evidence? My hunch? Some vague words a sniveling, conniving gang leader said? The claim wouldn’t hold. All it would do is let the moles know we’re onto them. They’ll just hide deeper and be sure to cover their tracks. It will be impossible to find evidence on them after that.” Papyrus lamented as he crossed his arms over his chest.

“You’re right… Didn’t think about that.” Undyne glared off to the side, worried about Papyrus’ safety and his predicament.

Undyne didn’t like the fact that Papyrus was basically being shoved between a rock and a hard place. It was either report an unsustainable claim, which would set his career back immensely, or deal with a possible would be assassin in his own battalion. Undyne silently growled as she ripped the top off her beer and began chugging the drink. She would rather be assigned as Papyrus’ partner, but she knew the guard would never let that happen. They were both leaders, they needed to lead their own separate teams. It would be stupid and a waste of resources to have them in the same group on the same deployment.
After a few moments of tense silence, and a few gulps of her beer, Undyne finally spoke up. “What about Sans…?”

Papyrus froze and looked up at Undyne. “What about him?”

Undyne paused and bit her lip, thinking of the best way to word her idea. “You said when you met up with him, he was very adamant about assuring your safety, right?”

“Correct…” Papyrus stared at Undyne, silently asking her to go on.

“And you two made an alliance?” Undyne asked to be sure.

“We did. But you know why I made that-“

“Yeah yeah yeah, I know. To get him to lower his guard, but just hear me out… What if you have him be your hidden ace?” Undyne suggested.

Papyrus’ sockets widened, surprised Undyne would even suggest such a thing. Up until now Undyne was against him trusting the strange skeleton in any capacity. Be it dubious alliances or otherwise. “Do you think he is that trustworthy?”

“No, but get this; have this Sans guy follow you and your group around, shadow you, make him your invisible body guard, then if and when the traitor attacks and tries to kill you just use Sans as a body shield. Either he kills the mole, or dies protecting you. Either way, you’re safe.” Undyne smiled. In her mind it was like killing two birds with one stone.

Papyrus frowned. He wasn’t sure how he felt about using Sans as a disposable body guard. Firstly, he didn’t like the idea of needing help at all. He was the Great and Terrible Papyrus after all, he could take care of himself! Secondly, he didn’t understand exactly why, but the thought of using Sans after he had saved him twice felt… wrong. Sure the underground was a world of kill or be killed, and the weak were the first to go. Showing compassion in any capacity was a sure fire way to get murdered. It was just… there was an odd swell of guilt and disgust that would make his soul feel heavy any time Papyrus even considered it. There was also a small, very small part of protective defiance that burned in the core of his being. A piece of him angry at the thought of Sans getting hurt just for him. Papyrus quickly ignored it and chalked it up to Sans just being one of the only other skeletons in the underground so he felt he needed to protect their species.
“I’ll consider it.” Papyrus relented. Although he didn’t like the idea, he couldn’t deny the assurance of someone having his back made him feel a little more comfortable about his new assignment.

Undyne smiled, happy with the compromise. She then cocked her head to the side, confused to see Papyrus get up from the kitchen table and grab his coat. “Yo, where you going?”

“Out. I’ll be back latter, don’t wait up.” Papyrus responded quickly as he made his way to the front door.

“Be safe.” Undyne called to him just before he closed the front door and locked it. She stared at the door, blinking curiously at Papyrus’ odd and sudden distant behavior.

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Sans whimpered weakly as he was dragged from the experimentation room through the hallways. A trail of deep red marrow followed his dangling legs as Gaster’s ecto hands cradled him roughly, only supporting his top half. A few assistants passed by and made sure to duck their heads. They went out of their way to ignore him and Gaster, as well as the trail of blood that made the lab hallways a slippery death trap.

Gaster sighed as he continued to write on his clipboard, his own exhaustion showing on the rings that appeared under his sockets. “That took longer than necessary. Sorry to disappoint you Sans, but I wasn’t going to let you waste yet another day of testing. Fall down all you want, but from here on out we are going to finish testing, even if it means skipping meals and going straight through the night.” Gaster bit at the semi unconscious skeleton, his frustration with his subject mounting. Sans had made him run late yet again. It was like he was trying to sabotage all his progress and hard work.

As soon as the two reached Sans and Flowey’s room, Gaster was quick to swing the large metal door open, not caring about knocking or waking anyone up. He noticed Flowey flinch awake on the single desk in the room, the discomfort from the flower monster giving him a brief moment of amusement. “He’s your problem now.” Gaster sighed in annoyance before quite literally throwing Sans into the room.

Flowey flinched when he heard Sans’ body hit the floor with a spine tingling crack. Before he could react, the large metal door was slammed shut and the heavy lock clicked into place.

Flowey then turned towards Sans ready to tear into him for his earlier reckless behavior, but as soon
as he opened his mouth, his voice stuck in his throat and his petals drooped. Flowey watched Sans semi unconscious form continue to tremble, marrow seeping out of various deep and precise cuts. There was also the pungent and distinct smell of death. Flowey didn’t know where to pinpoint the scent till he notice a thick dried layer of dust coating Sans’ teeth and face. Immediately Flowey felt bile rise in his own throat as he realized the particulars of some of Gaster’s experiments.

Flowey sighed and decided he would hold off on scolding Sans. Right now he needed to take care of his roommate. It was the right thing to do.

. . . . .

Down the hall Gaster stared silently at the coffee maker as he allowed the wear and tear of the day’s events finally come crashing down on his weary bones. Gaster rubbed at the back of his neck as he rolled his head, sighing in sweet relief as some stressed joints gave a satisfying pop. The Royal Scientist was about to take a relaxing sip of his fresh cup of coffee when a light tapping at his door caught his attention.

With a loud exasperated sigh, Gaster put down the coffee and called out without turning around. “Come in!”

Slowly, the door to his office was pushed open and in walked a nervous looking Alphys along with a tall, lean monster. “Um… Dr. Gaster, sir...?”

“What is it Alphys?” Gaster urged with an impatient, annoyed tone.

“Your uh… appointment is here.” Alphys forced out even though her voice threatened to treble off into nonexistence.

Like a flip of a switch, the largest smile appeared on Gaster’s sharpened teeth. “Ah yes! Bring them in.”

Alphys nodded quickly and stepped out of the way as she let the taller monster enter the room. She gave a curious glance at the two before quickly dipping out and closing the door behind her.

As soon as the door closed, Gaster turned and his smile widened, his eyes landing on the tall skeleton monster before him. It was his second favorite experiment…
The Royal Scientist walked up to Papyrus and greeted him with a warm hug. “Papyrus my boy, it’s good to see you.”

Papyrus simply patted Gaster on the back awkwardly, not being one for shows of such affection. He knew Gaster meant nothing of it, this had always been the way the Royal Scientist greeted him, ever since he was little. Ever since he saved him from sudden death as a helpless bundle of baby bones. “Good to see you too Dr. Gaster.”

“Please, I don’t know how many times I have to tell you, just call me Gaster. After all, we’re practically family.” Gaster smiled, although the smile didn’t quite reach his cracked sockets.

Papyrus always felt a little uneasy around Gaster, but he knew better than to say anything. Papyrus didn’t consider Gaster family, even though he was the only other known skeleton monster in the underground. As far as Papyrus was concerned, the only monster who was his family was Undyne… and his late brother… Still, Papyrus gave a polite smile to placate the Royal Scientist. “Sorry for arriving late, Dr.”

“Oh no worries my boy. The Royal Guard is a demanding job. I understand.” Gaster waved his hand dismissively as he turned around and strolled back towards the counter where his forgotten coffee mug sat. Before Gaster could lift the mug to his nonexistent lips, his teeth stretched into a devious smirk, hidden by his back facing Papyrus. “Then again, that is why you’re here. Ready for your next dose?”

Papyrus’ sockets narrowed and he stared off to the side, the continuous moral debate ravaging his thoughts. “I still think the guard is plentifully stocked with skilled warriors. I don’t understand why the king doubts our strength and requires some guards to be tested with this new drug.”

“The king just wants to make sure when the barrier breaks, our warriors will be able to survive the second monster human war.” Gaster set his mug down and pulled out a small syringe filled with bright red liquid from his lab coat. He stared at the needle with pride. “This time, we won’t lose…”

Papyrus eyed the Royal Scientist skeptically, but long time loyalty kept his mouth shut. If it wasn’t for Gaster, he wouldn’t be alive. He knew better than to question the elder skeleton. Papyrus sighed as he resigned himself and removed his coat before taking a seat on the freshly cleaned metal examination table. It took him a while to get comfortable -not that he could ever get comfortable in
Gaster’s lab rooms- and summoned his soul as was protocol.

Gaster moved towards Papyrus, removing the cap to the needle and tapping away any stray air bubbles. The long night of experimenting on Sans was tiresome, but the outcome yielded the best results so far. After a bit of trial and error, Gaster was able to put together a decent prototype formula for the DT solution. Of course he was giving Papyrus a much smaller, diluted version, but it was all about baby steps. Each step was progress towards the end goal. The perfect, unstoppable warrior.

Gaster eased the needle into Papyrus’ soul, careful as to not damage the fragile organ. Slowly, he pushed the syringe down and watched as the flood of bright red liquid entered the Royal Guard’s soul. A small almost unnoticeable smirk twitched across Gaster’s skull. There was just something so deliciously ironic about watching Papyrus writhe under the heat of the drug, completely unaware of the blood and screams shed by his brother in order to obtain the less painful mixture.

Gaster almost broke character, a snicker threatening to make its way out his tightly clenched jaw. He just couldn’t help it. The situation was just too amusing. He had the two skeleton brothers wrapped so tightly around his ingenious fingers.

All it took was the threat that he would torture Papyrus, and Sans became completely submissive. He recalled the way Sans begged him to leave his baby brother alone, to let him bear the brunt of all the experiments. Gaster agreed, but he never agreed the two would stay together…

Gaster knew the only thing that mattered to Sans was Papyrus, so in order to ensure Sans subservience he was sure to separate the two as soon as possible. He took Papyrus and gave him to Asgore to train to become a strong feared warrior, just like he was doing with an orphaned aquatic monster. When Papyrus was old enough, Gaster weaved the perfect lie, telling Papyrus his brother had died protecting him from vicious monsters, and that he found the small bundle of bones crying, alone, and helpless in his brother’s dust. This ensured Papyrus’ loyalty along with a life debt.

Keeping Sans a secret was easy enough. No one but he knew Sans was truly Papyrus’ long lost brother. Gaster was sure that the fear he struck in his employees ensured that his secret prisoners would remain a secret for as long as he lived. The magic represent collars kept both Sans and Flowey securely locked away while Papyrus grew up blissfully ignorant that his brother was always just a few doors down each time he came in for DT doses.

A small chuckle finally escaped, but Papyrus either didn’t notice or chose not to say anything about is as Gaster finished up and carefully removed the needle. “There, all done. Now remember, if you notice any side effects, anything out of the ordinary, report it to me immediately.”

“Understood.” Papyrus responded as he let his soul fade back into his chest. The tall skeleton tenderly rubbed at his sternum, a little residual stinging permeated from the needle prick.
“Well then, we’re done here. I’ll see you again when I have another dose ready.” Gaster smiled, a fake pleasant smile.

Papyrus nodded and quickly grabbed his coat, eager to get out of the uncomfortable lab room. There was always something about this place that always made him feel uneasy. As Gaster waved him off and Papyrus wondered down the maze-like hallways, the Royal Guardsman wondered if he should have brought up the fact that he spotted another skeleton monster in the underground. Papyrus didn’t understand why, but something in his soul told him to keep that information a secret… at least till he could get a little more information out of Sans.

Before Papyrus could turn the corner that would lead towards the upper lab, Papyrus noticed a few small droplets of what looked like… blood on the floor? The tall skeleton eyed the droplets, following the trail to what looked like a large metal door. The guardsman paused for a moment, wondering if it was worth it to investigate. Papyrus couldn’t deny, there was something… almost like an invisible force pulling him towards the curiously overly secured door.

“Papyrus!”

Papyrus flinched ever so slightly, nervous that he was almost caught snooping around the Royal Scientist’s lab without permission. The tall skeleton then turned and saw Gaster himself, just standing, smiling, and waving. Papyrus’ brow ridge raised as he noticed the tense almost desperate look on the scientist’s face as he continued to wave, almost as if his body language was telling him to leave. Papyrus felt a shiver run up his spine and he quickly decided it was best he head out before he caused any issues. He wasn’t naïve, he knew Gaster performed experiments that even the king didn’t know about. It was best not to cause tension between the two strongest monsters in the underground. Sure he was loyal to the king and the royalty, but he also owed Gaster a life debt that the scientist had yet to cash in.

Papyrus gave a curt nod back at Gaster and quickly strode out the lab.

After seeing Papyrus leave, Gaster finally stopped waving and let his forced grin fall. The Royal Scientist’s cold, hard eye lights hovered over Sans and Flowey’s door.

That had been too close for Gaster’s comfort.

Chapter End Notes

This doesn’t explain everything, but things are starting to clear up :o
Man that was uncomfortable to write ^^; I'm used to fluff.
The Mole

There was a heavy, somber feeling that permeated through the small space of the shared room as Flowey quietly went to work on Sans’ wounds. Neither monster spoke a word as the last of the gauze was placed on the deep laceration that traveled up the length of Sans’ sternum. Sans kept his gaze to the side, his eye lights dim, hazy, and unfocused. He didn’t even flinch when one of Flowey’s sharp thorns scratched him by accident. Sans couldn’t tell if the drug finally worked and Gaster was successful in creating a working prototype, or if he was just too numb to the pain to care anymore. Either way, it simply didn’t matter. It was over. At least for tonight. Sans took a deep breath, his tense bones relaxing with the solace that he would be spared for a few days.

“Uh… Sans… I know today has been hard on you, but… we need to talk.” Flowey gently spoke up as he packed away what little medical supplies they had left. Alphys really needed to sneak them a new med kit or else they would be in trouble the next round of experiments.

Sans didn’t respond. He didn’t move or look at Flowey to indicate he was even listening. Still, Flowey continued knowing Sans could at least her him, even if he refused to communicate.

“This last time… you cut it really close. You almost exposed the broken collars to Gaster.” Flowey glared at the floor as the memory returned. “I know you don’t like me, and I don’t like you… and we agreed we wouldn’t butt in on each other’s lives, but… this affects my life. You leaving and coming back to the very last second puts my life in danger! So… I at least get to know where you’ve been and what you’ve been doing that’s sooooo important to put both our lives in danger!” Flowey was fuming by this point. He understood this timeline was beyond messed up, and that their lives were turned upside down in the most horrific way. But they still had to live, they still needed to figure out how to fix the messed up timeline. They had to be careful of every move they made, unless they wanted to lose what tiny shred of freedom they had.

Sans’ shoulders slumped even further as he continued to focus on the grout lines in the tiled floor. As much as he hated to admit it, Flowey was right. Sans was messing with his life too. Sure he didn’t care for the flower, especially since Flowey was responsible for his fair share of resets at one point in time. But still… it wasn’t fair to put his freedom at risk. Flowey deserved an explanation at least.

“I…” Sans had to pause to clear his throat, his voice horse and raw from the hours of screaming. He swallowed uncomfortably, still feeling a few grains of dust stuck in the back of his throat. “I spoke with Papyrus… Showed him my face… told him my name…”

Flowey froze, his eyes widening. His own voice caught in his throat. He didn’t know what to think. Sans had exposed himself to Papyrus, the one thing he was never to do. The one thing! He had officially put their secret at risk. There was no taking it back. No resets. What was done was done. It was all over now. It was only a matter of time till Sans’ actions caught up to them. Till Gaster caught
wind. Their freedom had a deadline, and Flowey didn’t know when that time would run out. “Sans… how could y-“

“He didn’t recognize me…”

Flowey flinched. His petals drooping as he listened to Sans’ voice crack. A small sob escaping as tears dropped to the floor.

“He didn’t recognize me… nothing… there wasn’t even a little hint of a memory…” Sans began to chuckle, his sobs mixed with mirthless laughter. “I didn’t know what I was thinking… that he would suddenly have his memories back? That hearing my voice or hearing my name would trigger something?”

Flowey felt his whole stem droop as he listened to Sans break down. This was something they both knew would happen, but… actually experiencing it… Flowey didn’t want to listen any more. He knew what it was like to lose a sibling. Sure Papyrus wasn’t dead, but their relationship, their companionship, their memories, everything that made them siblings… it was all gone. Essentially they were dead. He knew none of this was easy. He didn’t want to even try to understand Sans’ feelings. He knew he couldn’t.

“He didn’t recognize me…” Sans repeated as he curled in on himself, hugging his knees to his chest.

Flowey looked to the side, unsure what to say to Sans at this point. Part of him wanted to yell at Sans, to really drive home how stupid he had been. But the other part of him… he knew there was nothing he could say that would make Sans feel worse than he already did right this second.

“I’m sorry…” Sans whispered into his folded arms.

Flowey sighed, not sure he wanted to hear Sans cry any more. “It’s fine-“

“It’s not fine!”

Flowey looked down knowing Sans was right, but not sure how to continue.
“I put both our lives at risk… It’s not fine… We don’t know what’ll happen if we die. We don’t know if there will be a reset… I put our lives at risk, so no, it’s not fine… and I’m sorry. Even though there’s no way I can fix this or make it up to you… I’m sorry…” Sans spoke, any sound of hope or happiness gone. His voice just as broken as his soul felt.

Flowey looked back up at Sans, watching the skeleton for a long time. He and Sans had always had a rough past. They fought, both verbally and physically. There were timelines where they had battled close to the death. There was no mending their past what so ever. But right now, in this moment, Flowey felt a small connection with his long time enemy. He could feel Sans’ remorse. He knew Sans regretted putting them in danger. He believed he was sorry…

Slowly, Flowey reached out and placed a gentle leaf on one of Sans’ hands, the action gaining the attention of the depressed skeleton. “We’ll figure this out… We’ll come up with a plan…” Flowey assured. He wasn’t completely convinced himself, but they just couldn’t sit around and do nothing. They had to try.

The ‘daylight’ in the underground began to brighten through the bleak, dust covered snow in Snowdin indicating a fresh new day for the trapped citizens.

Just outside of town stood a Royal Guard unit, eagerly awaiting to start their day.

Papyrus huffed in annoyance as he stared at the newly added recruits to his unit. All dog monsters, each one more oblivious looking than the last. The tall skeleton felt his socket twitch in frustration as Greater Dog lost focus and began sniffing his companion, Lesser Dog. The action caused Doggo to flinch and carelessly brandish his daggers. Papyrus was starting to realize just how easy it was for Nigel to bribe one of these mangy mongrels. Dogamy and Dogaressa shared concerned looks as they stood at attention waiting for Papyrus’ orders. They had been with Papyrus the longest and they knew their leader demanded the utmost excellence from his subordinates. It was clear these new monsters were not up to par.

“Listen up you morons!” Papyrus shouted, causing the three new recruits to flinch and fix their posture. “I don’t know what prissy, pompous leader you had before, but you’re under my rule now! There will be no tardiness, no slacking, and no half-assed jobs on my watch. You represent The Great and Terrible Papyrus now, and you will behave yourself in a dignified manner that will not embarrass me! I will have order, I will have obedience! Are we clear?” Papyrus’ voice dipped to dangerous levels. The growl in the back of his throat left no room to question his authority.
Dogamy and Dogaressa were quick to respond with a firm solute to their chest. After a moment of fear, the rest of the dogs followed suit, although their gazes looked anything but sure.

Papyrus let out an exhausted and frustrated sigh as he ordered the canines to advance and patrol the surrounding forest. Dogamy and Dogaressa partnered with Greater Dog, leaving Lesser Dog and Doggo to follow with Papyrus.

The leader of the patrol kept his guard up and his eyes constantly switching from his surroundings to his subordinates behind him. It was a tense first run. Papyrus knew there had been plenty of time for Nigel to plan another attack, and it could very well involve one of the new canines. He knew he was in a bad situation, but there was no way around it. Papyrus had been clear to Dogamy and Dogaressa not to disclose the existence of Nigel and the Hare Gang to any of the new members. He wanted his only trusted warriors to gauge the new member’s reactions if and when they ran into the traitorous gang. He couldn’t out right accuse any of them without at least some iota of evidence behind it.

As the three walked, Papyrus noted how quiet their surroundings were. All that could be heard was the slightly untimed march of his unit stomping through the foot high powdery snow. The tall skeleton kept alert, his instincts telling him things were too calm for comfort.

“So uh, what would we be looking for out here, Boss? Seems pretty barren to me.” Doggo huffed as he glared directly at Papyrus. Papyrus couldn’t tell if he was glaring at him or focusing on his frame since he was the only object moving in his field of view. Papyrus had already been briefed on Doggo’s handicap. Doggo was practically blind unless objects moved, or vibrated. The skeleton wondered how in the world the useless mutt was still allowed in the guard with such a debilitating injury. The cards were not stacking in the canine’s favor, Doggo was quickly becoming suspect number one.

“It is not your place to question orders, now shut up and keep alert.” Papyrus spat, still not wanting to give away his upper hand to the mole. If the traitor knew he was onto them, then there was no need to play nice and pretend to be a compliant subordinate. He could very well try to assassinate him here and now. Papyrus felt a nervous sweat drop down his skull. He still needed to talk to Sans before he could feel safe. As much as he hated to admit it, Papyrus needed someone on his side for this case. He needed Sans’ help.

Papyrus half expected Doggo to talk back or at least make a grunt of disapproval, but was surprised when Doggo kept quiet and trained his squinting eyes ahead.

The patrol continued, but Papyrus’ magic tingled at his fingertips, ready for an attack.
After a few hours of quiet patrolling, the still and tense air was broken by Lesser Dog’s loud and continuous sniffing.

“What is it, bud?” Doggo questioned causing the whole unit to halt. Everyone had their eyes on Lesser Dog.

Lesser Dog turned to Doggo and barked a few times. He then turned and stared at Papyrus with a concerned, but readied stare.

“Yeah, you’re right. Now that you mention it, I do smell something too.” Doggo turned to face Papyrus as well and all three guardsman brandished their weapons.

The three quickly scanned their surroundings. Doggo held his daggers tightly as his eyes frantically roamed over every tree branch and bush around them. Lesser Dog planted his shield in front of him, his appearance stern and focused, if it wasn’t for his tongue slightly sticking out like a puppy begging for a treat. Papyrus held his bone construct like a sword, his stance already in a blocking position, ready to parry any surprise attack shot his way.

There was a slight rustling in the bushes nearby, and before Papyrus could attack Doggo was already throwing daggers in that direction. A pained squeal echoed across the frozen tree trunks, signaling the start of an assault.

Three rabbit monsters jumped out from their hiding spots, their shoulders draped with a mesh ghillie suit that made them blend in with the trees and snow. Each Royal Guardsman picked their opponent and began their attack.

Doggo and Lesser Dog quickly teamed up, working together to stop their two opponents. With practiced movements Doggo would slash and strike at his enemy and lesser Dog would block any incoming blows that attempted to land outside of Doggo’s field of view. The two worked in perfect sync as they danced around their enemies. Honestly, it seemed a little unfair. Doggo and Lesser Dog both had legitimate weapons; Doggo with his daggers and Lesser Dog with his short sword and shield. All the enemies had were a crow bar and a metal rod. The two guardsman also had teamwork on their side, while as the attackers didn’t seem to know how to combo their moves at all.

The battle seemed unusually long and drawn out for a team that had such the upper hand.
Papyrus had a hard time focusing on his own battle. He had to keep watching the canines in case either of them decided to turn on him mid strike. Papyrus growled and felt his soul tense up. The situation was difficult, but not impossible to overcome. There was nothing the Great and Terrible Papyrus couldn’t handle! Papyrus was quick on his feet as he dodged and rolled from a swing of his opponent’s machete. His attacker turned quickly and their weapons collided with a loud clank. Unfortunately for his attacker, Papyrus was much taller and stronger than he was. Magic began to smoke from Papyrus’ socket as he grunted, forcing the Hare Gang member to bend his back as the skeleton put more weight into his stance. After a while the rabbit monster’s posture gave way and the attacker fell on his back. Papyrus didn’t wait for a chance for the gang member to get back up. With one fatal swoop, Papyrus speared the rabbit monster’s chest, dead center where his soul would be. There was the sound of a soul shattering and before long the monster’s body dissolved to dust.

The remaining to assailants stared in horrified shock as their friend seized to exist. After a short, but understanding stare with one another, the two remaining gang members fled the scene.

Doggo saw the two rabbit monsters flee and instantly the canine was ready for a hot pursuit. “Hey wait! Common Lesser, let’s go hunt them down!”

Lesser Dog barked in agreement, bounding after the two with a snarl and fangs bared.

“Wait!” Papyrus shouted, only successful in stopping Doggo from running off. The skeleton watched gravely as Lesser Dog continued into the dense forest, obviously ignoring the command as it continued running till it could no longer be seen. Papyrus let out a heavy sigh. He didn’t want either of them running off to be alone with Nigel or the Hare Gang. Who knows what secret information they could be exchanging.

“Why you tell us to wait!?” Doggo shouted, his breaths still coming out in heavy pants, still running off the adrenaline of the surprise attack.

“Because it was an order! And you do not question my authority!” Papyrus shot back, not wanting to explain the real reason he didn’t want the dogs alone with the Hare Gang. Still, he wasn’t wrong. He was the leader and the dogs were duty bound to follow his every command, regardless if they thought it was right or wrong.

Doggo held Papyrus’ glare for a long while before finally giving a heavy sigh and letting his shoulders drop.

Papyrus quickly pulled out his phone and text an update to Dogamy and Dogaressa. He told them about the attack, warning them to keep their guard up, and also ordered them to keep an eye out for
Lesser Dog who had run off. As Papyrus read the confirmation text he received almost instantly, the Royal Guardsman couldn’t help but wonder about the previous attack.

There was nothing special about the gang members who attacked them. They didn’t seem significantly strong, nor did they carry any special weapons. What was Nigel hoping to accomplish by sending such a pathetic excuse for an ambush? Papyrus pondered this new conundrum for a while, till slowly, the skeleton turned and stared at Doggo. The canine was angrily leaning against a tree, lighting a dog treat up for a quick smoke. Had Nigel expected one of the dogs to turn and attack him? That would explain why it looked almost as if Doggo and Lesser Dog weren’t even trying to fight their opponents. Papyrus felt a flash of anger course through his bones. If he wasn’t sure who the mole was before, he sure as hell knew now.

“Come on, let’s go.” Papyrus ordered, not wanting to stand alone in the forest with Doggo for a moment longer.

The canine took one last long drag of his dog treat before dropping it in the snow and stepping on the burning end, extinguishing the smoking treat into the dirt below.

The two headed towards town, neither one speaking. To say there was tension in the air was an understatement.

Papyrus wondered why Doggo hadn’t gone through and attacked him during the ambush. Had the canine noticed him continuously watching the other two? Did Doggo not feel he had an opening? Of that was the case then it made Papyrus feel better for being paranoid.

Still, if the Hare gang was counting on Doggo to attack, why did he follow orders and not run off like Lesser Dog?

Something wasn’t adding up.

Unfortunately, it didn’t take long till Papyrus heard the tale tell sound of Doggo’s daggers being unsheathed. The skeleton tensed, his spine rigid. He fucking knew it! Papyrus spun around just in time to see several daggers being deflected by a flurry of perfectly timed bone constructs. The bones were small, but the aim on them was impeccable. Papyrus eyed the red dissolving bones on the snowy ground below before glaring harshly at Doggo. His magic returned to his socket and the gravel tone to his voice intensified. “How fucking dare you attack your superior! You traitor!” A long pointed femur bone materialized in his hold. Papyrus didn’t think the mole would show themselves so soon, but he guessed it was better to get this out of the way now.
“Wha-? No! I wasn’t attacking you! I could have sworn I saw something in the bush next to you! I thought you were being attack and I was trying to deflect it!” Doggo pleaded as he frantically scanned over the now completely still bush. His vision blurred, making things much more difficult. The canine felt sweat drip down his fur. He was positive he just saw it move. He was sure! He wouldn’t have been able to see if something hadn’t moved in the first place.

Papyrus raised a brow ridge at the dog, watching as Doggo frantically searched the obviously empty bush. It was almost… sad really. Papyrus felt pity settle into his non-existent stomach as he watched the dog get on all fours, desperate to prove his innocence.

This was a first.

Either Doggo was a better actor than Mettaton, or the mole was not afraid to cast aside their dignity in order to keep up their little charade.

“Doggo… get up.” Papyrus spoke, his voice showing obvious discomfort. It was unnerving to see a monster, a member of the Royal Guard no less, panic and act so unprofessional.

It was downright undignified. He couldn’t risk others seeing a Royal Guard like this.

Doggo stood on shaky legs as he stared at Papyrus with determined eyes. “Sir, I swear to you I did not attack you! Being in the guard is my life! It is my dream! I would never risk that or the trust of my team!”

Papyrus eyed the dog with skepticism as he shifted, placing one hand on his hip.

With the help of Papyrus’ movements, Doggo saw the skeptic stare causing the canine to stomp his foot in frustration. “Please Sir, you have to believe me!” Doggo sighed, realizing he was not helping his case by yelling at his superior. “I know what people think of me when they hear about my eye sight. They think I’m useless, a burden. But I’ve never let it hold me back. I worked harder than anyone to make up for it, practiced day in and day out! I’ve used it to make me a better warrior. No one sneaks up on me thanks to my sight. No one! So please… believe me when I say I saw something… captain.” Doggo finished with a salute to his chest, determined to show his sub servitude the best way he knew how.

Papyrus eyed the canine for a long while. He waited to see if the dog would flinch or crumble under
his harsh gaze and silence. For the longest time, Doggo stayed still. His posture straight and his paw in a tight fist over his chest. Doggo did not flinch nor make any move to remove the salute. Papyrus considered the canine’s determination and dedication.

Regretfully, Papyrus relented and let out a heavy sigh. “Alright… I believe you.”

He didn’t really, but whether he believed Doggo or not didn’t matter. If he was to turn him in as the mole, he needed more evidence than maybe a possible assassination attempt… that failed horribly might he add.

“Sir!” Doggo smiled, his tail wagging uncontrollably behind him.

“Get going. I have a lot of paperwork to do thanks to today, I want to get on it sooner rather than later.” Papyrus dismissed his weapon and turned towards the town of Snowdin.

“Don’t you want an escort back to the capital?” Doggo asked, unsure if it was really okay for him to head home.

“I can do just fine by my own. I still have a few more places to check and I’m sure the trouble has died down for today. I don’t need a huge military presence making the town’s people anxious. You go on ahead.” Papyrus turned and eyed the dog, making sure his stare got the point across that this was a command, not a request.

Doggo looked uncomfortable with the command but knew better than to do anything else that would piss Papyrus off today. He’d already messed up enough. The canine gave Papyrus one last nod before heading towards town, more particularly the River Person.

Papyrus waited until Doggo was completely out of view before sighing softly and sitting down on a nearby rock. The skeleton waited for a moment before speaking up softly into the still, quiet air of the empty forest. “Thank you for saving me… again.”

There was a small pause.

After a moment of quiet, the hooded figure hesitantly stepped out of the shadows and entered into the light of the opened field. Sans then slowly reached up and removed his hood, staring at Papyrus with a soft smile. “You would have had it yourself.” He responded, hoping to make Papyrus feel better.
He knew how much his brother hated relying on others. He didn’t want Papyrus thinking he was scheming something by saving him again.

Papyrus huffed with a halfhearted laugh. “You think so highly of me.”

“Well of course… You’re Papyrus.” Sans shrugged as if it was the most obvious answer in the world.

Papyrus eyed the smaller skeleton with quiet contemplation. He wasn’t sure why Sans treated him so well. The only reason he could come to logically was that they were both skeleton monsters so there was some sort of comradery based off their shared species. But… something deep down told Papyrus that wasn’t the case. That maybe… there was something more personal there. Regardless, Papyrus wouldn’t get the answer out of Sans until the other skeleton trusted him more.

“How did you know where to find me?” Papyrus opted to change the subject, not sure how to take Sans’ compliment.

Sans’ face began to glow with a soft dusting of crimson magic. The small skeleton shifted uncomfortably in place before looking off to the side nervously. “I uh… I was following you…”

Obviously, Papyrus thought. He didn’t know why Sans seemed so embarrassed admitting it. “Do you always watch me?” He decided to prod further.

Sans’ face began to glow brighter and the smaller skeleton nodded shyly. “Whenever I can, yes…” His voice was soft and apologetic.

“Whenever you can? So you don’t always watch me from the shadows?” Papyrus perked up at this. He was under the assumption that Sans was always nearby, always watching. If this wasn’t the case, this could throw a wrench in his plans to have Sans be his invisible guard. Honestly, he was a little saddened by the news. At first he felt threatened of another monster stalking him. But now… having Sans nearby almost made him feel… safe.

“I uh… have obligations that I have to get to… some days I can’t really walk around or use my magic…” Sans admitted while being as vague as possible. There were some days when Sans was too weak and hurt to leave his room. Those days even moving around in bed was excruciatingly painful. The days Gaster was particularly merciless…
Papyrus looked over Sans frame again, almost as if seeing him clearly for the first time today. The small skeleton had dark rings under his sockets and his hands were holding the cloak tightly around his body. They were faint, but Papyrus could also make out the faded cracks of healing wounds. It suddenly occurred to him that he’s seen Sans hurt more times than not. The realization came to the guard as a shock. In Papyrus’ eyes, Sans was one of the strongest monsters alive. Did he get ambushed often? Were monsters constantly out for his ridiculously high amounts of EXP? It must be it. What other reason could there be.

“Sans… we are in an alliance now. If monsters are attacking you or hurting you, let me know and I’ll have the guard take care of them.” Papyrus stood, suddenly energized by the idea that someone would hurt his partner. There was that odd surge of protectiveness again, that feeling that would boil in his soul. Papyrus wanted to rub at his sternum to quell the intensity but knew better than to do so in front of Sans.

Sans could feel his skull burn with his magic. His soul suddenly felt light and hope blossomed where he was sure it had died a long time ago. “I…” Sans was struggling to get the words out. Was this Papyrus coming to his rescue? Should he tell the other about Gaster?

No.

He was getting ahead of himself.

Sans frowned as he recalled the conversation he had with Flowey. Flowey allowed him to continue showing himself to Papyrus so long as he didn’t jeopardize their freedom any further. That meant making sure Papyrus didn’t find out about Gaster. At least not for now… All Sans and Flowey had against Gaster was the knowledge that they could use their magic. The broken collars were their only ace. Their only upper hand. They needed to hold onto it till the right moment.

But now was not that time.

“I can’t say…” Sans finally spoke. He looked up at Papyrus, his eyes trying desperately to convey his feelings for him. “I promise I’ll tell you about it later… When it’s safer…”

Papyrus frowned not liking the idea that he couldn’t help Sans who obviously needed it. He didn’t like the idea of any monster hurting Sans. He never felt so helpless in his life. That burning desire to protect this monster he barely knew came back tenfold. Papyrus didn’t know why, but just hearing that Sans was in danger, yet couldn’t do anything about it, made his magic brim to the surface. He had to focus to keep his magic from manifesting in his socket.
Papyrus didn’t like this, he didn’t like it one bit, but… Sans promised him he would tell him about it later. He knew Sans was a monster who kept his promises. “Alright…” Papyrus relented. Still, he didn’t like it.

“Um… not to sound rude or anything, but… do you have any monsters attacking you that you need help with?” Sans shifted uncomfortably, unsure if Papyrus would even take his help if he offered. Honestly, the little brother he knew would normally get offended at such an offer.

“I’m a Royal Guardsman, there are always monsters trying to attack me.” Papyrus huffed in amusement.

“Yeah I get that. It’s just… your other guardsman, it just… it looked like he was about to attack you.” Sans admitted quietly, unsure if he was crossing some line.

Papyrus stiffened at Sans words and looked to the side as if he was struggling with some internal debate. Sans stayed quiet as he watched his brother mull over something in his head. Had he struck a nerve with something he said?

“Actually… that’s something I wanted to talk to you about.” Papyrus turned and stared at Sans with a conflicted yet grave look.

Sans straightened, his soul suddenly feeling tense. Was something wrong? Was his brother in danger?

“There is a rebellion growing in Snowdin. They call themselves the Hare Gang. They’ve been building their reputation and followers out here. It’s gotten to the point that even the town’s people are supporting them. Nigel, their leader, let slip that he bribed a member of the Royal Guard into keeping quiet. One that used to be stationed here. I believe the traitor is one of my new soldiers.” Papyrus paused for a moment then continued. “And I believe they are waiting for a chance to kill me.”

Sans stepped forward with a sudden urge to hug his brother, almost as if he felt he could use his body to shield Papyrus from the danger that he couldn’t see. The small skeleton stopped before he could do anything out of the ordinary, reminding himself to play it cool. Sans ground his sharp teeth together in frustration. This was bad. Papyrus was in danger. He had to protect his little brother.
“I cannot turn them in to the guard till I have proof that they are the mole. But at any point they could turn on me... It's put me in a very difficult situation.” Papyrus sighed as he thought over his next words. “Sans I-“

“Let me help!”

Papyrus flinched and stared at the smaller skeleton with wide sockets. What did Sans just say?

“I mean I already watch you from the shadows...” Sans felt his cheeks warm at the comment, but continued anyway. “I'll be sure to watch your patrol every day. I'll stand guard in case the mole tries to attack you. I'll protect you.” Sans could hear the urgency in his own voice and hoped that Papyrus didn’t notice. This timeline was hell. He was forced to watch Papyrus grow from a distance. His little brother was taken from him and there was nothing he could do. But damn it he was still Papyrus’ older brother. And broken timeline or not, he was still going to protect his precious baby brother. Sans knew he was taking a huge risk, but he didn’t care. What was the point of staying alive in this timeline if Papyrus was killed? He would have no reason to keep on living. As grim as it was, Sans knew the only reason he hadn’t let himself fall down, that he didn’t give into the darkness of this shit hole timeline was because of the hope that he could be with Papyrus again.

It was all for Papyrus. It always was.

Papyrus stared shocked at the fiery determination in Sans’ eyes. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing. Sans was volunteering to put his life on the line, to watch after Papyrus every day, just to protect him. Papyrus felt a strange emotion spark in his soul, but he did his best to ignore it for now. “Are you sure Sans?”

“Yes, I’ve never been surer in my life. Please Papyrus... let me help you.”

Papyrus was quiet for a while as he thought over all his options. He didn’t like the idea of using Sans as a guard, but on the other hand the smaller skeleton did make him feel safe. Also, if Sans was tailing him, that meant he could keep an eye on Sans as well, then maybe the other skeleton wouldn’t be jumped and attacked so much. Papyrus smiled at this new realization. Sans could protect him while he protected Sans. It was perfect!

“Alright. I’m counting on you.” Papyrus smiled as he extended his hand towards the other skeleton.

Sans smiled, grateful that Papyrus would let him help. Sans quickly stepped forward and shook on
their agreement.

Papyrus held back a quiet gasp as soon as his gloved hand held onto Sans’ small phalanges. It was like something akin to a memory flashed across his head, a conversation he couldn’t quite hear, a setting he couldn’t quite see, but he knew… deep down in his soul… that he and Sans had shook hands before. It was a feeling so strong there was no chance of denying it. Papyrus opted to stay quiet about the strange phenomenon and continued to smile at his partner.

Deep down, Papyrus couldn’t help but feel that there was something more to Sans… something he was determined to find out.

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