The Undying Empress

Summary

In a last-ditch attempt, Undyne manages to kill Frisk and stop them from destroying the Underground. However, in order to survive, she has to absorb Frisk's soul. Once that happens, everything changes, both Underground - and above.

This idea is entirely Khalliys's invention, and holy wolftails is it an amazing one. I am truly indebted to you for suggesting this to me, and I hope I meet all your expectations and standards while writing it.
Undyne was losing, and she knew it.

She didn't know how she could possibly be losing to a human child, but there was absolutely no
doubt that she was. She should have known it was possible when a single slice of that knife almost
destroyed her. She should have known it when that human looked gleeful when it looked as if she
were about to die from that one blow.

While she could tell she was hurting the human - Is it a human? It looks like a human, but it also
looks like a nightmare... - when it seemed that all it would take was one more hit to finish it, it kept
standing, looking almost stronger than before - and more maniacal. She hated that smile, that twisted,
empty smile, those glittering, bloodthirsty eyes...

This thing can't survive, she thought desperately, throwing everything she had at the chaos wearing a
human's skin, the murderer of her best friend. But everything I do, it just... absorbs it. It's like no
power can kill it, not even this power...

Her eye suddenly fell on the knife the human held. It was the real thing, an actual weapon that no
child should ever hold, made of solid metal and sharpened to cut the finest hair - or the thickest bone.
Though it was marred with a slight sheen of dust and blood, it was still strong, still powerful, and its
cuts hurt.

Suddenly, her mind seemed to slow down, to focus. She stared at that blade, watching the light from
her spears glitter off of it, watch as her blood dripped from its tip like rubies.

What was it that Asgore always said? she thought suddenly. "If you can't defeat someone, use their
power against them. Let their own hands deal the final blow."

That's what he always said.

That's what I have to do.

But... how?

Suddenly, her mind found a way, and she grinned, so wide that it stung, so gleefully that she no
longer felt the pain of her wounds.

It was dirty.

It was like cheating.
But it was the only way. And she wasn't going to let it go.

She summoned up a series of her golden spears, throwing them in all four directions and at varying speeds. The creature before her smirked, using one of her own spears it had stolen to deflect them. In that distraction, alone, she lunged forward towards it, when its back was turned and busy.

Her fingers closed over its left wrist, where it was still holding that knife, and she gripped tight. The creature turned to her in shock, about to pull back, but she grinned in reply, and, with all of her strength, twisted its arm backwards and jammed the knife into its chest, its fingers still on the handle.

The expression it wore was amazed, its mouth open in shock, as blood blossomed from the wound and stained its striped shirt.

Then, before it could take a breath, her spears impaled it from all sides.

It fell, its eyes still on her, still amazed.

Then, those eyes went blank, and it was dead.

Undyne stood there, panting and hunched over, feeling the pain of dozens of knife wounds all over her body suddenly screaming for attention.

Slowly, as if wary it would come back to life, she made her way over to the dead thing, one hand shakily reaching out, concentrating carefully. Her fingers shimmered with blue, and from deep within its bloodied chest, a bright red soul slowly came upwards towards her hand, as though pulled there with strings.

Undyne smiled. She felt tears come to her eye.

She'd done it. She'd stopped it. And she finally had the last soul they all needed to be free.

But deep down, even as she cupped her hands around the beating pulse of light, she knew it would be her last act. She knew that she was dying, and there was nothing she could do to stop it. She wouldn't live to see the surface, but at least she would know that everyone else would.

*Well, almost everyone*...

Her face fell, her eye spilling over with tears, when her mind fell on Papyrus. He would never see the surface. She would have to ask Alphys to scatter some of his dust there, along with hers, so that in a way, they both would.

Limping, she made her way slowly towards the place where the boatperson was docked. She'd only made it a few steps when suddenly, her phone rang.

Bemused, she held the soul in one hand tight and fumbled for her phone, her fingers numb and weak.

"He... hello?" she rasped out.

"Undyne, absorb the soul!" the voice on the other end shouted, making her wince - but also making her heart clench. "Absorb the soul, Undyne, now!" The voice wavered.

"Alphys...?" she murmured, closing her eye slowly in a tired blink. "I can't... I need to... Asgore needs it..."

"Undyne, you need to do it, right now! You won't make it to New Home, not like that! You need to
absorb the soul, Undyne, please, please do it! Or else you'll die!" The voice broke again. It stung, hearing Alphys sound that way. "You... you can't die! Undyne, you can't die! I... We need you!"

Undyne listened, her breaths feeling heavy in her chest all of a sudden. She noticed that her vision was dimming around the edges, and suddenly all she wanted to do was lie down and close her eye and just...

"Undyne! Absorb the soul, right now!"

Alphys.

She listened to that voice, heard how panicked it was, how afraid it was, and it cut deep. It cut through the haze of her dying, and finally, finally, she listened.

She closed her eye and brought the soul towards her chest. Her own soul reached out weakly, touching the stronger one almost tentatively, before it almost seemed to snatch it from her hand greedily. Her eye snapped open and she gasped, dropping the phone and falling to her knees, then onto her hands, the feel of that soul merging with her own like an electric shock. It seemed to touch her blood and spread out through her whole body, and suddenly she felt that pain ebb away, that looming cloud of death dissolve into mere mist, and her weakness be replaced with wonderful, comforting strength.

She stayed there for a moment on her hands and knees, her head lowered and her eye shut, just breathing and trying to calm down, feeling her body shaking from the intensity of what she'd just done.

She felt wonderful.

She felt invincible.

She wanted more.

But she knew it couldn't last.

Once she reached Asgore, she would have to remove it, and she would die.

But not yet, she thought, opening her eye slowly, the colour no longer black but normal, though it glinted with a new kind of strength.

She then heard Alphys's voice calling to her from her phone, and she picked it up.

"--okay?! Undyne?! Undyne!!"

"Alphys..." she murmured, almost slipping up in a sudden moment of affection. She could picture the doctor now, huddled in the Lab with the last of the monsters, watching the monitor desperately as it filmed Undyne's actions.

Blinking, Undyne realised that when she'd started walking, she'd stepped out of view. No wonder Alphys was panicking.

"Are you alright?!" Alphys cried, her voice choked.

"Yes," Undyne said honestly, smiling faintly. Suddenly, she wished she were in Hotland with her, sitting on her box bed and watching documentaries with her, instead of here, like this. "I'm okay. It worked. I feel... I feel better. Normal."
"Oh, Undyne," Alphys suddenly sobbed out, her voice muffled. "Good. Good. You-you need to tell As-Asgore what's happened. We-we need to plan wh-what to do, now."

"Right," Undyne agreed, slowly getting to her feet.

"T-tell him what's ha-happened. What you had to do. And then call me back with instructions on what I need to do next," Alphys concluded, her voice a little steadier, now.

"Okay," Undyne said softly, already walking towards the boatperson's dock.

She didn't have the heart to tell Alphys what she really intended to do, because she knew it would hurt the doctor - and that was the last thing she ever wanted, especially now.

"Call me back, Undyne!" Alphys insisted.

"Alright, Alphys," Undyne lied. "I will."

"Good. I... I... I'm... gl-glad you're... you're safe."

Undyne shut her eye tight. "I'm glad you are, too. Talk to you again soon."

"O-okay."

Undyne hung up and held the phone for a moment. Then, she pocketed it, and went on her way.
The Judgement Hall was quiet. The dying sunlight broke through the windows, creating shadow clones of the Delta Rune etched upon delicately spun glass upon the smooth floors.

Undyne had very rarely set foot in here, usually opting for the training yards or one of the guest rooms, and Asgore tended to prefer to visit her in Waterfall. She stood in the middle of the room for a moment, awed by it. She knew this was sacred ground, and knew that a lot happened here. But she'd never truly understood the magnitude of that until her eye actually took in the place.

"undyne?"

She jumped and looked down, her heart racing, before she recognised that voice, even before he walked from behind a pillar that she was sure he wasn't behind a moment before.

"sans?" she answered, her eye wide.

His expression was also shocked. He stared at her for a moment, his pinpoint eyes unusually dim, before he blinked slowly.

"you killed the human?" he then asked slowly, his voice oddly soft.

Undyne nodded. "I have its soul. I'm gonna take it to Asgore, and then we'll finally be free."

sans looked at her closely, then, a look that she didn't like. It felt almost as if he looked deeply within her, into her very thoughts. She really didn't like it, and she shifted on her feet uncomfortably. She felt a sense of urgency, of a need to get to Asgore as soon as she could, but she felt as if she couldn't move - not with sans looking at her that way.

"you'll die," he then said flatly, startling her. "the soul is keeping you together. if you give it to asgore, you'll die."

Undyne looked down a little guiltily and nodded. "Yeah," she agreed. "But everyone else gets to live on the surface, so who cares?"

She said it, but her voice suddenly wavered, and she gritted her teeth.

"are you sure you want to do that, undyne?" sans wondered.

She didn't look at him.

"you could talk to him, keep the soul. another human will probably fall again. he'll understand."

"No," she growled, clenching her fists. "Otherwise, they all died for nothing. The queen, Shyren, Aaron... Papyrus..." Her voice wavered again. She didn't see it, but sans winced, looking down briefly and blinking hard. "They can't have died in vain."

"true," sans agreed softly. "so they why do you have to?"

"I'm not," she snapped, her head jerking up. "I killed it. I have its soul. I'm bringing it to Asgore. Or I would be, if you'd just get the hell out of my way!"

sans stared at her, his expression unchanging. She glared back, her teeth bared.
The moment felt endless.

Then, slowly, he nodded. "okay. go ahead. i won't get in your way."

Undyne started forwards, but he stopped her.

"undyne," he said, his voice sharp. "you did a good thing, but you can do even better."

She opened her mouth to respond, but he dipped behind a pillar and was gone.

She stood there for a moment, confusion rooting her feet to the smooth floor. She decided it was just another one of sans's many double-talk moments, and thus shrugged it off.

Right now, she had more important things to do.

She'd never seen New Home so quiet. The city's buildings, usually glowing with myriad lights, its streets usually packed with cars and monsters, the very air full of the sounds of life...

All of it was absent, and it made her feel as though she'd stepped into a dream... or a nightmare.

It was a long walk, and Undyne hated it. It forced her to think. And as a result, it forced her to cry. She did it as quietly as possible, but her only comfort was that she was alone, and thus no one would ever see her do it.

Papyrus was gone. She hadn't been able to save him.

Of everyone they'd lost, his loss hurt the most. She could have saved him, could have gone to Snowdin once she realised he was late for his lesson, and maybe she would have chanced upon him facing the human. She knew, deep in her heart, that he hadn't fought the human. He was strong, and probably could have killed the thing in one or two hits, but he probably didn't want to. Knowing him, his gentle heart, he probably wanted to give the human a chance to change, first. And of course the human was unchangeable by then.

She missed him so much already. She even tried to call his phone once while she walked, on the off-chance - or pathetic hope - that maybe she was wrong, and he somehow survived.

But all it did was ring, and the truth hit her hard, and she cried even harder.

She'd wanted to make a warrior of him. She'd wanted to make him proud of himself. She'd wanted to protect him and make him happy.

But she'd failed him in all of those things.

Then, her thoughts fell to Alphys, whose words she could still hear ringing in her brain, her desperation and demand that Undyne call her back the moment she could. And Undyne had lied and said she would, when she damn well knew that she wouldn't be calling anyone else ever again.

She'd saved Alphys. That was a comfort.

And she'd be saving Asgore, too. That was also a comfort.

She wanted them to survive, wanted them to *thrive*. But she wished she would be able to be there to see it.

She *wanted* to be there to see it.
She wanted to be there when the barrier broke, Asgore and Alphys at her side, maybe even hold Alphys's hand in her excitement, as if not to would make it all disappear into a dream...

But she couldn't.

Finally, she'd made it to the royal palace. It looked daunting from the outside, but once she went in, she found it to be almost deceptively homey, like a little bungalow.

She walked in, as if an intruder on a peaceful moment, and found a note. She read it and smiled faintly; it was so like Asgore to be gardening, and to also leave a tiny puzzle for anyone who wanted to find him.

She held the note to her chest for a moment, her eye closing, regret and longing filling her, for a future she couldn't have, before she started walking around to find the two keys.

It was then that something strange happened, and Undyne had truly assumed that the strangest had already happened.

A flower with a face popped up in front of her.

She froze, holding one key to her chest, her eye huge on her face. She felt a shiver of uneasiness, and her mind half-summoning a few spears and holding them on hair-trigger.

Something about this made her feel... uneasy.

The flower stared at her, their eyes huge and their mouth small.

Then, in a tiny voice, they whispered, "You killed them?"

Undyne nodded slowly, unable to speak.

"Truly? They're dead?"

"I... yes. I have... its soul," Undyne agreed hesitantly, as if giving the flower that kind of information was a bad idea.

But the flower merely stared at her, their shocked expression turning from trepidation to... almost like relief. "Good. That's good. That human... that human wasn't right. That human was... wrong."

"You're telling me," Undyne replied dryly. "Who are you?"

"Nobody," the flower responded. "Nobody at all."

Then, the flower seemed to jump back into the floor, and was gone.

Undyne stared at the place where they had been, confused, before she started looking for the second key. When she found it, she unlocked the way to the basement, and made her way down.

By now, she was shaking. She was scared. She knew these were her final moments, and it scared her. She desperately wanted to call someone.

She wanted to call Papyrus. She wanted to call Alphys.

But instead, she called no one, and kept walking.
Asgore was watering the sea of flowers that carpeted the throne room, his back to the doorway.

For a moment, Undyne watched him, listening to him hum idly. It was clear, from this, that the king had no idea what had been happening to his kingdom. He had no idea just how close their world had come to turning to dust.

That thought was confirmed when he turned around, saw Undyne's state, and dropped his watering can, his face falling to terrified shock. He was before her immediately, his hands on her shoulders, and for a moment, she rested her head on his chest, like she used to do when she was younger, and able to be weak.

It was so comforting. It was also painful.

"Undyne, what's happened to you?" he asked, his voice shocked, his hand gentle as he carefully petted her roughly-shorn hair.

"There... there was a human, Asgore," she said softly, shutting her eye. "I killed it."

This was it, she knew. This was her last moment. She was shaking. She didn't want to die. But she knew she had to.

Asgore froze, before he gently took hold of her shoulders and pushed her a little away, looking right into her face. She looked back at him, her lips twitching, her eye stinging.

"It was killing everyone," she added, her voice still quiet, though she knew he heard every word. "I had to. I have its soul. It's yours, Asgore. Take it, break the barrier, and free us all."

Asgore's face darkened, an expression very few people ever saw. "You're dying," he said, his voice hard.

Undyne sagged a little. She knew she couldn't of hid it from him. Slowly, she nodded. "I absorbed the soul to get here. Once you take it, I'm done for."

She smiled weakly. "It's okay. I don't mind. If it means everyone's free, I don't... I don't care..."

Asgore winced; he knew she was lying. His grip tightened on her shoulders, and his eyes closed. Then, he said, his voice barely above a whisper, "Undyne, it has to be you."

She blinked, confused. "I don't... what are you talking about?"

"It has to be you who breaks the barrier, Undyne," Asgore elaborated, his grip tightening even more on her shoulders. His arms were shaking, and he lowered his head again. "Tori... Toriel... she's dead, isn't she?"

Undyne felt her stomach clench. "Yes," she whispered. "She was one of the first it killed."

He exhaled slowly, a small sob escaping him with it. Gently, Undyne reached up and placed her hands on his forearms, rubbing gently, her own eye burning again. She knew he'd always kept his love of his queen, after all of these years.

"Ah, damn it," he whispered. "I can't do it. I can't set a foot on the surface knowing that. I can't look at the sun without her seeing it, too..."

"But, Asgore," Undyne blurted, suddenly afraid. "We need you. We need you so much. We need you to guide us from the Underground, to lead us, to bring us back to where we were before--,"
"You keep saying 'we', Undyne," Asgore interrupted, looking up at her. His eyes were full, tears already streaking his cheeks, but he looked angry. "Yet you and I know that if I take that soul from you, there is no 'we'."

Undyne swallowed hard. She had nothing to say to that; it was true.

"Undyne," Asgore murmured, one hand moving from her shoulder and touching her cheek gently. "I will be damned before I see you die."

Undyne bit her lip. Otherwise, she knew she'd start to cry.

It was fine, because he wasn't finished talking.

"You're the daughter I never asked for, but got. You're the daughter I got, but never knew I wanted. And you're the daughter I want to keep living, no matter what."

His eyes flashed, two colours that she knew so well from sparring with him. "It has to be you, Undyne."

"But, I don't know anything about any of that," she said, her voice breaking. "I'm too stupid to do any of it. All I know is how to fight."

Asgore gently rubbed her cheek, brushing away dried blood and flecks of dust, all her own. "You know much more than that, daughter. You just don't know it, yet."

He smiled faintly. "And you won't be alone. I can already think of at least one other person in my employ who would be more than happy to help you, and be at your side."

Undyne opened her mouth, then closed it. That confused her. She had no idea what - or who - he was talking about.

"The other six souls are in the basement," he said softly. "Take them, Undyne. Absorb them, and use their power to break the barrier. And then keep using their power to stay alive. And make that life worth living."

"Please," Undyne suddenly pleaded, shaking again, but for a completely different reason, now. "I'm scared. I don't know how to do this. I don't know what to do. Please come with me, Asgore. Please!"

Asgore pulled her close and hugged her tight, and she clung onto him, unable to stop her tears. She had come ready to die, and here she was about to not only live, but thrive. She was terrified.

"You can do it without me," Asgore whispered. "Because you have to. I'm going back to the Ruins, back to... to where Tori..."

His voice choked up, and he had to take a moment before he went on. "I can't go on like this, Undyne. I need to be alone, at least for a while. I'm... I'm not ready to see the world above again. Not after so long. Not after all that I've lost."

"Asgore," she growled out, her fingers digging into his back, gritting her teeth. "Please, come with me."

"You're strong enough, Undyne. You already know it, but you just can't feel it, yet. If you can't trust yourself, then trust me. You can do this. And you can do this well."
She clung to him for a moment, shaking from her tears, feeling him do the same.

For that moment, there was only the two of them, father and daughter, saying a last goodbye for a time they only knew was going to be long - and possibly permanent.

It hurt. It hurt so much.

But soon, Asgore let her go, despite her attempts to keep hugging onto him, to pull him back.

"Undyne," he said gently, reaching forward and brushing her tears away with a kind, sad smile. "It's time to do what must be done. You can do it."

"Asgore..." She dug her nails into his arms. "Dad... I love you so much. I love you so damned much..."

"And I love you," he said softly, kissing her forehead gently. "Now go, my brave girl, and make things right."

He let her go. She hesitantly did the same, staring up at him for a long time, before she turned away and just ran out, running away from him, running away from the pain and the hurt and, worst of all, the truth.

He watched her go, before he slowly made his way back up the stairs to his home, to start his journey back to his first home, for good.
The basement was oddly eerie, despite looking normal.

Well, as normal as one could be when housing seven coffins.

Undyne felt her heart skip a little when she saw them, feeling for the first time the reality of what Asgore had actually done over all of these years - and what she had just done, too. Seeing the coffins, the proof of those murders - save one - brought it truly home for her, and she paused at the foot of the steps for a moment, her hand over her heart. Over the soul she'd absorbed.

She then started forward slowly, as if to go faster would somehow disturb the children who were long-dead. She stopped in front of the first one, its red heart making her pause. There was no glow upon this coffin, not like the others, but the colour was identical to the one the human she'd killed had. She shakily placed her hand over it for a moment.

Chara.

She knew this was the coffin of Chara, the human that Asgore and Toriel had once raised as their own, who'd died along with their son, Asriel.

She bit her lip, unable to imagine that kind of pain, the pain of losing not just one child, but two.

And here I am, just having killed a child, myself. Had that human been loved, somewhere? Did I just make a family fall into agony?

Does that make me... evil?

She winced. She'd often struggled with that. She'd never killed before, not before this. She often wondered how it would change her when she did, because she'd figured it would be inevitable with the job that she had.

So how has it changed me? she wondered, looking deep within herself. She closed her eye, her palm covering the red heart completely.

But no matter how hard she looked, she didn't feel the change she'd always thought.
She felt... sad. She felt the remnants of that fear that forced that action. She felt angry that she'd had to resort to those tactics to survive, and to save others.

But she didn't feel like a demon. She didn't feel bloodthirsty or wanting more death. If anything, she never wanted to take another life ever again.

She opened her eye at that thought, a flash like steel going through her whole body. *If I never want to take another life again, then I need to make things right.*

*Dad's right.*

*I can do this.*

She lifted her hand slowly off of the coffin and went towards the second one. This one glittered, and she could see the soul hidden within it. Her hand still shook, even as she held her palm over it, but she didn't move her hand away. She reached out, and when she lifted her hand, the soul came up with it. She held it for a moment, looking at its colour, before she slowly brought it to her chest. Her own soul reached out - again, almost hungrily - and touched it, and in that moment, she felt it again, that rush of intense power as it was absorbed into her body.

Deep within, she felt... amazing. She felt so powerful, as if she'd drunk a dozen of those syrupy drinks that Alphys liked, almost shaky and breathless with how energetic she felt. Her eye opened, and she didn't know it, but it glittered for a moment with three different colours before fading to normal.

Slowly, she pushed herself to her feet again, and moved to the next coffin.

She did it four more times, each time finding it easier to stay on her feet, each time feeling so much more powerful and so much more energetic.

By the time her hand was about to cover the last, she was trembling, sweating hard and her eye wide and dark, but she was smiling, almost drunk from the power.

*Was this why the war was fought? How do humans stay calm, with this kind of power within them all the time?*

*No wonder they thought we were dangerous...*

*No wonder we thought they were, too...*

Finally, she reached out, and took the last soul.

From there, it was like a dream.

Once her soul, already so saturated with power, touched and absorbed the last one, Undyne suddenly stood up straight, her eye closing, not tight or hard, just fluttering closed. She felt a sense of euphoria fill her, as if that was what her blood was now made of, and she laughed, softly, without menace - just a small laugh of delight. She stood up tall and straight, a hand to her chest, feeling so light and wonderful.

She didn't know that physically, she'd changed, and she looked different, now. She didn't see the
inner light that shone from her eye once she'd slowly opened it, nor how it changed from its usual black to a bright, emerald green. All she knew was that sense of joy, of power, the kind that could so easily be abused, could so easily bring torment and misery, and yet within these hands - her own - it would only bring that to one thing: the barrier.

Slowly, she made her way back up the stairs. The countless injuries she'd received from the human were gone, not only knitted up like old scars but smoothed over as if they'd never been there. The longer she walked, the more she changed, even to the point of her clothing dissolving from sharp-edged armour to soft, scale-plated robes.

She could feel the barrier. She knew exactly where it was. It was as if she could feel that it knew her, sensed her coming, and was afraid, as though it were a thing of its own mind. She followed its call, her smile wide and her eye blazing, excitement and hope making her heart pound within her breast.

*We're going to be free,* she thought. *We're going to be free, and I get to see it. We're going to be free, and I get to make it happen...*

She had no idea, but she was crying again. Only this time, they were tears of pure joy.

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The barrier was not at all what she'd expected.

Undyne had pictured a tall, thick wall, one made of pure magic, one impenetrable and invincible.

Instead, she found herself in what looked almost like a subway tunnel, stretching from where she stood to so far beyond, she couldn't see an end. It flashed with light every so often, stretching that span before repeating. There was a faint breeze, one that tasted of old, old magic.

Something stirred deep within her when she tasted that. Though she'd never asked, and never even read anything about it, she suddenly knew exactly what she needed to do to break it. She trembled with excitement, slowly taking several steps forward.

She felt the barrier yield to her. Of course it would; she possessed at least one human soul and one monster soul. She had the option of travelling between each world now if she so chose.

But she wanted so much more.

When she felt that slight bend in the barrier, she stopped. She held out her arms, raising her hands high above her head, her palms up and her fingers splayed open. She raised her head, looking up above her, focusing, reaching within her by instinct alone and summoning the power that she now held.

It rushed up her arms and from her fingertips eagerly, like unbridled lightning. A rainbow of colours seemed to gush from her hands, foaming outwards and smashing into the walls that still pulsed with white light, changing that white to the cavalcade she held.

Her hands shook, and she felt a tug of power from her core, like she felt when she was using up too much of her magic too quickly, and for a moment, she felt a sting of panic.

*Am I not strong enough? Am I too weak for this? Will it kill me, will we then lose the souls, and all of this will be for nothing?!*

But as if the souls heard her, she felt the drain on her core ease, and soon those walls pulsed with those rainbows of light. She couldn't look away, now, not even if she wanted to. Her hair, once ragged and now smoothed, whipping a few times in her face from the force of the power she
unleashed, but she didn't stop.

She couldn't stop.

And then...

...there was this sound of the smallest of glass breaking.

And then...

...it burst out into a symphony of broken shards, musical in its chaos.

And then...

...everything went from all of the colours she'd ever seen in her life...

...to stark, unforgiving black.
Beyond

Undyne awoke to a strange sensation upon her face. She didn't really understand what it was, but it was enough to bring her to.

Her eye opened, and she looked up above her, for a moment unsure of where she was or why she was on the ground. Her fingers dug into cold, slightly-damp earth, and she blinked, suddenly.

Then, a jolt of understanding hit her, and she sat up quickly.

Before her was a long tunnel made of dirt, packed hard and smooth. It rose uphill, and she could see, very faintly, a slight glimmer of reddish-gold light.

She stared, her heart racing.

This wasn't the barrier at all.

The barrier was gone.

She'd done it.

She sat there for a moment, allowing the faint feel of fresh air touch her face, her eye closing. It was almost intimate, how the air slid over her face. She'd never felt anything like it, never knew anything like it. Yet when it touched her, she recognised it for what it was.

After a moment, she pushed herself to her feet, taking a mental assessment of herself. Other than the slight jarring the fall had caused her, she felt perfectly fine. In fact, she felt...

She gasped, placing a hand to her chest.

_They're still here_, she realised with a jolt. _They're still within my body._

Undyne had assumed that once the barrier broke, the souls would vanish. But they were still within her, still attached to her own soul like a patchwork quilt.

How was that possible? In all of the rumours, it was said the souls would vanish. Why did she still have them?

That was when her phone suddenly rang, scaring her so badly that she jumped and summoned a spear before she recognised it for what it was. She grabbed it from her pocket - pausing for a moment when she realised her pockets were different - and then answered it.

"Hello?" she murmured.

"Undyne! You're okay? Where the hell are you, I was worried sick! What's going on? You said you'd call me once Asgore had a plan!"

Undyne felt her whole body suddenly react to that voice. She felt so warm, so comforted, that she closed her eye and smiled, holding the phone tighter. The spear vanished from her hand, and she just listened as her dear friend chastised her, hearing the worry and the relief beneath the stern words.

"Hi," she whispered, wishing she could say so much more, but found the words weren't coming to her.
"Where are you, Undyne?! Are you safe? Oh god, your voice, it sounds so soft, are you okay, please be okay, say you're okay?!

"I'm okay," she relented, still smiling, her hand going back over her chest, but for a completely different reason, now. "I'm... I'm in New Home. I'm at the barrier."

There was a pause.

"Is Asgore with you?" Alphys asked, her voice still tense but a little softer, now. "He has the souls?"

"No," Undyne admitted. "It's... a really long story. But, please, Alphys..."

She didn't know why she said what she said, next, but she did. "I need you here with me, okay? Can you come to the barrier?"

"Yes," Alphys answered immediately. "Of course I will. When I do, you need to tell me everything, Undyne."

"I promise," Undyne agreed softly, her heart speeding up with the anticipation of seeing her.

When she hung up, she held the phone to her chest, and closed her eye, still smiling.

Alphys was scared. There were no other words for it. As she took the familiar route from the Lab to New Home, her hands shook.

So much had already happened in the last few hours - hours? Was it hours? It only feels like minutes... - and she'd heard something strange in Undyne's voice. Not weak, not hurt, but strange. She couldn't figure it out.

Her whole body was tired. She had stood at those monitors for hours, fear making her stand stiff and unmoving, her eyes glued to the screen in front of her as the woman she loved fought for her life - and had almost lost it. Her eyes stung just remembering how badly Undyne had looked when she had last seen her; she hadn't seen the change brought on her once she'd absorbed the human's soul.

Alphys wasn't a religious monster, but she fiercely hoped that the weakness she'd heard in Undyne's voice wasn't from her dying.

Because if Undyne died... if Undyne died...

Alphys shook her head, not stopping in her fast-paced walk, reaching up and brushing the tears away from behind her glasses.

Undyne wasn't going to die. She patted the breast pocket of her coat for probably the sixteenth time, feeling the comforting bump there. Alphys would make sure of that, no matter the method.

She walked over the yellow flowers, a chill crawling up her spine like cold fingers for a moment, like it did every time she saw them. That was one thing she'd be glad to never see again, if it all worked out.

If...

Finally, when she turned the corner towards the hallway she knew led to the barrier, she paused, sniffing.

Something was... weird. Something was very weird.
It felt strange, smelled strange, and yet she had no idea what to name it.

Or rather, she knew its name, but wasn’t sure if that name applied.

"U-Undyne?" she called, suddenly afraid, her hands tangling before her and her posture lowering. She felt uneasy. Scared. Unprepared for whatever change she was about to face.

Then her eyes fell on Undyne, and her heart skipped.

Undyne sat on the ground with her legs crossed, slouching a little with her head tilted back to look up the slope before her. But it was an Undyne that looked nothing like the Undyne Alphys had last seen. Though she only saw her back, even that was changed. Her hair was no longer shorn and ragged, but smooth and its normal length, in its usual ponytail, the colour practically glittering red. She wore not armour, but robes, simple but elegant and flowing, yet cinched to her wrists.

That was all Alphys could see at that moment, but it was enough to know that her friend was different.

It was made even clearer when Alphys realised she could feel the power Undyne now held in the air around her. It was like a looming storm cloud, heavy with hail, but kept in check, ready to be loosed at a moment's notice. She realised, belatedly, that she was shaking from that feeling, her hands clenched in front of her holding onto themselves so hard her claws dug into her skin and hurt.

But it was still Undyne. And she was alive. That was the most important part to her.

"Undyne!" she called again, her voice sounding small.

Undyne started, getting to her feet and turning around, and Alphys stared at her, instantly spellbound. Undyne's eye... it was bright green, and it sparkled with both power and happiness. She could see that, from her narrow hips, she wore a belt that held a long, vest-like tunic to her waist, the hems so long they reached her ankles, her feet covered in sturdy but still lovely boots. Upon her chest was the Delta Rune, and stretching down from it were two spears pointing down, only to slowly merge into a single spearhead at the hem.

She was beautiful, still. Her face bore strange markings, almost like slashed scars, but of pure black, two on each cheek, one on each temple reaching down towards one on each side of her bottom jaw, all four ending in arches around her gleaming eye and empty eye-socket, partially obscured by some of her hair brushed over it. Yet these did nothing to tarnish her beauty. If anything, they added to it, emphasising her new strength.

To Alphys's surprise, that eye lit up when it fell on her. And then, to her absolute shock, she found herself embraced, so hard she lost her breath.

But suddenly, everything that happened slammed into her, harder than this embrace, and she found herself returning it, hard, her claws digging into Undyne's back and her face burying itself into her shoulder, her eyes shut, feeling tears come to her eyes without any chance of control.

"Undyne," she whispered again. "You're okay. You're okay!"

Undyne nodded, her eye closed, holding Alphys to her and just keeping her there, loving the feel of her against her chest. She never thought she'd even see Alphys again, let alone embrace her, and her heart suddenly felt too full, fuller than her soul felt, even.

There were words suddenly bubbling up into her throat from her heart, words that had her eye opening and her fingers digging into Alphys's back. She opened her mouth, about to say them,
"You broke the barrier yourself?"

Undyne jolted, thrown for a moment by these words, speechless.

Alphys was staring over her shoulder, suddenly connecting what was odd about what she was looking at.

The slope. That slope that Undyne was sitting at. That was where the barrier had been. And now it was just a plain slope.

The barrier was gone.

"Undyne!" Alphys pulled away and held her at arms-length, her whole face lighting up. "Did you and Asgore break the barrier?! Is he already on the surface?! We need to tell everyone, this is huge, we need to--,"

Undyne placed a finger over her mouth, silencing her and making her blush. "It was me. Asgore went to the Ruins."

Alphys's eyes widened, blinking hard. Undyne smiled weakly, then told her everything. All of it, from their last call to their most recent.

By the end, Undyne's hand had dropped back to her side, and Alphys's hands were covering her mouth, her face pale and her eyes huge and full.

It hurt something deep in Undyne to see Alphys look so pained, so she leaned close and hugged her again. Alphys, to her surprise and delight, buried her face into her shoulder and put her arms back around her waist, sniffing.

Undyne closed her eye, rubbing Alphys's back slowly, feeling a kind of hazy delirium brought on by this. She was holding Alphys, comforting her, and Alphys wasn't embarrassed or running away or apologising...

Again, those words came to her throat. "Alphy-Alphys," she stammered, blushing.

Alphys looked up at her, looking bemused and sad.

Suddenly, the words died right there. It wasn't the time. This wasn't the place.

"Wh-what do we do now?" she wondered.

"Well," Alphys said softly. "You... Undyne, I don't think you really understand what you've done."

"I broke the barrier," she answered.

"Not that," Alphys corrected, surprising her. "When you absorbed the souls... and then somehow kept them, despite using them to break the barrier..." She bit her lip, her eyes wavering a little.

Suddenly, with her thoughts as they were, Undyne felt so far beyond her, so out of her reach...

But Undyne didn't feel that distance. If anything, she wanted that distance to vanish. "Go on," she insisted.

Alphys hesitated, then pulled away, her hands tangling in front of her again. To Undyne's dismay,
she saw that Alphys was shaking.

"Undyne," she murmured. "You're... practically a god, now."
This chapter also has fanart?! By the incredible AerisHikari!!!

The link is right here: http://aerishikari.tumblr.com/post/154575258452/fanart-of-the-undying-empress-yukinoomoni

TELL HER SHE'S AWESOME.

Undyne laughed. "Go on, pull the other leg, it does a jig."

Alphys made a face. "I'm not kidding, and you know it, Undyne. You remember our history lessons. A monster with the power of just one human soul has unmatched power, and one with the power needed to break the barrier has that of a god."

Undyne blinked slowly, staring at her in shock, now, her smile fading. "I thought... I thought it was just... you know, said to make it sound worse than it is. To make them scared of us."

Alphys shook her head. "Undyne, do you even know what you look like?"

Undyne's hand went to her hair, then to her clothes. "A bit different, yeah."

Alphys took out her phone, opened the camera app, and switched the camera so that it showed Undyne.

Undyne grabbed it, staring at her face, touching the marks along her cheeks, then around her bright green eye, its colour standing out amongst the yellow.

Her fingers started to shake.

Now she understood. She stared at the image for a while longer, then looked back at Alphys, who was watching her intently.

"Undyne," she said, before Undyne could get a word out. "Do..." She hesitated, lowering the phone and shutting the screen off, her eyes darkening. "Do y-you want... re-revenge?"

The question startled her, almost as much as her own face had. She searched her friend's face, her mind going over that deceptively simple question.

If one looked at her objectively, Undyne should have already gone to the surface with this new power, spears in hand and laughter to the wind, ready for any human who was stupid enough to cross her path, a path that wouldn't end until the whole surface was free of them all. And truly, there was a small part of her that yearned for her to do just that, still - especially when she thought of Papyrus.

But that part was indeed small, now, so small that it shocked her. She placed a hand on her chest, closing her eye, and Alphys watched her, her gestures bemusing her. They were so... calm, and introverted.
"No," she whispered finally, sounding surprised. "I don't want revenge."

Alphys watched her closer. Inwardly, she was truly surprised to hear this. For the entire time that she'd known Undyne, all she ever talked about was storming the surface with Asgore and putting the humans in their place.

But then, that same monster had, after gaining the power to single-handedly do that, decided to sit and just... wait for her. Just sit and wait for her.

"I want..." Undyne said, startling Alphys out of her reverie. Undyne's eye was open and narrowed, and on her. "I want..." She then bit her lip, her expression falling to one of panic. Her eye then widened, and she shook her head. "I..."

_I want Papyrus back_, she thought. _I want everything to go back to the way things were. I want to be Captain and live in Waterfall and hang out with Papyrus and sans, or train the Dogs, or watch documentaries and eat ice cream with Alphys..._

_I want... I want this to stop. I don't want anyone else to ever have to face this ever again. I want... I want to learn how to do that. I want to learn how to actually lead..._

She looked at Alphys, who was waiting patiently for her to answer, despite how pale and nervous she looked. She was always so patient, so kind, so... so...

_I want her..._

Gently, as if hearing her thought, Alphys reached forward and took one of her hands between her own. Undyne closed her eye, her teeth sinking down harder into her lip, and the sting of pain helped her focus.

"Undyne," Alphys then said. "I-I know I'm n-not... Papyrus..."

Undyne opened her eye; Alphys's expression had fallen, as had her gaze.

"B-but I'm still your friend. I-I'm here t-to help... if you n-need me... or even w-want me..." _I do want you_, Undyne thought, her hand grabbing onto one of Alphys's tight.

"Th-there are things... I n-need to tell you..." Alphys continued, her expression falling further. "Things that... m-may change how you see me... but if you still w-want my help... you have it. J-just tell me wh-what you need, what you want."

Undyne hesitated for a moment. She had no idea what Alphys was referring to, but she could tell it was bad.

However, right now, at this moment, it could wait. Because now, suddenly, Undyne knew what she wanted.

"Alphys," she said softly, and Alphys looked up at her. "I... I think I want peace."

Alphys blinked at her, her eyebrows going up, but she nodded, so she went on.

"I think we should go to the surface," she said, her voice growing stronger the longer she spoke. "A small group first, maybe just you and me, and just... test the waters. Approach the humans, see who we're up against. For all we know, they could have forgotten all about us. I don't want them to freak out, because they could see it as a reason to attack us, and I don't want them to attack any of us."
Alphys nodded, her eyes focused and her grip on her hand firm. It was so comforting, that gesture, and it made Undyne feel even stronger, something she never thought could be possible, especially now.

"So many of us have already died," she said regretfully, her voice breaking. "The last thing I want is more of that. If I'm the one that's gotta lead, then I'll do it. But I'm gonna do it my way - the right way."

Alphys smiled faintly at that, the gesture so genuine that Undyne swallowed, hard, her hand twitching between hers.

Alphys blinked, thinking that she'd inadvertently insulted her, and she blushed, but she said, "I... I believe in you, Undyne."

Undyne stared at her, unaware until that very moment just how much she needed to hear that. She knew Asgore trusted her, and that he believed her to be strong enough to do this, but it was very different to hear Alphys say it.

Impulsively, she pulled Alphys to her and hugged her again tight, gritting her teeth and shutting her eye, trying to clamp down on the sudden influx of tears that crashed into her.

Alphys closed her eyes, feeling Undyne shaking. "It's okay," she blurted out softly. "I'm y-your friend. You-you don't need to h-hold it in."

"Fuck," Undyne answered, her voice breaking. She buried her face into Alphys's shoulder and suddenly felt something like a dam break within her, and she sobbed, hunching over not just from their height difference, but also from suddenly feeling so weary, so heavy.

To her surprise, Alphys not only held her up, but held her close, rubbing her back slowly, and that did it for her; she broke down, right then and there.

There had been a few times that, as friends, they'd had to comfort each other like this. But then again, there was nothing like this, nothing as horrible as this felt. All at once, they both felt it, and it felt awful.

"I miss him," Undyne sobbed out. "I already miss him. I keep thinking that I can't wait to tell him everything, but he's gone! They're all gone! Everyone I ever loved in Snowdin and Waterfall, Alphy!"

The nickname slipped out, but she was too upset to take it back or care, and Alphys just assumed it was a stumble from her tears.

"If I go back - and I have to go back - it's knowing that I failed them all! I failed them, when I spent so many years promising I never would!"

"I under-understand," Alphys whispered, holding her as close as she could, also the only thing keeping her on her feet.

"He was so gentle, Alphy!" Undyne cried, her voice breaking. "Papyrus was so strong, but dammit, he trusted everyone! He was so stupid! But he was so smart, too! I failed him, just sitting there, waiting for him, getting mad at him that he was late for the stupid cooking lesson, and he was already dead!"

Alphys nodded, her eyes closing, trying hard to keep herself from crying, but failing, sans had been the one to tell her that Papyrus had been killed. His voice, sounding so hollow over the phone,
relayed what he had found out - too late - to her. Apparently, he'd had no idea that Papyrus was going to face the human on his own, and did it behind his back, without even telling him, instead telling him he was on his way to see Undyne.

Then, when Undyne texted him asking him where his brother was, he understood.

And found only his dust left behind.

Papyrus truly wanted the human to change, to be his friend, so much, that he hadn't fought back. Both Undyne and sans knew that. And that human had taken full advantage of that kindness and had murdered him without hesitation.

"I want peace; you have no idea how much!" Undyne went on, her voice choked. "For Papyrus, and for everyone! I don't want anyone else to feel like this, like I do, right now! Asgore... he thinks I can do this, he thinks I can use this power to do good, but I'm afraid... I'm afraid... I can't... Alphy, I can't do this alone...!"

Undyne would later be mortified that she not only said what she said, but that she had said it all at once and in such a state. But Alphys didn't make her feel that way; if anything, she made her feel like she wasn't exploding all over her shoulder with tears and angst, and that this was something they always did.

"Undyne," Alphys said gently, her voice wavering a little but her arms still strong and steady. "You can do this. And, I promise you, if you need me, I'll always be beside you, and you'll never be alone. Ever."

She was amazed that she hadn't stuttered, but then, she was also confident in what she said.

"I need you," Undyne blurted out, holding onto her tighter. "I need you so much."

"Then you have me," Alphys answered right away, with no hesitation.

She paused, her eye snapping open, then, Asgore's words suddenly coming back to her mind: "And you won't be alone. I can already think of at least one other person in my employ who would be more than happy to help you and be at your side."

Alphys. He was talking about Alphys.

"You have no idea how much that means to me," Undyne admitted, her eye closing again, her voice softening. "No idea."

"I-I know what it's like to be alone and afraid," Alphys said, her voice barely above a whisper. "To be f-faced with circumstances beyond your control, and forced to deal with it... all alone..."

She paused, then said, her voice stronger, "Therefore, I won't let that happen to you, Undyne."

Undyne just held onto her for a moment, overwhelmed. The pain she heard in Alphys's voice was so real, one she'd heard before but had never been told what it meant, and she knew her friend was being honest in her empathy. She suddenly wondered if that was what Alphys meant when she said she had things to tell Undyne, things she wouldn't like.

Were the two related?

"Thank you," she murmured instead, deciding that, right now, she didn't care. "Thank you so much. I... I lo--"
She bit her lip, hard, her eye flaring open again when she realised what she had almost said.

Alphys nodded, oblivious. "Thank you, Undyne," she replied. "I... I hope I prove worthy of your trust."

Undyne found that such an odd thing to say, so odd that it rendered her speechless, but it didn't matter. They both took the moment of silence to calm down as best as they could.

It took a while, but once they were both calmer, they broke apart, though Undyne still kept hold of one of Alphys's hand in her own. Alphys didn't let go, either, finding it just as comforting.

"So, the surface," Undyne then said, looking over to the newly-revealed slope just near them.

Alphys followed her gaze and nodded, her other hand going to her chest and fumbling with the front of her labcoat.

"Should we... should we try it? Right now?"

Alphys found herself nodding slowly. She did think that, right now, it was the most logical step. Letting anyone else go right now, when they had no idea what they faced, wasn't practical, and with Undyne the way she was, now, Alphys knew she couldn't possibly be safer.

"Yes," she then added, once she realised that Undyne hadn't seen her gesture.

Undyne tightened her hold on Alphys's hand, reaching up with the other to dry her face, before trying to smile as wide as she could.

"Okay, nerd," she said softly. "Let's do this."

And together, still holding hands, they made their way up the slope.
Ascend

It was... beautiful.

That was the first word that came to mind, the only word that came to mind, for both of them.

They had slowly walked up, seeing the light before them become brighter and brighter, until their feet finally touched the surface and yawned before them, freezing them in place.

The sky was a mix of red and yellow, the sun slowly burying itself into the horizon and painting everything beneath it with those very same colours, including the expanse of green before them. They could see, in the distance, what looked like a city, one not too far away at all, and they instinctively knew that that was where they had to go.

But neither of them moved, their eyes instead on the sky, still holding hands tight, almost unable to breathe from the sight.

Undyne felt her eye well up with tears, not just from how bright it was, but simply from the sight of it. She felt her heart racing, and she threaded her fingers with Alphys's so that she could hold on tighter.

Alphys didn't hesitate; she couldn't move, anyway, her other hand over her chest and over her own speeding heart, for a moment able to forget everything that had happened before now.

It was so easy to forget the circumstances that had brought them here when faced with this, and they both just allowed it to happen, feeling the sun touch their skin and warm them, but in a gentle way, one that felt more like a caress than anything else.

And they both felt so lucky to be with the other at that exact moment.

Undyne, deep within her soul, felt something stir at the sight of the sun. It was as if the other souls within her were reacting to it, feeling it, too, after so long without it - save one - and were just as glad as she to be seeing it, again. She inhaled deeply, closing her eye for a moment, feeling the fresh air touch her lungs and fill them, and it felt almost electric within her.

*This is what it means to be alive,* she thought as she exhaled slowly. It was with a bit of sadness, but it made it no less true. *This feeling, this air, this... this sunset. All of it. They've kept it from us for so long. After all that's happened, we deserve this.*

*At the very least, we deserve this.*

Her eye opened slowly, moving to her side, where Alphys stood transfixed, her eyes huge and full of tears, a smile on her face. Undyne wondered if she even knew she was doing either, but she said nothing, just staring at her for a moment. The orange and red fell upon her yellow skin in such a complimenting way that it was if she were meant to always be in the sun.

Undyne swallowed, feeling a lump form in her throat at that, especially when Alphys blinked, then jumped, her hand going up from her chest to her cheek in surprise.

"Oh!" she then said, pulling her other hand away and turning away a little, blushing. "I-I'm... I'm... I'm s-sorry..."

Undyne moved closer, placing her hand on her shoulder, instead, and Alphys looked up shyly.
"I get it," Undyne admitted honestly, and Alphys relaxed, smiling again, the small gesture hitting her hard, her grip tightening on her shoulder a little.

"It's s-so..." Alphys said softly, her wet eyes back on the sky. "It-it's n-nothing like anything we ever w-watched."

"Not even close," Undyne agreed, her eye, however, still on Alphys.

"Undyne," Alphys whispered after a moment. "I-I'm so..." Her smile faded. "I'm s-so sorry..."

Undyne nodded, rubbing her shoulder slowly. "Me, too," she agreed.

Papyrus would have loved the sunset, but she also knew he would have been all business, too, probably insisting on being the first one to talk to the humans. And of course she would have to be the one to either drag him back or coach him on what to say...

"I'm sorry, too," she added, saying the words to the fresh air, now, her own tears welling up.

Alphys looked up at her again, then reached up and covered the hand on her shoulder with her own. Undyne looked down at her and smiled faintly, and she returned it, before they both resumed their watch, deciding to do so in silence.

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When the sun vanished and the sky began to darken, they seemed to come back to reality.

"Undyne," Alphys said gently, looking up at her again. "Where do we go, now?"

Undyne's eye moved from her to the skyline, where the city lay glittering in the distance.

"There," she said. "We start there."

"Er, well," Alphys answered, sounding a little shy. "Undyne, it's been at least decades since humans have ever seen a monster. If we just... show up in the middle of a city, it's bound to cause some panic."

"Well," Undyne said, shifting a bit from foot-to-foot. "That's what the human did to us, and we handled it well until it started killing us." There was an edge to her voice.

"And do you plan to act like it did, too?" Alphys answered dryly.

Undyne opened her mouth to snap back, then suddenly realised what had just happened, and instead felt incredibly grateful. If it had been anyone else, anyone at all, they would have gone along with her and what she said, without any second thoughts.

But Alphys, who had known her for a while now and was a close friend, knew her for the impulsive monster she was, and she also knew that she needed a reality check, sometimes. This, clearly, was one of those times.

"Fuck," Undyne sighed, scratching at her hair a little in her embarrassment. "No, of course not."

"Well," Alphys added with a gentle smile, now. "Then you agree that we need a plan?"

"Yep," Undyne agreed. "That was it. That was my plan: walk into the city and just go from there." She smiled at Alphys.

Alphys stared at her in disbelief for a moment, suddenly finding herself glad that she was here, as
well. She adored Undyne, but even she knew how short her temper was and how... lacking her diplomacy could be. It wasn't her fault; she never needed it being Captain of the Guard.

But she would need it, now, and need to learn it in a short time, too.

Alphys wondered, suddenly, if Undyne truly knew just how much she was getting herself into. But then, perhaps that was why she was who she was; she didn't need to.

"Well," Alphys then said. "We should use the night to our advantage, for sure. The darker it is, the harder it'll be for anyone to see us, which is good. From there, if we manage to get into the city without anyone seeing us, we should find out where the nearest government building is. From there, well, then we can 'go from there.'" She smiled again.

"Now that sounds like a plan," Undyne replied. "And a good one, too."

Alphys hesitated. "But I worry about it," she admitted. "I worry that we won't be able to escape being seen by passersby. And..." She winced. "I'll just be honest: I'm afraid of them."

Undyne didn't blame her. Alphys was already socially awkward, but that was incredibly different than being afraid. No, this fear was purely from that thing playing human. Undyne wasn't afraid to admit to herself that she shared some anxiety as well, but she didn't say it aloud, in case it only increased Alphys's.

She wanted to be strong for Alphys. She felt that she needed to be - especially the way she was, now.

"Don't be afraid," she said instead, her voice surprising her with how soft it came out. But she still meant it. "You're not alone, and we definitely have the means to protect ourselves."

She grinned as wide as she could after that, and Alphys looked up at her and managed to give her a shaky laugh in return.

"You're right," she agreed softly. "You're acting so normally, it's a little easy to forget."

Undyne paused, words failing her from this. Acting normally? What does that even mean? How am I supposed to act? I'm still me.

Well, sorta...?

She still felt like herself, for the most part. She had thought, when she'd had time to think about it on the way to the basement, that absorbing the souls would change her in mind as well as body, but instead, she felt more like herself than ever. She just felt stronger, and oddly... calmer, almost.

"I'm still me, nerd," she managed to get out.

Alphys looked up at her again, this time blushing and looking embarrassed; clearly, she knew she'd said something offensive, and regretted it.

"You're right," Alphys murmured. "Maybe it's just me."

She looked away, her eyes dark - almost darker than the sky in front of them - and that's when Undyne suddenly had a question.

"Alphy...s," she stammered, before she got it out. "You said before that you had something to tell me, something you'd done?"
"Yes," Alphys replied, her voice still oddly quiet. "But let's just get to where we need to go, first."

She started walking, startling Undyne, but not enough to miss her muttering, just under her breath, "In case you decide you hate me."

Bemused, she followed, unable to say anything after that for a long time.
Every so often, as Alphys and Undyne slowly made their careful way down the mountain, Undyne would hear Alphys's phone vibrate. Granted, she was using it as a flashlight, so she already had it out, but every time it vibrated, Alphys barely paused, switching between apps and replying quickly, not a misstep to be had.

Undyne was impressed; she knew Alphys could multitask, but seeing it was something different. "Everything okay?" she asked after the tenth one, her eye fixed on the ground beneath her boots.

"Yes," Alphys said softly, her voice a little distracted. "It's just... the others. They wanted to know about you."

Undyne's eye flicked to her for a moment, noticing how carefully blank Alphys looked. "What did you say to them?"

"I..." Alphys hesitated. "Undyne, I... I lied to them, for now. I said we're still making plans."

Undyne nodded, surprising her. "Good," she admitted.

"Good?" she echoed in her confusion.

"Yeah," Undyne agreed. "We don't want to get everyone's hopes up if this doesn't work."

Alphys stared at her for a moment; she was right. "What should I do once I go out of range?" she wondered.

Undyne thought about it. It was weird, being asked for advice like this. Truthfully, she was used to giving orders as Captain, but it seemed strange to be in a similar position with anyone else, let alone Alphys. She realised, with a little lurch in her gut, that she might have to get used to that, and probably quickly, too.

"Just... let it. We can explain later," Undyne said after a moment. "Just hint that if you lose the signal that they're not to come to New Home, but stay hiding."

Alphys nodded, hurriedly typing that down. It was very good advice, and once she sent that message, she peered at Undyne closer, noticing that her friend stood a little taller than before they started their walk. The closer they got to the city, the more nervousness she felt, but Undyne seemed to only feel challenged by it. She admired that. She certainly had confidence in Undyne - well, as much as possible; she was worried about Undyne's loose mouth - but she had zero confidence in herself.

"Just enjoy what you have now, she told herself angrily. Because once she finds out all the lies you've told, you're going to lose her. This is all you'll ever have with her. Don't waste it, you idiot."

She bit back a sigh, blinked back a sudden sting of tears, and focused ahead. The flashlight app was a good one, and it lit a reasonably good amount ahead of them - which was good, as the path was rather rocky and uneven.

"No wonder brats fall," Undyne muttered, kicking aside a rock before Alphys could trip or even step on it. "This place is a disaster."
"I'm starting to think..." Alphys murmured. "I'm starting to think that they really have forgotten about us. I mean, if they were still afraid, wouldn't they have kept some humans around this mountain to keep watch? Wouldn't they still be here, even at night?"

Undyne nodded. She not only agreed, but found the sound of Alphys's voice oddly comforting. She realised that she was feeling rather skittish, being on terrain she wasn't used to, under a sky so wide and endless. Even thinking about the sky made her heart race nervously, so she instead focused on Alphys, and felt better.

"And remember," Alphys continued, on a tangent, now. "When Asgore and the Queen were expecting their son, we'd integrated some of their technology by then, from the era they call 'the 80s'. And when their human child fell, it wasn't long after that. And it's been who knows how long since then!"

Alphys sighed. "Time is a tricky thing. We get their technology and their media second-hand, so it's notoriously difficult to date any of it. Who knows what era we're in, now?"

Undyne was speechless. This was a very good point, one she'd never even thought of when consuming said media, yet clearly Alphys had thought of nothing but.

"It's been long enough that Asgore had six souls, from kids who fell," she said slowly.

"Yes," Alphys agreed. "But even I don't know how long it took, and I worked with those souls... I-I mean... I..."

She winced as Undyne stopped suddenly, following suit so as not to lose her in the dark, and from the phone's light, Undyne's expression was clear: she was shocked.

"You what?" Undyne said, her voice odd.

Alphys looked away, her hands starting to shake so hard the light wavered. "U-Undyne," she murmured, "th-this is prob-probably n-not the t-time for this..."

Undyne eyed her closely. She looked guilty and scared, as though trapped in a scenario that was painful to her. But Undyne was genuinely confused, and didn't like the sudden sinking feeling she felt when she thought about Alphys said.

"Worked with the souls? What does that mean? And why does she look that way...?"

But then, Undyne did trust Alphys - quite a bit. If she worked with the souls, Undyne figured it was safe to assume that it was as the Royal Scientist, and thus for Asgore. She didn't like how Alphys looked, but she still trusted her.

"How can I not?"

"You're right," she said, clearly surprising Alphys, who looked over at her with that surprise. "Tell me later." She smiled. "Let's keep going."

Alphys bit her lip, her heart aching. She went back to Undyne's side with a small nod, and again, they continued their journey.

Together.

At least for the moment.
Alphys didn't know how long the silence hung over them, but it did. She was both concentrating on staying on her feet as well as trying not to think.

Therefore, when she was suddenly grabbed and pulled off the path, the sound she made reflected her shock.

Undyne's hand went over her mouth as she yanked Alphys backwards into a shady patch of bushes and trees, quickly kneeling down with her. Alphys stopped struggling once she realised, instead instantly paralysed by the sudden wave of fear that hit her. She grabbed hold of Undyne's arm and shut her eyes tight, Undyne holding her to her chest close.

"Don't move," Undyne whispered, and Alphys nodded, her eyes opening but still half-blind with fear.

Undyne could feel her shaking in her arms, her claws digging into her arm so hard they stung. She had never seen Alphys so afraid before - nor had she felt so afraid, either, which was why she held Alphys so close; both for her comfort as well as Alphys's.

Then, they both heard what Undyne had detected: several pairs of footsteps.

Alphys shut her eyes again, and Undyne felt her moving closer to her, which was fine: it saved her from doing it, first.

"Shh," she whispered again, and she felt Alphys nod.

They heard voices, and they weren't familiar, so they stayed still, opting for listening, instead, both trying to hold their breaths.

"This place is horrible," they heard one say. "No one comes up here anymore for a reason."

"Do you not want privacy or not?" The second voice was lower, teasing and sounding amused, and they heard the first voice laugh.

"You do have a point, sweetheart. But what if we fall?"

"I'll catch you."

"Cute, but I mean fall in, like the stories?"

"You really think that shit is true?"

The voices were slowly going away the higher they went, and suddenly Undyne realised that she couldn't let them go up there.

The barrier was broken, and the path, while not easily found, was still open.

She couldn't let anyone touch her people, ever again.

"Alphy," she whispered, and Alphys nodded against her hand. "I have to stop them."

There was a pause, but then Alphys nodded again, her hands suddenly going soft on her arm. She then felt, against her palm, Alphys trying to mouth something.

She pulled her hand away, and Alphys said, "Not alone."

Undyne blinked at her, barely able to see her in the dim light, but she could see how serious Alphys
looked - despite how much she shook. And if she were honest, Undyne wanted Alphys at her side, very much.

So she nodded, and together, they got to their feet

"Don't put any lights on," Alphys whispered, as they followed the sound of the pair of humans. "Maybe if they only see us in the dark, they won't be able to tell what we are."

"That's... brilliant," Undyne agreed, realising that her only idea was to threaten them until they either fainted or ran away screaming. For yet another time, she was so glad that Alphys was here.

"Let's go," Alphys advised.

It didn't take long to catch up to the two humans, and when they were close, Undyne called out, "Hey!"

They stopped, and in the dim light, Undyne noticed that they looked like two human males. Neither looked threatening, but both looked surprised. Undyne suddenly felt Alphys not only grab her hand, but move behind her, and Undyne held tight and moved so that she could shield her better.

"Hey," the second human answered. "Uh, what's up?"

Undyne suddenly saw him do the exact same thing with the first human as she did with Alphys, which oddly made her feel... warm inside, though it was very small.

"I..." Undyne started, her voice suddenly weak. "You... you can't go there."

Inside, she was disappointed. This was her first contact with the surface? This was the first human with whom she'd speak to? A horny couple she only stopped to keep them away from the mountain?

Alphys moved closer, her other hand going to Undyne's back, and she felt her claws dig in.

"Why not?" the second human asked.

"There's... there's..." Undyne hesitated, and Alphys whispered, "A hole." She repeated it, adding, "It's pretty dangerous. We, uh, almost fell in."

The first human sighed in annoyance. "Aw, damn!" he said crankily. "Are you sure?"

"Very sure," Undyne agreed. "Very, very sure. It's too dangerous. We were just going back, to tell someone about it."

"Probably easier to just post it online," said the second guy. "It'll reach more people that way."

"Uh, right," Undyne agreed, her heart racing. "So don't go up there?"

Was it working? Was she fooling them?

They paused, exchanging a look.

"We can find another place, hon," the second guy said, and the first sighed again, but nodded. "Hey, thanks," he added, looking at Undyne, now.

"Uh," Undyne answered. "No problem. Uh. Anyway, we're gonna--,"
"Wait, I know I'm not high, so it can't just be me," the first guy said, peering around his boyfriend. "The one behind you, uh..."

Alphys shifted closer, her shakes increasing. Undyne held her hand tight, swallowing hard.

"What about her?" Undyne said, her voice tight, her eye narrowing.

"She looks--," He hesitated, and Undyne gritted her teeth.

"Undyne," Alphys whispered fearfully. "Don't."

"Actually, come to think of it..." The first guy was saying. "Even you look a little--,"

Undyne panicked.

There was no other word for it. She was scared, afraid for Alphys, and she was still shaken up over everything else.

So when Undyne backed up a few steps and suddenly summoned up a spear, even she, herself, was surprised.

The blue light lit all four of them up, and she could easily see the sudden shock upon the humans' faces - especially when they saw Undyne clearly.

"Undyne," Alphys cried, moving to her side and trying to lower her arm, in hopes of forcing the spear to vanish.

Undyne, instead, used her other arm and pulled her close to her side.

"What..." the second human shouted suddenly, his eyes huge on his face. "What are you?!"

Undyne was frozen inside, seeing that fear and finding herself confused by it, feeling one almost identical to it. All she could feel was the urge to protect Alphys, to protect everyone, but seeing a similar look on a human's face... one so different than the first one she'd ever met face-to-face...

"Please," said the first human suddenly. "We-we don't know... we didn't know... What are you?!"

Undyne was breathing quickly, trying to find a way to speak, trying to find the words she needed to speak. But all she could think was about how many of her people had died from a single human and how, suddenly, she was faced with two - adult - humans, and no words would come. Instead, her grip tightened on her spear.

This was it.

This was what she was supposed to do.

This was what they were all counting on her for, and she was screwing it up.

But she was frozen in place. She was letting them all down, despite everything that had happened. Asgore was wrong.

She couldn't do this at all.
But then, Undyne heard a voice cut through the dark.

"C-calm down. We-we're just as scared, o-okay? Pl-please, j-just hear m-me out."

Alphys had slipped out from behind her and was now standing between her and the humans, her hands held out in front of her and shaking, but she didn't move, nor did she run away.

The humans stared at her, clearly even more shocked at the better sight of her, but they didn't run away.

"We-we're... m-monsters," Alphys then said carefully. They stared at her. "We-we came from the-the mountain--,"

"Holy shit," the second human interrupted. "Those stupid nursery rhymes are true?!"

"I-I don't know," Alphys admitted. "B-but I know we're j-just as scared as you."

"Alphys," Undyne finally got out. Her voice was terse, and she saw from the corner of her eye the humans flinch from it.

Oddly, instead of making her feel better, it just made her feel... like a failure, somehow.

But she didn't bother to dwell on it; her eye remained on Alphys.

"Get back," she added, moving a step forward.

"Undyne," Alphys answered gently, slowly moving so that one hand was pointed at her, the other at the humans, as she stood in the middle. "It's okay. We have options, right?" She turned to the humans, trying to pretend that they couldn't see her hands shaking. "Y-you could b-both forget this, j-just head b-back down. C-couldn't you?"

"Alphys," Undyne broke in. "Please, move back?"

She was starting to get nervous, especially when she saw the humans hesitate, some of their fear clearly abating.

"C-couldn't y-you?" Alphys said instead.

"Uh," the second guy said, his own voice sounding small. "I... we've been drinking a bit," he admitted.

Alphys offered him a small smile, nodding. "R-right!" she agreed. "You-you could th-think that this is all... just a bl-black-out!"

"Wait, but it's not, we're not that drunk," the first guy suddenly said, his eyes narrowing. "And you... Where are you going?"

"Alphys," Undyne said again, not liking his sudden shift in tone.

"W-we... uh..." Alphys looked over to Undyne for a moment, her expression panicked, before looking back, unable to smile. "We... d-don't matter," she concluded.
"No, no," was the sharp answer. "We're not that drunk. You're real. And... you came from the mountain."

Undyne's breathing suddenly went funny. She summoned up a second spear with barely a thought, and with one in each hand, she and Alphys were definitely revealed to be monsters.

The humans moved back a bit, as they noticed her moving forward.

"We came from nowhere," she hissed out. Her eye glinted bright, but not from the reflection of her magic. "We're no one, and if you can't get that, I'll make sure you never tell anyone, myself. Permanently."

Alphys stared at Undyne, now, her eyes wide. Undyne was glaring at the humans, now, her teeth bared and her stance poised. Alphys could also almost feel something in the air, something almost visceral, as if she were instinctively meant to be afraid of something. For her, it was minute.

However, the humans were another story. Within the humans of Ebott especially, even generations later, was that latent fear of monsters - especially those who were at their most inhuman by possessing a human soul. Undyne had seven. They suddenly felt that deep, inherited fear fill them, and they were frozen by its potency.

Alphys noticed and quickly turned to Undyne, carefully moving between the spears and putting her hands on Undyne's shoulders gently to stop her. Undyne didn't look at her for what felt like forever; it was as if her entire being was now focused on one thing, alone. And that was being threatened.

She was at risk.

Alphys was at risk.

Everyone left in the Underground were at risk.

Though she felt sick by the idea, there was also a stronger part that knew that she could - and would - kill these humans if it meant protecting everyone. The feeling burned through her blood and steadied her hands - and also bathed her in power.

"Undyne," she heard Alphys then say, her voice sharp and loud.

Undyne jumped, her mind suddenly yanked back from that haze, and her eye fell on Alphys, the colour dimming and her expression calming as she did. Her heart was suddenly racing with the realisation of what she'd almost done, and the spears vanished in her shame.

Alphys was a shadow in the dim light and her unaccustomed sight, but she could tell that she smiled, and felt her hands on her shoulders go gentle and almost soft.

"Stay with me," she added, her voice as kind as her hands. "We're okay. We're still okay."

Undyne nodded, staring at her while her eye slowly adjusted to the dark, again. She reached up and shakily placed her hands on Alphys's forearms, nodding slowly, allowing herself to relax and move out of her stance.

"Thank you," Alphys said, her voice sounding in such a way that had Undyne's heart racing again, but for different reasons.

This was made worse when she felt Alphys touch her cheek briefly - so briefly she wondered if she imagined it - before Alphys moved away, turning back to the humans.
"L-like I s-said," she said weakly. "We're... we're scared, too."

She had her phone in her hands, and the humans didn't notice it, their attention still on Undyne.

When Undyne jumped suddenly, feeling her phone vibrating, they did, too.

"It's okay," Alphys said, holding up her phone and turning the flashlight app on, facing it at them but not at herself or Undyne. "I was just getting this out, t-to post a warning online, l-like you ad-vised."

Undyne was now shadowed a bit, she saw, so she reached for her phone and took it out, turning to hide its light from the humans.

Alphys had sent her a text message: "We need to knock them out. So they can wake up and pretend it was a dream. I can stun them with my phone, so I need you to step back. Trust me."

She would always trust Alphys, so she did exactly as asked, though she was nervous, still.

"What is that?" one of the humans asked, the second one. "Is that... is that a phone?"

"Yes," Alphys said. "W-we have them, t-too. W-want to see?"

"Uh, sure?" he said, exchanging a look with his boyfriend. They moved closer, and Alphys held it out to them.

The moment the second human touched it, there was a small electric shock, followed by a faint fizzing noise and two bemused grunts. The phone's light went out for a moment, before coming back on. The shock had been strong enough to not only hit the second human, but his boyfriend, too, as they were still holding hands.

They both dropped to the ground, dropping the phone as they did.

Alphys jumped forward and grabbed her phone quickly, turning the light off. She stared at the humans, expecting them to get up again, unsure if the shock was strong enough to keep them down. However, the longer they waited, and the longer the humans didn't move (and kept breathing), the more Alphys felt reassured.

"Let's go," she said, darting back to Undyne.

Undyne was staring at her - or at least the shadow of her - absolutely enthralled.

She couldn't help it.

She hadn't expected that, any of it: Alphys having so quick a plan, how smart she was for even thinking of it, how she didn't hesitate to put herself in possible danger in order to make that plan work...

It was a side of Alphys barely anyone got to see - and this was Undyne's first time seeing it.

And she was instantly smitten.

She stood there, her face burning, her whole body burning, really. She felt so much, all at once and all in one way, and she'd never felt like this before. She'd felt attraction to Alphys, strong enough that she had to physically stop herself a few times before starting anything, but this... This was something she'd never felt before.
Within her, Undyne's heart not only raced, but blazed. The emotion she felt was overwhelming, but the degree of it was intense - and she knew she'd never been able to feel this way before now.

And it wasn't just because of Alphys.

She didn't move, struggling to calm down. It was as if everything was catching up with her, and this was the final straw for her. She'd lost too much, too many, and needed to remember that she was still alive. And that she was alive, still, because of the help of one other person, one she knew wouldn't abandon her.

"Undyne!" Alphys hissed out to her. "Come on! Before they wake up!"

"Alphy," she answered softly, trying to say more but unable to find the words.

Undyne's tone had Alphys veering back quickly in worry. Soon, she felt her hand quickly held and shaken gently, and she focused on the dim outline of Alphys in the dark.

"Undyne, what's wrong?" Alphys asked gently. "Are-are you alright? You-you didn't even use my full name."

Undyne swallowed, her eye searching Alphys's, noticing the faint glint of worry there, even in this low light. Shakily, she reached up and carefully placed her other hand on Alphys's cheek, startling her, but she didn't jerk away. Instead, her hands tightened a little for a moment.

"Are-are you...?" Alphys asked, her voice wavering.

*Is something wrong with Undyne? Why is she... why is she...?*

Her thoughts died immediately when she felt Undyne's slightly-cool fingers brush over her cheek slowly. She felt herself blush, unable to help her body's reaction to this.

"Are y-you okay?" she finally got out, her eyes finally able to see her better.

Undyne looked... she looked...

Alphys stared at her, now, in shock. *It's the dark, it has to be the dark, there is no way...*

But then Undyne leaned down and kissed her, right then and there and on the lips, proving Alphys completely wrong.

Alphys stood frozen, her hands grabbing onto Undyne's and holding tight, her whole body suddenly flashing hot. Undyne lingered for a moment, then moved to pull away, but then Alphys reached up quickly and took hold of her face, pulling her back and returning the kiss at last.

When Undyne realised she not only was being held closer, but being kissed back, something almost seemed to break in her, and she slipped her arms around Alphys's waist and pulled her up and closer, so that no air passed between them. Undyne closed her eye, the feel of Alphys against her like a dream - both the feel of her in her arms, and the feel of her lips against hers.

For a moment - too long a moment, probably - they forgot everything. In that moment, they only remembered this one this they shared - sensed but barely acknowledged, known but never named. They kissed, and they both knew that their feelings matched. They held each other, and they both knew that what they'd wanted was always there.

Neither would ever forget it.
But then, shocking both herself and Undyne, Alphys jerked away as though slapped, covering her mouth and backing away, her eyes wide.

"No, no, no," she whispered, stopping only when she backed into a tree. "No, no, we can't..."

Undyne stared at her, feeling suddenly very cold and very alone. "But... you..." she whispered. "You... do, too..."

"I know," Alphys agreed, her voice choked. "I do. So much. So, so much."

"Then why--,"

"Because you're going to hate me," Alphys answered, her voice a whisper, now. "You'll hate me soon, and break my heart... and I d-don't want... you to br-break it twice at once."

"What are you talking about?" Undyne wondered, her arms dropping to her sides. "You keep saying you have something bad to tell me, but you never do."

"Undyne, n-now isn't the time or place f-for any of this!" Alphys snapped, turning away. "We need to put as much distance between them and us as possible, okay?"

She started down the mountain again, the flashlight app going back on.

Undyne let her go ahead, then began to follow. It was true, but it didn't slow her heart down, nor did it hurt any less.

"Okay," she said softly. "But, we'll talk about it then," she concluded, her voice sharp.

Alphys said nothing. She couldn't. She was crying too hard to speak.
Conflict

Chapter Notes

Just a bit of a warning: there's lots of kissing - deep kissing. And from now, the progression will continue, though I'm not sure yet how far I'll go. So heads-up.

The moment they were on the fringe leading to the lit area, Undyne stopped in her tracks, refusing to go any further.

Alphys noticed, sighing and turning to her, her stomach clenching. Undyne stared at her, the light of the phone showing them both, and Undyne was clearly waiting for her to say something, first.

"Undyne," she started, but then suddenly, she was cut off.

"I nearly fucked it all up back there," she blurted out, her tone as well as expression furious. "I nearly killed them, and you stopped not only them, but me."

Alphys was speechless again.

"I didn't know what to do!" Undyne added, one hand going to her hair and tugging on it a little. "All I could see was that... that thing! But you, you just walked up to them, not knowing if they would hurt you, and just..."

She stammered, running out of words.

"I..." Alphys tried, but again she was interrupted.

"I realised then - and can't think of anything else now - that I need you with me," Undyne said, the words suddenly spilling out.

She moved forward and grabbed one of Alphys's hands, just like Alphys had done for her, and held it tight. "So whatever you're gonna say, whatever this bad thing is..."

She searched Alphys's gaze with her own, seeing both panic and longing there, and wondered if Alphys could see the same emotions in her. "I don't care."

"You will," Alphys answered, her voice small. "I'll just... I'll just tell you..." She inhaled shakily, her other hand nervously tugging at the collar of her coat. "I... I've..."

Undyne then lunged, cutting her off. She wanted to know, but at the same time didn't, and wanted to make use of the moments she still had not knowing. She let go of Alphys's hand and again held her face, instead, pulling it up to hers.

"Undyne--," Alphys tried, only her voice was tiny, and she wasn't moving away.

Undyne shut her up by covering her mouth with her own, not even bothering to say a word.

When Alphys seemed to almost melt and lean closer to her, her hands going to her forearms again, she felt a sudden wave of warmth full her. She did care about what Alphys had done, and was afraid
of it. But right now, amidst all of this confusion and agony, she couldn't take it. She couldn't take any more sadness. She just wanted to feel happy again.

And Alphys made her happy. That was never a question, not for a long time, now.

Alphys clung onto her, returning the kiss as best as she could, finding herself shaky and a little faint. She tried to pull away, at first - halfheartedly, it must be said - but when Undyne brought her back, she stopped, instead moving closer.

Undyne could hear her blood rushing through her veins, her body feeling almost too warm, and slowly, instinctively, she edged out her tongue and carefully licked the tip along Alphys's lips. Alphys jumped, but then slid her arms around Undyne's waist, and soon Undyne was able to lick those lips open, her tongue seeking Alphys's. They met, and they both made a soft sound at that.

Undyne's hands trailed down slowly from Alphys's face, down her cheeks and along her jawline, then down her neck, and she felt Alphys shiver and her claws dig into her back a little. There was little light, now, the phone's light dimmed from being held against Undyne's back, but she didn't need it. She could feel, see with that feeling, and she felt as if she were truly seeing Alphys for the first time, at last - the real, true Alphys.

Her hands moved lower, her breaths short between kisses, and her shaky fingers moved over Alphys's chest slowly, trailing over the outline of her breasts. Alphys shifted closer, another sound escaping her, one that had Undyne wanting to hear even more.

But then, her right hand suddenly traced something foreign, something hard and cold, and she blinked. Alphys suddenly went still, holding her breath, her own eyes snapping open.

Undyne pulled from the kiss, her eyes going to her hand. It felt almost like.. a tube?

"What... what the hell is that?" she blurted out.

Alphys felt herself go numb, and her hands dropped to her sides.

They were lit again by her phone, its glow visible, now, and Undyne saw that Alphys had gone very pale, her eyes wide and afraid. Undyne pulled her hands away, moving back a bit, and Alphys's stance drooped, her head lowering.

"It's... a syringe," she admitted softly. "I... I-I was a-afraid... you were go-going to die."

"And how would that help?" Undyne asked, suddenly feeling a sinking in her stomach.

Alphys shut her eyes, worsening that feeling.

"It's... s-something I dis-discovered in my research for Asgore," Alphys murmured, her voice soft, now. Her hands tangled together in front of her, and they were both able to see each other quite clearly from that. "It's called... determination. Or DT."

"And it's bad?" Undyne concluded uneasily.

"It's... n-not good," Alphys agreed. "Undyne, let's go somewhere deep in the shadows, where n-no one will find us, and we'll s-sit down. I'll... tell you everything, Undyne."

"But what about sneaking into the city?" Undyne said, and she then winced, as did Alphys.

They both knew that by asking that, she was only putting off the inevitable. Yet she said it, anyway.
"We-we can still go. It won't take long," Alphys smiled sadly, and with a pang, Undyne realised that her eyes were full of tears. "Let's go."

She started back into the denser green, Undyne following her hesitantly.

But even she knew that the time was now.

When they found a small little copse, Alphys dimmed the phone to half-lit, both to save the battery and to call less attention to themselves, and set it between them on the grass where they sat, facing each other. Alphys was holding the syringe in her hand, staring at it with that sad smile.

Undyne stared at her, barely able to breathe. She opened her mouth to say something, but Alphys interrupted her.

"No," she said gently, not looking at her, still. "Don't say anything, yet. Wait until I've... said it all. Then, then..." Her smile faded, and again her eyes wavered. "Then you can say anything you want."

She inhaled sharply, then began. Her voice broke a few times, especially the further along she got. Undyne listened, her stomach tying itself into more and more knots the longer she went on. She started shaking near the end, the mental images so vivid, and she bit her lip.

By the time Alphys had gotten to her standing at the abyss, Undyne was in tears. Alphys didn't look at her, and thus didn't know, yet, and she went on.

"Wh-when we met, Undyne," she said, and her voice suddenly became so gentle that Undyne blinked in surprise. "I..." She flinched a little. "I was about to end it. I... I've ruined so many lives... I just... couldn't take it, anymore."

Undyne felt her heart suddenly skip, and her breathing went a little funny. She suddenly realised exactly what Alphys meant, and she covered her mouth, lest a sob escape her. She'd had no idea.

Or, no. That was wrong. She knew something had been wrong, and knew that if she made Alphys happy it would be better, but she realised now that she hadn't allowed herself to conclude on that, fully.

Now she not only knew, but also knew why. And it hurt.

"Any-anyway," Alphys went on, startling her out of her reverie. "I... I've been lying to you. A lot. I'm not a hotshot scientist, but a loser, one that destroys everything she touches. I also lied to you about human culture, and about... almost everything."

She hunched over and covered her face with her hands, her shoulders shaking. "Except the fact that I... that I c-care a gr-great deal about y-you. That... that's the truth. B-but those things I showed you... the human-research material... it's just fiction. It... isn't history. I've been lying... All I do is lie... because the truth is that I'm not worthy enough to... to be with you..."

Her voice trailed off, choking up at the end, and she curled in on herself tighter, her whole body shaking, now. Undyne was, too. She sat there, staring at Alphys, her mind racing but nowhere near as fast as her heart.

"So," Alphys said, her voice high-pitched, now, with her growing panic and woe. "N-now that... you kn-know, I c-can leave. I can go back, send some-someone else. You d-don't ever h-have to see m-me, again."
Undyne's face crumpled, her eye burning with fresh tears. She was horrified; there was no denying it. She was only a little annoyed about the lies about humans (at the moment, it seemed so minute compared to all that had happened), but it was true that the DT research left her feeling cold.

But then she focused on Alphys, and really looked at her. She didn't see what Alphys clearly assumed she already saw, which was someone horrible and unforgivable for unmonsterly acts. She saw her friend, in so much pain, feeling absolute agony at the mistakes she had made, mistakes made with the best intentions at heart.

She saw the woman she was hopelessly in love with, still, not as a liar and a fake, but someone insecure, and just wanting to keep a friend.

*I still know you,* she thought, staring at Alphys with an aching heart. *I still know who you are. And I still adore you. I still need you.*

*And most of all, I still love you...*

She was about to say these thoughts, but then Alphys said, her head now turned away, "Who... who would you l-like me t-to send up?"

And with that, Undyne realised that she'd been silent too long, and Alphys had taken that silence as confirmation of her worst fears.

Undyne struggled to say something, *anything,* but the words wouldn't get past the lump in her throat. Instead, she crawled forward and stopped right in front of Alphys, reaching out with one shaking hand and touching her knee.

Alphys went still, her face still averted, and she held her breath for a moment. Undyne wanted her to look at her, she wanted Alphys to see her feelings that she knew were obvious, so she knelt in front of her, leaned close, and touched her cheek with her other hand, gently leading her back. Alphys opened her eyes slowly, the expression on her face one of misery, but when their eyes met, she stared, her own going wide.

"I..." Undyne managed to croak out finally, leaning even closer. "I... l-l... Alphy, I..."

*Why is this so hard to say?!* she thought angrily. *Why is this so hard to finally admit?! I've been wanting to for so long! Why is this so hard?!*

But that answer came quickly enough: even now, she was afraid of being rejected, and losing Alphys forever.

Alphys closed her eyes, lowering her head but leaning her cheek on Undyne's hand, still. She focused on the feeling of those hands on her, burning it to memory, vowing to never forget it as long as she lived, knowing that this would be the last time she'd ever feel this.

But then, in a tiny voice, one so small that Alphys felt her heart stutter, Undyne finally managed to get out, "D-don't go... please. I... Alphy, I need you... I want... I want you... here."

Alphys opened her eyes, jolting when she realised how close Undyne now was to her. Undyne's eye seemed to almost glitter in the low light, as though lit from within, and Alphys couldn't look away.

They were both in tears, both shaking, but neither pulled away.

Alphys tried to speak, but couldn't.
"Alphy," Undyne then said, rubbing her cheek. "I... I still... Please, please, don't leave me."

Alphys bit her lip, her eyes closing for longer than a blink, before she nodded. She reached down and covered the hand on her knee with her own, holding tight.

"You'll stay, still?" Undyne went on, searching her eyes. "Please?"

Alphys nodded again, a small sob escaping her. Then, she managed to get out, "I d-don't know why you'd w-want me to, though."

_Say it!_ Undyne screamed at herself. _Say it to her! Now's the time, now's the only time! Say it!

"I love you," she blurted out, so fast and so softly that for a moment, she thought she hadn't said it, after all. But then Alphys jolted again, her eyes flaring in shock and her mouth opening a little, though no sound came out.

And suddenly, it was so easy to say. "I love you, Alphy," she repeated firmly, her voice stronger. "Yeah, what you did sucks, and I'm very sad about it. They were - are - people I know and love, and it hurts to hear this. But you tried, with everything you had, and you meant well. You didn't abandon them. I still trust you - maybe even more, now. And, yeah..." She sighed, trying to smile a little. "I'm miffed about the lies. But... that's okay, too. I understand. So please, stay with me. I need you. I want you. Please stay."

"S-say it again," Alphys suddenly whispered.

"Please stay," Undyne repeated, her voice steady and strong, still.

"N-no," Alphys then said, and suddenly her heart began to race again. "The... other thing."

Undyne smiled a bit more. "I love you, Alphy."

Alphys closed her eyes, covering her face again and sobbing softly. She then leaned closer and hugged Undyne, burying her face into her shoulder.

"Undyne," she whispered, "I-I... love you."

Undyne closed her eye and held her closer, biting down on her lip to keep herself from exclaiming in joy. She could feel Alphys trembling, both from tears and emotion, and she slowly rubbed her back, trying to ease it. Her own body felt shaky, too.

"I-I don't w-want to leave you," Alphys then admitted tearfully. "Never. I j-just... I just w-want to be with you..."

"Then be with me," Undyne answered gently.

Alphys suddenly moved closer, her arms going around her neck, now, and her hands tangled into Undyne's hair, the feeling so oddly intimate that she closed her eye and rested her forehead on Alphys's shoulder. She pulled Alphys to her, so that once again, no space was between them, and for a moment, they remained that way, just kneeling in the grass together, pressed close, feeling each other's heartbeat and listening to each other breathe. Alphys was sobbing softly, her words choked off by them, now.

That was okay. Undyne suddenly raised her head and nuzzled Alphys's cheek with her lips gently. She felt Alphys shiver, but she moved her face away from her shoulder and looked up at her.
When their eyes met, they both acted in the same way, and this time, when they kissed, neither pulled away.
It had been a long time since he'd stood here, staring at this door.

The sight of it still had the power to render him mute and immobile. Before, it was always from fear, the cowardly fear of knowing he'd be rejected no matter what he tried, so why bother trying?

Asgore had tried so many times to be brave enough to at least knock, but, no; his hand would hover over the door, as though held back by an unseen forcefield, and he would never knock.

Now, it was much too late.

With a sigh, he placed his hand on the door, feeling the old locking spell on it, as well as the familiar scent of Toriel's magic. The feeling was alone enough to bring tears to his eyes, and he let them come.

He deactivated the spell, pushed the door open slowly and slipped in, keeping it slightly ajar for now. The sudden, strange silence that greeted him once he walked in was so alien to him that he froze.

The last time he'd been in this hallway, it was with so many others, including Toriel, ready to make the move from the old city to settle in a new one. To hear nothing was like an assault, and he winced, his heart tightening.

He knew the Ruins were lowly populated, but this silence...

It really brought the reality of everything home for him. Even more than the walk through the empty, abandoned Snowdin.

He walked down the hallway, feeling the hair along his arms and the back of his neck stand up. The place was dark and empty, and it felt like even his breaths echoed along the walls.

Then, he reached the end of the hallway and passed through the door - and froze, his eyes dropping to the floor.

There, upon the otherwise immaculate floor, was a pile of dust.

He stared at it, his whole body wracked in tremors.

Before now, he'd been able to pretend that there was a chance that Undyne had been wrong.

Before now, he'd been able to fool himself into thinking that maybe Alphys had been wrong, too.

But, no. Asgore finally had to face reality, as it was right in front of him.

His next breath was a sob, one that ripped through him, and he dropped to his knees, his hands going to his hair.

*She's really gone,* he thought, unable to control the violence of his tears. *She's gone, and I did nothing. She was brave, and was murdered for it. She did her best, did everything she could, and I didn't even know it...*

*Tori... my Tori...*

Except that she hadn't been his for a long, long time.
And though he'd always considered himself to be hers, despite the distance, he knew better.

And he only had himself to blame for it.

He didn't know what to do. He knew he should do something. He knew he had to do something. This was his wife... well, estranged wife, but still his wife to him. He couldn't just leave her dust here, this way.

But every time he tried to move, he instead leaned back and hunched back over, holding his head, unable to cease his tears. His heart was breaking - again - and he knew it was permanent, this time. The cracks that had never healed from Asriel and Chara were gulfed by the one left by Toriel. If anything, her death seemed to rip open those old wounds, too.

Asgore had nothing. He had no one.

He reached up with a sharp cry and ripped the crown from his head, throwing it as hard as he could at the wall beside him. The sound it made was almost pathetic, a faint, metallic noise, and he glared at it.

He didn't deserve that crown.

Not anymore.

His eyes moved back to Toriel's dust, and remained there. He sat there, staring at it, willing it to become his wife again, willing himself to wake up from this nightmare.

But neither of those things happened.

He held his head in his hands, hunched down to the floor, and wept.

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sans walked with his hands in his pockets, his pinpoint eyes dim but focused ahead. He'd never been through the Ruins before, but the puzzles were easy and he knew what he needed was at the very end of it.

The silence was painful. It was very painful.

By now, sans had made the connection that the "old lady" he'd spoken to through the door had not only been Queen Toriel, but was also the dust he'd seen on his way here. That was also very, very painful - more painful than he'd expected, likely because he knew that out of everyone, those of the Ruins, and the Queen especially, didn't deserve to die in such a way.

It couldn't stay this way. It wasn't right.

sans knew this better than anyone.

Therefore, when he reached the very end of the Ruins - the gardens - he stopped, looked around for a moment, then called out, "you know it's me. get out here."

There was a pause, before a popping sound burst out at his feet, accompanied by a golden flower with a face. The flower looked up at sans, his expression oddly... blank.

"weed," sans snapped, and the flower flinched. "why haven't you hit reset, yet?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you."
The moment he finished saying this, Flowey suddenly found himself surrounded by bright blue bones. He froze, quivering a little, his expression finally changing to one of fear.

"try me," sans answered back.

"I can't reset," Flowey said quickly. "I tried. I keep trying. Every time I try, I get blocked. That human, the moment that human saved here, I've been blocked. I keep trying!" His voice cracked. "I swear! But it's not working!"

When his eyes went dark, Sans also brought his left hand out from his coat pocket.

Flowey cowered immediately, shutting his eyes.

"This isn't a joke, Flowey," Sans said slowly, his voice low. "This isn't a little game you get to play because you're bored. People are dead. Reset."

"I wish I could!" Flowey shouted.

For a moment, behind him, there was a faint flicker of something, almost hidden in shadow... or someone...

"So do it," Sans advised, the fingers on his left hand twitching.

"I've tried! You have no idea how much I've tried! But that... that damned... whatever the hell it was... it took away my power! When it saved, it erased my power! I can't access it anymore!"

Flowey looked horrified, absolutely panicked and desperate.

Sans eyed him closely, slowly realising that, for once, the soulless monster was actually telling the truth, even though it clearly pained him to do so. No one could act that well, not even Flowey.

Sans stared at him, feeling a deep sinking in his soul. He believed Flowey, now, though he also shared the same disbelief.

"And... and they've tried, too?"

"Yes!" Flowey agreed, his eyes flicking to the right for a moment, where there was another flicker of a shadow. "And they can't do a thing!"

"Why didn't you kill it after it killed the queen?!" Sans demanded.

Flowey froze. He stared at Sans with deep fear, clearly too afraid to answer. "I was..."

Sans instantly understood, and he raised his left hand, his left eye flashing to blue.

Before the bones could close in on Flowey, however, a flash of metal bisected them in mid-air, before they fell back to the ground, harmless.

In their place and between Flowey and Sans stood a small human child, wearing a yellow and green striped shirt and holding a knife.

Sans lowered his hand, though his eye still burned.

"No," the human said softly, their voice honeyed and pleasant. "That's not fair. We have the right to self-preservation."

"Why didn't you stop it, then?" answered Sans.
"Because it died before I could. You know that," said the human, their voice calm, still. "I can only do so much. I have more limits than you do. You could have killed it when you saw it murdering people in Snowdin. But then, we still wouldn't be able to reset."

Sans flinched, but said nothing. It was true, and he knew it.

"It's done," the human concluded, a sharp edge coming to their voice. "Now we must live with it."

And with a flicker, they were gone. Flowey hesitated, looking at Sans for a moment, before he, too, vanished, but this time beneath the earth.

Sans stood there a moment, his entire body flooded in deep-rooted dread.

Then, as if cut down, he dropped to his knees, then onto his front, covering his head with his arms, and wished, so much, that he could just break down and cry.
So, I have this problem with pacing: I DON'T KNOW HOW. So here's chapter ten, adding a fourth update to this fic in 24 hours.

ALSO: LOTS of kissing in this chapter, as well as some touching. You'll notice I upped the rating of this fic and also added smut tags; neither are lying. So just a heads-up. And yes, I will add a note if a chapter will include smut.

It was so easy. It felt so natural. It was so wonderful, so intoxicating, that Undyne allowed it to push the rest of her thoughts away.

This was especially the case when she felt Alphys suddenly move closer before hooking her legs around her waist, forcing Undyne to sit down properly and cross her legs, but she didn't mind. In fact, she wanted more, and she reached down and tugged on Alphys's legs a little to bring them around her hips tighter. Alphys made a sound against her lips, then, one that sent a spike of heat into her, and again she wanted more.

She wrapped her arms around Alphys, pulling her closer, before using one hand prop herself up as she moved to lower Alphys down on her back. Alphys made another sound, then, and Undyne could feel her heart racing, something her own heart copied when, again, their kiss deepened and their tongues met.

Undyne found herself in another kind of haze, so unlike the panicked one of before, and it was almost addictive. She leaned down and pushed Alphys down onto the grass below them, lowering herself down with her, propping herself up on one elbow as her other hand slowly trailed down Alphys's face, then her neck, then lower.

Alphys could barely keep her breaths steady. She was still reeling from it all, still shocked that Undyne hadn't told her off, let alone all of this. The feel of Undyne against her was incredible, so much better than anything she'd ever imagined, so when she felt Undyne's fingers once again at her breast, she jolted a little and gasped, her claws getting tangled in her hair.

Undyne could barely believe this was happening, let alone in the circumstances they were in, now. When she felt Alphys slip her hands down from her hair to her shoulders, before one of them moved lower, tentatively trailing down with shaking fingertips but stopping just below her collarbone, she was the one who made a sound. Yet Alphys didn't move it down, clearly losing her nerve, so Undyne reached up and pushed her hand down and over her breast, holding it there for a moment, until she felt Alphys's fingers curve around it. The moment she did, Undyne let go and pressed back down again, her own hand going lower.

"Undyne," Alphys murmured breathlessly against her lips, her breaths uneven.

Undyne paused, not sure if that was why she said it, until Alphys shifted her body closer, curling her tail around one of Undyne's legs tight. She had never, ever felt this way, before, had never known she could feel this way before, and had no idea what she was doing, but it didn't seem to bother Undyne. If anything, Undyne seemed encouraged by this.
Therefore, when her fingers reached up and started unbuttoning the front of her coat, Alphys inhaled sharply but didn't stop her. She didn't want to stop. She wanted to forget everything else and get lost in the arms of the woman she loved.

"Alphy," Undyne whispered, "if I'm... if I'm..."

"You're not," Alphys answered quickly, slowly moving a palm over one of her breasts slowly, loving the feeling - especially when Undyne sighed deeply and her body reacted similarly. "Don't... don't stop."

Undyne nodded, kissing her again, getting the coat unbuttoned halfway before pushing her hand beneath, touching softer cotton.

Undyne blinked, a little surprised; she'd always thought that Alphys only wore her lab coat for some reason. Now she knew better, and she laughed a little, surprising them both.

"Uh," Alphys said shyly, going bright red. It was never a good sign when someone touched you that intimately and then laughed.

"Sorry," Undyne admitted. "I just... never knew you wore anything under this."

Alphys felt her face burn. "Undyne, of course I do!"

Undyne laughed again, finding her almost haughty indignation oddly adorable, unable to resist kissing her again.

Alphys was slightly mollified, but still blushed. She wondered if everyone thought that.

Then, she forgot all about it when she felt Undyne slip her hand under her shirt and brush her fingertips over her belly. She shivered without control, her arms going back around Undyne's neck, and she buried her face into her shoulder, feeling both horribly shy and incredibly aroused. Undyne smiled faintly, moving her lips down to nuzzle her neck gently, and it was like pushing a button: Alphys clung to her tight, gasping a little.

Undyne really, really liked this. She'd seen enough and read enough (and especially heard enough from her fellow Guards), but only now did she finally get it.

Before she met Alphys, she figured that if she ever got around to this, it would be from curiosity. After, all she could think about was wanting to try it with Alphys, alone.

And now, she was. It was wonderful.

"Undyne," Alphys hissed out when her fingers trailed over her breast again, this time separated only by her bra. It sounded like a plea, the way Alphys said her name, and she closed her eye, shivering a little. She never thought she'd be able to instill that kind of emotion in anybody, let alone Alphys, and yet here they were.

Gently, Undyne grazed her teeth over the curve of Alphys's neck, just as she reached into her bra and cupped her fingers around her breast. She felt a jolt, the skin so soft, yet also so firm, that she felt her brain completely hijacked by it. This feeling only increased when Alphys squirmed beneath her, biting back what sounded like a cry.

Undyne wanted more. Alphys did, too. And truly, both didn't want to stop, instead opting for blissful and wilful ignorance of everything around them until they were both spent.
But they were on the surface, and was reminded of that rather abruptly.

They suddenly heard it at the same time: the sound of voices, loud and excited. Their eyes snapped open and met, both freezing with fear, and quickly Undyne moved away, Alphys untangling herself from her as she got to her feet and summoned a spear into her hand.

"No, Undyne!" Alphys whispered sharply, getting to her feet and putting a hand on her arm. "Get rid of it, quickly!"

Undyne nodded, extinguishing it, moving backwards into the shadows. Alphys followed after she grabbed her phone, keeping close, one hand grabbing one of hers tight. Undyne pulled her closer and put her arms around her, instead, and they both stood in silence, both afraid and desperately listening, willing themselves to be as invisible as possible.

As they watched, a group of humans - older than the thing of their nightmares but younger than the two on the mountain - ran by without so much as a second glance in their direction.

It reminded Undyne of her late-night patrols when she still worked in New Home, when hyper teens would run around being loud and dumb just for the fun of it. She realised, then, that perhaps going at night wasn't such a good plan, after all. Night brought out interesting people, but not all were good, and most were loud. There was likely very little chance that they would be able to walk into the city unnoticed, even this late.

Alphys gritted her teeth, coming to the very same conclusion. She sighed, leaning back against Undyne without thinking, and Undyne reacted in kind, pulling her closer in the same way.

When they were sure the humans were gone, Undyne said, "We need a new plan."

"Yeah," Alphys agreed flatly. "We... we m-may have to risk the daylight."

"I know, but I don't like it," Undyne admitted. "It... it worries me. Remember how those two humans looked at us?" She felt a small fall in her stomach at the thought. "They were terrified. And it was still dark."

Alphys was silent for a moment, clearly thinking.

Undyne stayed quiet, instead keeping her ears sharp, just in case.

Then, Alphys pulled out her phone again and typed in something. Her eyebrows went up in surprise when she got an unexpected result. "Undyne, we're still connected to the Underground."

Undyne blinked, then leaned over her shoulder and peered at her phone, surprised, one hand going to her other shoulder and squeezing lightly.

Alphys went a little pink, both from shyness and delight at such a casual yet affectionate gesture. She held up her phone, and Undyne nodded.

"So what can we do?" she asked.

"I... honestly don't know yet," Alphys admitted. "But at the very least, we can contact a few people. Someone really should be at the barrier - er, where the barrier was."

"But if they go, they'll tell everyone, and we can't risk panic," Undyne said a little regretfully.

"Th-that's true." Alphys paused, then blinked, her eyes focused. "I think I know who we need."
Undyne looked at her, and she smiled.

"Mettaton," she concluded.
Plan

Somehow, they'd managed to get a little sleep.

Once Alphys had contacted Mettaton and sent him a code to use to track her by her phone in order to find her on the surface, she suggested that it was probably best to try sleeping.

Neither expected it to work, as both of their minds were flooded with intense thought and emotion. They went as deep into the most shadowed copse they could find, then sat down beneath a tree and leaned against it beside each other.

Then, Undyne sighed and reached over, grabbing Alphys easily and pulling her into her lap. Alphys went scarlet, but admittedly, she was a little cold, and it felt much better to lean against Undyne. She curled up in Undyne's arms and was asleep in minutes, clearly exhausted.

Undyne held her close, slower to get to sleep, her reflexes on hair-trigger and her mind still full of regrets. However, once she managed to focus just on Alphys, and how she was not only still with her, but in her arms, somehow, she calmed down enough to fall into a light doze.

She didn't know how long she was asleep, but she snapped awake the moment she heard what sounded like footsteps in the grass.

She pulled Alphys closer - something that woke her up and had her clinging on - and got to her feet, about to summon a spear, when a familiar voice hissed out, "It's me!"

"Oh!" Alphys slid out of Undyne's arms and ran towards it, and soon there was the sound of flesh hitting metal as Alphys and Mettaton hugged tight.

There had been no hesitation or awkwardness, as once they both understood what the human was, they immediately dropped their planned ruse and instead teamed up to help evacuate everyone. In that time, their friendship, one that would have become strained otherwise, became stronger.

The Mettaton Alphys held onto now was his humanoid form, one with the capacity to shift into a battle form if he needed it. She was slightly worried about this, as in that form, he ran out of power quicker, but as long as he didn't need to attack or defend, it would last longer.

"Did you bring it?" Alphys asked when she thought of it, still hugging onto him.

He nodded against her shoulder. "Of course. Wouldn't of come without it." He was referring to his charger, one she demanded he bring, despite just having had a fresh, full charge.

"And the others?" Alphys added, her voice wavering a little.

"They're okay, Alphys," he agreed. "All of them. I checked the True Lab, too. They're very worried about you."

"But you didn't tell them, did you?" Undyne broke in, now standing with them.

Mettaton pulled away from Alphys, who held his hand for a moment before letting it go. He stared at Undyne in shock, able to see the changes in her even in the dark. It took anything he'd wanted to say away from him, and he just gaped at her.

"Mettaton," Alphys said, snapping him back.
He blinked, still staring at Undyne. "I lied," he said. "I said you needed me in New Home, to help with the souls. What... what the hell...?" He raised his hand and pointed at Undyne. "You... you look like..."

"I know!" she snapped, blushing angrily. "I still have the souls, okay? And no, we don't know why or how, so don't ask!"

Mettaton closed his mouth for a moment, his hand dropping to his side. "Alright," he said calmly, one eyebrow going up. "Now I'm starting to see why you two need me."

"Shut up!" Undyne grumbled.

"Calm down," Alphys sighed, pushing her glasses up on her forehead and rubbing her eyes. She was tired, still, and yet they had so much they still needed to do. "Mettaton, we don't need you to come with us, but we do need you to watch the barrier."

Mettaton glanced at her, looking ill-amused, now. "Why the hell did you ask me to come see you, then?"

"Because we need you to watch it from here," Alphys answered sharply, her eyes narrowed when she replaced her glasses. "We can't have humans get near the barrier entrance at all, and the only way we can do that without scaring everyone is with you."

"But why me, Alphys?" Mettaton shot back. "I'm not exactly a human!"

"Neither are we," Undyne answered. "But you... humans are familiar with robots, if we go by their media."

Mettaton glanced at Alphys, who sighed, then nodded. He looked back at Undyne. "Darling, you know that a lot of that is made up," he said gently.

"Shut up, I know!" Undyne snarled, though she'd actually for the moment forgotten. "But media still reflects the culture! And they clearly have some experience with robots!"

"Hm," Mettaton said, his hand to his chin. "Well, that's true."

"Of course it is, you dumb breadmaker."

Alphys covered her mouth and looked away for a moment, swallowing a laugh. It oddly calmed her, how easily they fell back into bickering with each other, like they used to in the Underground. It was comforting, in a way.

"Well," Mettaton huffed, turning away from Undyne and back to Alphys, who looked back with her hand still over her mouth. "Tell me what you need me to do, then, and I'll do it."

Alphys let her hand drop, smiling now for a completely different reason.

Before all of this happened, she and him had a selfish kind of friendship, one solely based on how they could benefit themselves as well as the other. But when the Underground started to fall, Mettaton suddenly seemed to shift gears, and he had begun to actually volunteer to help her with things, like the evacuations or the messages to the city's people.

Though he was still stubborn and haughty at times, Alphys was now seeing a far more mature side of him, one she really liked.
"Mettaton," she said gently, "this comes with a risk. You can say no, and I'll understand."

"Oh, shut it, dear," he replied flatly. "I'm not going anywhere until you tell me what I can do, understand?"

He paused, then said, his voice sombre, "I'm afraid for them, too. I want to protect them, too."

Alphys couldn't help herself; she threw herself at him and hugged him tight. He caught her easily and returned it, and it was a real, genuine hug, and not a pity hug like she always used to get from him.

Undyne glanced at them, feeling a little sad, as well as angry, too.

They were only in this situation because of that damned demon-spawn claiming to be a human, and she almost wish it were still alive, just so she could kill it again. Their entire lives had been irreversibly changed, and not for the better - not even close to that, yet.

Seeing Alphys and Mettaton hug like that reminded her of it.

It also made her miss Papyrus, making her wish he was here, too, so that she could tease and hug him, and order him around while he playfully postured around like a war hero.

She looked down at the ground, biting her lip and swallowing her tears. Now was not the time, she knew.

"In that case," Alphys was saying, now back on the ground and holding something out to Mettaton. "Take this with you, too."

It was the syringe of DT.

Mettaton stared at it, then her. "But..."

"I know," Alphys agreed. "But... I-I c-can't..." She gritted her teeth. "Just take it," she concluded, her voice sharp.

Mettaton did, holding it and staring at it for a moment, before he looked back at her.

"Okay," he said softly. "I'll text you with regular updates. Every hour?"

She nodded. "Yes. Make it an even number, and consistent."

He smiled. "Got it."

He grabbed her hand, squeezed it, then nodded to Undyne, before turning around and heading back and a little up along the mountain's base.

Undyne placed her hand on Alphys's shoulder, startling her.


Alphys blinked, her eyes going to the sky, and noticing that she was right: the sky was already a little lighter.

She looked back at Undyne. "What do you think we should do?" she wondered.

Undyne paused, taken aback by this question, her fingers twitching a little on Alphys's shoulder. "I..."
She bit her lip, her mind going blank for a moment, before she was able to focus again. The little sleep she had managed to get hadn't been enough for her to be able to think better under pressure.

Alphys, however, didn't rush her; instead, she waited quietly, reaching up to touch her hand still on her shoulder.

Undyne shut her eye for a moment, Alphys's touch helping her to concentrate.

"Okay," she said finally, opening her eye again and meeting Alphys's curious gaze. "I got it, but if it sucks, please tell me."

"Of course!" Alphys replied easily - then blushed when she realised how it sounded.

Undyne grinned, however; this was the Alphys she knew and loved, for sure. "Okay."

She went over it quickly, blushing by the end, but Alphys was nodding by then, her eyes wide and excited.

When Undyne saw that, she was surprised. "Wait, none of that bothers you?!" she demanded.

"No, of course not!" Alphys replied, smiling. "It's risky, and might not work, but it's insane enough to still be good!"

Undyne sighed in relief, closing her eye again for a moment, before she opened it again and returned that smile. "Sweet. Then let's go, Alphy."

When Alphys nodded, Undyne grabbed her hand tight, and together, they ran towards the lights.
Undyne's plan sounded simple, but putting it into action proved the complete opposite.

Both were immediately nervous when they saw the sun come up, sharing the feeling of being exposed and visible. But they also actually enjoyed the distraction of the sunrise beforehand, so perhaps it could have been worse.

"Ready, Alphy?" Undyne whispered, holding her hand tight.

Alphys swallowed hard, then nodded, squeezing her hand.

They were both looking at their target.

"Okay. Let's do this."

Undyne took a breath and started forward and into the sunlight, and Alphys was right beside her.

They both had to pause and flinch the moment the sun fell on their skin, the feel of it still startling. But they both silently agreed that now was not the time to savour it, so they continued, carefully edging onto a sidewalk that was just off the dirt path they'd been following.

Once there, they edged closer to each other and kept walking, both keeping their gaze trained on their goal. Around them, there were only the occasional car or truck that marked signs of human life, but so far, none had started walking, or got out of their cars.

So far, so good.

Alphys was shaking, her other hand at her chest, her fingers fumbling with the buttons on her coat. Her eyes moved around quickly, trying to take in as much at once as possible. She trusted Undyne, and truly agreed that this plan was insane enough to work, but she was still scared.

Undyne was, too, but she wasn't going to admit it. She tried to stand as tall as possible, hoping to inspire confidence in Alphys by doing so, but she couldn't manage it too well.

They paused for a moment once they were close to their destination, for a moment sharing a stab of doubt.

Then, Alphys narrowed her eyes, rolled her shoulders back, and squeezed Undyne's hand, nodding, and Undyne grinned at her.

Together, they walked to the door, and Undyne opened it.

The door chimed a low, electronic chain of notes, and again they froze, confused by such an oddly familiar noise. There was a rustling, and they turned to it, seeing an oddly all-familiar countertop against the wall, both from what they'd watched but also grown up with.

When a human suddenly appeared from the back room, they froze upon seeing them, just as they did seeing the human.

"Uh," the human said slowly, their eyes wide. They looked and sounded female, her hair short and her clothes clearly a uniform to the store she worked in. She blinked slowly, and Undyne felt Alphys grip onto her hand so hard, claw bit into her skin.
"Hello," Undyne said, her voice soft to begin but growing stronger the more she said. "Sorry to bug you, but do you sell coffee? We're new to the area."

"I'll say," the clerk said. "I've never seen you here, before, and mornings are usually routine."

She then gestured around to the side, where there was a self-serve coffee counter set up. "Help yourself."

Alphys nodded, accidentally ripping off a button (she quickly stuffed it into her pocket before the human saw it) and looking at Undyne in silence. Undyne smiled faintly and led her over, and for a moment, they busied themselves with the simple, familiar task - even the smell was familiar.

It fascinated Alphys, that aspect of it all. Most of the food grown were only able to do so Underground through magic, so she was surprised that coffee smelt the same, despite that. She loaded hers with sugar and what looked and smelled like milk (though much fresher), and smiled when she saw Undyne glare at her choices and only add a single sugar to hers.

Alphys giggled a little, and the sound made Undyne smile, her shoulders relaxing a little.

"Uh," they suddenly heard the clerk say, breaking them from their bubble of coffee and bringing them back to reality. "So... what brings you into this neck of the woods? Some kind of convention, or...?"

Undyne stared at her, finding no answer coming to this.

But Alphys nodded, smiling, still - though now it was a little strained. "Yes," she agreed. "A small one, close to the municipal buildings. Can you tell us where we should go, if we want to walk there?"

Undyne stared at her, shocked. Not only had she gotten all of that out, but she hadn't even stammered. Granted, she noticed that Alphys's hands still shook, and she was a little pale, but Undyne was still impressed.

Alphys had no explanation for it, other than desperation. She wanted to not only get it done, but quickly, and she knew confidence was needed for that.

"Oh, sure," the clerk said, and finally, she seemed to relax. Alphys handed Undyne her coffee and took her phone out, opening a new word document. As the clerk spoke, Alphys hurriedly typed down as much as she could.

When the clerk finished, she thanked her, then saved it and pocketed her phone. As she and Undyne walked up to the till, Undyne grabbed a couple of bags and boxes that looked bright and edible on the way.

Alphys was fumbling with her wallet, looking nervous.

"Cash, credit or debit?" the clerk asked.

"Er," Alphys squeaked out - especially when she noticed the human eyeing them a little now that they were closer to her.

Alphys hurriedly pulled her credit card out, powered solely by habit in her stress, and luckily the clerk took it with little hesitation. When she ran it through, Undyne shifted on her feet and started towards the door, ready to make a quick exit if she needed to.
But to their surprise - especially Alphys's - it went through. It actually went through.

When it did, Alphys was so shocked that she stared at the clerk for far too long, barely able to lift her hand and take the receipt.

"Alphy," Undyne suddenly called, her voice sharp.

Alphys swallowed, looking hurriedly away and lowering her head, grabbing her wallet, the now-bagged snacks, and the receipt before rushing over to Undyne's side.

Quickly, they made their way to the door, not once looking back.

"Hey, wait," the clerk called, sending a burst of adrenaline through them both. "You two... what convention around here has costumes that good?"

"Go," Undyne answered, handing Alphys her cup and pushing her forward.

Alphys hurried out, and Undyne quickly followed her, just as the clerk moved and called for them to wait.

"Run," Undyne added, and they both broke into one, both going rather fast for so early in the morning - and on little food and even less drink.

Once they rounded a corner and went back into the copse they came from, Undyne grabbed Alphys and hugged her tight, causing them both to spill their coffee a little. Alphys clung onto her, and they were both trembling.

"Shit," Undyne whispered.

"It's okay," Alphys answered softly. "It worked; you were right. She only grew suspicious near the end." Undyne didn't reply, so Alphys added, "We're okay, Undyne. We're safe."

Undyne nodded. "Thanks to you. Did you know that your card would work?"

Alphys spluttered out a laugh, pulling away from the hug and placing a hand to Undyne's cheek for a moment.

"Hell, no," she admitted. "I was going to let it fail, then grab it back and make a run for it - or just leave it behind, honestly."

Undyne laughed, finally feeling calm, again. "I still can't believe that bullshit worked," she admitted. "I honestly can't believe it."

Alphys smiled, taking a sip of the coffee - and grinning, finding it strong and sweet, just how she liked it. It definitely tasted different, but not by much.

"I can't, either," she agreed, "but then again, it was your plan."

"So? I also had a plan to teach Papyrus cooking," Undyne said easily - before she paused, her stomach sinking when she realised what she just said. She closed her eye, lowering her head and biting down on her lip, hard.

It was so easy to forget that he was gone, when things were like this.

She felt Alphys touch her cheek again gently, and her eye opened. Alphys looked up at her, her eyes bright with tears and her expression deeply pained.
"Undyne," she whispered. "I'm... I'm so, so sorry..."

Undyne leaned into her hand a little, truly finding comfort from it. "Me, too," she agreed, her voice wavering.

When Alphys took her cup and set it on the ground with hers, Undyne didn't fight it, especially since she figured why - and was right: Alphys immediately hugged her, standing on the tips of her toes in order to do so. Undyne leaned over to make it easier, and when Alphys pulled her closer, she slipped her arms around her and held tight, taking a moment to allow herself to weep - just a little.

"When everything is calm again," Alphys whispered, "we'll make sure we give him the best scattering in the entire Underground."

Undyne nodded, choking out a small sob at that. "Alphy, thank you," she managed to get out.

Alphys was quiet for a moment, then pulled away and blinked up at her. "Undyne... why do you call me that?"

Undyne blinked back. "Call you what?"

"'Alphy','" she replied shyly.

"Oh!" Undyne blushed, scratching her cheek and smiling crookedly. "I am? Sorry... uh, does it bother you? I just, uh..." She blushed even more, now. "It's... uh... it sounds cute, like you, so I just... eh...!"

She looked away, crossing her arms over her chest with a growl.

Alphys was scarlet. "Wh--cute?" she squeaked out. "Uh, I d-don't... I-I'm not..."

Undyne turned back to her and glared. "Are you judging my taste?"

Alphys stared at her. "No?" she asked, unsure, herself.

"Good," Undyne replied. She leaned down, grabbed the coffees, and handed hers over. "Because I have excellent taste in people."

Alphys took a big gulp to prevent herself from protesting Undyne's assessment of herself further.

Then, she decided to change the subject. "Want to try some of these snacks as we walk?" she wondered instead, holding up the plastic bag.

Undyne grinned. "Sure."

She rummaged through it, grabbed the brightest bag, and opened it, and with a nod, they moved back onto the sidewalk and started to walk again.
The sound of Alphys's phone chiming scared both of them into jumping, before either recognised it for what it was. They stopped, and Alphys grabbed her phone and opened a text message.

"All clear. You?"

Alphys sighed with relief, closing her eyes for a moment. "It's Mettaton," she said, and Undyne relaxed. "He's still clear."

"Weird," Undyne replied, her mouth a little full as she started to eat again. "He hasn't seen those two guys you shocked?"

Alphys blinked, then typed it in and sent it.

When the reply came, she tilted her head at it, genuinely confused. "No," she admitted. "He hasn't seen anyone. No, wait!"

Alphys reached out quickly and grabbed Undyne's hand, stopping her from going back. "Wait. It's very, very unlikely they still went up. If they had, Mettaton would have seen them. That shock wasn't a small one."

Undyne swallowed hard, her eye still trained back on the mountain, which they could still see some of on the horizon. "Are you sure?"

"Yes," Alphys agreed firmly. "I'm sure. They must have turned back to the city once they woke up."

Undyne shifted, looking nervous. "Alphy, what if they... what if they say something to someone?"

"No one will believe them," Alphys said, though part of her wondered how accurate that was, and how long it would last.

Indeed, she thought with another jolt, soon everyone will be saying it... and then what can we do? We can't hide. This is our only chance.

Undyne sighed, crumpling up the now-empty bag and - when she found one - tossing it in a dustbin.

"Am I already fucking things up, Alphy?" she wondered, gulping back some of her coffee.

"No," Alphys answered without pause, sincere. "You're doing really well." She smiled. "No one's been speared, yet."

"Har," Undyne rolled her eye, but still smiled, anyway. "Well, might as well get this done."

She started walking again, and Alphys followed.

Undyne leaned over as they walked and rummaged through the bag, grabbing up a small box. Alphys blinked up at her, surprised, as she'd already eaten an entire bag of chisps (though they were spelt wrong on the bag, they were still the same thing as in the Underground).

"Uh," she said, as Undyne opened the box and pulled out several stacks of cookies, individually wrapped (at least they had spelt that right). "You're... hungry," she concluded.

She knew that she should be, too, but anxiety as well as coffee kept her from feeling it.

Suspect
On that thought, she grabbed a small stack, herself, and started to eat one mechanically. The food, like the coffee, tasted weirdly familiar.

"Yeah," Undyne agreed, her cheeks going pink. "I... uh... just feel really hungry all of a sudden."

Alphys eyed her closely for a moment. Undyne looked fine, if a little tired. She walked fine, and Alphys couldn't sense anything off about her. But then, maybe the fact that she was hungry was not only to be expected, but a good thing.

How long had it been since either of them had had anything decent to eat?

It felt like forever...

"Well," Alphys said slowly. "Let's keep on top of that from here on out, okay?"

Undyne nodded. "Agreed."

By the time they'd almost made it to the general area they needed to be, it was morning in full. Both had finished their coffees and had gradually moved closer to each other the longer they walked - especially when they noticed other people walking on the other sidewalks.

Though they both kept close and tried to remain as casual and confident as possible, they still got confused looks, and they were increasing the more they walked.

When Alphys felt her phone vibrate, she didn't stop, this time, instead just grabbing it and checking it quickly. It was Mettaton, reporting another all-clear and asking for an update. She quickly sent back, "Almost there."

Then, she pocketed it quickly and looked back to where she had focused in order to stay calm: the municipal building.

"Shit," Undyne whispered suddenly, and Alphys could feel her shaking - just like she was. "Shit, Alphy, I'm..." She trailed off, her eye quickly darting around them with bright panic. "Shit..."

"No," Alphys whispered calmly, grabbing onto her hand and holding it tightly to her. "Keep walking." It was easy to say, but harder to do. She, too, was starting to balk. "Just keep walking."

"Alphy..." Undyne answered, her voice wavering again, and her fingers twitched.

Alphys grabbed them again and held them tight, something that had Undyne oddly calming down from - which was the point. Undyne closed her eye for a moment, then focused it ahead, the rest of her mind now on her hands, and how Alphys was holding them.

"That's it," she heard Alphys say gently, and her touch was the same way. "Stay with me..."

There it is again, Undyne realised. The second time that Alphys said that. And also the second time it worked, too, as Undyne found herself nodding. She wondered why Alphys said it.

Undyne had no idea that, when she was panicking, her eye lit up and made it obvious.

It was also obvious that, when it began to glow that way, she was also, without even trying, starting to summon up power - and that it was so potent that Alphys could feel it.

Alphys knew she had to tell Undyne soon, but right now, they had to do this. Otherwise, what was
When they were on the final sidewalk that would lead them directly to the pathway into the building, it was obvious that they'd been spotted for what they were. Thankfully, the humans around them didn't get close, and the moment it seemed that they were too close, they backed up or to the side, but they still froze in place and stared, often leaning over to each other to whisper.

Alphys had lowered her head as far as she could, but it didn't help - especially when Undyne held onto her and tried to do the same, despite their height difference.

Once their feet touched the final stretch, Undyne suddenly grabbed Alphys and ran the rest of the way, causing quite a few startled responses and much stumbling.

Everything went past them both in blurs, and Undyne only managed to stop once she realised that they were finally in the building.

She stopped, and she felt Alphys touch her cheek, something that startled her but instantly won Alphys her full attention. Alphys stared up at her, clearly still afraid, herself, but somehow managing to stay calm enough for this. Undyne still held her in her arms tight, refusing to let go just yet.

When Alphys started to talk, she listened, allowing Alphys's voice to cut through her fear and spread a soothing balm over it.

"Breathe," she was saying gently, trailing her fingertips over her cheek.

Undyne closed her eye and inhaled slowly, realising she hadn't had a decent breath in a while. When she exhaled - and with it, finally lowered her arms and gently placed Alphys onto the floor in front of her - Alphys stayed close, and Undyne kept her hands on her shoulders.

"Thank you," Alphys whispered.

Undyne opened her eye slowly, and found Alphys smiling at her, almost proudly. For some reason - or rather, the most obvious reason that she couldn't see just yet - she felt better, and she smiled back.

Alphys's eyes wavered, to her surprise, and she couldn't help it - Undyne darted forward and kissed her. Alphys squeaked, then blushed and returned it, her hands staying where they were.

For a moment, despite everything, they were able to forget. The feel of this was too intense to focus on anything else. With it, both found themselves calming down easier, and when they broke apart, Undyne felt much, much better.

Alphys looked to the side and noticed they were definitely being stared at, still, and worse; they were also clearly making the humans around them afraid.

"Alphy," Undyne whispered, moving closer again but in order to shield Alphys from sight.

Alphys sighed, then moved out from behind her and replied, "No."

Undyne glared at her for a moment, but then Alphys grabbed her hand, and again she relaxed, just a little more.

"C-can we...?" Alphys tried to ask the closest human, but they immediately backed up - and Undyne pulled Alphys back when she tried to follow. "Undyne..."

Undyne didn't look at her, but was looking past her. She turned back and saw that a human was
walking towards them, closely surrounded by other humans who looked rather... intimidating. Alphys backed up, and Undyne's hands twitched as she had to clamp down on the instinct to use her magic.

"You two," the human said, the moment she - it was clearly female - stopped in front of them. "Follow me," she concluded, barely raising an eyebrow when her eyes fell on them.

Undyne hesitated, just as Alphys did, both looking at each other quickly. To Undyne's surprise, she saw Alphys's eyes flash, then focus, and she smiled up at her. It twitched a little, but it was real. Undyne managed one in return, grabbing onto her hand tighter - before she nodded, rolling back her shoulders.

Together, they quickly chased after the human and her crew, both sharing fear - but also hopeful anticipation.

In silence, all of them managed to file into the elevator (one that only went up and down, Alphys noticed, raising an eyebrow). When the doors closed, it was to staring, confused faces.

The human then sighed, before turning to the two of them. Again, she showed no signs of fear - just mild apprehension.

"So," she said, "What are your names?"

"Uh," Undyne answered, taken aback. She found herself speechless, unable to keep herself from just staring at the human in her confusion.

"I-I'm Doctor Al-Alphys," Alphys squeaked out, her face going red. "Th-this is C-Captain Undyne."

Undyne stood up straighter and blinked, a faint blush upon her cheeks, now, too.

"Nice to meet you," said the human, seeming to actually mean it. She smiled. "I'm the Minister for the Underground for Ebott. You can call me Minister, or by my name, Laurel."

"Uh," Undyne added helpfully, still trying to think of what to say. The casual reception they were getting was only confusing her, further.

Alphys, however, found this distracting enough to focus on completely. "Min-Minister for the Underground?" she echoed. "Th-then you... kn-know, already?"

"Mmhm," the Minister replied, though she raised an eyebrow and used her eyes to point at the other humans with them. "Let's go into detail in my office, shall we?"

"Yes," Undyne said finally, startling all three of them.

Undyne nodded, relieved that she could finally say something else, and a word, with that. Alphys looked at her with a smile, squeezing her hand, and she sighed quietly, squeezing back.

This, I can do, Undyne found herself thinking. This is gonna work.
The moment they were alone in Laurel's office (she left her crew in the elevator), the Minister turned to them and said, with a smile, "I've a bet with my predecessor, so do tell me: is Asgore still king?"

Both Alphys and Undyne gaped at her; that was the last thing either had expected to hear. In fact, it wasn't even on the list.

"Uh," Undyne managed to get out, once the words finally connected. "Yeah. Kinda. Uh." She looked at Alphys for help.

"Asgore was the king up until... recent circumstances... changed that," she added, her hands now held in front of her. "It's been... a long day?"

She blinked, surprised by that. She turned to Undyne. "It... it-it's really only been a day?"

Undyne bit her lip and touched her shoulder, nodding a little. "Yeah," she agreed. "Weird, huh?"

"So he's gone? Did someone take over?" Laurel asked, blinking at them in curiosity.

Alphys peered at her, finding her not that much taller than herself. There seemed to be no malice there, nor anger.

Alphys wondered just how much this human actually knew - and how badly it would go once she did.

"He..." Undyne's voice wavered, so Alphys quickly jumped in.

"He's stepped down," she said, "for now. Undyne has taken his place."

Undyne jolted, blushing suddenly.

It was true, wasn't it? She had taken his place; it was Asgore who was supposed to break the barrier, and Asgore who was supposed to be here.

But instead, Undyne was the one here.

"So, then," Laurel said, her low, clear voice breaking her from her reverie. "You're the new Queen?"

Undyne stared at her, feeling her face burn. "I..." she squeaked out, her hand on Alphys's shoulder holding tighter. "I..."

She paused, thinking about it.

She'd never asked for it, nor had she even wanted it. But by stepping in - and up to - Asgore's place, she had also assumed his duties. She just didn't fully understand it until she heard that word: Queen.

"Yes," she said, standing up straight again, her voice firm. "That's true."

Alphys smiled up at her for a moment, her eyes glinting, and Undyne realised, with that, that Alphys had already accepted her as Queen; it was Undyne who was clearly the last to know.

"Well, it's nice to meet you, Cap--no, sorry--Queen Undyne," Laurel replied, holding out her hand.
Undyne jumped, then gingerly took it, finding her hand firmly grasped and shaken.

"I'm glad to be the one who greets you here, at last. I'm glad you came to me, first, so that not so many people saw you. Did Asgore tell you to?" the human wondered.

Now Alphys blushed. "Er," she admitted. "N-no... the truth is... we have been seen. This wasn't our first st-stop."

Laurel blinked, clearly shocked. "Well," she said slowly, scratching her cheek. "That's... going to be a problem. But, it's okay." She smiled. "We can still work around it. It'll even out in the end."

"Sorry, but..." Undyne began, before blurt out, "What the hell is going on?!"

Alphys winced, and Laurel blinked again.

"How do you know about us? Or Asgore, even? Did you...?" Undyne narrowed her eye, her hands twitching. "Did you send that... that thing after us?!"

Alphys grabbed Undyne's hand from her shoulder and held it tight, but otherwise kept her glance fixed on Laurel.

Truly, now that Undyne mentioned it, it did look rather suspicious.

"What are you talking about?" Laurel answered, holding her hands up; they were plain, save the bracelet and the pair of rings she wore on her left wrist and hand.

Alphys found herself staring at those rings for a moment, surprised to see them on anyone but a monster. She wondered if it meant the same thing as it did for them. She wondered if it even mattered.

Why would that ever matter? Focus!

She did, but she filed it away for later, anyway.

"We..." Alphys said, her voice cracking a little.

"Wait," Laurel answered. She gestured towards her desk, where three chairs were seated in front of it. "Please sit. I'll get some water." She leaned over what looked like a phone and spoke softly into it, then gestured again. "Sit!"

They did, and Laurel sat down in the chair on the other side. The simple act of being able to sit was powerful for Undyne; it had felt like days since she'd been able to just sit. She sighed without control, leaning back and closing her eye for a moment.

Alphys didn't, instead leaning forward and fussing with her hands. She was tired, too, but her anxiety kept her wired.

They waited until the water arrived - Laurel insisted - and they'd had a chance to drink as much as they needed. Both drank without hesitation, parched by then, and found that the water tasted exactly the same as they water Underground. When they both realised, they exchanged a glance, clearly thinking the same thing.

Laurel noticed. "What?" she asked, smiling again. "What's the look about?"

They jumped, both unfortunately blushing at the same time. "Er," Alphys squeaked out. "The-the water."
"Is it the same?" Laurel grinned. "That makes sense! We're all technically on the same system, after all."

Alphys blinked, her eyes going huge behind her glasses. "Oh, my god," she stammered. "It is? Then... then the abyss really does go to the surface... to here!" She laughed. "I was right!"

She turned to Undyne, who was staring at her, her teeth buried into her bottom lip. "I was right!" she repeated cheerfully, laughing again.

Undyne blushed brighter, unable to look away from Alphys; whenever Alphys allowed that kind of passion - and the thrill of it - show, Undyne was immediately smitten and tongue-tied. It was one of the first things she'd fallen in love with.

Alphys then lowered her head, hiding her eyes back behind her glasses. "Er, sorry," she murmured. "I'm... I was a scientist Underground."

Laurel nodded. "Yes, about that," she said, obviously choosing her words carefully. "What brings you here?"

It was a simple question, but it was obviously one that Laurel wasn't comfortable asking. Undyne eyed her for a moment; did she know what it took to break the barrier, what it had cost them? Did she know that children who disappeared up the mountain were now dead, their souls now taken? How much do you know, human? Undyne asked her silently. And how much will it cost us?

"We... broke the barrier yesterday," Alphys said, once she realised Undyne wasn't going to answer. "May I ask, do you know how that's done?"

Laurel had gone still, her hands folded on the desktop, her back straight. Her expression was oddly neutral, now. She met Alphys's gaze right on, and said, "Yes."

"Fuck," Undyne whispered, then covered her mouth and winced, shutting her eye.

Alphys gave her a strained look, and Laurel's eyes went wide.

"Now, don't do that," the Minister said, her voice going back to its previous, melodic tone. "Yes, I know how it's done, but obviously things can change over the years. Right?"

Undyne looked over at Alphys, who had gone pale. "We-we tr-ried," she said softly. "I sp-spent years trying... B-but, we never found an al-alternate method..."

Laurel's eyebrows went up, and she leaned back slowly. "Oh. So you're saying you did it... the old-fashioned way? Seven human souls and one monster soul?"

Both Undyne and Alphys nodded. Undyne's eye glinted a little, and her hands were now holding onto the armrests so hard that her fingers shook. Alphys swallowed, feeling a little faint.

"Okay," Laurel said calmly. "Why don't we start from where we left off. What happened once you were sealed Underground?"

"We adapted," Undyne said flatly. "We made the best of our situation, and made it as livable as we could."

"Are there many of you left?"

"Well," Alphys broke in, "To be honest, even now, there are, yes. Certainly equal to the number that
was sealed, if not greater."

"And what happened now?" Laurel wondered.

"We... we were attacked," Undyne answered, her voice low. "A human fell and... and it started killing us."

Laurel's mouth opened in shock. "I'm so sorry," she said, and she sounded it, too. "I had no idea... How many did you lose?"

Alphys lowered her eyes. "We won't know until things c-calm down," she admitted. "But... at least a third of us."

Laurel winced. "Where is this human, now?"

Undyne was silent, though her eye narrowed and her eyebrows went up.

Alphys said, her voice barely more than a whisper, "Gone. It-uh-they... w-were killed."

Laurel looked at her with wide eyes, then at Undyne, looking confused once she saw her look. "Right," she said, her own voice soft. "I'm sorry. Of course." She nodded. "You had that right. Did they leave anything behind, any ID?"

"We..." Alphys swallowed. "We haven't... w-we haven't ch-checked y-yet. It all h-happened so fast, M-Minister. W-we haven't even told the r-rest of the Underground th-that the barrier's br-broken."

Laurel stared at them. "You're completely unprepared, aren't you? You never expected to be free. Did you?"

"N-no," Alphys agreed weakly. "We... honestly, we were l-lucky."

"Look," Undyne said suddenly, her voice short. She'd lost her patience, now, and was annoyed by it. "We want to work with you, but here's the thing: you knew about us. Yet clearly you're the only one, judging by our trip, here. How? I'm not comfortable sharing anything else with you until you tell us."

Alphys nodded, surprising her. She'd honestly expected Alphys to either chastise or try to calm her, but instead, she was clearly feeling the same way.

Laurel nodded as well. "Honestly, that's fair. I'm sure you're - at the very least - confused. I'm sorry." She smiled. "Ever since the barrier separated us, there has always been someone here to be the person who would deal with it - or you, rather - when the time came. As time went on, however, people started to forget - except for us. I honestly don't even think this city knows I exist, let alone this province."

She smiled again, but it was a little crooked this time. "That won't last, now!"

"You're going to tell other humans?" Alphys asked.

"I have to. The fact that you're here at all means it's time."

"Time for what?" Undyne asked.

"Time for something old to become new again," Laurel replied, her eyes glinting with obvious determination - something that had both Alphys and Undyne shifting a little from. "My predecessors were waiting for this day to come, and now it finally has!"
"What has?" Undyne finally snapped out, looking as irritated as she clearly felt, now.

Laurel grinned, clearly unfazed by Undyne's tone (which admittedly annoyed her quite a bit).

"The real first day of peace," she replied easily. "And not a moment too soon."

It would be weeks until they fully understood what that actually meant.
Debrief

When Undyne finally understood that word - peace - she found herself relaxing again, though part of her screamed at her not to. It was what she wanted; it was perhaps all she wanted. It made her feel strangely old, too.

*Has it really only been a day...?*

Alphys glanced at her worriedly, noticing her sudden shift in posture. Was she angry? Or was she sad?

"I want peace," Undyne admitted, her voice soft. "Honestly. I know I don't look it, and my means of getting here aren't exactly the most peaceful, but... it's all I want."

It's all I want, but so much is needed just to get there.

Laurel nodded, her expression sombre. "As do I," she agreed. Again, she looked incredibly sincere. "It's why I'm here in the first place, and why I'm glad you thought to come here. Had anyone else gotten to you first, well..." She winced, for a moment betraying her age and acting far more natural. "Let's just be happy you're here."

"Well," Undyne said, holding up a hand. "How do we get peace, then? It can't be this easy."

"True," Laurel sighed. "It's not going to be easy. Probably not for some time. Since people have seen you, it's likely that word will spread, and people will start to come together when they're willing to admit they saw you. And once that happens, well, we need to be ready."

"Sorry, but..." Alphys broke in nervously. "Why is this 'just in time'?"

Laurel looked over at her, making her fidget a little. "Because," she replied, "things aren't as good as they could be. With you here, it'll encourage change."

"So where do we start?" Undyne asked. "I just want to get started. I want to make sure everyone will be safe, and the sooner, the better."

Laurel looked back at her. "When will more come up?"

"When I tell them to," Undyne answered calmly. "They don't even know the barrier is broken, remember?"

"Yes," Laurel agreed. "Which is why I asked. That's good, I'm glad you came here, first. It gives us both time to prepare each side."

"Us three," Undyne corrected.

Laurel blinked. "What?"

"Not us both," Undyne said. "Us three. You, me, and Alphy." She gestured to Alphys, who jumped and went scarlet.

"O-oh," she stammered. "N-no, I know I'm n-not--,"

"Yes, you are," Undyne broke in, glancing at her. "I mean, uh, if you want to be. Uh. Where I go, I'd like you to. I mean..."
She coughed. "I kinda... need you," she muttered softly.

Alphys smiled at her, feeling warm all over. She reached over and grabbed one of her hands, and immediately Undyne lit up, making her feel even warmer.

"Y-yes," she agreed. "Uh, if-if it's okay with th-the Minister, I-I mean..."

"Are you two married?" Laurel wondered calmly.

Both were scarlet, now.

"Uh," Undyne stammered, and Alphys lowered her head, her glasses fogging up.

"M-married?" Undyne concluded.

"N-no," Alphys answered shyly.

"Not yet," Undyne added, causing Alphys to look over at her with a start.

"What?!" Undyne snarled, still red.

"You... me?" Alphys squeaked out.

"Uh..." Undyne stared at her, suddenly realising what she just said.

Laurel quickly jumped in, clearly sensing that now was a bad time for this conversation.

"Well, anyway," she said sharply, before Undyne could elaborate. "I don't mind keeping it to just us three, then. But we do need to come up with a plan, and now, before it all hits the fan."

"What do you suggest?" Undyne asked, looking at Laurel, but taking a moment to squeeze Alphys's hand.

"Well," Laurel said, smiling. "I imagine soon, I'll be getting a phone call. Once I do, we can begin in earnest. But until then, let's go over what we can."

She opened up a drawer at her desk, pulled out a fresh notebook, and grabbed a pen. "How exactly do you spell your names?"

For a short while, they went over the basics: who they were, their ages, what they were now, and what they ultimately wanted from this.

Everything was easy until they got to the last one.

"Peace," Undyne repeated, raising her eyebrows.

"I know, but," Laurel waved her pen in the air. "What does peace mean for you?"

"Uh," Undyne hesitated for a moment, before her eye cleared and she answered. "Easy. No more fighting. No more killing." She winced. "On both sides. I can't deny that we've killed some of you."

"Well, clearly." Laurel agreed. "How else could you have broken the barrier, otherwise? Especially since you admitted it. Do you have information on those who died? In case we need to alert their families?"

Alphys blushed, though the expression on her face was not shy, but rather, deeply upset. She
lowered her head, her hand twitching a little in Undyne's.

"Y-yes," Alphys agreed softly. "W-we have all of th-their first names, at th-the very least."

"And were any killed by either of you?" Laurel asked.

Undyne eyed her closely, wondering if there was any ill-intent in those questions. Was she asking in order to get information - or to persecute them later?

"One was," Undyne answered, "killed by me. The rest, as far as I know, were killed by Asgore."


"The one you killed yesterday?" Laurel wondered, her eyes on Undyne.

Again, Undyne eyed her closely, but she saw no light of accusation, there. Nor did she see mistrust or even anger. It was as if Laurel not only understood why Undyne had killed that human, but didn't take it personally, either, like she assumed the humans would.

"Yeah," Undyne agreed. "I killed the last human, the one who was killing us."

"Is that also why you're now Queen?"

Undyne nodded. "Kinda, yeah. Asgore lost his wife... ex-wife... in those killings. Once he found out, he just..."

Undyne's face fell, thinking about how miserable Asgore had looked, and found herself worried about him.

"He needed space. I don't know if he'll ever leave the Underground, honestly. Not without her." She shifted a little in her seat. "Honestly, I can't blame him. I lost... I lost a lot of people I loved, too."

Her voice broke, and she looked away for a moment.

Laurel was polite, and pretended to scribble more things down to give Undyne time to collect herself. Against her better judgement, Undyne found herself starting to trust the human - just a little.

Alphys broke in, her voice small, "The-things I saw th-that human do... the way that it-uh-they did things to us... Barely anyone f-fought back. M-most of our generation d-didn't really believe humans could exist, e-even though many of us wanted them to..."

She trailed off, her expression falling. Clearly, she'd been one of those who'd hoped - and felt terribly betrayed.

Laurel looked up, her own expression falling. "I'm so sorry," she said softly, playing with her pen. "You've suffered a lot, in such a small time, haven't you?"

Undyne swallowed hard, trying to reply but finding her throat clogged up. She nodded, and felt Alphys suddenly entwine their fingers together, her other hand rubbing the top of Undyne's gently. Undyne bit her lip, closing her eye for a moment, more emotion welling up in her from such a gesture. It not only helped her calm down, but it also cheered her up.

*I'm not alone,* she realised, her heart speeding up. *Alphy... she's with me. She's with me, after everything, because she actually wants to be.*

She opened her eye, blinking back her tears, glancing at Alphys for a moment. Alphys smiled at her.
gently, and Undyne swallowed again, grabbing onto Alphys's hand harder.

Laurel then said, very gently, "It's been a long day, hasn't it?"

Alphys spluttered out a dry laugh. "To say the very least," she agreed.

"Listen, you'll need a place to stay, and a place that you'll also be protected in, too," Laurel continued. "I'm going to talk to a few people I know I can trust, and I'll arrange it so that you - and I will, too, so you know you can trust the place - will stay in a hotel without any outside exposure. Once I get it arranged, would you like to go there right away?"

"Yes," Alphys said immediately, surprising Undyne (though honestly, she agreed). "We really need proper sleep, and a proper meal. As soon as you can, that would be great."

Laurel nodded, then picked up her phone and dialled, turning around in her chair just as she began to talk.

They listened for a moment, before Undyne looked over at Alphys and smiled faintly. Alphys noticed and blushed, but smiled in return, squeezing her hand.

"Hold on," Laurel said, covering the mouthpiece of the phone and turning back. "Do you two need one room or two? Or more? Do you expect more people to come up?"

"Uh," Undyne blinked, then answered honestly and with little thought. "One is fine, and no, not yet."

Laurel nodded, her expression not even twitching, as she turned back to the phone, speaking into it and repeating Undyne's answer.

"Uh," Undyne whispered, leaning over to Alphys, who smiled. "That okay?"

"Y-yes," Alphys admitted, her other hand fussing with her coat's buttons again. "Th-that would be very nice."

Undyne stared at her, finding herself unable to look away all of a suddenly. "Alphy, uh," she added, still whispering. "Do you think we could...?"

Alphys found herself in a similar predicament, her own gaze glued to Undyne. Her heart suddenly felt too fast for her chest.

"Wh-what?" she asked, her mind unhelpfully supplying a few scenarios that were unlikely.

"I..." Undyne found her mouth suddenly dry. The look on Alphys's face made her stomach flood with such intense excitement that she lost any control over her ability to speak. "I would like... I mean, if you would like... I would like us to... I would--,"

"Okay," Laurel broke in cheerfully, causing them both to jump and look at her, clearly startled. "Uh, you okay, there?" she wondered with a smile.

"Yes!" Undyne squeaked. "Of course!"

Alphys nodded quickly.

Laurel raised an eyebrow, her smile going a little sly. "Well, anyway," she said. "It's all set up for you. Just use my name and this card..."
Laurel grabbed one of her business cards and scribbled on it, before handing it over to them. "And they'll do whatever you ask - well, within reason, of course. I can send a team of security officers with you to make sure you're safe, and when I get that call, I'll join you there."

"That sounds good," Undyne said slowly. "But how do we get to the hotel without anyone seeing us for what we are?"

"That's inevitable," Laurel agreed. "But it's okay. This will all come out eventually, anyway." She smiled, again with a sly edge to it. "Let's just amuse ourselves with baffling people on the way, shall we?"

Undyne eyed her closely. "You seem to be really happy about this," she observed. "Even though it means life as you know it ends."

"Life as I know it is spending my days waiting for it to end!" Laurel agreed.

Undyne smirked; she was actually starting to warm up to this human. "I see."

In a way, they had that in common; Undyne had also been waiting for life to change, too. And truly, much of that was not change she welcomed.

But then again, there was some silver in this patch of grey, wasn't there?

Alphys smiled at her, and she grinned. 

More like gold than silver, she thought - before inwardly wincing at something so cheesy.

"How long do you think you'll need to be rested?" Laurel wondered.

"Uh." Dammit, is that the only thing I know how to say?! Undyne blushed, scratching at her other cheek. "How long can we have?"

"Well," Laurel replied - though one eyebrow went up. "I don't know how long it'll take for someone to contact me, but even if it's sooner than later, I can always make excuses for you until you're ready."

Alphys suddenly lit up. "You-you can do that?" she wondered softly. "You d-don't mind? We need... we-we need at least three hours, but six would be best."

Undyne nodded in agreement; three was a good number, and six was even better.

"Done," Laurel agreed. "Want to go, now? If you don't mind leaving your numbers... uh... you have cellphones, right?" She blushed, realising she just assumed something that she shouldn't have.

Alphys nodded, and she relaxed. "We'll leave both of our numbers, and you can contact us a half-hour before we're needed."

Undyne grinned, suddenly, though it took her a moment to even notice. When she did, Undyne blushed and looked away, though Alphys didn't understand why. (She would, though - and later end up in a giggle-fit on the floor; Undyne had thought Alphys was questioning her stamina.)

Laurel took their numbers, then called someone. Undyne peered over at Alphys during that call, finding Alphys already looking at her.

For a moment, they shared a smile, squeezing the other's hand at the same time.
Laurel hung up and sat back. "Alright. My team will be up in a second, the same one that brought us here. I have to stay here until I get yelled - called. The one in charge is named Michael."

She stood up, prompting them to quickly do the same. "Don"t worry," she added, stopping them in front of the elevator. "You have my number; use it!" She grinned. "This is going to be awesome," she concluded, letting the political veneer drop from her for a moment. "This is such a good thing. I can"t wait."

"Me, too," Undyne agreed honestly. Despite it all, she still nursed the hope that things would be better, that now that the barrier was broken, they would finally be able to live. And live without fear, too.

The doors opened, revealing the calm-expressioned security guards from before. Laurel pointed to the leader, a male human. "This is Michael."

He nodded and stepped forward, offering a small smile.

"You can trust him with anything you would trust with me, but no one else," Laurel added, her eyes meeting Michael's, finding his already going to hers.

Then, they both smiled, and with a surprised blink, Undyne recognised that kind of look - and with it, just how much Laurel was trusting them with.

"Th-thank you so much," Alphys said, her eyes going back and forth between the two humans. "We-this-it m-means a lot."

Laurel nodded. "Yes, it does, for us, too," she agreed. "Now rest up. I'll contact you soon."

She shook Undyne's hand, then Alphys's, before she touched Michael's arm briefly and smiled. Nodding, Michael moved to the side, gesturing for the two monsters to come into the elevator.

Alphys grabbed Undyne's hand, just as she was reaching for hers. Once they were holding hands, they walked in. Both could feel the other shaking a little, so they stood closer, Alphys slipping her arm into Undyne's and holding on.

"See you soon," Laurel said, waving a little, as Michael stood in front of them.

They nodded, and the doors closed.
The way down in the elevator was quiet.

Undyne focused on Alphys, and Alphys focused on Undyne, pretending they were in the elevator that took them to New Home. Neither said a word, yet it was oddly as if they were both shouting at each other, every time their eyes met.

By the time the doors opened again, both were blushing, holding each other's arms as closely as possible.

Michael led them out and back down the main lobby of the building. Neither he nor any of the other officers surrounding them hesitated, even when it was clear that they made whoever they passed hesitate. Undyne glared a few times, but then stopped looking altogether once it only made things worse.

"Stay close to me, please," Michael said softly. "And don't worry. Just keep your focus ahead."

"Okay," Undyne agreed, and Alphys nodded.

Granted, it was honestly difficult at times to do so, since they were quite obvious when walking together down the sidewalk and towards the hotel, so they got noticed by quite a few people. But it helped their nerves not to look, as then they could both pretend that no one actually had noticed them.

"Don't worry," Michael said softly, so that only they could hear. "It won't last."

He sounded more optimistic than either of them felt, but it did help a little.

In what felt like an eternity - but also a short time - they finally stopped.

Both Alphys and Undyne looked up the moment they did, finding a tall, tower-like building in front of them.

"Hey," Undyne whispered, as Michael spoke to a few of the hotel staff. "It's kinda like New Home."

Alphys nodded, feeling surprised. Again, she marvelled at how similar humans and monsters really were, and she allowed that to smooth over her anxiety.

Undyne could feel her starting to tremble again, and she couldn't help it - she leaned over and put an arm around her. To her delight, Alphys moved closer, slipping one of her arms around Undyne's waist, and Undyne felt her face heat up again.

"Okay," Michael said once he came back. "Go on in and show them the card. No one will say anything, and if you have any trouble, we'll always be right outside any door you're behind, okay?"

Undyne looked at him with scepticism. "Every door?" she echoed.

"Yes," he replied calmly.

Alphys was nodding. "Th-thank you."

"Go ahead, then."
The two exchanged a worried look, then nodded together, turning back to the door. Together, still arm-in-arm, they walked in to the lobby and to the front desk.

The human sitting there was clearly nervous, unable to smile and clearly sweating. But they were still kind to the two, and when they started down the hall towards the elevators, they caught Michael and his team slowly making their way after them.

Undyne shot Alphys a sudden, mischievous look, and before she could process it, Alphys found herself being dragged into a run for the elevators by Undyne - who was unable to bite back a laugh.

They threw themselves into the elevator and quickly closed the door before Michael could catch up, both bursting into laughter once the doors closed. It was laughter brought on not because something is funny, but because the relief they felt from finally being able to just be alone and breathe, was so overwhelming. It was high-pitched, with a slight edge to it, as clearly they were both exhausted, but it was real, all the same.

Once they'd managed to calm down, they were almost on the right floor. Undyne looked up and saw a camera in the corner of the ceiling, and she grinned at it and waved - something that Alphys started laughing at, and which in turn had Undyne laughing again, too.

When the elevator finally stopped, they tumbled out, breathless and wiping away tears. Alphys grabbed the keycard, then Undyne's hand, before she moved down one side of the hallway - then having to circle back the other way. She stopped finally, and they went in.

It was very, very big, and had so many windows that they were both frozen in fear from what they saw, finding the windows almost too thin between them and what they saw outside.

For a moment they stood there, sharing the same awe and surprise at the sight, before they eventually relaxed and walked in.

Undyne immediately went to the small fridge, flinching when she found it was a normal one. "Ugh," she grumbled when she looked in. "Booze, booze, and booze. And two water bottles. The hell?"

Undyne glowered at these contents, wondering if this was a joke.

"Grab the water," Alphys advised, sitting on a slight-worn chair with a folder in her hands. She opened it and lit up, and when Undyne went to her side and held out a bottle to her, she grinned and took it.

She held up a few flyers. "Look! Delivery!" she said, excited. "Look at this food! Look at it!" She was pointing to one of the pizza flyers. "Look!"

Undyne nodded, sitting down on the armrest and opening the bottle she held. She took a gulp, then said, "Order it."

"Order what?" Alphys wondered.

"All of it," Undyne replied. "I'm starving."

Alphys nodded, feeling the same way. "Good idea; let's order a bunch, so we can save it. Look, they even have an app!" She grinned and pulled out her phone.

"Is that still working?" Undyne asked.

"Yep," Alphys agreed, typing on the screen so fast that Undyne was impressed. "I don't know why
and right now, I don't care. I'm just happy we're still connected."

Undyne pulled out her phone and opened a browser, typing in the news website for the Undergound. She then paused, shocked: it was still displaying yesterday’s news. It hadn't been updated, yet, save a few threads on the message board. Undyne opened a few and found families looking for loved ones, and some loved ones looking for families. It was heartbreaking.

Undyne closed it and looked to the side, turning her head away from Alphys. She was tearing up, and didn't want to worry Alphys - especially now that she looked happier.

_Papyrus would be super pissed if he knew I had this chance, only to blow it, _she thought suddenly. _He was the only one who knew just how much I love her; he was always trying to get me to grow better ovaries and send a damn letter. But I always wussed out..._

The reason for that was a good one, though she hated it: she hadn't wanted to get close to Alphys, and then, if she died fighting a human, break her heart with that dying. The thought was just too much to deal with - especially when she realised just how close that actually came to being reality.

_But it's not, _Undyne thought suddenly, looking back at Alphys, who was grinning at her phone, still. _I survived. The barrier is broken. I didn't die._

_What the fuck am I waiting for?!_

Undyne swallowed hard, then, her whole body flooding with nervousness - but also giddiness. She bit her lip and blushed, but found herself unable to look away from Alphys.

When Alphys noticed, she jumped, then blushed and smiled shyly.

"Hi!" she squeaked out, raising a hand and waving it a little, making Undyne burst into laughter.

_She's so cute, _she thought fondly, gazing at Alphys with a grin, now. She reached over and trailed her fingers over one of her cheeks gently, feeling how warm it was. She felt a little jab at that, one of deep affection from so little a gesture, and she pressed her palm flat on Alphys's cheek, keeping it there.

Alphys closed her eyes and leaned into it a little.

"Alphy," she murmured.

Alphys opened her eyes and nodded; her other hand was holding Undyne's in place. "Are y-you okay?" she asked gently. "Do you...? Please, Undyne, if y-you want to talk about it, g-go ahead."

Undyne swallowed again, a lump forming there and sticking.

Even now, Alphys was thinking of her. Even now, Alphys asked her to be honest and open.

Undyne felt her breathing go a little funny, felt a small shiver along her skin, and suddenly it felt like her skin was too hot for her.

"W-we have at least an hour b-before the food gets here," Alphys went on, her voice a little shaky. The way Undyne was looking at her made her think of a great deal of _unhelpful _things. "W-what do you want to talk about?"

Undyne opened her mouth, then shut it, her eye darting down for a moment before going back to Alphys's.
Alphys blushed deeper, clearly understanding that, and now Alphys couldn't speak.

Undyne leaned down, shoving her phone aside and placing both hands on her face, bringing it towards her. Alphys's hands twitched a little, especially when their lips barely touched.

Undyne saw Alphys's eyes go a little dark, and felt yet another jolt; it was clearly from desire - mutual desire.

Undyne kissed her, then, and felt her arms slip around her waist and pull her closer. Alphys returned the kiss shyly, her eyes closing as though pulled shut, yearning flooding through her veins the moment she did. Undyne then deepened the kiss, pressing closer and licking Alphys's lips apart slowly - achingly slow. Alphys's claws dug into Undyne's back a little, but neither stopped, especially when Alphys reached out to touch her tongue to Undyne's.

Undyne made a sound, then, from deep in her throat, and she leaned down, grabbing Alphys around the waist and pulling her close. Alphys jumped up and, surprising them both, hooked her legs around Undyne's waist, just as she stood up. Undyne staggered for a moment, both from surprise and a sudden jab of desire forcing her to, before she sat back down in the chair, this time with Alphys on her lap.

They kissed deeper, both not wanting to break apart unless it was only for air. Alphys pressed herself against Undyne, something that had Undyne digging her nails into Alphys's back instead - especially when Alphys slipped her hands down to her breasts and trailed her palms over them. Undyne pulled her closer, gasping a little against her lips, especially when Alphys's fingertips trailed over now-hardened nipples through her shirt.

"Take it off," Undyne whispered between kisses.

Alphys opened her eyes in surprise; it actually sounded like Undyne wasn't asking, but begging. This was made even more obvious when Undyne's hands moved under Alphys's shirt, her fingers moving up and along her back until they landed on the back of her bra.

"Alphy, take it off?" she repeated, her eye opening and lit a little, the green colour glittering.

Alphys broke from the kiss and reached down, tugging loose the belt at Undyne's hips, setting it aside, before grabbing onto Undyne's shirt and pulling it up. Undyne pulled away and grabbed it, yanking it off and throwing it to the floor, before she quickly tugged her bra off over her head, as well.

Alphys froze, her eyes going huge on her face, and only then did Undyne think to blush - especially from the way Alphys looked at her.

Alphys bit her lip, one hand going back and gently cupping one of Undyne's breasts, her whole body going hot the moment her palm met bare skin. Undyne wasn't exactly greatly endowed, but Alphys didn't really care; what mattered was that it was Undyne.

"Quit it," Undyne muttered shyly, especially when Alphys grinned at her.

"Quit what?" Alphys wondered, her fingertips now trailing over the surface of that breast, her eyes dancing when Undyne shifted a little and shivered.

"Nevermind," Undyne answered quietly, leaning her head back a little. "Keep staring at me."

Alphys laughed and leaned against her, hoping for another kiss and getting one right away.
Undyne's hands moved away from the now-undone bra, and she pulled them out and tugged on Alphys's shirt. Alphys pulled away and shrugged her coat, then shirt, off, hesitating a little when it came to her bra. Undyne kissed her again, reaching up and pulling Alphys's arms away from her chest, gently, something Alphys allowed with a racing heart.

When Undyne grabbed her bra, Alphys swallowed and shrugged it off, and Undyne tossed it on the floor to join the rest.

Alphys was scarlet, now, her hands starting to shake, closing her eyes quickly so that she wouldn't have to see Undyne's reaction. She buried her face into Undyne's neck, sliding her arms around it. She pressed her body against Undyne's, and was surprised not only because she sighed from it, but that Undyne, did, too - even going as far as to bury her face into Alphys's shoulder.

"Alphy," she whispered into her skin. "Don't hide, okay? I want to see you."

"N-no," Alphys answered, her hands twitching a little. "Y-you probably d-don't."

"Don't even try to tell me what I want and don't want, nerd," Undyne answered sharply, though she smiled a little sadly, too. "Please?" she added. "I... uh, really want to. I think you look... really good..." Her voice trailed off near the end, clearly feeling shy.

Alphys bit her lip, squeezing her eyes shut, before she pulled away and sat up, her hands now on Undyne's shoulders. She turned her head away, not sure what she was expecting.

Undyne stared at her, her mouth going dry again. Alphys was a plump monster, and it was something that clearly embarrassed her, but Undyne didn't see it - or her - that way. What she was seeing was beautiful because it was Alphys, not because of a specific shape or size.

Therefore, she couldn't help herself - she leaned forward and nuzzled the soft skin right between them.

Alphys jumped in surprise, almost tumbling over before Undyne caught her and pulled her back. Alphys's heart was racing, her breaths so fast that she felt a little faint - but she didn't push Undyne away. She didn't want to.

Undyne sighed deeply, letting herself linger for a moment before pulling away. Alphys turned back to her and met her gaze shyly, one hand gently curving over her cheek.

"Wh-what are we doing, Undyne?" Alphys whispered, leaning closer to her and brushing her lips over Undyne's.

"Living," Undyne answered without hesitation.

"Show me how?" Alphys asked, her voice wavering a little.

Undyne grinned at her, her eye going wide. "Yeah? Really?"

"Yes," Alphys agreed, grinning back.

"Just so we're clear," Undyne said, her voice so soft that Alphys shivered again. "I'm suggesting sex."

Alphys blushed but also rolled her eyes, which made Undyne smile again. "Yes, Undyne!" she sighed. "I know that!"
"So, then, you know that once we do it, that means we're together, right?"

Alphys blinked at her, looking shy again. "Uh," she murmured. "I-I mean... I-I understand if not. Things are r-really messed up right now, and we-we both... really need this..."

She said that quite sincerely, closing her eyes for a moment. "S-so I won't... hold it against you i-if this is j-just a one-time thing."

"Alphy," Undyne tried, but Alphys cut her off.

"We're adults," she continued, her hands now tangled and held in front of her chest, her head lowered. "I'm n-not that m-much of a loser, to n-not be open to th-this kind of comfort--,"

"Shut." Undyne reached up and covered her mouth gently; Alphys looked up at her and went quiet.


"Yes," she said, her voice muffled by Undyne's hand (she let it drop after that). "And... I love you," she admitted. "Th-though that was obvious, heh."

"Uh, yeah..." Undyne cleared her throat. "Obvious. Right. But what I mean by that is, well, blame my being surrounded by dogs, but I prefer a mate for life, y'know?"

Alphys suddenly couldn't breathe. She stared at Undyne, realisation slowly going through her.

"I... me?" she squeaked out.

"Alphy," Undyne smiled, leaning close to her again. "It's always been you."

"Undyne..." Alphys whispered, her hands suddenly going up and grabbing onto her shoulders. "Kiss me?"

Undyne kissed her - and this time, they didn't stop.
Chapter Notes

And here is a smut chapter. I've set it up so that if you skip it, you won't miss anything but the smut. So I hope that makes it easier :D

The chair was a good place to start.

Alphys decided this the moment it dawned on her that, in her current position, she was the one in charge. It made her blush, but it also made her feel oddly aroused, too; how could she be in charge with so formidable a monster holding her close?

And yet, when Alphys trailed her fingertips towards Undyne's back and below her ribs, Undyne jolted, her eye flashing in shock, the moment those fingertips lightly brushed over her gills.

Undyne grabbed Alphys's hand, her face bright red and her breaths short. "N-no," she said, looking embarrassed. "Uh, not... not this soon, okay?"

"Sorry," Alphys said immediately, holding her hands up before her and feeling embarrassed.

Undyne grabbed her hands back and led them right to her breasts again. Alphys's hands automatically cupped them, and Undyne was relaxing again beneath her, smiling faintly. Alphys leaned down and nuzzled the curve of Undyne's neck, and the smile faded as she shivered, closing her eye in surprise from how good that felt.

"You..." Undyne murmured softly, her hands moving up to touch - then grasp - Alphys's breasts. "You've done this before?"

Alphys froze, her whole body flashing hot with embarrassment. "Er," she answered. "Uh. Is that... important?"

"Not really," Undyne admitted. "But I'll just be blunt: I've never done this, and I have no clue what to do." She grinned. "But I look forward to being taught!"

Alphys stared at her. "Wh...?" she managed to answer, her confusion obviously. "Taught? Uh, Undyne..."

"Really, it doesn't bother me," Undyne replied, looking as though she meant it, too. "I just care about now, and the future. Plus at least one of us will know what we're doing."

"Er..." Alphys lowered her head, her face so hot that her glasses fogged up a little. "Undyne... I'm... uh... not. I don't know. At all."

Undyne gaped at her. "But... why not? Didn't you date in school?"

"I was busy getting my doctorate, so I could get it at a decent age in order to get a job for life," Alphys admitted. "And, well, people weren't interested me... or if they were..."

She muttered the rest. "They were just pretending, in order to hurt me."
Undyne touched her cheek, and she looked up. "Hey," she said softly. "I'm not pretending."

Alphys smiled. "I know."

"So..." Undyne grinned. "I guess we'll wing it?"

Alphys giggled. "Don't we always?"

Undyne's answer was to pull her back down and kiss her, something she returned with increasing fervour. Undyne was surprised by this - but only for a moment, as her own desire was starting to distract her - especially when the object of that desire started using her tongue.

Alphys had leaned down and licked along Undyne's collarbone slowly, watching for her reaction carefully. When Undyne shivered again, one hand going to Alphys's waist, the other to her shoulder, Alphys leaned lower, then lower, until her tongue met one of Undyne's nipples and carefully licked it, feeling it go hard beneath her tongue. She reached up and gently caressed Undyne's other breast, before slowly switching sides.

By the time she was about to switch again, Undyne was squirming beneath her, her eye closed and her teeth bared. She felt Undyne's fingers hook around the waistband of her pants, and had a brief moment of shock when she felt them slip beneath her pants and trail along the curve of her backside - and this time Alphys was shivering, her own hands now tugging at Undyne's pants.

Undyne grabbed hold of her, stood up, and set her down on her feet. Alphys wobbled a little, unsure if she still had legs, and Undyne held her steady - as well as holding herself steady, too.

Then, once they were both calm, they kissed again, this time aiming for the bed.

They both fell onto it, before Undyne flipped Alphys onto her back and grabbed hold of her pants. Alphys nodded, and Undyne grinned and slipped them off - her underwear going along with them. Alphys squeaked, surprised by that and her sudden stark nakedness, and she curled up into a ball, hiding her face behind her tail.

Undyne sat up and looked down at her, tilting her head. "Hey, Alphy," she said, leaning over and poking the reddened curve of one cheek - making Alphys giggle. "Come on out."

"N-no," she replied. "N-not until you do it, too, please."

Undyne rolled her eye but stood up, easily kicking her pants, underwear, socks, and boots off. She knew that she should probably feel self-consciousness, less because it was Alphys and more because it was such a foreign place.

But the moment she sat back down, Alphys uncurled and placed her cheek on Undyne's knee, very shyly looking up at her, her eyes going over what she saw - and glowing. Undyne was doing the same for Alphys, her mouth going dry again and her heart pounding at the sight.

Silently, their eyes met, and then, without a word, they kissed, this time pressing their bodies together.

The warmth that came with it, the feel of another person's skin against your own... it was intoxicating in its own right.

Alphys soon found herself trailing her hand from Undyne's hip to lower, her heart pounding but her will focused. Undyne's breathing went a little short, especially when those fingers trailed up the inside of her thigh.
Then, Alphys advised, "Lie down?"

Undyne did, Alphys the one sitting up instead. They stayed close together, resuming their kiss, and Undyne felt Alphys bring her fingers up, higher... higher... then...

Undyne jolted, reaching up and clinging onto Alphys tight, a short gasp escaping her.

Alphys paused, barely having got her fingers past already-slick folds (the feel of which had Alphys in a small haze, barely able to believe it).

"You okay?" she whispered.

Undyne nodded. "Yeah, definitely," she replied softly. "Just... keep going."

Alphys nodded, leaning down to kiss Undyne's neck again, trailing her fingers up and down the soft, smooth skin, feeling it go warmer and warmer - as well as wetter. Alphys paused, then, having a thought. She leaned closer, raising her head to watch Undyne, before she very slowly pushed one finger into her centre, reaching up once she did. Undyne groaned, latching onto her again.

However, when Alphys found what she sought and angled her finger to rub it, Undyne winced and grabbed her forearm, stopping her immediately.

"No," Undyne murmured. "I'm not a fan of that."

Alphys blushed, as she, herself, was quite a fan. "Sorry. Are... are you okay?"

"Yep," Undyne agreed. "Just..." She pulled Alphys's hand up higher, so her fingers were close to her clit. "There. Right there."

Alphys nodded, licking her lips, moving her fingers to trail along and then push down and rub Undyne's clit. Immediately, Undyne relaxed, her breath hissing out of her as her eye closed. Alphys smiled faintly, keeping her gestures slow and careful, relishing in the way Undyne almost swayed along with each touch.

"Alphy," Undyne growled out against her shoulder. "H-harder."

Alphys looked down at her as she complied, and found herself spellbound by how so simple an adjustment affected Undyne. She leaned her head back, her hips moving against Alphys's hand and her nails digging into her back.

"Faster," Undyne suddenly cried out, her face now hidden in the crook of Alphys's neck. "Faster, Alphy."

Alphys complied, and Undyne grinned, her eye still closed. "Okay..." she murmured, her face flushing.

Alphys could feel her going hot, could feel her desperation in the way she grinded against Alphys's hand, and especially in the way she made soft, eager noises - noises that honestly were turning Alphys on more and more.

"Just..." Undyne gritted her teeth, arching a little. "Bit... more... Fuck..." Undyne gasped, her head moving back against Alphys's shoulder, her body stiffening. "Fuck... yes... ah..."

Undyne gasped again, her voice suddenly rising. "Alphy," she keened out.

Alphys held her close, not stopping her hand, until Undyne cried out Alphys's name again, drawing
it out in a way that had Alphys amazed.

Undyne was coming. She was coming, and it was because of Alphys.

It was amazing.

Undyne calmed, moving back to Alphys and hugging onto her tight, shaking a little. "Fuck," she whispered. "Alphy... I... I want... more. Again."

She felt selfish admitting it, but she couldn't help it; whether it was the cost of her new power or just Alphys being naked, she felt hungry, still.

Alphys grinned, an idea coming to her. She pushed Undyne back down onto her back and slipped between her legs. Undyne watched her for a moment, then collapsed with a shocked sound once she felt Alphys lick along her folds slowly.

"Fu-uck," Undyne groaned out happily, arching her back.

Alphys grabbed her hips to keep her in place, her tail actually thumping a little from how excited she was. Again, she slowly licked along those smooth, slick folds, her eyes closing as she finally tasted Undyne, something she dreamt about for ages.

"Holy shit," Undyne gasped out with a shaky laugh. "Holy shit! That... that's good, keep going!"

Alphys grinned and leaned down again, this time focusing the tip of her tongue along Undyne's clit.

"Fuh," Undyne whispered. "That's perfect. Keep doing that...?"

Alphys nodded, part of her relieved that Undyne was telling her these things. It not only made it easier, but kept Alphys calm, too.

Soon, Undyne was again moving along with Alphys's actions, becoming lost to the sensations that such small touches brought her.

Undyne wondered again if part of her growing desire was just the result of holding it in for months, or something related to her new power. Certainly the energy levels had something to do with it, didn't they?

Or was it really all Alphys?

"Alphy," Undyne said again, not so much answering her own thoughts but finding all thoughts vanishing the closer she got.

Alphys squeezed her hip in reply, and Undyne choked out, "So close..."

Alphys increased the speed of her tongue flicking over Undyne's clit, and that brought a low, contented growl from her, one that ended in a gasp.

Soon, she was stiffening again, this time her cries louder than before, as she came again. Alphys held her close, licking along her slit again slowly and tasting her, smiling faintly.

"Alphy," Undyne whispered.

She looked up and aimed her smile at her. Undyne held her arms out to her, and she grinned and jumped up into them, pressing her body along Undyne's and hugging onto her tight.
"Alphy," Undyne repeated.

Alphys nodded.

"Again."

"You want--?"

"You," Undyne growled, reaching up and pushing Alphys down onto her back, straddling her and holding herself up on her hands.

Alphys swallowed, her eyes sparking with worry and shyness - until she felt Undyne touch her, that is. That gentle, tentative touch sent a wave of desire though Alphys so hard she reached up and huggd onto Undyne.

"What do you like?" Undyne wondered gently, still stroking her.

"I... I like what you like... and also what you d-don't," Alphys admitted, her voice strained.

"Oh?" Undyne wondered. "So, you like this, then?"

With a grin, Undyne gently pushed two fingers deep within Alphys's core, and she gasped, arching up and grabbing onto Undyne tighter, her breaths gasps now.

"Yes," she answered, though she sounded desperate, which made her feel shy. "J-just... hook y-your fingers up--,

Undyne did, and Alphys melted in her arms, moaning softly. Undyne stared at her, mesmerised by this change in her usually shy friend. Now, however, she was practically all business.

Idly, Undyne wondered if Alphys had always thought about this moment, too.

On that thought, she leaned down and kissed Alphys deeply, something that had Alphys utter a soft sound of pure want. Undyne curved her fingers again and rubbed gently within her, and Alphys again made a relieved sound, her body automatically following the pace of Undyne's strokes.

Alphys was oddly quiet during this, though she did make some sounds and was clearly enjoying it, from the expression on her face. Undyne had expected her to be loud, like she'd always expected of herself. Seeing her this quiet was oddly intriguing, almost like a challenge, really.

Then, Alphys went rigid, her heels digging into the bed and her breaths ragged at the edges. Her face went red and her eyes closed tight, and to Undyne's growing delight, Alphys groaned out her name as she came, drawing the name out so long and in such a charged way that it hit her, hard.

"Undyne," Alphys again whispered when she could, reaching up and placing a hand on her cheek, her face breaking into a warm, affectionate smile. "Th-thank you."

Undyne blinked at her. "Why are you thanking me? We're not done, yet. Again!"

Alphys opened her eyes wider, now the one flooded with giddiness. "You m-mean, you w-want to...?"

"Hell yeah!" Undyne agreed. "Alphy, I love you. I wanna make that love with you, too!" She then blushed, realising how stupid it sounded.

Alphys, however, was quite touched. "B-but, if we're going too fast..."
"Does it feel that way to you?"

"Honestly? No," Alphys admitted, one hand lightly brushing over one of Undyne's arms. "I feel... like this is something natural."

"Same here," Undyne agreed, relieved. "So..." She smiled, and Alphys smiled back, her eyes dancing.

"Yes, please," Alphys whispered, giving Undyne delicious chills.

"Kiss me...?" Alphys added hopefully.

Undyne leaned down and kissed her, wrapping her arms around her and pulling her close. Alphys latched onto her and tugged her down, and she shifted down onto her elbows to do so. Then, remembering what she'd read and watched myriad times, Alphys shifted her legs, helping Undyne do the same, so that they were almost woven together.

Both were breathing quickly, still high from their previous orgasms, but also from the sweet anticipation.

Their eyes met.

Alphys reached up and cupped Undyne's face between her hands, her tail hooking around one of her legs gently. Undyne pressed down closer, nuzzling Alphys's cheek for a moment, before she lowered her hips down and pushed herself against Alphys at last.

They both felt it the moment their bodies touched, and they both buried their faces into each other's shoulders, not moving for a moment in order to just feel.

Then, Alphys whispered, "Please, Undyne..."

She was shaking, whether from nervousness or anticipation, Undyne wasn't sure. Maybe both?

*But her voice...*

*It* was so thick with blatant lust that Undyne couldn't resist - nor did she even want to. She angled her hips a little, feeling a small spark of pleasure as her clit met Alphys's briefly, and, once she was comfortable, she started to move, angling her hips and rubbing against Alphys at a slow pace to start.

Alphys's reaction was immediate: relief. She relaxed beneath Undyne, her eyes closed and a hand on her chest. She smiled, looking amazed, and when she cried out, Undyne kissed her again, wanting to hear even more of those sounds.

"Th-that," Alphys whispered between kisses, "is g-good." She tried to keep the pace, and couldn't for a moment, feeling awkward, until she felt as if she finally managed it - and was rewarded by an influx of intense pleasure.

"S-so... g-good," she added, her voice raspy. "Undyne... I... love you..."

Undyne pulled her closer, resting her cheek against Alphys's, her eye closed.

"I love you, Alphy," she murmured, smiling faintly. Though she spoke, she didn't stop moving. "I *adore* you, you crazy nerd..."

"You... y-you have n-no idea how m-much you mean to me," Alphys blurted out, her voice catching a little. "And h-how long you have..."
She gritted her teeth, trying to hold back a loud cry, but failing. She couldn't help it; everything was too wonderful, so intense and yet she still wanted more.

"I think... I might," Undyne replied, smiling faintly when Alphys managed to open her eyes halfway. "Since the abyss?"

Alphys stared at her, going still for a moment in her surprise. "H-how--?"

"Because," Undyne kissed her between each word. "I-was-the-same-way."

She again kissed her, but this time she let it linger - then bloom, the kiss suddenly going from warm to hot as they held onto each other and matched each other's rhythm. They faster they went, the louder Alphys would cry - as would Undyne, to be fair - and Undyne adored those sounds.

To hear Alphys, the woman she'd been in love with for what felt like ages, make those kinds of sounds while in bed with her...

Undyne had always dreamt that, someday, she'd be able to do this with Alphys, but she'd never expected just how much it clearly meant to Alphys, too.

And that was saying only a fraction of what Alphys felt. This not only meant so much to her, but it was similarly dream-like. To be able to see Undyne like this, and to know that she was responsible for bringing Undyne into such a state... She wondered if she truly was dreaming...

But then, she felt Undyne lick her lips apart, felt her hips grinding against hers, hear her quick breaths and her short cries - sometimes of her name, of all things! - as she dug her nails into Alphys's shoulders desperately...

This was too real to be a dream.

"Oh," Alphys then murmured, her eyes flaring open. "Undyne... you-you feel so amazing... I... I-I..."

She reached up and wrapped her arms around Undyne's neck, her tail curled around one of her shins tight. Her body flashed hot and her skin went red, and she shut her eyes and arched back, keening out desperately as she felt her second orgasm reel through her. She lost her breath for a moment, truly incapable of remembering how. She'd had many orgasms at her own hands, but never had she felt anything like this.

Idly, the scientist in her wondered, Is this because of Undyne? Or is it also because of the souls? Alphys didn't feel any power being used, but Undyne's eye would spark every once and a while, so she still wondered.

Alphys clung onto Undyne hard, panting and murmuring nonsense, feeling dazed but also very, very high. Undyne was still, holding Alphys to her chest and sitting up a little to do so. Alphys leaned on her tiredly, smiling slowly. Undyne gently stroked the skin along the ridges of her head, and she sighed deeply, burying her face into Undyne's neck and nuzzling the soft, sensitive skin, there. Undyne held her tighter, her bright eye closing.

With a curious glance at her, Alphys shifted a little, then pushed her hips up and against Undyne's. The reaction was immediate: Undyne gasped and closed her eye, before she grinned and pushed Alphys down onto her back again.

"Again?" she wondered, and Alphys grinned with a nod. Undyne kissed her again, hard, and Alphys had to cling in truth now, the gesture so intense she stumbled.
When Undyne began to move again, Alphys melted a little, her body still flooded and thus sensitive and malleable. When she picked up the pace, Alphys laughed suddenly, the increase sending little hiccups of aftershock through her.

This, all of this, delighted Undyne, and with a jolt to both her heart and her gut suddenly realised that she would never be able to get enough of this, this private intimacy known only to them, their own sensual secret they could explore as well as share.

*There is so much we could do together,* she thought, her eye now searching Alphys's glazed-over eyes, and feeling a sharp stab of love hit her as a result. She felt so much, at that moment: not just the eagerness of a close orgasm, but the eagerness of realising that something new and incredible was about to happen, and best of all, happen to her and Alphys.

"Fuck," she whispered, the only word that came to her when trying to express all of these feelings. She blushed, but Alphys smiled at her, touching her face with such kindness that Undyne felt her throat clog up a little, which would have been disastrous - save one thing.

The moment she felt her words stopped up, she also felt herself incredibly close. She quickly leaned down and pressed the length of her body along Alphys's, catching her lips into a kiss so desperate that Alphys groaned and dug her claws into her shoulders.

That did it for Undyne, and with a sharp cry, she felt her third orgasm fill her from blood to bone, so intense that her next breath was a shocked sob.

It was so intense, so overwhelming, that it felt as if she were about to pass out from it. She'd never felt like this before, but for the moment, it was all she could feel.

And so, she felt it. She clung to Alphys tight and felt her being clung to in response, and for the moment, they both lay there, trying to calm down but also not wanting to miss a second of this.

Neither would ever forget it, no matter what happened. In that soft, quiet moment, both burned it into their memories for life.

Which, for both of them, was perfect.
Alphys held Undyne close as she calmed down, stroking her hair slowly and kissing her forehead several times. Undyne had collapsed on her, tired at last, gasping for breath and shaking, her eye closed.

All the words she had wanted to say were gone, now, instead finding herself only communicating with action. She buried her face into Alphys's neck, and felt Alphys touch the top of her head lightly, her other hand gently caressing up and down her arm.

"Fuck," Undyne whispered again, her voice breaking.

Alphys blinked in shock, her hands stilling. "What's... what's wrong?" she asked. "Undyne... did we... go to fast?"

"No," Undyne answered, though now her voice was muffled, her face hidden in Alphys's shoulder, now. "I... I can't..." she added, her voice suddenly breaking.

Undyne then, to both of their surprise, started crying.

Alphys pulled her closer and held her, kissing her forehead gently and stroking her hair. Undyne curled up into her arms and couldn't stop, now, despite desperately wanting to.

Alphys, however, didn't seem panicked about this. In fact, she kept stroking her hair, kept kissing her forehead, as she cried, and Undyne felt her heart aching.

*After all that's happened, of all the things I can't believe are real, this is what I have trouble accepting as real: that Alphy and I just slept together...*  
*Alphy and I love each other...*  
*Alphy and I...?*

Alphys was nervous, but she kept it back, knowing that Undyne needed her right now, and needed the version that was calm. She just hoped that the tears weren't what she was afraid they were: disappointed and regretful.

"When you're ready, okay?" Alphys then whispered. "Do... do you want water?"

Undyne smiled despite herself, her bottom lip quivering. "Alphy..." she whispered, her voice wavering. "I want... you."

There. She finally got it out.

Alphys, however, apparently didn't get it. She smiled in return, her eyes warm. "You have me," she answered kindly. "You... you've had me f-for a while."

Undyne shut her eye for a moment, then sat up beside her, reaching up and pulling the hair away from her face, revealing both of her eyes - as she was still without an eyepatch and had been using her hair to hide the lack.

She watched Alphys carefully, but all Alphys did was sit up beside her, placing a hand on her knee lightly. Her gaze didn't waver, not even when her eyes landed on her left eye - or rather, the socket - and she leaned forward and kissed her cheek gently.
Undyne stared at her for a moment, speechless for that time.

Then, she managed to say, "Alphy, what do you see when you look at me? At my... my eyes?"

Alphys searched her face again, her cheeks going pink. "I-I see..." She swallowed, lowering her head shyly. "Undyne..."

"Tell me," Undyne answered.

"You," Alphys blurted. "I just see... you. I m-mean, your eye is different, and sometimes there's a spark of light in your left, and other times I can feel you stirring power in the air and you don't seem to realise it, but..."

She took a quick breath. "I j-just see you. I-I'm sorry, that's bad, right? Because you're different, now?"

Undyne let her hands drop, finding herself smiling again. She relaxed, both in posture and expression, and Alphys felt relieved.

"Alphy," she then said, taking one of her hands. "I..."

There was a loud knock at the door, scaring them both into clinging to each other for a moment.

Then, it was as if they suddenly remembered where they were, and they exchanged a shy smile at that.

"Food," Alphys observed.

Undyne nodded and got to her feet, stretching out slowly before leaning down and grabbing Alphys's coat - both actions having similar effect on Alphys. Especially when Undyne shrugged the coat on with a wry grin. The sleeves were a little short, and the hems only reached to her knees, but oddly, Alphys kind of liked it.

Undyne grinned, brushed her hair over her eye with her fingers, then leaned against the door. She opened it a tiny bit, keeping out of view and holding her magic in reserve.

"Michael?" she asked softly.

"Pizzas...?" was his confused answer, which made even Alphys laugh (and fall back onto the bed in a heap from that laugh).

Undyne opened the door just enough to grab them with a grin, catching a brief look at his expression - confused amusement - before she shut the door and held up the boxes in triumph, this time laughing along with Alphys.

For a nice, warm moment, they lay in bed together and ate pizza, both finding the entire situation hilarious. It really was out of an old anime, if one thought about it, and it delighted them both to admit it.

"Mm," Alphys said, her eyes closed. She held up a slice of pizza. "Taste this and be its slave."

Undyne burst into laughter but was game, leaning over and taking a generous bite. Then she groaned and lay back down, raising her hand only to flash a thumbs-up. Clearly, she agreed with Alphys's assessment.

Alphys laughed, finding a sudden bubble of giddiness crash into her. She put her slice down and
instead lay down next to Undyne, curling up against her and hugging onto her. They were both still naked, hunger and laziness - as well as mutual admiration - keeping them without clothes for now. Undyne put an arm around Alphys's shoulders and held her tight, though she did keep eating.

"Undyne," Alphys said, looking up at her.

"Yup?" Undyne replied, smiling at her.

"We're doing good so far. You know that, right?" Alphys was sombre, her eyes focused and clear. She had Undyne's full attention, now. "That despite it all, we're doing okay?"

Undyne lowered her slice of pizza, looking a little shy. "Do you have some kind of psychic power I don't know about?" she wondered, only half-kidding.

"Er," Alphys replied, taking her seriously. "No, I just... understand. I notice you sometimes pausing, looking sad, and I know you're thinking about..." Her smile faded for good, now. "Papyrus, and everyone else who got killed."

"Yeah," Undyne agreed.

"But, Undyne..." Alphys then continued, looking up at her again. "Look at where we are. Look at what we're doing! You've done a good thing, you really have."

"you did a good thing. but you can do even better."

sans said that. Was this what he meant?

Am I doing even better? Am I doing this right at all?

Her gaze met Alphys's, and she saw those eyes light up when it did. Undyne wondered if Alphys even realised her eyes did that every time. She also wondered why she, herself didn't notice sooner.

"We still have tons to do," Undyne admitted.

Alphys nodded, something that Undyne found herself grateful for; if she had tried to pretend otherwise, it would have been with empty words, and Undyne didn't want those.

"We do," Alphys agreed - before she blushed. "I-I mean... uh, you do. I'm just here... if you need me."

Undyne sighed, surprising Alphys - until she found herself grabbed and brought to lie down right on top of Undyne. With a squeak, she lay still, her hands resting on Undyne's shoulders, and when she met that bright green eye, she blushed even more; Undyne looked irritated.

"Alphy," she sighed, reaching forward and cupping her palms around Alphys's face. "It's 'we.' The moment our feet touched the surface, it's been 'we'. Hell, the moment you called me, even." She grinned, trying to hide her own blush - and failing miserably. "So stop trying to get out of it!"

"N-no!" Alphys protested quickly. "I-I'm not! I j-just don't w-want to be pushy or too clingy and freak you out!"

"No," Undyne answered. "Be pushy and clingy, please. I like both."

Alphys made a face at that, which only made her laugh.

"Alphy, do me a favour if you can?" When Alphys nodded, Undyne went on. "Just... assume,
okay?" When all she got was a confused blink, she elaborated. "You and me. Us. We. Assume that whatever you see us as is fact, because it is."

She turned a little, so that they faced each other, and she smiled at Alphys, who blushed but smiled back.

"Trust me, okay? I'm..." Undyne swallowed. "In. I'm all in."

Alphys reached up and touched her cheek, biting down on her lip, hard, to keep from crying. Despite her attempt, Undyne still noticed, and immediately pulled Alphys to her. Alphys clung onto her, and she heard a faint, choked-up sniffle.

"You don't believe me, do you?" Undyne wondered sadly.

Alphys shook her head. "I do," she answered, her voice small. "I'm just.. am I dreaming? Pinch me." She held up her hand.

"No," Undyne answered flatly.

"Do it," Alphys insisted. "So that I know I'm awake."

Undyne raised an eyebrow, then grinned deviously, reaching down and trailing her hand over one of Alphys's breasts - startling her into jumping a little - before very gently and very lightly pinching her nipple.

Alphys jolted again, squeaking in surprise, before she paused - then burst into laughter.

"That works!" she decided between giggles, burying her face into Undyne's shoulder again and closing her eyes, smiling so wide it hurt a little.

"So you believe me, then?" Undyne wondered.

Alphys nodded, her claws digging into Undyne's back a little, and she shifted closer.

Before Undyne could even ask, she felt Alphys graze her teeth along the curve of her neck. Undyne inhaled sharply, instinctively curling around her and closing her eye.

When Alphys raised her head, Undyne grabbed her face and pulled her close, kissing her so deeply that she closed her eyes and lost all thought - save the ones focused on the one kissing her.

After, they ended up drifting into a light doze, from the combination of food and sex.

Therefore, when Alphys's phone suddenly vibrated and chimed at once, it scared her so badly that she shrieked and was sitting up to shield Undyne before she was even fully awake. Undyne woke up from that, shocked - but it was something she would not only remember later, but at a crucial moment, to boot.

Alphys then realised it was her phone, and she grabbed it, answering it with a drained, "Hello?"

And immediately she winced, holding the phone away for a moment. Undyne's eye went wide; it was Mettaton, and he was actually yelling.

"Why haven't you answered my updates with updates, Alphys?! You promised you would! That was the deal! You better have a good reason why! I was ten minutes away from coming to get you!!"
She waited until he was done, before she placed the phone back and said, very softly, "I'm sorry I scared you."

This was met with silence, one far more eloquent than his words had been. She could hear him squeaking a little, clearly swallowing more snarky replies, since she already knew why he was giving them.

"If I tell you what's happened, will you forgive me?" she wondered.

Mettaton was silent for a moment before he said, "Of course."

Undyne then leaned over and grabbed the phone from Alphys, surprising her. "Hello, diva," she said cheerfully. "Guess what?"

"No," he answered. "Put Alphys back on."

"Nope. We're in a hotel."

Mettaton was quiet again. "A hotel?" he echoed.

"Yeah! Apparently there's a small group of humans who already knew about us, and right now, they're protecting us. So we're okay, and you don't need to yell anymore, okay?"

Mettaton sighed. "Anything else, Undyne?"

"Yeah," Undyne replied, her grin going devious. "Alphy and me did it--."

"Undyne!" Alphys yelped, grabbing the phone back quickly and covering Undyne's mouth. She then put the phone back and said, "I'm sorry! We really are fine, I swear--."

"Alphys."

She paused. "Yes?" she squeaked.

"Is what Undyne said true?"

"Yes," she admitted, still squeaking.

"Are... are you happy, Alphys?"

Alphys paused, the tone of his voice surprising her. He sounded wistful, almost. But also oddly gentle.

"Mettaton," she murmured, lowering her voice and hoping that Undyne was too distracted by the pizza she nibbled at to hear. She closed her eyes and smiled, a hand going to her chest. "I'm... s-so happy. Despite all, b-because of her... yes. I'm happy."

"What if it doesn't last? And you get hurt?"

"Then at least I have the memories," she answered, meaning it.

Mettaton again was quiet, before he finally concluded, "Okay. But please don't forget like that, again. I got really scared, okay?"

"Okay," Alphys agreed, wishing she could hug him. "I'll text you right on the hour, okay?"
"Please, darling. That would mean a great deal."

"I'm sorry," she insisted. "The time... I j-just..."

"Alright, alright, spare me the details, he replied, sounding more like himself, again. "At least until later. Then spare me none."

Alphys laughed, both in shyness and relief. She agreed, and they hung up amicably.

"Sorry!" Undyne grinned, though she didn't look sorry.

Alphys smiled at her, before leaning over and curling up into a ball against her.

Undyne wrapped an arm around her and kissed her nose. "Hey, Alphy?"

She looked up, her hands curling around Undyne's thigh. "Yes?"

"I'm not going anywhere that's not with you," she answered, her expression suddenly quite serious. "Okay? I meant it when I said I was all in."

"So did I," Alphys agreed softly, her eyes closing on their own, feeling everything - the entire day and a half, truly - catch up on her and begin to drag her down into what she knew would be a heavy sleep. "Undyne, I love you, and to me, that's all in."

Undyne bit her lip, her eye wavering. She knew that, once they left this room, this contented bubble they shared would burst, and things would never be this easy again for a long time. But she also knew that Alphys also knew this, and yet she was not only still here, but vowing never to leave.

"Alphy," she whispered, "I... I wanted to ask you, before, but we got so... distracted..." She smiled shyly. "This... this whole thing, it's made me realise... I don't want to be alone, anymore. And... I just want to be with you. For... forever..."

Undyne swallowed hard, her voice wavering. "What... what do you say?"

For a moment, Undyne thought Alphys had fallen asleep, and she sighed, both annoyed and relieved, in a way.

Then, she heard Alphys whisper, "Yes."
Mettaton, to be fair, was a little bored at first.

Granted, in many ways, he was grateful to be bored, considering what lack of boredom had meant over the past day. But then, Mettaton was also one who loved to be busy; it was why life with Alphys had been so interesting. Between her work on his bodies and her secrets, things were never boring with the doctor.

He sighed, his thoughts now on Alphys, even as he continued to look around and pace. He wondered what exactly was happening to her and Undyne, and not just lurid details, either.

He wished he could be there, be at her side, make sure she was okay.

He was surprised by this, truly, but there it was.

He wondered: was it curiosity, or his recent realisation that Alphys meant a lot to him, and not just for what she did to make his life easier?

He frowned, pausing for a moment. He stood still and focused ahead, manipulating the lenses of his eyes in order to see further and clearer. He caught a flash of movement, but it was going along, not towards, him, so he relaxed.

Truly, it didn't seem as if there was a point in his being here. So far, he'd seen no one, not even a curious monster, and he wondered if it was just paranoia on both Undyne and Alphys's behalf that he was still here.

But then, he thought about a human finding the way into the mountain, and he felt ill at ease.

Better to be safe, he figured.

So he kept his vision sharp, only pausing to check his phone. He'd told one of his cousins the truth, in order to have someone below watchful for him, and every so often he'd get a text from Napstablook, saying that people were scared and impatient but too afraid to do anything.

This is good, Mettaton decided. Better everyone stay in place, than come up here and cause chaos.

Except, from what Alphys said, the humans... at least some of them... had been expecting them. That was both weird and suspicious.

Then he sighed, rubbing his forehead. And yet Alphys apparently trusted them enough to let her guard down. Hell, Undyne trusted them enough, too. That was also either weird, or a good sign.

Admittedly, he was a little jealous of the two.

The kind of physical love they'd recently shared was one of the few things denied to him the way he was. Granted, there were ways he could be pleasurable for a partner, but when it came to himself, it became rather... complicated, to say the least. He knew that his body could only do so much, and was grateful to have it, but even in this form, he was limited.

Which depressed him, because he was full of affection, and someday wanted to truly share it. So he found himself envious of them both - especially Alphys, who he knew had yearned for that for what felt like years: first with King Asgore, then, more intensely, with Undyne.
But then... he was also proud of her. She not only had been brave enough to confess everything to Undyne, but had also been brave enough to be the most vulnerable with her, too.

That, he knew, was not easy for her. Not even a little.

He smiled faintly. *Maybe, in this misery, good things can happen, after all.*

He certainly hoped so, in any case.

---

Things... certainly happened. That was true.

When the two electrocuted boyfriends woke up, it was almost morning.

The first guy, named Joel, woke up first, not quite remembering what happened before he woke up Ahmed, his boyfriend.

"Shit," said Ahmed drowsily. "Did we pass out?"

Joel was about to admit he didn't know, until suddenly he remembered, and grabbed onto Ahmed tight, startling him.

"Ahmed," he murmured, starting to tremble. "Did what I remember happened actually happen?"

Ahmed sat up and pulled him close, kissing his forehead and stroking his hair for a moment, hoping to calm him down. He hated it when Joel got scared.

Joel moved close, burying his face into Ahmed's neck, still shaking. "It's okay, hon," he murmured softly. "Just take a sec, okay?"

Joel nodded.

"If you remember being zapped by what were clearly two monsters, then yes, it happened," Ahmed added, his tone a little dry.

"Holy shit," Joel whispered. "I was so hoping I was just drunk..."

"Half a beer doesn't get you drunk, love, no matter how much of a lightweight you may be," Ahmed teased.

"Hurrhurr," Joel answered, though he did smile, something that Ahmed was happy to see.

"Come on," Ahmed said, slowly getting to his feet, before helping Joel do the same. "Let's just go back and get some coffee and pretend we're crazy."

"But, sweetie," Joel protested. "We're not!"

Ahmed sighed, slipping an arm around Joel's waist and pulling him close. "I know. Let's just go."

---

By the time they'd made it to the corner store, it was well into morning. They'd had to walk slow, both rather shaky and nauseated from that shock, so it took them far longer to walk down the mountain than it had going up.

They walked in and were surprised to see the clerk staring at the door already, her eyes huge and her hands clutching the side of the counter. She visibly jumped when she saw the two walk in.
"H-hello," she stammered.

"Hi...?" Ahmed answered, noticing that Joel was clearly too tired to deal with people this early, judging by the way he leaned against him and sighed.

"Uh," the clerk added, as they walked in and moved towards the coffee station. "Did either of you happen to see...?"

Joel looked over at her, curious. Ahmed pretended not to notice, busying himself with getting them both coffees.

"See what?" Joel asked.

"Uh," the clerk said, her voice odd. "Well, maybe it's still early, but... hey, is there an anime convention going on in town?"

Ahmed snorted. "In this place? Please."

The clerk went pale at that, biting down on her lip at the same time.

Joel moved away from Ahmed, surprising him; Joel was usually very shy. "You saw someone dressed up for a con?"

"I..." The clerk shifted a little on her feet. "Think so?"

"You saw them," Joel answered sharply. Ahmed looked up, reaching out and touching his arm lightly, but Joel shook his head. "You did, didn't you?"

"Saw who?" the clerk wondered, blushing.

"Saw two... people," Joel elaborated, going right up to the counter. "One with red hair, really tall, the other yellow, in a coat?"

"Is this a joke?" she snapped back. "Who the hell are you? Is this a show or something? Because if it is, fuck you."

Ahmed was immediately at Joel's side. "Hey," he answered sharply. "Don't talk to him like that! It's a simply, serious question, believe it or not!"

The clerk looked at them closely, but also with obvious suspicion. They glared back, their indignation obviously genuine. She finally sighed, leaned over the counter, and rubbed her forehead.

"Yeah," she agreed at last. "I saw them. If this is a joke, whatever. But yeah, I saw them both. They came in, bought coffee and junk food, then ran out as if I lit their feet on fire."

"They... they're monsters," Joel said, his voice soft and his face pale and drawn. "They admitted it."

The clerk slowly stood back up to her full height, her eyes narrowed. "You're for real, aren't you? You're not yanking my chain."

"Why would we joke about something so stupid-sounding?" Ahmed answered.

"But, come on, monsters?" she laughed, though it was obviously on edge and very uneasy. "Like in the nursery rhymes?"

"You saw them," Joel answered. "What else could they be? No cosplayers look that good, and they
admitted it to us!"

"That's true," Ahmed agreed. "Right along with showing us actual magic."

The clerk stared at Ahmed, now, speechless. He nodded. "That's how we felt, too. But the tall one had blue spears, and the short one shocked us with her phone."

Joel shivered, moving closer to Ahmed. Clearly, the memory still frightened him. Ahmed pulled him close and handed him a coffee, and he smiled gratefully.

"Okay," the clerk said. "So, if I'm not crazy, and you're both not crazy, then they really were monsters, and they're now loose in the city."

"Yup," Ahmed agreed.

"Does that mean..." She paused, thinking. "The stories said that monsters were sealed underground beneath the mountain, right?"

When both guys nodded, she went on. "So, the seal is gone now or something?"

"They didn't want us going up the mountain," Ahmed said. "They were going to attack us if we did."

"There's something they don't want us to see?" the clerk concluded.

"Sorry, but, I'm not going back there," Joel broke in sharply. "That tall one, the one with the spears? She was... scary. Really, really scary. Something about her was just... not right. The short one was okay, though freaky-looking, but the tall one?" He shuddered. "I thought I was gonna piss myself, and not from the beer."

"I felt a little bit of that, too," the clerk admitted.

"So what the hell do we do?" Ahmed wondered.

That was the question, indeed. One neither of them had an answer to.
Repose

Undyne froze, her heart feeling like it stopped within her chest, and she was moments from passing out. She swallowed, thinking that she probably was just hearing what she wanted, and that what she heard was merely a sleepy sound from Alphys, and she was overreacting to nothing.

So she stayed quiet.

Until she felt Alphys's fingers curl around her thigh tighter, though she buried her face deeper into her own arm.

"Yes, Undyne," she repeated softly.

Undyne felt her heart start beating again, so hard she felt it everywhere. "Alphy," she whispered, leaning down and placing a hand on the top of Alphys's head.

Alphys opened her eyes and looked up at her, and she said, "Listen, I... think I tricked you? When I said..."

Alphys smiled up at her, sitting up and placing a hand over her mouth gently. Undyne's eye softened, and Alphys said, "I know what you said. And I still say yes, Undyne."

She let her hand drop, and Undyne grabbed her right away, pulling her into her lap and holding her tight, burying her face into Alphys's neck. Alphys closed her eyes and rested her cheek against Undyne's head, reaching up and stroking her hair slowly.

"I want to be with you forever," Undyne whispered, her voice choked. "I know it's corny, and stupid, and sappy, but I don't fucking care, Alphy. Please... please..."

"Undyne," Alphys replied gently. "Do you see me going anywhere? I'm on your lap, naked, and holding you, in a hotel owned by humans, on the surface." She giggled shyly. "I'm pretty sure I'm not going anywhere, unless you want me to--,"

Undyne had grabbed onto her tighter before she even finished that sentence, making her squeak but laugh again.

Then, to her surprise, she heard Undyne start crying.

"No," Alphys whispered, dismayed. She held Undyne closer, kissing her cheek several times and stroking her hair away from her face. "N-no, I'm sorry, d-don't cry..."

"Alphy," Undyne whispered, her voice choked. "I'm crying because I'm so happy, and I don't know how else to emote, okay?"

Alphys nodded, still kissing her gently and petting her hair. "O-okay," she agreed.

"Th-the last thing I want," Undyne said softly, "is you going anywhere. Please, Alphy. Stay. It won't be easy, I know I'm being selfish, but..."

"Shh," Alphys answered kindly. "I know it, too, and I'm still here. I want to be here. With you. There's nowhere else I want to be."

Undyne inhaled sharply, her next breath a sob, and she clung onto Alphys tighter, keeping her pressed right against her. Alphys curled up closer and closed her eyes, loving the feel of this and
hoping it would never end.

Or if it had to, at least come back again, later. And more than once.

"I need you," Undyne admitted. Alphys shook her head, but Undyne nodded. "I do, Alphy. I need you because you're supportive, and you're smart, and you... you calm me down when I want to be anything but calm... and... and I..." Undyne kissed Alphys's shoulder. "I love you so much."

Alphys closed her eyes again, letting those words seep into her at last. Before, she'd cynically wondered if Undyne said those words in the haze of passion.

Now... now she knew better. Much better.

"Undyne," she whispered. "I love you more than I can even prove."

Undyne raised her head, and their eyes met. Undyne's was teary, but its green colour glinted. "Try me," she replied, smiling a little.

Alphys's eyes lit up, and she, too, smiled. She leaned close and kissed her, deeply, and Undyne took hold of her and returned it, moving to lie down on the bed - and bringing Alphys with her.

After, they fell asleep for real, finally exhausted and unable to resist sleep any longer. They had barely caught their breath before they dropped off, Alphys first, then Undyne, both curled up against each other like two cats sharing a sunbeam.

They only woke up once when Alphys sleepily replied to Mettaton's text, before falling back asleep in Undyne's embrace.

When they woke up next, it was to both of their phones chiming at once, startling both awake. Undyne grabbed her phone and threw it, but Alphys picked hers up and sat up, hunching over it while yawning.

"It's L-Laurel," Alphys reported, her voice small. "This is our half-hour warning." She lowered the phone and sighed, rubbing her eyes. "How l-long has it been?"

Undyne rolled over and picked her phone up from the floor, then checked it. "Mm... Since we got here? Four hours."

Alphys nodded, though inside, her felt her nerves start to kick in, and she started shaking a little. "I guess... I-I guess th-they kn-know, now?"

Undyne sat up and hugged her from behind, kissing her shoulder gently. "Yeah," she agreed.

"What do you think wi-will happen, Undyne?" Alphys wondered, leaning back and closing her eyes. "And, uh, d-do you w-want me to call you... uh, Queen Undyne, in public?"

"No," Undyne snarled at once. "Fuck that. You call me Undyne, or whatever pet names you want, but that formal shit is not on that list."

"Pet names?" Alphys echoed, raising an eyebrow. "Like sweetie? Or honey? Or cupcake?"

Undyne went scarlet. "Yeah," she muttered. "I... I like that shit, coming from you. Stop looking at me like that!"

Alphys was grinning. "What about cutiepie? Or honeysuckle? Sweetums?"
"Alphy!" Undyne growled, burying her now-scarlet face into Alphys's neck. "Stop it!" Which, admittedly, wasn't a no to any of those names.

"Alright. But only because we need to plan what we're going to do, next," Alphys replied, turning around to face Undyne, who was looking away with a red face, still.

"We get married," Undyne replied, looking mischievous as she said it. She grabbed Alphys's hand between hers and squeezed it.

Alphys felt her heart stutter a little, at the same time her stomach flooded with butterflies. "Undyne," she murmured. "C-can we focus? I-I mean, yes, b-but first, we need to plan what t-to do with the humans, not just us."

She smiled, though, which made Undyne feel giddy.

"What were you thinking, then?" Undyne wondered, silently filing away the 'yes' Alphys had just given her so casually at the same time.

"Well, we get showered and dressed, to start," Alphys replied with a faint blush. "Then we invite Laurel in, so she knows we trust her. We-we do, right?"

Undyne nodded. "Yeah. I trust her, right now. She has yet to give me reason not to."

"Same," Alphys agreed. "She trusted us with her husband. Did you realise that?"

Undyne nodded again. "Yep."

"I think it's safe to trust her for now. But when it comes to everyone else...?" Alphys winced. "I'm scared, Undyne."

Undyne touched her cheek gently - then paused, thinking about that for a moment. She hadn't hesitated, hadn't even thought about it - she'd just touched her. And Alphys closed her eyes for a moment, leaning into her palm.

Undyne swallowed, feeling like she was dreaming for a moment.

"I'm scared, too," Undyne admitted softly. "But then I think about how far we've already come, and I feel better."

Alphys opened her eyes and nodded.

"So I know we can do this."

Alphys smiled. "You-you're right," she agreed, reaching up and touching Undyne's hand. "Okay. S-so, I'll shower first, then y-you--."

She'd started getting up, grabbing her clothes from the floor with a slight blush, but Undyne stopped her. She blinked, and Undyne grinned, which made her giggle a little.

"You-you can come, too," she concluded.

Undyne leapt to her feet, grabbed Alphys's hand, and dragged her towards the bathroom, both laughing as they did.

The shower wasn't all that different than what they were used to, save that it pumped through the
pipes much faster and warmed up quicker, too. Both were impressed.

Alphys hesitated at first, but once Undyne jumped in, she leaned back to wait her turn - only to be grabbed and pulled in after. This, she didn’t mind - especially since Undyne had excellent ideas on how to share a shower, most of which had cleaning come later.

By the time they were finished and dressed again, they were both giddy and hungry, too, so they spent their last few minutes eating some leftover pizza and talking about pretty much nothing, smiling the whole time.

*Was this what Asgore meant when he suggested Alphys?* Undyne wondered, gazing at the doctor fondly. *Did he know how she felt about me? Did he know how she'd immediately support me, and do it well?*

*When I see him again - not if, but when - he's getting a huge hug for this.*

Alphys looked up, noticing Undyne's look and immediately looking back down again, going red. She then looked up again shyly, noticing that Undyne's expression hadn't changed.

"Wh-why are you l-looking at me like that?" she wondered softly.

Undyne smiled wider. "Because," she replied.

Alphys opened her mouth to add to that, but was interrupted by a knock at the door. Both stared at it, edging closer to each other on instinct, grabbing the other's hand tight.

Then Undyne said, in a clear, loud voice, "Who is it?"

"Laurel," was the reply.

"Okay, Alphy," Undyne whispered, squeezing her hand. "Ready?"

Alphys swallowed hard, her eyes glinting with both fear and anticipation.

But she sat up, smoothed out her clothes, and nodded.

Undyne kissed her cheek gently, then got up and went to the door.

The moment that door opened, their nest would vanish. They both knew this, and knew it would likely be a while until they could rebuild it. But they also knew that the time spent in that nest would last, and keep them strong, regardless.

And they would need that strength - sooner than they'd ever expected, too.
Alphys stood up as the door opened, folding her hands in front of her in order to hide their shaking. She raised her head, vowing not to show how afraid she was, for Undyne's sake. She didn't want to embarrass her.

Before they'd opened the door, they'd managed to make the room as neat as they possibly could, both to make it welcome as well as to keep their own affairs their own, still. She figured that once the door opened, Undyne would become all business.

She did, but she also stood beside Alphys, which surprised her - especially when she felt Undyne take her hand. She felt her face warm up a little, but she didn't say anything - nor did she react.

Undyne held that hand tight, it being the only thing that kept her from visibly shaking. She stood up tall and made her that her hair covered her left eyesocket, then met Laurel's gaze.

Laurel, however, looked calm, her smile kind. She glanced at Michael, then looked back to Undyne. "Relax," she said as her greeting, waving Michael in before shutting the door behind them. "There's nothing to be afraid of, alright?"

"Well, cut us some slack," Undyne answered sharply. "A lot of us are dead."

Laurel immediately sombered. She nodded and gestured to the couch and chair that were in the room.

Undyne waited until Laurel and Michael had sat down together on the couch. Undyne then sat down on the chair, but Alphys remained standing, moving to do so beside Undyne, her hands remaining folded in front of her. They shook, but she was able to hide it from the humans (Undyne knew, however).

"So, what's the damage?" Undyne asked bluntly, wanting to get it over with. "How fucked are we?"

Laurel smiled. "First, you may want to ease up on your language when talking to other humans. I know you're new at being Queen, but trust me."

Undyne blushed, but nodded.

"And... it's..." Laurel's smile faded. "Not great. There's a reason why you're so high up, and why you take up most of the floor."

"How bad is it?" Undyne repeated, her fingers digging into the arms of the chair. "Are my people in danger?"

Alphys turned to her, her heart racing. Undyne had said that without hesitating, and had said it with conviction, too.

She sounded just like a queen, and hadn't even noticed.

"Not yet," Laurel said softly.

Undyne got up and started towards the door without a word.

Alphys scrambled after her and grabbed her arm quickly, pulling on her to stop her. Undyne stopped, but only so that she wouldn't drag Alphys.
"Let go, Alphy," Undyne advised. Her eye was already on the door, her blood feeling almost cool in her veins, as though something needed to keep it that way.

"No, Undyne," Alphys said tersely. She could feel Undyne drawing on power, could see her eye start to glint, and she dug her claws into the floor. "No. Wait until we hear everything."

"They're in danger," Undyne answered, an edge to her voice.

"We don't know that, yet."

During this, Laurel and Michael watched in silence, though Laurel was on her feet, one hand out. Michael had hold of the other, clearly stopping her.

Undyne turned back to Alphys, who looked at her seriously, hearing the fear in her voice and seeing it in her face and understanding.

Undyne held her hand tight, closing her eye for a moment, before taking a breath and nodding. Alphys pulled on her arm gently, and they resumed their place - something Laurel also did, as well.

"I'm sorry," Laurel said at once, holding her hands up. "I didn't mean it the way it sounded. I don't mean to imply that your people are in danger, Queen Undyne. I just mean that, as of now, people haven't made the connection between you and the mountain."

Undyne's breath was shallow, but she listened. All she could think about was losing the rest of the people she loved, the people who counted on her, who trusted her.

Shakily, she reached to her side and grabbed for Alphys. Alphys immediately held her hand out, and Undyne grabbed it tight.

"So what do they know?" Alphys asked, sitting up taller.

"Well, you were definitely seen," Laurel admitted. "By at least three people face-to-face, right?"

"Yes," Undyne sighed.

"Well, those three came forward; apparently you said you were on your way here, and they followed you. And on the way, they found people standing there looking shellshocked." Laurel sighed. "And once my boss saw that, they suddenly remembered I existed - and I got my call."

"What did you tell them?" Undyne asked.

"The truth," Laurel replied. "Four times. It was only when a store clerk revealed video footage of you two that my boss got it. She peered at Alphys. "Your card actually worked?"

"Wait," Undyne raised her hand. "Who is your boss?"

"Who else? The mayor."

"And the mayor is okay with this happening? You told them that you have two monsters with you, and they were just fine with it?"

Undyne's voice was cold, but Alphys didn't say anything, nor did she add anything to soften Undyne's words. Clearly, she wanted to know, as well.

"Well, no," Laurel admitted. "She's actually on the side of not being okay with it. Or the fact that I've been here all along and didn't say anything." She smiled anyway. "But it's been said now, so we
need to focus on that. She wants to meet you."

"I technically outrank her," Undyne said. "Does she know that?"

"Well, I mentioned it, and she was..." Laurel raised a hand and waved it slowly, rolling her eyes, and that was a good enough answer.

Undyne shrugged, not in the least bit intimidated. "I didn't ask for this, but now that I'm Queen, I'm putting everything I have into it." She smiled, her eye narrowing, the kind of look she wore when about to pummel someone with the intent to "teach". "She'll learn."

Alphys, she saw, was smirking, though she tried to hide it.

Laurel covered her mouth for a moment, just as Michael turned to her with a carefully blank face.

"Queen Undyne," she said softly, her voice muffled, "we're going to get along just fine."

"That can only happen if you can guarantee the safety of my people," Undyne answered. "And that includes allowing us back on the surface." Her eye glittered, though she still smiled, and her hands were folding under her chin, her legs crossed.

Alphys stared at her. In that moment, that exact moment, all she wanted to do was hug Undyne, and hard.

Laurel again looked unruffled by Undyne's brashness, instead looking oddly happy and intrigued. She lowered her hand, and though her face was calm, her cheeks were pink.

"I know," she agreed. "And I fully intend to make that a reality, and not a goal shelved indefinitely for years and years."

"Same here," Undyne agreed. "But again, how long do we have until your people go to the mountain? My people there, they're not properly defended."

"They are," Laurel answered. She grabbed a tablet from her bag, pulled up an image, and handed it to Undyne.

It was a still image of what looked like a ring of humans in formal gear at the very entrance of the former barrier. If she looked close enough, she saw Mettaton hanging back, but the humans paid him no heed.

Alphys checked her phone at that, and sure enough, there was a message from him: "THERE ARE HUMANS HERE! THEY TOLD ME TO STAY OUT OF SIGHT AND WHEN I WAS ABOUT TO SCREAM, THEY SAID YOUR AND UNDYNE'S NAMES. YOU BETTER EXPLAIN, ALPHYS."

With a red face, she did hurriedly, turning away a little to do so in order to not be rude. She explained everything and told him to trust the humans - for now. He agreed.

Undyne was looking at her, and she said, "He's aware, now."

"Who is?" Laurel wondered.

"Our friend," Undyne replied. "He was guarding the entrance."

Laurel and Michael exchanged a look and a nod; it was clear they knew who they meant.

Undyne handed the tablet back with a smile. "Thank you for doing that," she said sincerely. "But
maybe, next time, start with that, okay? So that I don't freak out, again."

"Deal," Laurel agreed.

"So what do we do now?" Undyne wondered, raising an eyebrow. "No matter where I go, people will be looking for me by now - as well as Alphy...s." She blushed a little at her stumble, but Alphys didn't even blink.

"Well, what do you want to do, Queen?" Laurel wondered.

"I want to hurry up and get us together in peace," Undyne answered immediately.

"Undyne," Alphys broke in softly, leaning down and touching her arm. Undyne looked up at her and nodded, her attention fully on her.

(Unseen, Laurel and Michael exchanged another, different look, one that also had a nod but for another reason - one made clear when the smile they shared was soft, and understanding.)

"We can't just show up and magically ask the humans for everything, then expect it in seconds," Alphys was saying softly. "It's going to take a lot of time, a lot of talking, and a lot of patience."

Undyne's face fell a little. "I was afraid of that," she admitted. "But, Alphy?" She lowered her voice. "You... you'll stay with me? I know I can do all of that with you..."

Alphys smiled, her heart racing and her face burning. "Yes," she whispered immediately.

"Just so we're clear," Undyne whispered, leaning closer. "I'm talking about marriage."

Alphys giggled, touching her cheek. "I got that when you already said before that we should get married before we even made peace with the humans!"

Undyne's eye lit up, and she grinned. "Fuck yeah, Alphy," she whispered.

Laurel cleared her throat pointedly, and the two jumped apart and looked away, both blushing and pretending to look at anything but each other.

"S-s-sorry," Alphys stammered. "We-we've been th-through a l-lot."

"And I understand that," Laurel said gently. "But the mayor won't. She won't have the patience, nor the tact. So if you need more time to yourselves, I can arrange it, but I can't promise you more than a day."

A day. An entire day to themselves, to spend in their bubble again, to forget everything happening around them and instead focus on remembering everything that happened in that bubble.

Both Undyne and Alphys desperately wanted to say yes.

But they also both knew better. They glanced at each other, both wearing a similar expression of longing regret, before they nodded.

"The sooner we get this done, the better," Undyne said. "No, we can do it as soon as we need to."

Laurel nodded. "Then there's one more thing I need to ask you. When introducing you, Alphys, how would you like me to?"

"Doctor--," Alphys said.
"Queen--," Undyne said at the same time.

Both Laurel and Michael blinked at them, as they blinked at each other in surprise.

"Undyne, I can't be a queen," Alphys said sharply. "You're the Queen, now. And we're not even engaged!"

"Yes, we are," Undyne said calmly and seriously, in a tone that made sure there was no argument.

"Okay, yes, we are," Alphys agreed with both a sigh and a blush, throwing her hands up in the air. "But that doesn't make me a queen, and even when we married, it still wouldn't! At most, I'd be your consort."

Undyne frowned. "That sounds very... mistress-like."

"It's not; it's a proper position that I'd have as your wife," Alphys said calmly.

"And when will that happen?" Undyne demanded, crossing her arms over her chest - and nor looking like a queen at all, but a petulant prissy princess.

Laurel broke in again. "We can arrange that for you, once things calm down a bit more," she said. "We've had these mandates written up since we started, updating them as time goes on. And, for the record, Undyne, though I call you queen, you're technically an empress, which would make Alphys your queen following marriage."

Alphys and Undyne were speechless as well as red, staring at Laurel in a way that made her laugh, and Michael grin.

"Empress?" Undyne echoed. "Why the hell would I be that?"

"Because of the power you now wield, Undyne," Laurel answered. "A monster with just one human soul is frightening, with power unmatched; you have seven, and not only do you have them, but you're able to control them and their power."

Undyne was confused. "What are you talking about?" she asked.

"Well, in the stories, it was said that the monster who absorbed the seven souls to break the barrier would be controlled by that power," Laurel explained. "And once the barrier shattered, that power, with the souls, would vanish, and the monster would be normal, once more."

Undyne shakily placed a hand over her chest, her eye wide. "So you're saying that because I still have them, I'm in control of that power?"

But was that true?

She remembered being almost a sleepwalker when she went to break the barrier, and though she'd had no idea what to do, that power did, and did it on its own.

And then she'd felt the drain on her core... and fought back.

*Oh my god,* she thought, biting down hard on her lip. *It's true. I'm in control.*

*I'm in charge. It's all up to me.*

*I'm the Empress.*
Laurel nodded slowly, understanding Undyne's reaction. "You had no idea, did you? You really are as unprepared as I'd thought." She leaned down and grabbed the bag at her feet, pulling the tablet back out and placing it on her lap, typing into it for a few moments.

During this time, Undyne couldn't really concentrate. The more she focused inward, the more she felt.

Just how easily had she clamped this down, with barely a thought?

*And more importantly, how the hell am I doing it?! How was I strong enough to keep the souls attached to me? What the fuck is going on--?!*

"Here," Laurel said, handing her a tablet. "These are electronic transcripts of the original spells for the barrier. When you have a chance, read them over carefully. The more you understand, the better. Because..." Laurel shifted in her seat. "There's no history of this happening. You'd be the first."

Undyne raked her eye quickly over the words, taking in random ones like "unmatched", "driven by raw emotion", "uncontrollable", and, the worst: "insanity".

But then she caught this paragraph: "*Human souls have the ability to rebel against their monster hosts - unless they, too, share a common goal. Since it's unlikely that any human soul would want the barrier broken, even if the monsters succeeded, they'd possibly never break free for this reason.*"

*What the hell does that mean? Does that mean that those souls I absorbed all wanted the barrier to break? Even the one I killed?!*

Gently, Alphys reached over and took hold of the tablet from her, rubbing her arm gently once she did. Undyne looked up at her, unable to keep the confusion from her face, but Alphys smiled and held the tablet to her.

Laurel said, very calmly, "I know this is a shock, but we still have much to do. I promise, tonight, you'll have time to yourselves. Michael and I have rented the rooms across from yours, so you'll be protected - and have someone to trust."

She leaned forward. "But now, we need to see the mayor." She met Undyne's gaze right on, and she froze. "Are you ready, Empress?"

Undyne let the word soak into her, feeling its meaning join with her blood and bones. With it, she felt her confusion take a back seat to her new obligations, and she got to her feet, standing up straight. She nodded.

"But just so we're clear," she said, her voice having a slight edge to it. "Alphys stays at my side, no matter what."

Alphys looked up and smiled faintly.

"Of course," Laurel agreed. "Let's go."

The way there was nerve-wracking, and had Undyne holding Alphys's hand so hard it hurt. Granted, Alphys was holding hers hard enough for her to feel claw, so it was an even trade.
Before they'd left, Laurel had given Undyne a new eyepatch.

"Just for now," Laurel said, noticing Undyne's hesitation.

For whatever reason, Undyne didn't want to wear it. She'd felt so comfortable without it, and with Alphys barely reacting, she saw even less need for it. Plus, the humans had already seen her without it.

Laurel insisted, though, so she obliged.

Now, seeing the crowds gathered around the car they were all in, Undyne was glad. She was also glad the windows were tinted.

When the car started to move, the crowd parted politely, but still stayed close. There had been so many pictures when they had left the hotel.

Undyne wondered why they were still bothering.

The car trip was quiet, but once they got into the parking garage of City Hall, Laurel broke the silence.

"We're going to travel through the garage instead of the building," she said. "We want to avoid as many people as possible for now."

It worked out rather well, though once at the proper elevator, Undyne and Alphys got nervous again - especially when it opened to reveal people already in.

Laurel casually walked in, holding the door for Michael, Undyne, and Alphys (their crew had already gone up to meet them there), who did the same. The humans on the elevator were silent, but many moved away and one even took pictures (making Undyne sigh).

Once they finally made it to the right floor, Undyne and Alphys practically ran and jumped out, which made Laurel snort a little (though she tried to pass it off as a cough).

The mayor was small.

That was Undyne's first impression. Indeed, it was her only impression, at first. The mayor was short, thin, with small hands and feet, and small facial features. She was as short as - likely shorter than - Alphys, and even her hair was short, more like a buzz-cut than cropped.

But the moment her eye met the mayor's small ones, she could see the iron core this human had. She could sense the authority she held.

And it made her grin and place a hand on her hip. Because it unimpressed her.

The mayor held out her hand and said, "Welcome to Ebott, Madam Undyne. I'm Mayor Cathy Awad." She didn't even look at Alphys.

Undyne took the offered hand and shook it vigourously, still grinning. "Thanks. You can call me Empress." She let go as the mayor raised her eyebrows and pursed her lips.

Undyne gestured to Alphys, who stood beside her with her hands in front of her, sweating and pale. "This is my partner Doctor Alphys, soon to be my wife."

Undyne grinned wider, and her eye glinted; she found that she loved to say that. "When that
happens, you need to call her Queen. But Doctor is fine until then."

"Or Alphys," said the doctor rather flatly, shooting Undyne a look. Clearly, she didn't approve of the sarcasm.

Alphys held her hand out, and Cathy shook it gingerly. Alphys blushed, offended, now; clearly, the mayor didn't like Alphys, and didn't want to touch her. Granted, of the two, despite her height, ears, and colour of her skin, Undyne was the most human-looking. But it still stung.

Undyne noticed and didn't like that. At all. Her grin twitched, and she said, "I do hope we're on the same page, here."

Both Laurel and Cathy blushed, now. Laurel was clearly afraid she had already destroyed this meeting, while Cathy was clearly being called out for her reluctance.

"Of course we are," Cathy snapped, raising her chin. "This is a major shock. That is all."

She then gestured to the main room of her huge office, where a large couch situated in front of a large desk took up only a fraction of the place.

"Do sit and have something to drink," Cathy added, calmly walking over to her desk and sitting down in it.

It was a faux pas, and everyone knew it, especially Cathy. By sitting down first, she was declaring her power.

Undyne raised an eyebrow and looked over at Laurel and Alphys (Michael was standing in front of the door outside). On that shared look, they walked over and sat down on the couch, Undyne smiling the whole time.

When Cathy was about to pout some water, Undyne beat her to it, taking the jug of iced water and not only pouring herself a glass first, but also serving Cathy last. Cathy was the one raising an eyebrow, now, as she sipped her drink.

Undyne smiled, only now, there was an edge to it.

"I'm young, Mayor," she said coldly, her hands around her glass as she leaned forward. "But I'm not a fool. I've been through quite a lot the past two days, and even though two days ago I was a Captain, now I am an Empress."

As she said it, she realised just how easy it was to say it. "Do treat me with respect. I earned this title."

Alphys was staring at her, her cup of water hovering over her mouth. Her eyes shone, and very carefully, she smiled a little before hiding it again. In that moment, Alphys was so proud of Undyne.

The mayor looked at Laurel, who was sipping her glass calmly as she returned the look. Laurel was still new to the mayor, despite having worked there - for pay - for several years. Laurel was also new to being seen by her peers and co-workers, and didn't share the seemingly-innate need to defer to the mayor. If anything, Laurel truly felt that her position as liaison (for now; that would change soon) was equal to or even greater than Cathy's.

So perhaps it was understandable that all Laurel said was, "It's true, Madam Mayor."

Cathy sat up straight in her chair, her hands folded on her desk and steady. Alphys looked at them
and found only one ring on her right index finger, some kind of signature ring in a heavy, thick gold. Otherwise the mayor wore no other jewellery or make-up. Clearly, she saw no need for it.

"So, my Minister of a department I never knew I had tells me you two are monsters," Cathy said calmly.

Undyne and Alphys both nodded. "That's kind of obvious," Undyne added.

Cathy, however, didn't rise to the bait. "And that you also have come in order to return to live here in the city?"

Undyne nodded. "Yes. We belong on the surface, just like you do." She swallowed, then said, surprising even herself, "What happened to split us apart should stay history. We want to move on and learn to coexist again."

"I-in the past," Alphys broke in softly, though she kept eye contact with the mayor. "We-we did get along. But then there was a major rift, one that even we don't remember, now. Why maintain a distance based on something forgotten?"

Cathy eyed them both for a moment, then turned to Laurel. "You were right. They're blunt, but intelligent."

Undyne scowled and Alphys blushed, but they said nothing. Undyne wanted to keep her temper and Alphys was too shy.

"No, Madam Mayor, what I said is that they're smart and no-nonsense, but also open," Laurel replied. "They've been through a great deal of pain and loss over the course of hours, and yet they're sitting here, calm and still willing to talk peace. That's what I meant."

It was then, right there, that Laurel became their friend for life, something she would never, ever lose.

Both Undyne and Alphys were so grateful to her, and so impressed by her courage, that they really couldn't help it. Laurel was clearly committed to her very soul in making this work, too. She seemed less like a human and more like a monster that way. She earned their complete trust in that moment.

And they'd never, ever regret that.

Cathy looked at her for a moment, then turned back to Undyne. "So, in that case, I'll be just as blunt" she said, her voice oddly smooth. "I'm sorry, but I must decline. You cannot relocate here with us. You must stay underground and never come back."
Walls

It was very curious, the way Undyne suddenly felt. Her whole body seemed to tingle with a hot kind of needle-like sensation. She was angry, there was no question.

But she was also hurt, in a way she wasn't sure she had the words for.

Because in all of this, in all of her thoughts and plans, she'd never planned on being rejected. But there it was.

Suddenly, two fists slammed onto the mayor's desk, and for a moment, Undyne wondered how she didn't feel the impact in her hands - only to then realise that those hands weren't hers.

Alphys had stood up and done it, her face twisted into such an angry, hateful expression that Undyne realised she'd never, ever seen before - and was suddenly glad of that.

"How dare you," she snarled, her whole body shaking and her tail lashing with anger. "Who do you even think you are?! Do you have any idea what we've been through?!

She reached into her coat pocket, grabbed her phone, and punched in a few things. She then slapped it down on the desk in front of the mayor and pointed at the screen. "Here are some highlights!"

Undyne froze when she heard the sound come from the phone - as did everyone else, even Alphys, who then winced and began to weep quietly, one hand going up to push her glasses to her forehead and cover her eyes.

It was violence they could hear, violence and death. And above it all, the sounds of pleading, of begging - and high-pitched, delighted laughter.

It was what Alphys's monitors had recorded of the human's progress through Snowdin and Waterfall, and it was heartbreaking.

By the time Alphys had grabbed the phone back to stop it, unable to take anymore, the mayor was visibly pale and shaken.

There was a small silence as Alphys sat down, holding the phone to her chest and still crying. Undyne reached over and touched her shoulder, and she bit her lip and nodded a little, but was unable to speak.

"Those were our friends, our family. Our people," Undyne said softly, her voice wavering. "People we loved. Many who didn't fight back, either. Many who refused to."

The mayor looked at her, but not directly. "That was a child," she said, her voice carefully monotone.


Cathy was silent for a moment, before her eyes met Undyne's, their colour dark with thought. "That child was murdering people, and laughing."

"It killed my best friend," Undyne answered, her voice breaking. "He didn't fight it. He wanted peace. Just like I do."

"You killed that child."
Undyne thought, her hands now back on her knees and clenching, feeling a snake of fear unravel within her gut.

"Yes," she finally agreed, her voice breaking again. "But to be fair, I was about to die, myself."

Cathy started at this, surprising even Laurel. "You were?" she asked, sounding shocked.

"Yeah," Undyne murmured, feeling uncomfortable and trapped. "I... I was still just Captain when it faced me."

She closed her eye for a moment, feeling in that moment the myriad stabs and slices all over her skin from that knife.

"I barely survived." She looked over at Alphys, who was still pale and weeping, but who noticed and looked back. "Alphys saved me."

"I-I didn't," Alphys protested, her voice choked. "I-I just t-told you to absorb the soul. You... it was you that saved you, Undyne."

"No," Undyne replied with a small smile. "You."

Laurel cleared her throat, apparently her signal to them that they needed to stay on topic. "The fact is, Madam Mayor, that unfortunate, catastrophic circumstances have brought us all here. We're not unprepared, either; that's why I'm here, after all. I have all of the plans we need to not only begin integration, but a fair one, too."

Cathy was now looking at Alphys, who had looked away and hid her face with her hands, trying to stop crying. Her expression was neutral, but her eyes were assessing and watchful.

"I wish I could help you," the mayor said finally, and to her credit, she sounded like she meant it, too. "I wish I could say you're welcome here, but I'm sorry. I still have to say no."

Alphys's head shot up. "Why?!" she snapped.

"Because I'm only one mayor, and this is part of a major city," Cathy explained calmly. "Ebott only takes up a small section of this city, and each section has a mayor."

"So make a meeting and talk to them," Undyne suggested, her voice thin with impatience; it was such an obvious solution to her. "They'll believe you, because we're right here. And you can bet I'd go to any meeting that even says the word 'monster' just once."

"That sounds oddly like a threat," the mayor said coolly.

"Which it can be, if you choose to make it one." Undyne answered, her voice still thin. She was tired, heartsick, and desperate to get started, and yet this tiny slip of a human was able to stand in her way as though she were actually a mountain.

She wanted peace.

But she wanted it now.

She knew it was illogical and even immature to have such a black-and-white viewpoint on so grey a matter, but that was just her way. She knew what she wanted, and therefore she made sure to do all she could to get it.

She never really counted on being denied something she - and everyone of the Underground - so
clearly deserved.

"Madam Mayor," Laurel broke in, one hand fussing with the rings on her other hand. "Empress Undyne and her partner have been through a great deal, and have had to see many, many deaths. This wasn't easy for them to come here and ask for help. They could have been violent, but instead chose to speak to us. This isn't something we should dismiss."

"You make it sound like I do such a thing easily," Cathy answered, a bite suddenly edging around her words.

This interested Undyne, as now the mayor was showing actual emotion.

"As if I can make an announcement that will immediately change things. I understand you've come at a great risk, but by doing so, you have also put my people at risk."

She then surprised them. She leaned forward, rested her forehead on her hands, and sighed, a sound of deep, conflicted defeat.

"Please," she then said, sounding tired. "Give me at least a day to try and see if I can make this work. As of right now, it still stands, and you must remain Underground - with you two as the exception, for now."

She opened her eyes and sat up, suddenly becoming the woman she had been before.

"Laurel will see to your needs; apparently that's her job." She shot Laurel a sharp look, something the Minister merely smiled at calmly. "When I have come to a more definite decision, I will let Laurel know, who will then tell you."

Alphys then said, "And your co-workers?"

The mayor looked at her directly, something that Alphys didn't balk at. This also interested Undyne, seeing this show of bravery in her. Clearly, Alphys was at the end of her rope.

"That's what I need to figure out," was Cathy's calm response. She looked at Undyne, who met her gaze. "Can you accept that for now... Empress?"

Undyne kept her expression calm, but inside she wanted to crow her victory to the stars.

Instead, she said, "Alright. But remember: these are people, and we're desperate. We need your help."

"I know," the mayor agreed, and Undyne saw something in those eyes that pleased her: a glint of determination. "But now, if you'll excuse me, I must begin. Laurel, please see our guests back to their hotel, and leave them not wanting."

Laurel stood up, and Undyne and Alphys did the same. "I will," Laurel replied. She tilted her head and started walking, and Undyne followed.

Alphys hesitated, however, before she murmured, "I-I'm sorry. F-for what I showed you, M-Madam Mayor. I-I... I-lost my temper."

The mayor looked at her and said, very clearly, "I needed to see it."

Alphys nodded, then made her way back to Laurel and Undyne, disappearing into the elevator with them.
The ride down was quiet, until Laurel said, "I'm sorry."

Undyne looked at her and saw that her face was drawn, her hand now playing with the bracelet on her left wrist - some kind of silver thing with little charms on it. "Why are you sorry?"

"Because it didn't work the way it should have," was Laurel's answer, her eyes narrowed and dark.

"You had no way of knowing," Alphys said softly. "And there's still a chance."

Laurel lowered her hands and turned to them both, getting their attention immediately. Her face, usually so jovial, was so serious that it looked almost strange.

"Listen," she said, her voice strong. "No matter what happens next, no matter what the Mayor decides, I'm your ally. I won't abandon you if she does. I will continue to keep fighting for you."

Alphys gaped at her, speechless, but Undyne leaned back, her hands on her hips. "And what's in it for you?" she wondered. She still trusted Laurel, but she wanted this answer, anyway.

Laurel stared at her, her eyes suddenly lighter, and Undyne saw tears, there. "That video was real, wasn't it?"

"Yes," Alphys whispered.

"That's why," Laurel answered. "Because one of my people hurt so many of yours, and it's my job to make it right."

Undyne examined her closely, then nodded. "Okay," she said, trying to keep her voice gentle. "Thank you. We're glad to have you, Laurel."

And she slapped her hand on the human's shoulder, grinning.

Laurel staggered for a moment, surprised, before she smiled faintly and nodded. "I'm... grateful, Empress."

Undyne sighed. "Laurel, please, just call me Undyne, okay?"

Laurel blinked in surprise. "But--,"

Undyne narrowed her eye, and she shut up and nodded, her cheeks going pink. Clearly, she was pleased.

"Once we get back to the hotel," Laurel then said, "Michael and I will be staying with you on the same floor. We'll also have a team covering every entrance, so you'll be safe. Just draw the curtains and lock the windows, just to be safe."

She paused. "May I frankly suggest that you take this time to yourselves, and just sort of hide out? I assure you, the barrier is covered, and nothing will even come near you without us knowing."

"Honestly, Laurel," Alphys sighed. "All I want to do is sleep forever."

Undyne didn't like that, especially with the tone of voice Alphys used.

Suddenly, there was nothing else that mattered, and Undyne leaned down and placed her hands on Alphys's drooping shoulders, holding tight. Alphys looked up and tried to smile, but it didn't hold.

"Alphy?" Undyne wondered softly, the worry in her voice blatant.
Alphys nodded, but her lips trembled. Undyne leaned closer, touching her pale cheek, and the moment she did, Alphys's eyes filled with tears. Undyne pulled her close and held her, and Alphys clung onto her and buried her face into her shoulder.

Laurel looked down, her own eyes filling again, especially when Undyne closed her eye and bit her lip.

"I think this down time will help," Laurel said softly, touching Undyne's arm lightly. When Undyne didn't shake her off, she kept it there. "Just focus on each other, and contacting those you need to, alright? I'll handle anything in between, until you're needed - both of you."

Undyne nodded, kissing Alphys's forehead and giving Laurel a gentle smile, but stayed quiet. Alphys kept her tears quiet, but they were still audible, and still painful to hear.

The moment they closed the door, Alphys went to the bed and lay down, curling up into as small a ball as possible, hiding her face in her arms. She was still crying, both from grief and exhaustion, and couldn't stop.

Undyne hesitated, then unbuckled her belt and shrugged it off, then the tunic. Wearing only her pants and her shirt, she lay down behind Alphys and hugged her tight. Alphys sobbed softly and moved closer.

When Undyne pulled her coat off, Alphys let her, turning around to face Undyne once it was done. Her face was marred with her tears and pain, so Undyne cupped it between her hands gently, rubbing her cheeks.

"I'm scared," Alphys sobbed, closing her eyes. "I'm so scared."

Undyne pulled her close and shut her eye. "Me, too," she admitted softly. "Me, too."
Another smut chapter warning! Some of what is said in this chapter is important, but if you choose to skip it, it should be okay, as I'll likely go over it again if need be (or if someone asks). So, yeah. Smut!

When she was calmer, Alphys texted Mettaton. "There's been a slight hiccup, here. I need a favour from you. Are you alright?"

"I'm fine, darling, just slightly skittish around these uniformed pillars. I need to charge soon, though. Do I trust them?"

"Yes, trust them, and get back to the Lab. I need you to put a bunch of things into one of the dimensional boxes, so I can access them, here." She sent him the entire list, one that both she and Undyne put together, and there was a pause before he replied.

"Alright. I should be able to get this done in an hour, but then I'll be offline charging. Keep sending me updates, anyway, and once I'm done, I'll reply."

"Thank you, Metta. Please be careful."

"You too, Alphys. Stay close to your fish wife, ;)."

Alphys blushed, but smiled, putting her phone aside and hunching over. She sat at the edge of the bed, and when she lowered her head, Undyne, who had been lying down resting beside her, sat up and slipped her arms around Alphys's waist, pulling her backwards and against her chest.

Alphys closed her eyes and tilted her head back, her arms covering Undyne's. When she sighed, it was a low, yearning sound, one that surprised them both. Undyne closed her eye and smiled, resting her cheek against Alphys's warm one.

"Undyne," Alphys whispered, her voice wavering. "I'm..." She hesitated, and Undyne could feel her shaking a little. "Still scared," she finally concluded. Her claws dug into Undyne's arms.

"I know," Undyne whispered. "Me, too. I hate to admit it, but I can never lie to you."

"Never, ever lie to me, please?" Alphys answered softly, her eyes opening.

Undyne opened hers and met her gaze. "I only have once," she admitted with a soft smile.

"When?" Alphys blinked.

"Recently. When I said I'd call you back," she explained. "I said I would. But I lied, because I..." She winced. "Alphy, I was sure I was dead."

Alphys held onto her arms tighter, biting her lip. Inwardly, she wondered if she'd known Undyne had lied, and had pretended that she believed her to protect herself.
Undyne pulled her into her lap, curling around her and burying her face into Alphys's neck. "I'm sorry," she whispered.

"It's okay," Alphys promised, meaning it. She seemed to melt into Undyne's arms then, her head lowering down, her cheek resting on Undyne's chest, listening to her heart beating and feeling comforted by it.

Such a simple thing, and yet it was soothing.

"Undyne," Alphys whispered, "what if we fail?"

Undyne held her closer, placing a hand on the back of her head and rubbing gently. "We won't," she answered.

"Undyne."

"We won't, Alphys," Undyne said sharply. "We won't because we can't. I refuse to fail. It's not an option and it's not gonna happen, so we're not talking about it, okay?"

Alphys paused, then said, "But, Undyne--,"


Alphys nodded, closing her eyes and resting her cheek back over Undyne's heart, which was now racing. Undyne pulled her to her, her head rested atop Alphys's, and soon Alphys could feel her shaking.

Alphys shifted, turning in her lap to face Undyne, slipping her arms around her and hugging her. Undyne immediately clung onto her, burying her face into Alphys's neck, and Alphys held her firm.

"We have to succeed," Undyne then whispered. "We have to."

"Then we will, Undyne," Alphys replied gently, stroking her hair and loving how it felt between her fingers. "We will."

"We," Undyne echoed. "Alphy, that time you said it with no hesitation."

Alphys nodded, though she did go pink a little. "Because I no longer feel hesitation," she admitted. "I'm scared, and worried I'll screw it all up like I always do, but..."

Alphys closed her eyes. "I'm with you," she concluded. "Together, we can do anything, just like you said."

"What if I was just saying that to sound romantic and cool?" Undyne wondered weakly.

"I don't mind," Alphys replied with a small smile. "I also like the cheesy stuff."

Undyne laughed a little, something that brought a little bubble of happiness to Alphys's heart. She leaned closer and kissed Undyne's cheek gently, keeping her own cheek there with her eyes still closed, loving the feel.

"Alphy," Undyne whispered, one hand reaching up and trailing over Alphys's other cheek, so lightly that she shivered. "I... can we... I mean, if you're not too tired... can we...?"

Alphys felt Undyne's cheek burn again hers, and she smiled. In reply, she nuzzled closer and gently kissed the curve of Undyne's neck - and this time Undyne shivered.
"Undyne," Alphys whispered, "I would love to."

Undyne raised her head, her eye still wet, and reached up with her other hand, capturing Alphys's face between them to pull her into a kiss - and a deep one at that.

Alphys sat up and pressed against her, her arms going around Undyne's neck and her legs around her waist, returning the kiss with sudden, desperate need. Undyne made a low sound in her throat, and in moments Alphys found herself on her back, Undyne pressing her into the bed now beneath her, her tongue already out and eager. Alphys tightened her legs around Undyne's waist, her tongue meeting Undyne's as she uttered a sound of her own, her hands reaching up and getting tangled in her hair.

"Undo it?" Undyne gasped out, before returning to kiss her in that deep way.

Alphys slipped her fingers through Undyne's hair and grabbed the elastic, pulling it slowly and carefully out. Undyne's hair immediately got in their faces, sticking up with a bit of static, the ends a little frizzy. Neither paused, especially when Alphys reached up and slid her fingers back through it and brushing it from Undyne's face, getting her claws tangled a little, but Undyne didn't seem to mind one bit.

Undyne made a noise again, pressing her body against Alphys's harder, her hands reaching down and going to the bottom of her shirt, reaching under and brushing her fingertips over that soft, warm skin. Alphys inhaled sharply against her lips, arching her back so that her body could be as close to Undyne's as possible.

Undyne felt the same way, made clear when she suddenly pulled away, sat up, and pulled her shirt off, before reaching down and tugging on Alphys's shirt. Alphys sat up and helped her, only to go a step further and reach for Undyne's bra, tugging it off over her head. Undyne grinned and leaned back down, reaching around to Alphys's back and unhooking her bra before pulling it off.

Then, before Alphys could even make any move, Undyne leaned down and pressed against her again, so close they could feel each other's hearts racing. They kissed again, only increasing that.

Alphys slid her hands back up to Undyne's shoulders, but that was when Undyne surprised her and sat up again, grabbing her hands and moving them down over her breasts. A spike of heat lanced into Alphys then, her hands curving automatically and her thumbs trailing over hardening nipples.

Undyne leaned down, her forehead pressed against Alphys's chest for a moment, her breaths going uneven and fast, before she sat up again. Her hands tightened around Alphys's wrists for a moment, something that had Alphys opening her eyes and looking up at her for.

Before she could ask, Undyne closed her eye and brought Alphys's hands to her sides - and right on her gills. She hissed out her breath, her face reddening, and Alphys was frozen, breathless from Undyne's reaction.

"U-Undyne," Alphys whispered, too afraid to move.

Undyne nodded, her eye still closed, her loosed hair falling over her shoulders and chest in a frizzy, misshapen cloud.

"Move... move them...?" she whispered.

Alphys swallowed, then very carefully trailed one hand over one of her sides, right over her gills, feeling her heart racing. Undyne lowered her head further, her hair hiding her face and her teeth gritted and bared, her face going crimson. She growled out, clearly trying to suppress a moan, but the growl still sent heat through Alphys, anyway.
It was intense, Undyne realised, completely unprepared for it. It was completely different when someone else touched her, there (her parents or doctor came to mind) - but it was a whole new dimension, practically, when Alphys touched her. It was just on the right side of intense, bordering on overwhelming but only just.

She trusted Alphys, and realised that she could only truly convey it this way.

Alphys definitely got the message, and found her heart aching. She kept her hands still, until Undyne leaned down and placed her hands on Alphys's shoulders, gripping tight.

"M-more, Alphy," she pleaded, her eye still closed.

Alphys nodded, this time trailing her fingertips on both sides, keeping her touch as light as possible. Undyne's nails dug into her shoulders, and she groaned, her whole body swaying with Alphys's touch.

"Oh," she whispered, her voice so small that Alphys bit her lip.

Alphys moved her fingers backwards, and Undyne again swayed, making another noise. Her hips soon began to shift against Alphys's, something she barely noticed at first, but Alphys certainly did, her eyes closing, unable to keep herself from moving along with her.

"Alphy," Undyne suddenly said, her voice high and louder. "F-fuck... Alphy, I... ah... st-stop..."

Alphys's hands froze immediately, her eyes snapping open. Undyne was leaning back, her eye closed and her head tilted back, panting.

"Fuck," she repeated breathlessly - before she suddenly jumped off of Alphys and stood up, taking her pants and underwear off - almost ripping them in the process - before going back to the bed and reaching for Alphys's, who was nodding before she was even touched.

Undyne pulled them down and off, then leaned down and licked one of Alphys's breasts slowly, the tip of her tongue circling around the nipple in such a way that made Alphys gasp and arch back, her hands going back into Undyne's hair.

"Undyne," Alphys gasped out, squirming a little. "Please... I w-want... I want you..."

Undyne sat up and kissed her lips, her arms wrapping around Alphys's waist and pulling her close, before surprising her and rolling them both over, so that Undyne was on her back and Alphys was on top. Alphys tried to shift her weight off of Undyne, but Undyne pulled her down and kept her pressed flat against her, her hands reaching down and grabbing Alphys's legs to wrap them around her waist again.

Undyne licked Alphys's lips apart with a soft cry, her hands now on Alphys's face. Alphys met Undyne's tongue with her own, purring the moment they touched, and suddenly she saw no reason to hold back. She shifted her hips for a moment, then gasped when she felt her flesh meet Undyne's - who also made a sound.

Undyne pulled from their kiss and buried her face into Alphys's neck to kiss there, and Alphys started to grind her hips against Undyne's, her legs tightening around Undyne's hips.

"Oh, god," Alphys whispered, feeling so much all at once.

With Undyne, she could forget that instead of moving forward with the humans, they'd ended up a step back, and had potentially ruined things.
With Undyne, she could lose herself in the arms of the woman she knew she'd do anything for - even die.

That thought was so sudden that it surprised her, but she didn't let it linger. Instead, she just accepted it, knowing it was true and feeling fine with it.

"Undyne," she added, her voice weak. "I love you... so much..."

Undyne laughed softly. "You... say that... every time, Alphys..." she teased - though it was true. "You don't need to..."

She cried out suddenly, Alphys shifting in a perfect way. "Alphy, like that, like that!" she then begged, her breath catching.

Alphys nodded, maintaining the exact pace and rhythm that had caused Undyne to plead. Undyne moaned and started moving with her, her eye squeezed closed tight and her teeth bared again, her arms around Alphys so tight it was almost breathtaking.

Soon, Undyne started saying Alphys's name, but not just once. No, she kept saying it, almost with every breath, something that had Alphys both feeling shy and incredibly turned on.

Undyne then moaned out again, before shouting Alphys's name, arching her back and clinging to her so hard that Alphys coughed in surprise. Undyne practically writhed beneath Alphys, and from that, Alphys realised she was coming, and hard. Alphys followed her every move, hoping to draw it out - which worked, judging by Undyne's low, satisfied growl.

Alphys held her close as she calmed, stroking her hair slowly and listening to her gasping. Undyne leaned against her chest, listening to her heart racing and unable to keep a smile from her face.

"I still can't believe... I can make you do that..." Alphys admitted softly.

Undyne laughed softly, kissing her chest, right over her heart. "Oh, Alphy, if only you knew..."

"Knew what?" Alphys wondered, peering down at her. Undyne looked up, then away, blushing. "Knew what?" Alphys echoed.

"Forget I said anything," Undyne replied, but Alphys leaned back, sitting up and crossing her arms over her chest, her eyebrows going up.

Undyne sighed, her hands sliding up and down Alphys's thighs slowly, something that made Alphys's eyes soften.

"Alphy," she sighed. "I... have been attracted to you for a long time..." She looked away, biting her lip shyly, before concluding, "You've been able to do that for me for a long, long, time."

"Uh, but," Alphys answered, confused. "We've only been together barely a few days, what do you--?"

Her eyes suddenly focused, and she giggled, blushing, which of course made Undyne cover her face with her hands.

"Undyne," she blurted out between laughs, "I... h-honestly didn't k-know."

Undyne reached up and grabbed Alphys's shoulders, pulling her back down against her and kissing her, hard, causing Alphys to cry out softly in surprise - especially when Undyne pushed her hips
against Alphys's and sent a jolt into her.

"More," Alphys suddenly whispered, her hands grabbing Undyne's shoulders, her claws digging in hard, matching her move for move. Undyne of course obliged, wrapping her arms around Alphys's waist in order to do so.

Soon, Alphys was the one unable to control the sounds that came from her, her whole body feeling hot and her mind completely take over by Undyne.

It didn't take as long for her as it did for Undyne before she found herself peaking, her words mixing together, a mess of Undyne's name and declaring her love for her as she did. Undyne laughed softly, kissing her forehead as she slowly came back down, soon melting into Undyne's embrace.

For a moment, they lay that way, both breathless and blissed out, sharing a similar smile with their eyes closed.

Undyne reached up and began to trace the ridges along Alphys's head, something that had Alphys curl her tail around one of Undyne's legs in affection.

Then, Alphys shivered, shifting closer to Undyne, gooseflesh rising up along her skin. Undyne blinked, then looked around for a moment before grabbing the edge of the comforter and yanking it back, before wrapping Alphys into it like a burrito. Alphys smiled and wrapped herself around Undyne, which made them both giggle.

After a moment, still curled up together, Alphys whispered, "Undyne, I would... do anything to keep you safe."

Undyne smiled, kissing her forehead and closing her eyes, "Same here," she agreed.

"N-no," Alphys said, her voice louder. "I-I mean, if it m-meant that you were safe and I-I was... for the s-sake of everything, I would... I-I would..."

"Shut up," Undyne snapped, fear lancing through her so hard that her voice was harsher than she planned. "Don't ever say that again, Alphys."

Alphys bit her lip, her eyes opening and looking up at Undyne's. "Wh-why are you so m-mad--?"

"Because, Alphys," Undyne answered, feeling her heart clench suddenly, fear filling her. "Because if something happened to you... if something happened to you, I'd... I'd lose it. I'd lose my fucking mind. So don't even say it, okay? Just don't."

Alphys felt her own heart ache, the pain in Undyne's voice and face so raw that it hurt.

Silently, she touched Undyne's cheek and kissed her gently, first on her forehead, then on her lips, lingering there. Undyne returned it, keeping it soft, before she broke from it and pulled Alphys close again, closing her eye and sighing deeply. Alphys curled closer, her own eyes closing.

Though it was afternoon, it felt so much later, and soon, their room was full of the sounds of sleep - deep, well-deserved sleep.
Undyne slowly crawled up from sleep hours later, if she took how low the light was as indication. Her eye focused on the wall for a moment, then shifted to her side, where Alphys lay with her back to her, curled up into a small ball and looking still deep in sleep.

Undyne bit her lip, then moved close and curled up behind her carefully, hoping not to wake her - something that worked. Alphys merely stirred a little before curling back up again.

Undyne was hungry, and knew that Alphys was probably hungry, too, but something kept her from waking Alphys up or getting food for herself. Instead, she buried her face into the back of Alphys's neck, closing her eye and sighing deeply.

*I love you,* she thought to Alphys without pause, her eye stinging. *I love you so much. I trust you so much. I never want to lose you...*

She bit her lip, a sinking feeling hitting her when she remembered what Alphys had so casually confessed.

*Don't ever hurt yourself for me,* she begged Alphys silently, her eye spilling over. *Please... I'd... I'd...*

There were no words for what Undyne would do if Alphys got hurt. There were only images, sickly satisfying images that came to her at the mere thought of Alphys gone from her life. She even had the power to do it, too - and perhaps that was the scariest part.

She cried for a while, keeping quiet enough that Alphys slept through it.

Then, she dozed off again, curling close to Alphys and finding herself lulled back into sleep by Alphys's soft, uneven snore.

Alphys woke next maybe half an hour later, to the sound of her phone's text alert. She swallowed a groan, then very carefully reached over to the nighstand, not wanting to disturb Undyne, who was still asleep behind her. She put her glasses on and checked her phone.

"Doctor Alphys, it's Gerson. We haven't heard anything from you or Captain Undyne directly, and we're starting to fear for you. Mettaton assures us you're both fine, but you know how he exaggerates... so please contact me as soon as possible. I hate using these things to talk."

Alphys felt a wave of guilt crash through her, so potent she teared up. She'd been selfish, focusing only on her own needs and wants and completely allowing herself to forget everyone else.

"I'm so sorry. Please, forgive me. Undyne and I are fine. We're still working on it, so please, tell everyone that, if they return to New Home, to stay away from the Royal Palace. It's too dangerous right now. Can you trust me, sir?"

There was a long pause, before she got this back: "Yes, Doctor, I trust you. We all do. It's why we're frightened. Thank you for telling me. I will ensure everyone gets the message."

Then, "Please, little Alphys, do tell me when you and that brat with you are safe, now that you're on the surface."

Alphys smiled faintly. "I could never lie to you, could I, Uncle? Yes, I will. As long as you keep that
"Protect that brat, will you, Doc?"

Alphys swallowed. "I promise, with my life."

"If anyone can, it's you. Talk to you soon."

Alphys closed the app, placing the phone face-down on the bed for a moment, her hands covering her face. She struggled to keep quiet, but her body still trembled, and in the end, Undyne woke up, anyway.

Alphys only knew when she suddenly felt Undyne hold onto her tight, moving close enough to rest her cheek on Alphys's wet one.

"Talk," Undyne murmured gently.

Alphys did, explaining her guilt over leaving everyone behind and having to constantly lie to them in addition. She also told of Gerson's kindness, though she left out the parts about Undyne, save that Gerson wished her well.

"He knows from Asgore," Undyne explained once Alphys was done. "I would bet my spears on it. They were best friends - still are - and I know Asgore would tell him everything."

Undyne's face fell. "Damn, I miss him. I miss him, and I miss Papyrus.... hell, I even miss sans, a little."

Alphys nodded, covering her face again. She missed them, too. She felt worlds apart from the Underground, lost in an unfamiliar terrain that was practically designed to kill her. She felt alone and afraid.

Well, until she suddenly felt Undyne start to rub her shoulders. Then, she didn't feel so alone or afraid.

"We'll get back together with everyone, soon," Undyne promised gently, as she felt Alphys relax beneath her hands. "And everything will be kickass, then."

Alphys smiled, her eyes still closed. "Yes," she agreed.

Undyne pulled her close and hugged her tight for a moment, before sitting up and stretching out her back, then getting to her feet. Alphys turned around and watched her, blushing a little but also smiling, her heart pounding so hard she wondered if Undyne could hear it.

"Gonna heat up some of the pizza," Undyne said, as she walked over - still completely naked, her hair still loose and hanging down her back - to the counter, grabbing one of the boxes and tossing it in the microwave, before reading the instructions for a moment. (Apparently, even microwaves worked the same.)

Then, as the pizza was being heated up, she stood watching it, shifting her weight from foot to foot - another lovely sight for Alphys to enjoy. Undyne, being Undyne, didn't notice, which was fine with Alphys, as she was a shy about it, anyway.

When the pizza was reheated, Undyne grabbed the box, two of the cans of pop that had come with their order, and sat back down on the bed, handing Alphys a can - who first wrapped herself up in the comforter before taking it. Undyne grinned at that, leaning over and nudging her shoulder with
her own, making Alphys giggle.

"Why are you hiding?" Undyne wondered.

"I'm not," Alphys said truthfully. "I'm just cold!"

This time, they both laughed - and it felt amazing.

Somehow, when the sun went down, Undyne and Alphys managed to fall asleep again - this time, finally, for real.

Though they'd only begun sleeping together - both literal and metaphorical - they were both so exhausted that sleep came easy.

It was early in the morning when Alphys woke up, for a moment forgetting where she was and feeling fear. She froze, her eyes wide, until they took in what was around her, and she finally remembered.

On that note, she turned around on her other side - and there was Undyne.

Alphys stared at her, unable to move again. Undyne slept heavily on her side, facing her, now, her red hair tangled around her face and shoulders, partially obscuring her face. Alphys noticed that Undyne was still naked - something Undyne warned her about - though she had a sheet tangled around her legs, almost as an afterthought. One arm was being used as a pillow under her head, despite there being a real pillow beneath it, and her other was stretched out on the bed beside her. She was drooling a little, and her face was perfectly relaxed.

She didn't look like the most powerful being on the planet, that much was true. She looked like an average woman, lost in sleep, with no indication of the coils of unmatched power that hid beneath her skin.

And *I'm in bed with her*, Alphys realised suddenly, hiding up to her nose beneath the comforter, her eyes huge. *I'm in bed with her, and she trusts me to be. I've made love with her, more than once, and she's still here. She actually loves me in return, and wants to stay with me...*

Undyne make a strange noise in the back of her throat, before she shifted in her sleep and resumed as she had been, as though nothing had happened.

Alphys had jumped, then had to smother giggles. For some reason, it made her feel less intimidated, more worthy of being with Undyne, despite Undyne never indicating otherwise. If anything, Undyne was adamant that Alphys was worthy of her, despite her horrible mistakes.

*Or is it because we need each other?* Alphys thought suddenly, her smile fading as fast as her mirth. *We rushed into this, in many ways. Is it because we're both so scared, alone, and need someone, regardless of who?*

*When this calms down, how long will I have left with her?*

Because for Alphys, someone like Undyne had no place with someone like her - especially now, as Empress. Undyne may say that she intended to marry Alphys, but again, she wondered.

How much of that was just fear and loneliness? Was it actually love?

For Alphys, it was. It always had been love.
Granted, the loss and pain had certainly stripped her bare of hesitation, adding a layer of urgency when it came to being with Undyne, but her love was no less real. If anything, she'd found it increased, now, to the point that, she knew, her heart would likely be broken by Undyne once things stabilised.

But then, she smiled. Her eyes filled with tears, but they were on Undyne's face, almost comical in its repose.

*Well, okay, then. She'll break my heart. At least I can say I tried my best, and I can leave with wonderful, beautiful memories...*

She reached forward and touched one of her finger's to one on Undyne's lightly, before hooking onto it. She reached up with her other hand and brushed her tears away, still smiling faintly.

*Until then, I'm going to live with her, in happiness.*
Dreams

Undyne dreamt of memories. But they weren't hers. She knew that, but only once she woke up.

She dreamt of being small again, of being afraid, of being comforted by... someone familiar... only to have to leave and make them sad...

She dreamt of snow, of warm food and nice people, regretting wearing only a bandanna instead of a proper winter hat...

She dreamt of damp, humid air, and the patterns of reflected light off of water, of flowers that talked and feeling fearless in her shoes and skirt...

She dreamt of feeling terrified, of fear so intense that it made her want to panic, of losing her glasses and feeling blind, not even being able to write...

She dreamt of being overheated, or conveyor belts and steam, of losing her frying pan but being grateful for her apron, especially when she got hurt, and she got hurt a lot...

She dreamt of pretending to have a loaded gun (it was full of candy), only to be taken seriously and attacked, and finding herself actually trying to shoot in her last moments...

And then... she dreamt of murder. One made of her worst nightmares.

Because she saw Papyrus.

And then... she didn't...

She reached out, but couldn't feel him there. She tried to see through the darkness, but he wasn't there. She called his name, small at first, before losing it and starting to scream it, desperately, wondering if a person could scream loud enough to wake the dead...

The dead...

Papyrus is dead...!

This time, when she screamed his name, she knew nothing would happen.

But it still hurt.

Alphys woke up to Undyne screaming and immediately was awake, scrambling up and quickly reaching for her shoulders. Undyne fought her, especially when she grabbed on tight and dug her claws in.

"Undyne!" Alphys then shouted, and it was only that that managed to cut through and wake her up.

She jolted awake, her eye snapping open, full of tears but also glowing bright green. She sobbed out, covering her face and trying to curl up, but Alphys had her pinned too firmly on her back to do so.

When she realised, Alphys let go and was about to move back to give her space, but Undyne reached up and grabbed onto her before she could, pulling her down and pressing up to her close, bursting into tears that hurt Alphys's heart.
"I killed him," Undyne sobbed out, her voice broken. "I killed him, Alphy!"

Alphys held her close, stroking her hair and trying to keep her steady, though when Undyne sobbed, she sobbed with her whole body.

"You did not," she corrected firmly.

"But I did! That soul in me, it's part of me, now! And that soul killed him! I killed him!" Undyne answered, shaking her head against Alphys's shoulder.

"No, Undyne," Alphys whispered, kissing her sweaty forehead and rocking her, gently, barely aware she did either. "No, you didn't, and no, you're not. You're still you. Those souls may be a part of you now, but that doesn't mean you are them."

Alphys said this last part as clearly as possible, and Undyne looked up from it, her face agonised.

"But, Alphy..." she protested. "I felt what it thought... for brief moments, I was--,"

"No," Alphys snapped, surprising her. "That's not how it works, Undyne, and you need to listen to me when I say that."

Undyne blinked at her, silent, so she went on.

"I worked with those souls, Undyne. When I used them to extract Determination for my experiments, the monsters I injected that DT with didn't change into the soul from which it came!"

She paused for a moment, then muttered, "Well, except maybe in one case, but..."

"What case?" Undyne wondered, but Alphys shook her head.

"We can talk about that later. It's not urgent. But what I'm saying prior to it is, Undyne. None of the amalgamates changed in personality - not like that. You're not them. You're experiencing their memories because they're a part of you. It's not the other way around, okay?!"

Undyne stared up at her, speechless.

The intensity of her voice held her spellbound, and slowly, she nodded, hearing those words finally cut through her panic. Alphys's eyes, having become so bright with both tears and emphasis, immediately softened, and Undyne reached up and touched her cheek gently, brushing the tears away.

Alphys closed her eyes and leaned into her hand, and immediately Undyne reached up and wrapped her arms around Alphys again, pulling her down atop her and holding her tight. Alphys of course held her in return, one hand stroking her still-loose hair, the other around her neck.

"It's alright," Alphys whispered into her ear, and she closed her eye and rested her forehead on Alphys's shoulder. "I'm here, okay? I'm right here."

Undyne nodded. "Thank you," she whispered back, meaning it with everything she was. "Thank you, Alphy."

"I'll always be here, Undyne," she replied, smiling. "As long as you need me, I'm here."

"I need you," Undyne admitted weakly, though she didn't feel horrible saying it to Alphys.

Undyne knew it was something that she, the way that she was - especially now - should never say.
aloud, let alone admit it to the one person they trusted with everything they had.

But instead, Undyne felt like it would have been unnatural not to admit it to Alphys. Alphys had the right to know, after all.

Alphys, however, just smiled sadly and closed her eyes again. "Thank you for saying that, Undyne," she said softly. "You're so sweet."

Undyne was silent, unable to say anything to that. It sounded as if Alphys didn't believe her, and worse - as if she thought that Undyne was humouring her to make her feel better.

But that wasn't it at all.

Undyne truly needed Alphys, and not just for dealing with politics and humans.

It was because she'd finally found someone who understood her, who was unconditional in supporting her as well as loving her - all of her, even the ugly parts, many of which she'd already seen in these few short days already. And yet, Alphys was still here, still with her, and still willing to stay at her side, without even asking for anything in return, except perhaps that love, back.

And she had it. Oh, Alphys had Undyne's love, unconditional and completely.

And yet, the way she acted, it seemed as if she didn't even know it.

"Alphy," Undyne said, sitting up carefully in order to keep Alphys in her arms.

Alphys nodded, not moving away, though she did blush a little, just remembering now that they were still both naked.

Undyne barely noticed. She held Alphys by her shoulders and stared right into one eye, then the other, over and over, intently searching that gaze. Alphys looked back, her eyes still warm and soft - but also a little sad.

"What's wrong?" Alphys asked gently. "Are you okay? Is there... did I do something... wrong?"

Undyne shook her head quickly, her eye blazing, now. Alphys couldn't look away, now, even if she wanted to.

"Alphy," she tried again. "You know I love you, right?"

Alphys's eyes wavered, and she nodded a little - though if anything, her eyes looked sadder, now.

Undyne stared at her. You believe me, but... not really. You know I love you, but... something keeps you so sad...

"Alphys," she said, now, her eye narrowing and her nails digging into Alphys's shoulders.

Alphys closed her eyes briefly, her smile fading, but she didn't look away.

"I love you," Undyne concluded. "I love you, Alphys."

Alphys nodded, and she whispered, "I love you, Undyne - so much..."

"But you don't believe me!" Undyne snapped, surprising her. "Not completely! Something is making you sad, it's... Why are you sad when you look at me, Alphy?!!"
Alphys gaped at her, trying desperately to think of something - anything - to say. She did believe Undyne, will all of her heart and soul.

Yet it was also true that she was sad. And she hated that not only could Undyne see it, but that she was hurt by it, too.

"I-I-I--," Alphys stammered, before she winced again, embarrassed that she stumbled already. "Undyne, y-you... o-once y-you have everything under control, you..." She smiled, though it hurt. "You w-won't need me."

Undyne opened her mouth to protest, but Alphys went on, suddenly unable to stop.

"You don't need me now, but you j-just haven't accepted it, y-yet." Alphys looked down, her hands tangling in front of her. "You h-haven't really n-needed me e-ever since the barrier br-broke..."

"That's bullshit--!" Undyne protested.

"No, it-it's not. You... you're a legend, n-now. Once you g-get the hang of politics, you'll be a perfect ambassador for our two races," Alphys said, speaking over her loudly. "And-and it's okay, Undyne, really!" Her voice broke. "Be-because I'm s-so happy we had this, Undyne..."

Her smile vanished, and her eyes filled with tears, to her growing shame. She grabbed the comforter and buried herself into it, humiliated and unable to even look at Undyne, let alone have Undyne see her.

"We had this?! Alphy, you're talking like it's over!" Undyne moved closer, trying to take the comforter away and failing. "Alphy, come on! This is serious! We need to talk about--!"

Both of their phones chimed at the same time, startling them both; Alphys even poked her head out and stared at her phone like it was something alien.

Automatically, almost identically, they both reached for and grabbed their phones, checking them in silence.

They both had the same message: "Good morning! New day, new goals! How does breakfast in the restaurant downstairs sound? Is an hour enough time?" It was from Laurel.

They looked at each other. Then, they both nodded, and sent similar confirmations at the same time.

When they got, "Good! See you soon!", they looked back at each other in that same silence.

Then, suddenly, Alphys lunged for Undyne, throwing the comforter off and knocking Undyne down onto her back with her on top.

"Alphy--!" Undyne gasped out, but Alphys leaned down and kissed her, hard, her hands on Undyne's shoulders and her legs around her waist.

Undyne closed her eye, pulling Alphys down closer, wrapping her arms around her tight. She then whispered, "Alphy..." again, but differently, and in a way that meant so much more than just one word.

Alphys heard it, shut her eyes, and whispered Undyne's name, in a similar, but different, way - but in one that was no less understood by Undyne.

They kissed again, barely stopping to breathe - which was fine for both of them.
For that moment, in any case.
The moment she could, Alphys escaped to the shower. She felt conflicted, both afraid of talking to Undyne as well as her own intensity that she'd just shown.

Undyne let her go, but reluctantly. She picked up Alphys's phone and opened one of the dimensional boxes, going through the contents carefully before she found the section for her. She pulled from it almost everything, then shifted back to Alphys's list, though she didn't know why. She just allowed her eye to linger over the words, finding the little notes in brackets endearing. She touched one lightly without thinking, and accidentally pulled out the item she touched.

It was a note, and she realised it was something Mettaton had added to the list, snuck in between a few items. Impulsively, she opened it, never quite one for tact when her emotions were this messy.

"Alphysy, my dear, do calm your tits over this. I know it's hard to detach, and I know especially how hard it is to have feelings for people you need to work with. But when I say detach, I don't mean completely divorce yourself from your feelings - I mean detach from what's KEEPING YOU FROM ATTACHING TO UNDYNE. ATTACH TO HER, ALPHYSY, LIKE THE LITTLE LIZARD BARNACLE YOU ARE!" This was followed by a drawing of Mettaton's face winking.

Undyne quickly replaced the letter, then the phone, before she lowered her face into the pile of clothes she'd extracted to keep the sound she made from coming out too loudly.

But she trembled from her tears, soaking the sweater she'd planned to wear, too.

Oh, was her only thought.

She stayed that way until she heard the water shut off; then she scrambled to sort through her clothes as well as clean her face. The moment Alphys came out, she was standing nearby with her clothes in her arms, waiting. Alphys smiled weakly at her, looking more awake but still upset.

Undyne touched her cheek. "Hey," she said softly.

"Hi," Alphys replied, closing her eyes briefly. "It's all ready for you."

She pulled away and went back to sit on the bed, grabbing her phone as she did, her smile fading.

Undyne bit her lip and went for her shower.

Alphys felt better once she had on clean clothes; the ones she'd had before had the unshakable stench of fear and agony. The clothes she wore now at least smelt like home. She shoved the dirty ones back into the dimensional box, deciding to forget that they existed for a while.

She then found Mettaton's note and smiled at it, faintly, shaking her head. She wanted it to be that easy, but it wasn't.

Or rather, it didn't seem to be. If there was an easy way, she'd hadn't seen it, yet.

Sometimes, the most willing can be just as blind as the unwilling.

When Undyne came out of the bathroom fully dressed and with a towel around her head, and the moment her eye met Alphys's, she paused and smiled, something that had Alphys freeze in place, having just stood up. The gesture was so casual and yet so completely genuine it shocked her into
immobility - but not for long.

For some reason, at that moment, the word "barnacle" floated into her mind, and she found herself closing the distance and hugging onto Undyne tight, burying her face into Undyne's slightly-damp neck and closing her eyes. She held on tight, and in seconds, Undyne was holding onto her, too, her fingers digging into Alphys's back and shaking.

In fact, to Alphys's surprise, Undyne was shaking all over, her forehead pressed onto Alphys's shoulder.

"Alphy," Undyne whispered, her voice wavering. "I wish I had some way to prove how I feel about you to you."

Alphys smiled faintly, her eyes stinging, now. "I wish I did, for you," she admitted.

"You do, Alphy," Undyne insisted. "I know how you feel. I can see it every time you talk at me, every time you even look to me... You make it so obvious that I feel so stupid for not seeing it sooner."

"You... y-you had better things to do," Alphys replied gently.

"Shut up," Undyne growled, not liking that. "I had reasons, but they were stupid, and I wasted time. I don't ever want to waste time, again."

She gathered Alphys closer to her tighter. "I can't lose you, Alphy. Not now, not ever. And it's not just because of this stupid political mess we're in, now. Don't get me wrong: you're fucking amazing at it and I'm glad you're here to help me, but that's not why I asked you to come to the barrier with me, okay?"

Alphys was quiet for a moment, thinking about that and letting the words seep in through her mental walls at last.

Then, she whispered, "Undyne, why did you ask for me?"

"Because I love you," Undyne said immediately. She surprised herself with how easily she said it, since it had been such an ordeal to even try to say it, sooner. "And I loved you before the human even came near the mountain."

Alphys was the one shaking, now, her teeth gritted and her tears getting messy. "Undyne," she managed to get out. "You h-have no idea... n-no idea..."

Undyne shook her head. "Then tell me," she pleaded.

"Wh-what... This m-means... everything to me..." Alphys answered. "With everything th-that's happened, the-the fact that you - you, of everyone - c-care about m-me--,""

"Love you," Undyne interrupted to correct, her voice sharp. "I care about you, and I love you."

Alphys couldn't speak after that, which was okay: Undyne couldn't, either. In the end, they didn't need to say another word.

On the way down in the elevator, they held hands, tight, standing pressed close, shoulder-to-shoulder. As they went down, they spoke.

"Obviously Laurel knows something and needs to talk to us about it," Undyne said.
She felt better in her normal clothes, too, though she did admit that the robes she'd worn were quite wonderful and wanted to wear them again, soon.

*Maybe for important political things? They'd need to be washed, though...*

"Yes," said Alphys, breaking Undyne from her laundry reverie. "And we have no way of knowing if what we're about to deal with is any good, or something incredibly bad."

"At this point, it can go either way, and I wouldn't be surprised," Undyne sighed, closing her eye for a moment.

"While I always say it's best to prepare for the worst at every single turn, I want to be optimistic for this," Alphys admitted. "I want to believe that there is a place for us, Undyne." She looked up at her, her eyes sombre. "Because otherwise, what are we even doing, then?"

"We're still trying," Undyne answered calmly. "I'd rather try and try and fail miserably than not try at all and still fail from laziness." She grinned. "Why do you think I'm so crazy?"

Alphys leaned against her shoulder, smiling. "You're not crazy."

"You take that back," Undyne demanded, which only made Alphys laugh - exactly what she wanted.

There was a small silence between them, before Undyne said, her voice small, "What if it really is bad news, Alphy?"

Alphys looked up at her again and saw that she was very serious, her face falling from its previous mirth. Alphys squeezed her hand tight.

"Then we'll deal with it together, okay?" she replied gently.

Undyne looked down at her, her teeth sunk into her bottom lip, and Alphys smiled faintly in return. "We will."

Undyne nodded, her wavering, its colour glittering a little. She leaned down and pressed her forehead to Alphys's, and Alphys closed her eyes, leaning up into it.

"We will," Alphys repeated, her voice stronger, and Undyne nodded again.

But she didn't pull away until the elevator stopped.
Laurel and Michael were alone waiting for them in the restaurant - literally.

The place was empty, and marked closed, when Alphys and Undyne walked up to it. It was Laurel coming to get them that made them realise it was closed specifically for them.

"Sorry!" Laurel said, standing behind the staff member locking the door again after they walked in. "We probably didn't have to do this, but it's just to be safe. The staff is smaller, too; understandably, they're... skittish."

"I'm not," the staff member broke in calmly, turning to them with a grin, even when they looked at Undyne, then Alphys. "What? I begged to do it."

"Why?" Laurel asked, her voice a touch cold. "So you can be famous for telling people, later?"

"Nope," replied the server, gesturing to them to follow. "I genuinely wanted to see what you were like, is all."

They were led to the table Michael was now standing up from, giving them a smile in greeting.

"M-may I have... uh..." Alphys tried, then blushed, still unable to speak to a human without getting flustered. She lowered her head, still standing while everyone else had sat down. "Uh... s-some..." She smiled weakly. "C-coffee?"

Their server laughed gently and nodded, promising to be right back with it. Undyne tugged on Alphys's hand gently, and she quickly sat down, still blushing deeply.

"Don't worry," Laurel said. "Everything here is safe. We won't be seen or disturbed by anyone else, and the staff have... legally... promised to keep their discretion."

Undyne snorted out a laugh at that, unable to keep it in. "Nice," she replied, flashing a thumbs-up.

"Th-thank you," Alphys added softly. "We don't mean to seem as though we lack trust in you. On the contrary, we do trust you, Minister."

"Just Laurel," was her answer. "And just because we hit a small speed bump doesn't mean our car is broken."

Undyne actually rather liked that, and she grinned at Laurel, nodding. "Okay, then. Tell us why we're here."

Laurel nodded, her eyes flicking to their waiter for a moment, clearly deciding to wait for privacy. They placed their orders and, once the water left, began to talk.

"I got a call from the mayor's office not long before I texted you," Laurel explained with no preamble, pausing only to sip her coffee. "She would like to meet with you again. She has an idea that she'd like to run by you, and if you can, she'd like you to cooperate."

Undyne raised an eyebrow, her eye glinting as it narrowed, despite her smile. "Meaning, show up and listen to her, or expect her not to cooperate with us."

Alphys smiled at her faintly, then hid it behind her mug - a second too late, but Undyne still found her attempts at discretion cute, and smiled in return, which made Alphys blush.
Laurel, however, was nodding. "Exactly," she agreed. "I'm not even sure if she expects anything but a 'yes' from either of you."

"What's the idea?" Alphys wondered, still holding her mug up to her mouth.

"I don't know," Laurel admitted. "The mayor didn't tell the lackey I spoke to, and I wasn't allowed to ask for clarification." She propped her chin on her hand and sighed. "I tried, though. I'm sorry."

Michael leaned over to her and placed a hand on her arm, rubbing it gently and catching her gaze, before smiling at her gently. Her expression eased a little, and she sat up a bit, clearly comforted.

Alphys placed a hand on the table. "Th-thank you. Truly."

"It's my job!" Laurel replied with a smile.

"Yeah, about that," Undyne said. "Can you go into that a bit more? Because honestly, it kind of freaks me out."

Laurel smiled and nodded, looking relieved, now. "Oh, of course," she agreed. "To be honest, I've been dying to ever since I got the alert that you were here. You have no idea how hard it is to sit on a decades-old secret like this and not share it beyond a very, very tiny group of people."

Laurel sighed, and Michael made a soft noise and petted her hair, which made her smile and her eyes spark at him. "This one being one of the few," she added, placing her hand on his cheek and rubbing, something that made him smile, his own eyes sparking. "And luckily, he was already in on it."

"How does that work?" Alphys wondered.

"We fell in love through the job," Laurel replied. "While we were both still in training, we realised we had to become friends to work together once we were in charge."

Michael grinned suddenly. "Turns out we have a lot in common, as well as a lot uncommon, and we get along well," he said, the affection strong in his voice.

Undyne eyed them both closely. (Alphys was smiling at them, blushing; she loved a good romance.) "So, even though you both have a job you share in many ways, that doesn't mean you love each other any less, nor is it out of convenience or self-gain. You just became friends - then fell in love - then ended up this way."

Laurel met her gaze and nodded. "Yeah, exactly like that. When we're on the job, we're on the job - but that doesn't make us any less together."

Undyne turned to Alphys and raised her eyebrows, and Alphys blushed deeper when she noticed, looking back down into her coffee.

Slowly, she nodded, and Undyne smiled.

"Well, that's good," Undyne then said, "but that still doesn't explain how or why you're here."

"Right, sorry." Laurel agreed, lowering her hand and folding them both on the table before her, meeting Undyne's gaze right on. "Ever since the barrier was put up, the humans of Ebott have had a system in place to keep watch on it. Once time went on, and people started to forget, a small group realised that they had to make sure at least some of us would remember, as some day, the barrier was bound to come down, again, and the monsters - you - would come back. And we were right to
worry, clearly. Not only has everyone pretty much forgotten, but you also need help on this side, too." She smiled warmly. "Something I'm happy to help with."

"Why?" Alphys blurted out. "Why are you so happy to help?"

Laurel blushed, her smile twitching. She looked at Michael from the corner of her eye, and he nodded, patting her hand gently.

She sighed, then said, sounding embarrassed, "It's a dream come true."

"It is?" Undyne snorted at this. "Come on."

"No, really," Laurel insisted. "Ever since I got this job, ever since I found out about everything, all I've wanted is for that damned barrier to break. I've wanted to meet the monsters we so cruelly locked away, and I've wanted to be the one to help them, to finally bring them home."

"Peacefully?" Undyne wondered, her voice cold again.

Laurel met her gaze right on again and nodded, her face the most sombre that they'd ever seen.

"Peacefully," she agreed.

"M-may I ask...?" Alphys broke in. "D-do you still h-have magic here?"

There was a pause here, as their food had arrived and they were all admittedly very hungry.

Then, Laurel said, "No. Not in the way that I know you still have. That faded the longer we lived without you."

Alphys's eyes suddenly lit up, and she sat up straighter. "I knew it," she answered, her voice sharp.

Undyne lowered her fork, blood rushing to her face; it was the tone of voice Alphys used when she was most passionate, and it had that effect on her.

"I knew it, I knew I wasn't a damned fool, I knew I was right! Undyne!" She turned to her, which in turn had her eye go wide and her mouth tiny. "I was right! That's why we're still so magically infused, and why humans are not, even despite showing it in their media!"

She turned back to Laurel for a moment. "Something I'd love to talk to you about one day, please," she said, before turning back to Undyne. "It's why our stuff still works, too! Because we're depending on magic, and humans don't know how anymore. It's why my card worked, Undyne! And why our phones still work!"

She beamed, holding her phone up in her excitement. "This is amazing!" she concluded.

"Question about your bank card," Laurel said. "What do you call money Underground?"

Undyne blinked. "Gold," she replied. "That's what it is, duh."

Laurel looked at Michael, who looked shocked. "Told you," she said to him, before she faced Undyne again. "Here's the thing about that," she continued. "No one on the surface really uses gold anymore. In fact, it's kind of a price commodity."

Alphys nodded. "Of course it is, it's money," she agreed with a smile. "But really, you act like it's some kind of secret?"
"Here's the thing," Laurel agreed. "I have a feeling that, when you say 'gold', you mean real gold, right?"

When both Undyne and Alphys nodded, Laurel raised her eyebrows. "Okay. Don't go public with that information, yet. At all. Or ever, if you can help it."

"Why not?" Undyne wondered.

"Because that makes you rich," Laurel replied easily.

Undyne choked, and Alphys dropped her fork and spoon onto her plate, her eyes going wide.

"Go on," Undyne wheezed out, laughing a little. "Quit fucking with us, Laurel."

"I'm not!" Laurel protested. "Look, you can look it up on your own time, but I'm not kidding. Be very careful with your money, and only use your electronic-magic-whatever cards to buy things for now, okay?"

Alphys nodded, taking her seriously. Undyne was still sceptical, but she said nothing, deciding to continue to eat instead.

"How did you do it?" Alphys then wondered. "How did you keep your hopes up for so long, and not give up on it like everyone else?"

"Because we wanted to correct our mistakes," Laurel replied immediately. "It took a while, true, but we came to regret what we'd done. By that time, though, we'd lost the power to bring the barrier down - so we waited for you."

"Did you send humans to the mountain to fall?" Undyne wondered calmly.

"Never," Laurel said softly. "I actually regret that. Clearly, we haven't been watching close enough."

"See it as bittersweet," Michael said softly, rubbing Laurel's hand. "It took a lot, and involved loss, but now we're here, and it means a great deal. Let's focus ahead."

It was good advice, and they decided to take it.

"So, then, when does the mayor need to see us?" Undyne wondered. Judging from her tone, she wasn't looking forward to it.

"This evening," Laurel replied. "That way, at least you have a few hours to prepare."

"And we intend to take them, too," Alphys muttered, her tone dark. "That woman is a wall of steel."

"Yeah, well, we have cores of steel," Undyne answered with a grin. "We can do it. Whatever she asks, we can do it."

It was nice to hear, and brought the mood at the table up immensely.

They finished their meal on a good note, and parted ways, deciding to meet at City Hall and go in together when the time came along.

When they were alone in the lobby, Undyne grabbed Alphys's hand and said, "I've got an idea."

Alphys looked up at her and grinned. "Oh? Is it crazy?"
"Fuck yeah," Undyne agreed with a wild smile. She gripped Alphys's hand tight, swinging their arms a little. "Let's go."

"Wait, don't we need hoodies?" Alphys then yelped out, dragging her heels in as Undyne pulled her towards the doors.

Undyne hesitated, about to protest that she didn't care, then closed her mouth. She nodded, looking embarrassed. "Good idea. Let's get hoodies on, then let's go."

It was an amendment to the plan that ended up in their favour - to say the least.
Laurel Wickstave grew up with a special secret.

It was one she had to keep quiet, despite desperately wanting to reveal it. It only took one time she had no discretion that ensured her eternal silence after, and it was purely accidental. It lucked out in the end, but she never forgot it.

Since then, she could only talk to her parents about it, since they were of the few that knew, too. There were only about three dozen or so of them left, and nearly all who could work did so for the city.

It was how they were able to stay on the payroll for so long.

Laurel wasn't driven by her ambition, but she did have it, and it was a simple one: be the Minister who greets the monsters back.

It was all she wanted in life.

She grew up learning about her ancestor's pasts, having to come to terms with a terrible error that could not be changed, now. And with that came the need to fix it.

She'd spent years in school working for it, studying the requirements meticulously and by the numbers, learning everything there was to know about what a Minister really was.

The more she learnt, the more she wanted it, and thus the harder she worked to get there. She even spent several years researching magic and trying everything to get it to work - only to fail every time.

She didn't give up. She wanted peace.

Secrecy should have made her a wonderful, conniving liar. And in a way, it did: she was a politician, after all. She lied about her job to anyone not in on it, saying she worked administration for the mayor's office, lied about why she was even in the municipal buildings when asked by (unknown to them) co-workers.

In order to be the Minister for the Underground, one had to be able to lie, and convincingly, because your job - and everything it stood for - was on the line, otherwise.

And yet the moment she heard on her (probably not allowed but snuck in anyway) eavesdropping phone someone call someone else that there were weird people in very good costumes in the lobby, everything about being a liar suddenly seemed to vanish.

Suddenly, in that single phone call, she didn't have to lie anymore. She didn't have to hide, or pretend, or not speak about how proud she actually was to even be a part of this history as a name on the list, even if she never saw the barrier break...

Now, she could finally be what she was meant to be: The Minister for the Underground. The Minister to the Ambassador of Humans and Monsters.

The moment she called out to Undyne and Alphys, she became that Minister.
She found it suited her immediately. And she would never, ever go back.

Chapter End Notes

Brief note: Updates may get a bit sporadic over the next few days. When I can, I'll update with whatever I have, but just in case, here's an extra update today, though yes it's a little short. Sorry x___x. Things should resume normally in a day or so. Thanks for understanding :3
They did more than just put hoodies on: they also made sure that they wore sunglasses (Alphys had clip-ons), most of their skin was covered, and Alphys's tail wasn't showing (she had to wrap it around one of her legs).

"We look silly," Alphys sighed, though she reached up and tucked a strand of Undyne's hair back beneath her hood gently.

"Good," Undyne replied with a grin.

They held hands and went back downstairs, though only Undyne knew where they were going.

Alphys tried to get it out of her on the way back down, but Undyne shook her head and refused to say a word. Alphys eventually gave up, her increasing nervousness distracting her, instead.

"Chill out," Undyne advised as they walked through the lobby, both walking close to the walls and hunched over a little. "Trust me."

"I tr-trust you," Alphys agreed. "I d-don't trust people I don't kn-know."

"Then pretend it's just us," Undyne replied. "If anyone tries anything, I'll skewer them. Okay?" She grinned as they walked through the doors and outside. "Besides, I doubt they'll even notice us. No one noticed us in the lobby!"

"Sh-should we t-tell Laurel about this?" Alphys wondered, hugging onto Undyne's arm tight, wincing when the light fell on them. She felt dreadfully exposed, as though under a spotlight.

"Look left," Undyne replied.

Alphys did, and saw two of Laurel's staff walking across the street, their pace identical to their own. For some reason, it made her laugh, and Undyne grinned.

"See?" she said cheerfully, as they walked by several humans and got no reaction. "We're fine, okay?"

"O-okay," Alphys agreed with a nod. "But where are we going?"

Undyne grinned wider. "Oh, you'll see."

They stopped in front of a small, brightly-lit street-shop.

Alphys nervously looked up from Undyne's arm, her eyes widening as she took the place in. "Undyne," she said softly, "th-this is... uh..."
"Yup," Undyne replied with a grin, her hands on her hips. "Is there a problem?"

Alphys stared at her, still holding one of her arms, and her claws dug in. "Uh-uhm, Undyne... I-I don't... y-you don't h-have to..." She blushed, hiding her face again. "I kn-know you, uh... you..."

She hesitated, and that's exactly when Undyne cut in.

"Exactly," she said, holding her other hand up and poking Alphys's nose with it. "You still can't say it. After everything we've been through. So, fuck it. We're rich, right? Let's get some ridiculously ugly rings or necklaces or whatever and make sure that whoever sees them - including ourselves--," she poked Alphys's nose again, "--will have no doubt how disgustingly in love we are."

Alphys giggled, the description not so far off, if she thought about it. "Y-you don't have to, Undyne."

"I know that," Undyne replied, grabbing hold of one of Alphys's arms and pulling her closer. "But I want to. So either accept it or fuck off."

Alphys laughed, hugging onto her tight, and she returned them both, her heart soaring. She nodded against Undyne's shoulder, and felt herself hugged even harder.

Undyne then waved her hand in the air briefly, looking somewhat annoyed by it. Alphys didn't understand why, until suddenly a tall, formidable figure greeted them both as if from nowhere.

Alphys jumped, but Undyne only blinked.

"Can we go in there?" she wondered.

The human seemed to think about it, before muttering something into what looked like a radio affixed to their shoulder.

They paused, spoke again, then paused again, before raising their head and nodding. "You can, but be quick, and try not to make eye-contact."

"How am I supposed to haggle with them, then?" Undyne demanded, looking annoyed, but the human merely blinked at them, clearly not really concerned about this.

Undyne sighed and nodded, looking irritated, and the human spoke into their radio again, then paused again. They waved first Undyne in, then Alphys, before slipping into the store behind them and standing at the door.

Undyne shot Alphys a long-suffering look and decided to pretend she didn't know what was going on - Alphys along with her - especially when another human, the owner of the shop, came out from the back to greet them.

Only to freeze in their steps the moment they were fully seen, a hand to their chest.

Yet despite the fact that neither of them made any damned eye contact and even tried to hunch down further to look more invisible, there was no hiding what couldn't be covered by careful clothes.

The human - an older female - said, her voice a shocked whispered, "You're the two everyone is talking about online."

"Fuck," Undyne sighed, gritting her teeth and turning around, making sure Alphys not only went with her, but stayed as close to her as possible - something Alphys had no problem with, scared, now, herself - probably more than the human.
"No, no, wait a moment!"

They stopped, and the human at the door turned around, their hand reaching behind them and locking the door. They turned back around, and the human woman had suddenly changed her stance; she was now standing with her arms crossed over her chest, her iron-grey eyebrows raised into her curly bangs of a similar - but lighter - colour.

"Really?" she sighed. "Locking me in my own store when I haven't even said anything at all threatening, yet?"

She looked to Alphys, who was trying to hide under her hood, then to Undyne, who wasn't, instead raising her chin and allowing the light to reveal her face, her expression clearly daring the woman in front of her to threaten her.

"Monsters," said the woman, but she said it calmly, like one would say, "houseguests" or "cupcakes" - just a fact. She nodded, looking Undyne over closely, something she stood taller against, her eye narrowing and flashing a little, her grip on Alphys tight (Alphys was too afraid to look up just yet).

"I'll be damned. The real deal. Do take your hoods, off, please; if we're to conduct business, I need to look you in the eyes."

Undyne sneered at the human guard at this, yanking her hood and sunglasses off, pulling her hair free and sighing in relief. Alphys pulled the shades off, but only that; she still couldn't look up.

"Do switch that sign to closed, please," the woman said to the other human. "I don't want any interruptions."

When they did, she smiled, clasping her hands in front of her and nodding.

"Alright," she said finally, "what can I do for you, today?"

"Are you for real?" Undyne blurted out, before blushing.

Alphys placed a hand on her forehead and winced, but said nothing.

"We're monsters. You know that, and yet you act like we're your grandkids or something."

"Oh, no, my dear, I would never let my grandchildren in here, they're not smart enough, yet," the human replied with a smile. "No, no, I'm treating you as my guests, because I'm otherwise going to have to go into the back room and have a kind of hyper-manic dance-attack at my good fortune."

This was so incredibly specific that both Undyne and Alphys decided to trust her; anyone that happy about seeing monsters deserved to have their day.

"Cool, then," Undyne grinned. "I'm Undyne, and this is Alphys." Alphys peered up briefly and waved a hand, smiling weakly.

"I'm Berenice," the woman replied, shaking Undyne's hand, then Alphys's. "And it's my pleasure to be able to help you, today."

"Oh? And why is that?" Undyne wondered, smiling but with an eyebrow raised.

Berenice smiled in return, though hers was relaxed. "I watched a lot of cartoons as a kid. This is a dream come true."

"Is this city full of nerds?!" Undyne wondered, then blushed again, realising that Berenice might end
up being insulted by that. She wasn't; she instead laughed, nodding her head and patting her shoulder, and Undyne relaxed again.

"So are you here for something specific?" Berenice wondered, still smiling.

"Yes," Undyne agreed, standing up tall again. She also squeezed Alphys's hand, and Alphys blushed and smiled, returning it. "We want matching jewellery."

"To celebrate being on the surface at last?" Berenice wondered, waving her hand and starting towards one of the counters.

"N-no," Alphys murmured, surprising all three of them. "S-something else, something m-more... uh, personal."

"Marriage," Undyne added, her voice clear and calm. "As soon as we get the chance. And here, on the surface - I want us to be the first." She grinned.

"That's always you," Alphys teased softly, looking up at her and meeting her gaze. "You always have to be first."

Undyne leaned down and pressed her forehead to Alphys's, her eyebrows raised and her grin sly. "Really, Alphy? Am I always first? Always?"

Alphys went crimson, unable to reply to that, which had Undyne smirking in triumph and standing up tall again, looking incredibly pleased with herself.

Berenice laughed. "You two remind me of myself and my spouse, back when we were young - and they were still here."

She said it calmly, even though it shocked Alphys and Undyne, so it had clearly been years - but they could still hear a small note of sadness, there, regardless, despite her wide, happy smile.

"Only they were the smaller, and they were also the horniest one." She shot a smirk to Undyne, who was next to go crimson, though she did laugh and scratch her cheek a little shyly.

(Alphys wanted to protest this; she was certain she was far more driven than Undyne was. But she was already feeling too shy, so it was left unsaid.)

"What do you like?" Berenice asked them, stopping in front of the counter and slipping behind it, so that she now faced them both over it. "Silver, gold, copper? Platinum? What kind of stones do you like? And of course, how will you wear it?"

The two peered at the case in front of them, blinking at the glittering assortments in front of them. There was some gold, a lot of silver, and a smaller amount of the others. All were divided into colour-coded sections, and both slowly gravitated to the opposite side of the case, Undyne attracted to the gold and orange stones, and Alphys to the silver and blue stones.

Berenice watched them for a moment, clearly amused by this and wondering if they even knew what they did while they did it and why, but said nothing.

"That one is fucking awesome," Undyne suddenly breathed out, her finger pushed so hard on the glass that she left her fingerprint there. "That right there. That's mine."

Alphys went over to her side and followed her finger, finding Undyne pointing at a necklace, one with a pendant set in gold with a matching chain. The stone of the pendant was about the size of a
dime, and it glittered under the artificial light, sometimes looking yellow, other times looking
greenish-yellow.

Alphys realised that the stone was made like that, and she moved her head from side to side while
staring at it, enthralled.

Undyne was watching her, grinning in delight. "That settles it," she said, turning back to Berenice,
who was smiling. "Mine."

Berenice was about to name the price, but Undyne said, "No, I'll pay whatever, just let me walk out
wearing it, okay?"

"Uh," Berenice blinked in surprise. "Sure. Alright." She reached into the case and took the necklace
out, placing it on a velvet cloth for Undyne to hold as she looked it over.

Undyne smiled, a different smile, this time, and she grabbed Alphys's hand, leaning down to her
again. Alphys smiled up at her, and got a kiss as her reward, something she enjoyed very much.

As Berenice polished the necklace, Alphys tugged on Undyne's hand shyly, her face red and her
gaze averted.

Undyne grinned, allowing herself to be pulled to the other side of the case, and silently, Alphys took
Undyne's hand and placed one of her fingers over the selection she'd made.

Undyne followed it - and grinned wider, grabbing Alphys's hand and holding it tight between her
own and nodding.

It was a silver ring, one with gemstones placed together like a flower, the middle stone a light green
and the petals a rich blue. Alphys knew immediately that it was the one she wanted, and Undyne did,
too.

"Also, that one, please," Undyne said.

When Berenice was done, placing a long, velvet box on the counter between them, then reached
down again and getting the ring, handing it to Alphys for her to look over.

Alphys held it shakily, her eyes wide and her heart racing. She felt her face burn, and her eyes went
up and met Undyne's bright green one, one that crinkled up the moment she did.

Berenice gave her a moment, then gently took the ring back to clean it, assuming that Alphys would
want to wear hers out, too. (She was right.)

The look in Alphys's eyes in that moment made Undyne so happy that again, she didn't even bother
to haggle. She would have paid a million times as much just to see that glow, one she knew was
meant only for her.

And the best part was that it lingered, it didn't get snuffed out by fear or doubt. It flickered there, and
Undyne felt herself choking up a little, having to look away to mask it, coughing.

Alphys, however, had seen it, and she leaned her head against Undyne's arm, closing her eyes and
hugging it to her.

Undyne would have paid for both, except she and Alphys had a brief whisper-fight over it, both
wanting to pay and getting angry about it. In the end, they decided to pay for each other's, and were
both satisfied as a result - especially when the machine didn't even hesitate to run through their cards.
Then, after tucking their wallets away, they both turned to each other and grinned, holding the box they held out to the other. They were exchanged, though Undyne grabbed Alphys's ring, then her hand - her left, to her giddy glee - and slipped the ring on herself.

Alphys blushed, then grabbed Undyne's necklace and moved around to her back, standing on her tiptoes and trying to reach Undyne's neck. Undyne leaned down, and Alphys reached it, gently brushing her hair away and fastening it around it carefully. It hung just below her clavicle and sometimes disappeared beneath her shirt, but it didn't matter. Undyne's hand kept going to it with a smile, and that was more meaningful.

They left with Berenice's business card, and even got a hug from her and a congratulations. Undyne decided to make it her default 'spoil Alphy' place (and Alphys was privately doing the same).

Then, they hid back under their layers of clothes, were escorted out, and then were 'left alone' (meaning their guard went back to the other side of the road). With a shared laugh, they held hands and went back to the hotel, bringing more attention to themselves on the way back, but caring far less about it.

In that moment, there was nothing better.
Undyne decided to wear her robes when facing the mayor that night. She wanted to not only feel strong, but look it, and even Alphys agreed that the robes certainly had that effect on at least her.

Together, they used both magic, soap and water, and yelling to clean the robes back to as pristine as possible, and once she had them on again - especially wearing her new necklace - she felt so much better. She certainly felt ready to face anything, at least.

Alphys rummaged through both the clothes she already had and the rest of the contents of the dimensional box, but couldn't find any clothes she deemed worthy enough to wear to something that could be so important.

In the end, she decided to wear something comfortable but nice, and then throw her cleanest labcoat over it, making sure it was completely buttoned-up, just in case.

She didn't realised she was fussing with her buttons until she felt Undyne's hands on hers, stopping her gently. She looked up, and Undyne stood there, smiling.

"Hey," Undyne said, leaning down and kissing her forehead. "Breathe, Alphy. It's okay. Whatever she asks, I don't even care. I'm gonna do it, and I'm gonna kill it. And then, finally..."

She moved closer and hugged Alphys to her tight, closing her eye. "We'll be free."

Alphys nodded, clinging onto her, unable to say anything now that there was a lump in her throat.

Undyne understood anyway, giving her another kiss.

"You and me, Alphy," she whispered. "We'll finally be free."

The moment they walked into Cathy's office, Undyne could tell that something was different.

It was in the air, and it made her tense up at first, both surprised and wary by the fact that she was sensing something like that.

*I really need to read that stuff Laurel gave me about souls...* she decided right then and there.

The three of them sat down in front of Cathy, who seated herself at the same time. She looked serious and focused, though if Undyne looked closer, she could see some strain in Cathy's eyes. It was obvious that she'd come across something challenging, but somehow, in some way, still seemed to have won.

Cathy looked right at Undyne and said, with no preamble, "I spent the majority of yesterday on conference with my fellows, over cold coffee and using loud voices, but nonetheless, it's done. We
managed to agree on something. It's small, and it's not exactly what you wanted, but it's something. It doesn't mean you're welcome on the surface yet, but it could make the difference in getting here. Are you willing to listen to it, still, knowing that, Empress Undyne?"

"Of course I am," Undyne replied.

Alphys nodded very slightly, her jaw set and her eyes bright, her hands folded in her lap, and Undyne nodded in return, something that only Alphys noticed - and smiled very faintly and very briefly at.

"Very well," Cathy replied. "They would like you to prepare a speech to present in front of the media, a concise paper about who you are, what you are, and what exactly it is you want from us."

Undyne paused, waiting for more. When she got none, she leaned forward. "But?" she prodded. "What's the catch?"

"Wait," Alphys broke in, her eyes narrowed. "Do we even get to write it?"

Cathy looked over at her and sighed, looking oddly offended by that.

Laurel coughed a little, clearly trying to signal to her new friends that the question was indeed offensive, but Cathy then smiled, surprising them.

"Believe me," she replied, the smile oddly adding far more character to her face than they would have ever given her credit for having - and thus forcing them to rethink their initial conclusions about her. "That was the plan, and that was going to be the only option. We were going to feed the words to you and make sure that whatever you said would be as white-washed and bland as possible."

She leaned back, looking to all three of them, her gaze lingering on Undyne. "You've barely existed to them for two days, Empress, and already they're looking for ways to make you something they can use."

Undyne rested her chin on her hand, her eyebrows going up. She was also smiling, now, hers similar to the mayor's, as she was both surprised and impressed - and intrigued by both. She waved her other hand, and the mayor continued.

"But you see, I'm somewhat oldschool, but I'm not that oldschool," she continued, her eyes flashing a little. "I saw what you went through."

Her eyes went to Alphys for a moment, and she blushed and looked guilty, but Cathy smiled at her.

"I'm not going to let them even try to control you. I agreed to this little video display, yes, but only on the grounds that you write your own speech. We have to approve it, yes, but it would be your words and your story. And..."

She looked to the side for a moment. "Should there be edits after the final approval is made, well, who would know until too late?"

Undyne, by the end of this, was grinning at Cathy, looking as if she'd just been told it was her birthday as well as that she'd won the lottery the night before. She was absolutely blown away by this sudden side of who she thought would be one of her greatest rivals in her hopes of peace.

"If I wasn't in love with someone already," she declared, "I'd fucking kiss you, Madam Mayor."

Alphys smirked. "Go ahead, just this once; I understand - as long as I'm next."
Undyne turned to her, now, her grin going even wider as she laughed in surprise, thrilled not only by the joke, but by Alphys's ease in saying it.

"I'm flattered," Cathy replied dryly, her expression shifting a little, and her lips twitched, as though trying not to laugh, herself. "But that certainly isn't necessary, Empress." She then smiled again. "So you'll do this?"

"Yes," Undyne agreed without hesitation. "Absolutely. How long do we have and how long does the speech need to be?"

"I do find your eagerness refreshing," Cathy admitted. "I hope it's contagious, and I hope the rest of you are similar. We could use it."

She opened a thick notebook on her desk and went to the middle of it, where a pen was resting in place. "They'd like it to be no later than a week from today, and to be at least fifteen minutes long."

"Fifteen minutes is a lot," Undyne sighed.

"I can help you," Alphys offered. "I-I sometimes have issues staying within a limit..."

"And I can, too, of course," Laurel offered.

"Yes, but they have to be your own words, Empress. I can't stress that enough." Cathy said this sternly and with a sharp edge in her voice that there was no choice but to listen to her. "This is going to be your first - official - confirmation of your existence, as well as your intentions with the rest of us, and people stick to first impressions so much longer than anything else, regardless of how wrong they usually are."

(The irony of that would hit Undyne and Alphys later.)

Undyne nodded. "I only get one shot," she agreed. "I know. I'll make it count." She paused. "Thank you. For fighting for us, for fighting for the right for us to speak for ourselves. That... that's a good start."

Cathy nodded. "Like I said, I can only do so much, but I will do it to the height of my ability."

"That's all we want, really," Undyne agreed. "Again; whatever gets us to peace."

"So you'll do it? I can tell them right away?" Cathy said, looking both relieved and excited - though mildly, that has to be said. She was still the mayor, after all.

"Yes," Undyne agreed. "We will definitely be doing this. No question."

She'd both come to revel in - and deeply regret - that decision until she was dust.
They went over various ideas of what Undyne could talk about for an hour.

In that hour, Undyne and Alphys learnt a great deal about Mayor Cathy Awad, and decided that, though she certainly could be rather intimidating and standoffish, she was also a formidable politician and even better ally. She was honest, which was rare to begin with, though she admitted that she was a skilled liar and knew how to do it without even thinking once, and in a convincing way that almost always worked. While she wasn't as passionate or as outspoken as Laurel, she was slowly becoming just as important - if not trustworthy.

They all agreed that the first thing Undyne should mention - after explaining who she was - was her desire for peace. It was not only the most important and most sought-after, but also something that could be easily agreed upon. They also agreed to have the presentation as early as possible, and not in a week like planned.

The reason for the rush was obvious, and Undyne knew that, with Alphys's help, she'd be able to write something amazing in little time. They decided to aim for two days, and if they needed more time, well, they'd face it when they needed to.

"I've no doubt that this can be done, and in an effective and concise manner," Cathy admitted as she walked them to the door; it was now late, the skies darkening above, and all four were tired. "I only doubt the intelligence of the collective of people we need to educate."

It wasn't the most confident of notes to leave the day off on, but at least it was a little funny.

Laurel then invited them out for dinner with her and Michael, but without the measures as the morning, and certainly at a nicer venue.

When Alphys looked nervous about this, Undyne hesitated. The truth was, she did want to go out. There was an entire city before her, and she'd only seen a small amount of it. She wanted to get to know not only this new place, but a place she wanted to know second-nature, soon.

Her eye fell on Alphys again, and she smiled faintly. Oh, she had plans for the surface, and much of them were selfish.

But she also had more thoughts about how to make this work for those still waiting Underground. She didn't want to take over Ebott. She didn't want to move people out of their homes. She was certain that a lot of the people she knew would be fine settling outside of the main stretch of the city, instead favouring areas closer to greenery. She knew that if she made it clear that she wanted that instead of taking over, then maybe it would be easier to negotiate...

"Undyne," Alphys said softly, snapping her out of her reverie so suddenly she jumped. "You haven't answered, yet?"

"Uh," Undyne replied, scratching her cheek. "I want to go, but I also wonder if it's even safe, this soon. And not just for us, but for you, Laurel. You're bound to be known by the media by now, right?"

Alphys blinked, then grabbed her phone and hunched over it.

Laurel saw this and blushed, but merely cleared her throat and said, "It doesn't matter, does it? I
mean, they're gonna talk about me, soon, eventually, so if they start early, does it matter?"

Undyne raised an eyebrow at her. "You just answered me when you were trying not to."

Laurel sighed. "Yeah, well, like I said, does it matter?"

"Oh," Alphys squeaked out, her hand over her mouth, the other holding her phone shakily. "L-Laurel, they're being really awful to you. I just t-typed in your name and so much hatred just popped up." She winced. "Humans have no filters online, do they?"

"Be fair, Alphy," Undyne said with a grin. "We're just as bad. Aren't we? Especially with things that were disappointing?"

Alphys glowered at her, blushing, but didn't answer that; it was true - especially for her.

"So, dinner?" Laurel offered again.

Undyne hesitated, then said, "Uh, well, honestly? I think... we should stay in."

Alphys looked up at her and nodded, though Laurel looked surprised. "How come?" she asked.

"I wanna work on that speech," Undyne admitted. "It's been interesting, and distracting, and all that, but now, it's time to focus. I want to get this done, but I can't expect anything done if I don't even begin."

"Would you like my help with it?" Laurel wondered.

"At this point? No," Undyne said. "I think, at this point, Alphys and I can handle it."

When Alphys nodded, Undyne grinned.

"Alright," Laurel agreed. "Keep me posted, will you?"

They agreed, and parted ways.

The way back was quiet, until Alphys said, very softly, "Wh-what will you write, Undyne?"

Undyne was staring at the wall of the elevator, her eye unfocused but clouded in thought. She had been thinking just that, and looked down at Alphys in mild surprise, who smiled.

"You always wear the same look then you're concentrating," Alphys admitted shyly.

Undyne smiled a bit, but it faded when she thought back to the question. She thought about it.

Who we are and why we're here, she knew. But also why we deserve to stay here.

Because we do. Especially now.

"Well, I wanna take time to write a list. And while I do that, I also wanna go over all of those notes Laurel gave us about soul absorption." Undyne sighed. "There's so much I don't understand about it, and I really, really need to."

They left the elevator and walked to their suite, making sure it was locked before they sat down on one of the couches and relaxed for a moment.

Then, Undyne opened her eye and said, "Let's get to work."
Alphys nodded and got to her feet, going over to the desk and grabbing the hotel stationary, before giving it to Undyne and sitting down beside her again.

Undyne paused, then gave it back.

"I need you to write down what I say," she explained. "I'm just gonna babble out all of the ideas in my head, you scribble them down, and after we'll see what we can do."

Alphys nodded seriously, crossing her legs and sitting up, the pen poised over the paper carefully.

Undyne stood up, her hand to her chin for a moment, before she started pacing in front of the couch, slowly and surely. She made several rounds before she started talking, but as soon as she did, Alphys started writing, and Undyne couldn't stop.

She honestly had no idea what came out of her mouth at the time, but it was a lot. Alphys had to stop her a few times so that she could catch up. But even when she paused, she still didn't lose her place, and kept going.

She did eventually run out of words, and by then, it was getting late. Undyne paused for a moment.

"And..." she said, then paused again. "Huh."

She smiled, especially when Alphys looked up at her questionably. "I'm done."

Alphys hesitated. "Done-done?" she echoed.

"Done-done," Undyne agreed, making the point clear when she came over and sat down beside her.

Alphys immediately relaxed, the pad of paper and pen going loose into her lap, her hand slowly flexing. Undyne laughed.

Alphys then handed her the notes, something she frowned at. She held them up close to her eye, then away, then tried to turn it several ways before giving up and looking at Alphys in frustration.

Alphys blushed and took the papers back. "Okay, hold on, let me write them more legibly."

As she started, Undyne got up and thought for a moment. "I'm starving," she admitted. "Do you want leftover pizza or something new?"

"Anything is fine," Alphys answered, sounding distracted.

The answer made Undyne sigh, and she decided it was easier just to have leftovers, so she went to heat them up.

By the time she was done, Alphys was halfway through. Undyne picked up a sheet and glanced at it. It was still scratchy but she could read it.

"Alphy, there's no way I said any of this," Undyne protested after a moment, holding the paper up and glaring at Alphys, who looked up from the other papers.

"What are you talking about?" Alphys said, blinking up at her in confusion.

Undyne held the paper up and read from it. "'Major substantial and finite outcome overall: peace above all else, negotiations pending on to what that pertains.' She raised her eyebrows at Alphys. "I may have meant it this way, but there's no way in hell I said it."

Undyne sighed, looking over another sheet. "This doesn't sound like me at all," she admitted.

"It's not," Alphys answered, going back to her notes. "At least, not the you that you think everyone else thinks you are."

Undyne made a face. "Thanks?"

"No, I mean..." Alphys sighed and lowered the pen, turning to Undyne with her full attention. "These notes are mine, the thoughts are yours, so of course together it's not going to sound what you're used to hearing yourself sound like," she explained.

Undyne nodded.

"This, right now, is a collaboration. Once you get the exact feel of what you want to say, derived of these raw thoughts and worded in your own way, then it will sound like you."

Undyne chewed on her lip for a moment. "Can't it be a collaboration the whole time?"

Alphys hesitated. "You would have to say things outside of your comfort zone," she admitted.

"Like what?"

"Like, things similar to what you just poked at me for," Alphys replied, waving her pen at the paper Undyne held. "It would mostly be the way you'd say it, but there has to be a sense of formality to things, especially when speaking to large crowds of people that you need to keep quiet long enough to hear all of what you have to say."

Undyne stared at her in unexpected surprise. She hadn't thought of that at all. She'd merely thought that by saying whatever she wanted to say, in the way she wanted to say it, would be enough for something like this. She'd had to go to events like this with Asgore, where they would have to hear him present something stuffy and boring, and the way Asgore always presented it made it sound like it was from his own heart and out of his own words: formal if a bit old-fashioned.

It never occurred to Undyne to wonder if he'd even written that speech, let alone dictated thoughts for it.

She closed her eye for a moment and sighed, then opened it and smiled. "Alphy, I'm glad you're here," she admitted. "Otherwise I'm pretty sure my first speech would be a disaster."

"No," Alphys replied, though she did blush a little. "Just a little unpolished and misunderstood, perhaps. But I want you to be understood, Undyne. So I want to help you."

"And I need your help," Undyne agreed, though she also blushed at the idea of needing anyone's help for something like this.

"Alright, keep going. I'll eat and study as you do." She nudged Alphys's untouched pizza. "Eat that or be made to eat it, Alphys."

Alphys took it without looking and did just that, making Undyne laugh, and happily.
By the time Undyne realised that Alphys had fallen asleep, she was halfway there, herself.

She grabbed Alphys's phone (which was flashing quite urgently), ignored all of Mettaton's texts save one, opened that one, and replied, without reading it, "Chill out, Diva, we're fine. We're just working and about to go to bed. Alphys is fine; she's protecting me just fine :D. U."

She then tossed it on the coffee table, got up, and stretched.

As she did, she noticed that night had indeed fallen, and if she looked out of the window around the curtains, she saw the entire city lit up, but only a few cars on the road, and no people on the sidewalks.

It was a strange sight, and it reminded her of that walk to New Home.

On that thought, Undyne went back to the couch and grabbed her own phone, typing in a text: "Are you there? Have you reached there, safely? Are you gonna be okay?"

She then tossed it back; she knew it was unlikely she'd get an answer this late, but it was good to try.

She paused over Alphys for a moment, who was curled up in a ball on one side of the couch, the pen and notepad still in her hands but loose. Undyne took them away, then scooped Alphys up into her arms. Alphys stirred just a little, then relaxed again, not waking up even when Undyne lay her down on the bed and took her glasses off.

With a smile, Undyne touched her cheek for a moment, then got undressed and slid in beside her, curling up into a ball alongside her.

In minutes, she was asleep.

Undyne woke up right away, her eye snapping open as she sat up and reached out with her magic, calling a spear into her hand. Slowly, she stood up, her eye flicking around the room.

Everything was dimly lit by the glow of her spear, but she couldn't see anything amiss. Even Alphys was still sleeping soundly.

What woke me up?

She made her way around the suite in that slow, careful way, her eye glowing through the darkness and not from her spear's reflection.

Then, from the last corner she was going to check, a voice whispered, "put some clothes on, captain."

The moment she recognised that voice, the spear went out, plunging them into darkness again (though her eye still shone through it). Though this sadly wasn't the first time either of the brothers had seen her naked, it still wasn't something any of them had enjoyed.

Hurriedly, she grabbed what was closest - Alphys's labcoat, again - and threw it on, before she lunged for the corner.

Her hands met bony shoulders, and she shook sans, hard. "What the fuck is wrong with you?!!" she
whisper-yelled. "I could have killed you! Someone might've seen you! What the fuck are you doing here?!"

Before he could answer, she hugged him, surprising them both.

"Fuck, sans," she blurted out, shutting her eye, tight. "So much has happened since I saw you, last."

"I know," he agreed, hugging her back for a moment before pulling away. "Look at you. I barely recognised you."

She frowned, reaching up and touching her face for a moment. "Am I really that different?" she wondered. Alphys had said so initially, but hadn't said anything since.

"In looks and in magical feels, yeah," he agreed. He peered around her. "Should we wake her up?"

"I'm up," Alphys answered, sitting up slowly and glaring in their direction. "What the hell are you doing here?" She shoved her glasses on and turned one of the lamps on, before she got out of bed and shuffled over to them, her tired eyes focusing on sans.

"You're not happy to see me?" he wondered with a smile, one she rolled her eyes at.

Undyne peered at them both; they knew each other, true, but their banter right now was more like that of old friends.

"When is it ever good news when you're here, sans?" Alphys replied with a shrug, but it was followed with a small smile. She held out her hand, and he took it - no tricks - and held it for a moment. She squeezed it with a bigger smile, and once he saw that, he let it go with a pat.

"You know sans already?" Undyne wondered.

"Doesn't everyone?" sans replied, while Alphys blushed and looked away for a moment.

Undyne narrowed her eye at him, and he oddly flinched a little.

"Don't look at me like that, undyne," he pleaded. "You have no idea how disconcerting it is."

"Yes, I do," she snapped. "Which is why I'm staring at you that way." She shifted her gaze to Alphys. "Tell me later?"

Alphys swallowed, then nodded, and she sighed.

"Okay, then, whatever," Undyne concluded. "Why the hell are you here, sans?"

"You sounded so happy to see me, too," he said sadly.

"And I am," Undyne agreed honestly. "Truly. But I'm also nervous, because like I implied: if you're not behind a counter, you're bound to be about to give bad news - or be it."

sans sighed. "Sort of," he agreed. "But it won't last. Honestly, after I do give you my news, I want to help out."

Undyne and Alphys blinked at him, sharing the same surprise. "You want... to help?"

sans's eyes narrowed, the pinpoints darkening, though his smile remained. "You think I'm gonna be some depressed sad sack, hiding underground, just because my brother died?" he wondered.
Both of them winced, but he went on, anyway.

"I'm not gonna dishonour his memory that way, especially since he really believed that everyone could be good. So I'm gonna see if he's right, and the only way to do that - as well as honour everything he was and what he died for - is to be at your side and helping you, here on the surface." His eyes were bright now, his hands fists at his sides and shaking.

Alphys placed a hand on his shoulder lightly, but he didn't react to it.

Undyne looked at him closely, still speechless. What he was saying was absolutely true, and it shamed her.

_Papyrus would keep believing in everyone, wouldn't he? Even if he had survived, he still would believe in people, especially humans._

_I miss you so fucking much, Papyrus_, she thought, swallowing back a ball of tears. _But I'm still here, and so is your lazy brother. I'll take care of him as best as I can for you. I promise._

"Okay," she said softly. "I'd love your help, sans. Thanks. What's the news?"

Sans nodded. "Thanks. And, it's bad news. Ready for it?"

Alphys took Undyne's hand, and she nodded. "Shoot."

"Most of the monsters are starting to get back to new home, and it's only a matter of time before someone gets to the castle," he said right away, his eyes on Undyne's. "I don't know how long we can keep lying to everyone about the barrier. When I left, people were talking about going there to check the barrier and make sure you're even alive. I tried everything I could, but they never take me seriously."

"Gee, I wonder why," Alphys muttered.

"In any case," sans said, shooting her a glare. "You need to visit the underground again, soon, and tell everyone the truth. Otherwise they're gonna get impatient and start taking it into their own hands."

"The last thing we want right now, especially when we haven't even managed to get the right to even be here," Undyne sighed, rubbing her forehead. "Fuck," she growled. "What the hell am I gonna do? I wish I had a clone!"

"You have us," Alphys reminded her gently, nudging her with a small smile. "Just tell us what you need."

"I agree with you, undyne," sans added. "They need to see undyne, not one of us. They want to make sure she's okay, and that they're safe. They've only had rumours, because no one can figure out how to use the damned video machine to watch the surveillance footage. It's why I'm here: to get you back faster."

"But we need to stay here and work on things with the humans," Undyne protested. "I need to make sure we can even give them news before I get back there."

"Again, something I know, and something I'm here to help you with. I'm not saying go back now and fuck the humans," sans said dryly. "I'm saying let's do this fast, and then go back and fuck the humans."

"C-can we not fuck any humans?" Alphys cut in, her voice flat. "We want to maintain peace if -"
once - we get it. By pissing off the moment we start, we're showing ourselves indecisive and careless. No, sans, we can't go back, yet. I don't know when we'll ever be able to go back, but it's not going to be anytime soon."

Alphys sighed. "I need to figure out a way to do this." Her tone went soft and low, the tone she used when ruminating over something important. "I need to find a way to cross the signals. Our phones can do it; I've already proven that with my own, since I used it to look up info on Laurel, but..."

"Alphy, come back," Undyne begged, waving her hand over her lover's eyes, which had them blinking - and Alphys blushing.

"Share with us, so that we can help?" Undyne concluded.

"Mettaton could help," Alphys blurted out right away, her eyes wide. "If I give him the right coding, and he can get to the Lab and write it in...!"

She darted away from Undyne and sans, grabbed her phone, and sat down on the bed, hunched over her phone and typing furiously, her eyes blazing and her tongue out.

Undyne was gazing at her fondly without realising it - but sans did. He smirked at her, nudging her gently. "you and the doc?" he asked softly. "finally, right?"

She went pink, but nodded, smiling shyly. "Finally, yeah," she agreed, her hand going to her pendant. "It's so weird, huh? Everything was falling apart, and some of it has forever, but there was actually some good to come from it - and soon to be even more good." She glanced at him. "Did you predict that ever happening?"

sans laughed. "i never predicted any of this happening, not even the slightest," he admitted, his hands in his pockets. "but we gotta make due."

There was a pause, before Undyne had to ask: "Did you get it all?"

sans nodded, his eyes darkening. "yeah, as much as i could. some will still be left there, but most of it i managed to get."

"I want to scatter all of it here, on the surface. Once we're able to have homes. Are you okay with that?"

"more than okay, captain."

They glanced at each other, smiling faintly, sharing that deep pain that varied between them but hurt nonetheless. They were different in many ways, but their common ground had always been how much they loved Papyrus. Now that he was gone, one could argue that there was little reason for them to even continue to try to be friends.

Except I know that Papyrus would insist I 'look after sans', Undyne thought. And I'm sure he'd say something similar to sans. Besides, sans is lazy, but a good guy. I could use his help, and know I won't regret it.

"Got it!" Alphys suddenly shouted, her face thrilled as she held her phone up in the air. "I have the plan!"

She turned to Undyne and sans, who blinked at her in surprise.

She beamed at them. "Trust me, it's a good one."
It was.
"We can splice the signal," Alphys finally explained.

She was sitting on the couch, sandwiched by sans and Undyne (who was now wearing proper clothes), as all three hunched over her phone and looked over what was displayed there: a confusing, multi-layered interface that only made sense to Alphys.

"I'm able to get signals for the internet from both Underground and on the surface at the same time. My phone can do it because..." She blushed, then coughed, making sans and Undyne smirk over her head for a moment. "Because it can," she concluded. "But it wouldn't be hard to have everyone else's phones in the Underground be able to do the same."

"which is where mettaton comes in, i assume," sans replied. "he'll be able to do it from the lab?"

Alphys nodded. "Exactly. He can change the internet signal - which originates from the CORE but is wired to be accessed from the Lab - in order to broaden what it receives. I've already written the code for him, and all he needs to do is write it in when I tell him to." She paused. "I don't think we should give it out, yet."

Undyne frowned. "Why not? Wouldn't it be better for everyone Underground to know what's going on, especially on the surface?"

"too overwhelming," sans answered. "look at what's happened in two days. if we give them access to the humans' information dump, they're only going to be more afraid. i agree with alphys."

"Me, too," Undyne admitted. "That makes sense, put that way. We should give the code out or whatever just before I go online for my presentation. They're bound to film it live right?"

"Absolutely," Alphys agreed. "Why wouldn't they? No matter what happens, it's history. I think your idea is a good one, Undyne."

"same," sans replied, shooting Undyne an amused smirk at that, which made her roll her eye.

"Which brings us back to that," Undyne sighed. "My presentation. We fell asleep before we finished even the introduction, Alphy."

Alphys blushed. "Yeah, sorry about that."

sans peered over and looked at one of the windows. "do you two need more sleep? i can piss off if you need to."

"There's no way I can fall asleep, now," Undyne admitted, and Alphys was nodding in agreement, though she rubbing her eyes a little. "Should I order some breakfast?"

"Yes, please," Alphys agreed. "I need coffee."

For a moment, they allowed such a simple thing as hunger and waking up to have their full attention. During the space between, they kept it light, sticking to things they knew were safe, like the surface, their hopes, and what they expected the reactions from others to be.

However, once a guard knocked on the door with their food (showing mild concern upon seeing sans until Undyne reassured them that sans was fine), that mood dissipated, and they got back on
sans was reading over Alphys's notes as he ate, his eyes growing brighter the more he read. He seemed to like what he found upon the pages, which oddly flattered Undyne, though why, she didn't really know. Maybe she just wanted validation.

Or maybe she just missed Papyrus's constant and unconditional support in everything she did.

But either way, it was important to her.

Alphys offered him the introduction, and he took it, reading it with quiet interest.

When he was done, he nodded. "I'm hardly an expert," he admitted. "But this sounds pretty damned good, Undyne."

She grinned. "Of course it does, it's mine," she replied, but inwardly she was pleased.

"How do you plan to go on?"

She told him, picking up several of her notes and reading off of them while she explained. He listened, nodding, and in the end, did only that as she and Alphys started to work on the speech again, only offering words or opinions when asked. Instead, he seemed to watch them carefully, almost thoughtfully, as though trying to figure something out that was just outside of his reach. It was odd to see, but Undyne didn't let it sidetrack her.

By the time they'd finished the first part, it was morning in full and they were starting to feel tired again.

"Ugh," Undyne sighed, leaning back and closing her eye, as Alphys dropped her pen and hunched over, resting her forehead on the pad of paper. "I'm starting to forget what language means."

Alphys nodded, holding up a hand and giving her a thumbs-up in agreement.

"In that case," sans said, getting to his feet. "I'll let you guys rest. I've got some stuff to look after, anyway."

Alphys got up after him. "I'll walk you out."

At the door, sans leaned close to her and said, very softly, "Before you ask, no: I can't."

Alphys swallowed, her eyes closing for a moment. "Are you sure, sans? If anyone could, it'd be you. You're the only one who's actually seen anything that would prove it true. There's absolutely no way?"

He shook his head, his eyes dim. "I tried everything, Alphys. Nothing worked. We're stuck here, whether we deserve to be or not."

"Fuck," she whispered, closing her eyes again. "Okay. Thank you. When will you come back?"

He smiled faintly. "When you need me to."

"How disconcerting." She raised her eyebrows at him, and he smiled, stepping out and shutting the door after him.

Alphys hesitated at the door, then turned around and went back to Undyne, her posture clearly betraying her emotions. Undyne blinked at her, then stood up and took her hand, and she looked up.
“Hey,” Undyne said gently, "you okay?"

"Yeah," she agreed. "I'll tell you later, when it's more important. For now, let's just rest."

Undyne nodded, but kept it in the back of her mind, so that she'd never forget.

On the same floor, some ways away from the suite Undyne and Alphys shared, another suite was quietly invaded.

Both Michael and Laurel were already awake, as it was still morning and they both still had jobs to do, even when not with their new monster friends, so when sans suddenly walked into their kitchen from seemingly out of nowhere, they were clearly surprised to see him there. Both looked up and froze, Michael at the desk and in front of a laptop and Laurel in one of the chairs with her tablet in her lap as she ate, both still in their pyjamas.

"sup," sans greeted, stopping in the doorway, his hands in his pockets.

"Uh. Hello," Laurel greeted, getting to her feet and holding her hand out. sans took it and shook it firmly, his eyes not leaving hers, and he noticed that hers didn't waver, either. "How... how did you get in?"

"i managed," he replied with a shrug. "i'm sans the skeleton, a friend of undyne's."

Laurel hesitated. "You don't mind if I ask her later, do you?"

"it would be stupid not to, don't you think?" he replied cheerfully. "but for now, let's chat." He looked over to Michael, who was staring at him, still. "shall we sit and talk for a little bit?" he concluded, winking.

Laurel nodded, waving him over to the small table that the suite had, and they sat around it. Beneath the table, Michael had his hand on Laurel's knee, his fingers digging in a little, and she had her hand over his, but their faces betrayed none of this. They simply looked at sans expectantly, and after a moment, he smiled wider.

"y'now, for someone who was invisible in her government until now, you certainly know the tricks of the trade," sans said.

Laurel shrugged. "I believe in what I'm doing," she answered. "Not many of us can say that. And if I get fired tomorrow, that doesn't stop me from being your liaison - that's up to the Empress." She narrowed her eyes, emphasising this point.

"that's cool," sans agreed, pulling his hands out of his pockets and putting them behind his head, leaning back a little in his chair. "you should know that i'm friends with undyne, and alphys. i also know the - former - king. things i want you to verify, so you know i'm not full of shit right away, and thus am telling you the truth when i say what i say next."

Laurel raised her eyebrows, as if to say, Then say it, already.

"my brother was killed by that human," he said flatly, his eyes darkening a little. "murdered in the blink of an eye, while trying to talk that kid back into sanity. so one could say that i may not like you humans very much right now."

"Understandable," Laurel admitted, her eyes darkening.
"but," he added, closing one eye. "that doesn't mean i don't want to see this happen."

"And what do you think 'this' is in this case, Mr sans?"

He made a face. "just sans, and, exactly what undyne wants: peace. it's the only option. but there's the rub, right?" He lowered his arms and rested them on the table. "peace. it doesn't come easy, even less so for you humans. you can't even stop fighting each other for more than a day. how would you react when suddenly you have hundreds of new targets?"

Laurel inhaled sharply, her eyes narrowing even more. "So you think peace is impossible?"

sans laughed dryly, the sound lacking any kind of humour. "lady, i know it is."
Laurel leaned forward, her eyes suddenly blazing. She smiled thinly, her hands clasped together and holding her chin up. "Is that a threat?" she wondered softly.

Sans's eyes dimmed further, though he never lost his smile. "That depends on you and yours, doesn't it? We sure as hell didn't ask for this. You forced us to. You really think that, with people like that child existing alongside you, peace is possible?"

"So then, you feel Empress Undyne will fail," said Laurel.

"No, I'm saying she'll try everything she can not to, but you humans will make her fail, simply because of who and what your race is."

"And what of those from a race who kills children?" Laurel shot at him.

Sans snorted. "Really, minister? How high is that horse you're sitting on?"

"How high are you on yourself, right now?" Laurel snapped, losing her temper. "No human is perfect, just like no monster is perfect. If you're not here to help Undyne or myself, why are you here?"

"Oh, I'm gonna help," Sans corrected calmly. "And I'm gonna use my whole ass while doing so. But I don't expect any success."

"So why are you bothering?" Michael wondered.

"To send a message," Sans replied. "To make sure you know - especially you, minister - that not all of us trust you. And that most of us won't trust you, no matter what."

"Thanks," Laurel said flatly. "You can go now."

Sans eyed her for a moment, expecting something else added to that, but Laurel simply glared at him in silence.

He was impressed despite himself; she still knew how to play this game.

He shrugged, stood up, and left, actually using the front door.

Michael and Laurel glanced at each other, silent for a moment.

Then, Michael said, "That's kind of a buzzkill, huh?"

For which he was hugged and kissed many times, despite it being true.

Undyne woke up before Alphys, but she didn't get out of bed. Instead, for a moment, she just kept lying there, on her back, her eye open and staring up at the ceiling, going over the various cracks and nubs that the plaster displayed. Her mind was so full, and she couldn't do anything else but think, one hand absenty playing with her necklace.

Everything is going okay, she thought to herself, biting down on her lip. So far. For what it is. It's not perfect and never will be, now that so many are dead.
I wonder if I'll ever be able to accept that Papyrus is gone... I don't want to. I don't want to think about it. I don't want to even hear about it. But that doesn't make it any less true...

She sighed, then reached over to the nightstand and picked up the tablet Laurel had loaned her there, turning it on and opening one of the files.

This one was titled, "Seven-Souled Monsters, Part One." She hesitated, then started reading.

For starters, she learnt, it was rare that, even before war broke out, that any monster would absorb a human soul (and apparently vice-versa; she hadn't known that humans were able to absorb Boss Monster souls back then); there was little reason for it, as they were all friends, and doing so was seen not only as needless, but offensive, in a way. There were only two documented cases of soul-absorption, and only one had more than one. In both cases, the monster wanted revenge on humans, and in both cases, they were killed only through manipulation and cunning.

Apparently, it was possible to kill a monster with a human soul - it just wasn't easy. The more souls a monster had, the stronger they became, as if they were layers of armour.

But even armour can be pierced.

The two monsters had been killed violently, true, and it had taken a great deal of people to do it. But at first, it seemed as though the monster could deflect attacks, or even absorb them and fire them back - and this included things like arrows and spears as well as magic.

Theoretically, then, a monster with the proverbial seven would be invincible, a kind of monster that went above and beyond power - akin to a god, like Alphys said. They had the power to destroy the world with seven - or more - souls, and usually in a way that would make it happen in the blink of an eye, or a flash of light.

"Such a creature," Undyne read, her heart racing, "could be subjected to the most violent of torture and still live. Even pierced in the heart or the head, they would still live, the stolen souls acting as a powerful, indestructible blanket. One would have to repeatedly attack the heart or head to succeed in killing them."

That power could be used for good, but never was.

No one knew what a monster with human souls could do with them that would be good, because none had stolen them for that reason.

No one knew what a monster with seven souls as well as good intention could do.

That much was clear.

Well, Undyne thought, closing the tablet and setting it aside again, her lips curving into a determined smile. I hope Laurel's taking notes, because we're gonna find out with me.

That much was obvious to her. She wanted power to make things work, and had been given it. It wasn't easy, wasn't going to ever be easy, but she knew that and still wanted peace.

She was going to be the one to find out just what a monster with human souls can do for good - or she would die trying.

Otherwise, what's the point?

Her phone suddenly chimed, and she blinked in surprise. She grabbed it - then jolted and sat up
quickly, her hands clutching the phone tight. She'd gotten a text message, and with excited, hopeful thoughts, she opened it quickly.

"I am here, safe. I am staying in the old Palace for now. Tori has been scattered to rest. Now I am here."

It was from Asgore.

Undyne closed her eye for a moment, feeling a relief so intense it hurt. She realised then that she hadn't expected an answer at all, and had actually feared the worst: that when faced with the amount loss they now had, Asgore wouldn't be able to cope.

But then again, she thought, this is also the same monster who was able to stay on his feet after both of his children died in one night. This is the monster who stayed on his feet after taking the souls of not just one, but six human children.

She was embarrassed by the amount she'd underestimated his strength. He deserved better than that, especially from her.

"I'm so glad to hear from you, Dad," she texted, her eye welling up with tears as she did. "You have no idea how much. I miss you."

There was a pause before she got a reply back, and she realised that it was probably because Asgore wasn't used to texting. "I am fine. How do you fare on the surface? Are you alright? I assume at least a little, as you are contacting me right away, which is nice. What has happened since I left you?"

Undyne smiled and began to type, her thumbs flying over the small keypad so fast that she made mistakes but didn't bother to correct them - she knew Asgore would understand. She told him almost everything: breaking the barrier, the souls remaining within her, the dreams, the humans they'd encountered...

She especially enjoyed telling him about the Minister, and how there were humans who were already on their side.

She only left out the details about Alphys, though why, she didn't know.

It ended up being moot, though.

When she was done, there was another long pause before he replied. "That sounds wonderful! Golly, I never expected things would turn out so well so far. Granted, I do have some trepidation over the fact that they want you to make a speech, and that it decides pretty much everything, but other than that, it seems promising. I knew you could do it, my dear."

Undyne covered her mouth at that last line, closing her eye in order to keep her reaction as quiet as possible. She had almost started sobbing, something that she was both surprised and embarrassed about.

When had she become such a crybaby, anyway? Especially with Asgore, of all people!

"I didn't," she confessed through blurry vision. "I was sure I was going to fuck it all up."

"But you did not, Undyne. If anything, you're doing the exact opposite."

"There's something else you need to know, though," she added. "Something that I think you maybe
already knew, which is why you said that stuff about someone who worked for you who'd love to help me. Wanna try and guess?"

This pause was longer, as clearly he was trying to guess, always game for something like this to happen.

Then, to her surprise, she got the following: "When is the wedding?"

That was it. Nothing else was added to it. Just those four words.

Undyne stared at them, feeling her whole body suddenly feel lighter, and she started laughing, softly at first, but gradually it grew to something loud, something uncontrollable, and she fell over and just laughed and laughed, so hard she cried, holding her phone to her chest the entire time.

It woke Alphys, who turned around slowly and blinked at her with sleepy, half-open eyes. By then, Undyne couldn't stop, which had Alphys sitting up, putting her glasses on, and placing a concerned hand on her shoulder. She moved closer to Undyne and peered at her, but could only see mirth, and soon, she smiled, too - then squeaked when Undyne reached up and threw her arms around her, then dragged her back down onto the bed pressed close to her. This had her giggling, now, and pretty soon, it was all that could be heard for longer than either of them would ever admit.

When they were calm, Undyne held up her phone and typed a reply shakily, still giggling a little, while Alphys curled up next to her and buried her face into Undyne's shoulder, grinning so wide it hurt.

"How the fuck did you even know that, you old goat? How long have you been sitting on that egg? You almost killed me!"

"I'm an old man and have my ways, my daughter. You have no idea how long; I know Alphys quite well, too, remember. And I am sorry for that, but I'm laughing, which is nice, as I never thought I would, again. But you still haven't answered my question."

"Undyne," Alphys coughed out. "What was that all about, anyway?"

Undyne looked at her with a still-watery eye, and wordlessly, she leaned close and kissed Alphys's nose, making her smile and blush a little - something Undyne would always love to see. She then explained, showing her the texts, and by the end, Alphys was scarlet and hiding her face in Undyne's shoulder again.

"I didn't know he knew!" she squeaked out. "Be-because f-for a while, I didn't even know! Oh my god, kill me."

Which only had Undyne laughing again - unexpected, but welcome, all the same.

Later, when Alphys was in the shower, Undyne texted Asgore back with the following: "I hope sooner than later, Dad, and you better get your ass up here for it. Or else I'll come down and drag you by your dumb stupid beard."

To which he replied, after a long pause which was filled with more laughter she couldn't see: "It would be my pleasure, daughter."
It took them the rest of the morning and most of the afternoon, but by the end, after hours of going over it, arguing, laughing, and correcting, they finally had the first draft of the speech. And Undyne loved it.

It was, in her opinion, the best thing she'd ever written, and that included music, something she'd always thought she was the best at.

The moment they realised they’d done it, both she and Alphys leaned back and exhaled, closing their eyes in relief.

Then, Undyne opened her eye, looked over at Alphys, and grinned. Alphys didn't see it, her eyes still closed, her hand on her chest, the other at her side and holding her pen loosely.

"Alphy," she said softly, slowly leaning over and resting her shoulder on Alphys's.

Alphys opened her eyes and looked at her, her eyes lighting up the moment their eyes met. "Hi," she said softly, smiling at her.

Undyne felt a pang go right to her heart from that, and her eye wavered as her smile widened.

"Hey."

"We did it."

Undyne nodded. "We did."

"You'll be wonderful, Undyne," Alphys concluded, her smile warm. "You're so brave, and so strong. You can face anything and win. I know you can."

Undyne stared at her, biting her lip for a moment, before she answered, "But what if I just fuck up? What if, no matter how good the speech, I still somehow fuck everything up and ruin it all?"

Alphys was quiet, searching her face and thinking. "Well," she said, "then we still have the Underground. We'll still survive." She smiled again. "I'll still believe in you, Undyne."

Undyne searched her gaze, finding nothing but that trust and love there, and she felt her throat close right up, robbing any hopes for speech from her right away. She turned on her side and brought her hand forward, placing it carefully on Alphys's cheek.

Alphys leaned into it, closing her eyes and sighing, one of her own hands going to Undyne's knee and squeezing. Undyne swallowed hard, her breaths going a little short, and she felt heat slowly kindle within her blood and spread through her.
If asked, she'd never be able to explain why she was so attracted to Alphys. She knew Alphys wasn't typical, both in looks and personality - but then, neither was she, and for her, the typical was just that: typical. It was boring, average, with no challenge and no surprises.

But to her, Alphys was beautiful, both in and out. The way she smiled; the way her tail wagged when she was excited or happy, or how it hooked around one of Undyne's legs when she was feeling affectionate; the feel of her skin beneath her hands, slightly scaled but also really tough and strong; the way her eyes always crinkled up when she genuinely smiled; the way she squirmed when tickled...

The feel of Alphys's arms around Undyne's neck or waist; the way her body looked in bright light or dim light, how generous her proportions were and yet Undyne still felt she couldn't get enough; the unique way she tasted intimately; the eagerness she always showed whenever aroused; the way she laughed or cried out when Undyne particularly managed to touch or kiss her in a certain way...

There weren't enough words to describe it all. There wasn't enough time in a single day.

Alphys wasn't perfect, though - Undyne wasn't a fool. She could be challenging at times, something she learnt quickly as her friend. Alphys loved attention, loved to talk endlessly, and loved to try and get Undyne into the same things she loved. She also was loud, prone to anxiety, and could be extremely socially awkward and confused. And then there were the things she had done as Royal Scientist, with her DT research...

But...

Undyne stared into her eyes, reaching up with her other hand to touch Alphys's other cheek, now, and Alphys closed her eyes again, reaching up and touching Undyne's forearm with her other hand.

But... she's Alphy. She's perfect, not because she's perfect, but because she isn't - and yet she's still wonderful.

I love her so much...

"Are you okay?" Alphys asked softly, now looking up at her with those eyes that she sometimes wanted to just drown in, as cheesy as it was.

Undyne nodded, leaning closer and pressing her forehead to Alphys's, closing her eye as she did.

Alphys closed hers, again, turning towards her and holding both of her forearms, now. Her breathing was almost as fast as Undyne's now, and her heart felt like it was going to burst.

It was so easy, so incredibly easy, for Undyne to render her practically boneless. The more she got to know Undyne, the more she adored. There was some unpleasantness, like her brashness and tendency to throw things - and people - during moments of excitement (she'd thrown the pen they used at least four times while they were writing), as well as her loose mouth and penchant for laughing at others failing at things she found easy.

But Undyne was also fiercely loyal, incredibly dedicated, and full of so much love that it was almost intense. She was able to look past Alphys's flaws - inside and out - and still love her despite it all - or maybe because of it. She loved deeply, intensely, and with her whole being, and she loved to joke around and play ridiculous games and dares, so long as it made Alphys laugh. She trusted Alphys, beyond anything she'd ever expected, with both her mind and her body, and Alphys hoped she deserved that trust.

No more lying, she thought. Never again, never with her. No more hiding. There's no point, no need
for it, anymore.

And most of all, no more running away. From her, and from my feelings.

"Kiss me, please?" Alphys whispered, practically pleading, now, her whole body filled with eagerness, her claws digging into Undyne's arms a little.

Undyne smiled, pulling Alphys's face to hers and kissing her, just brushing her lips over Alphys's slowly, so light it almost tickled. Alphys's breaths got shaky right away, her grip on Undyne's arms tightening, and she shifted closer, so that their knees were touching.

"Undyne..." she pleaded, her heart racing, and Undyne couldn't help it - she leaned close again and kissed her, fully, this time, and immediately Alphys slid her arms around her neck, her hands burying into her hair, a gesture that had Undyne pushing closer.

Alphys did the same, to the point of wrapping her legs around Undyne's waist and sitting in her lap, at the same time parting her lips and running the tip of her tongue along Undyne's lips slowly.

At that, Undyne was hers, and she grabbed onto her and picked her up, then collapsed with her on the bed, still kissing her, only now Undyne's tongue touched Alphys's.

Soon, both were panting and desperate, and the moment they were both naked, there was nothing else, nothing at all.

It was just them. For the moment, all either of them needed was each other.

After, still catching their breaths, they lay together, not wanting to let go just yet, even though the way they were lying down was a little awkward; Alphys was still on top on Undyne, her arms and legs still around her, though now they were loose. Undyne's arms had dropped to her sides, though her legs were still bent at the knee, and Alphys still had her tail around one of them.

Both were in a daze, unable to speak just yet.

Then, Alphys whispered, "It-it keeps getting b-better... didn't kn-know that was even poss-possible..."

Undyne swallowed, her eye still closed. "Huh... agreed. Very much agreed... Holy shit, Alphy."

Alphys giggled shyly, one hand reaching up and playing with the pendant around Undyne's neck. "It's c-certainly a nice way to c-celebrate, anyway."

Undyne grinned. She immediately had the delightful mental picture of doing this every single time there was anything even slightly worth celebrating, and decided to use any excuse in the future just to do so.

"Fuck yeah," she agreed.

They were both quiet for a moment, both just enjoying the quiet as well as the feeling they shared.

Then, Undyne murmured, "Do you really think I can do this, Alphy?"

Alphys opened her eyes and looked up at her, hearing a degree of true fear and worry in her voice, something she wasn't used to hearing there at all. There was worry, but also doubt, too, and it pained Alphys to hear it.
"Yes," she said firmly, meaning it. She reached up and touched Undyne's cheek, and Undyne opened her eye and looked at her, her face drawn and pale with that same doubt. "You can do this, Undyne. I know you can. We all do."

"But, you, Alphy," Undyne answered, her voice still very small. "You believe in me?"

"Yes," she repeated. "Always, Undyne. Even if you screw up, I'll never stop believing in you, because I know you'll also fix it, too."

She carefully moved herself off of Undyne and sat down beside her, instead, one hand still on Undyne's cheek, the other on her shoulder.

Undyne now looked up at her and bit her lip, her eye wavering a little.

"Trust yourself, Undyne," she concluded gently, rubbing her cheek.

Undyne closed her eye for a moment, allowing those words to seep into her mind as well as her soul.

Then, she sat up and hugged Alphys tight, burying her face into her neck and holding her close, speechless again, her throat clogged with so much emotion that she couldn't even say Alphys's name.

"Also," Alphys murmured softly into Undyne's ear, one hand already stroking her hair slowly. "You're not alone. I will never, ever abandon you. I promise. O-okay?"

Undyne gritted her teeth, digging her fingers into Alphys's back and nodding into her shoulder. She tried to tell Alphys that she loved her, but all she got out was a choked mewl of a sound, one that was accompanied by a sharp inhalation of breath.

But again, Alphys surprised and delighted her. She smiled, leaned close, and gave Undyne a kiss on her cheek.

"I love you, too, Undyne," she admitted.

Undyne sobbed softly, then, clinging to Alphys so tight it almost hurt, but Alphys didn't pull away. Instead, she pulled Undyne closer and closed her eyes, resting her cheek on Undyne's head, and for a long while, there was only this: a strong, unyielding embrace.

Chapter End Notes

You'll notice I've capped the chapters at 50, as though to display a definitive number of chapters. However, this isn't necessarily etched in stone. It may change, so don't take it as the end-all. But then again, it may not change. I don't know. I have a very thin outline for this story, so we shall see.
"Good afternoon, Empress Undyne. We need to chat as soon as possible, if you don't mind."

Undyne got this text not long after she and Alphys were finishing up a small snack. She blinked at it, oddly confused by it. She showed it to Alphys, who tilted her head at it.

"Why would she word it like that?" Alphys wondered, sounding as confused as Undyne felt. "It sounds weird, but we were going to tell her about the speech, anyway, so..." Alphys shrugged.

"Sure. Everything okay? We also needed to talk with you. We're done the first draft of my speech."

Undyne sent this, keeping it semi-formal, just in case something was wrong and it was important to. For all she knew, Laurel's phone was being watched as she typed to Undyne.

"I had an interesting morning. That's very good news! Would you like to meet up to go over it? I would suggest remaining in the hotel today; things in the media have gotten a little overwhelming."

Alphys tilted her head again at that, then grabbed her phone and started looking things up. Absently, she added, "Let's go to-to their suite."

"How come?" Undyne wondered.

Alphys blushed a little but didn't answer, instead pretending she was too involved in what she was surfing for to hear her.

Undyne scowled a little, knowing when she was being ignored for a silly reason, but didn't push it right now, anyway. "They're coming over here. It's just easier. Okay?"

Alphys sighed, then nodded.

Undyne texted Laurel to come over, and was told they'd be there in ten minutes.

By that time, Alphys was staring at the phone, her blush long gone and replaced with a pale complexion - one that frankly worried Undyne a little. She went over to her side and looked over her shoulder, just as she was holding the phone up for them both to see.

Alphys had accessed one of the human search engines and put in the words "monsters, Mt Ebott" into it.

The list that followed was... long, to say the very least.

At the top of the list were the following:

"Monsters sighted in the city... end times?"

"Mayor Awad says she has no idea where they existed..."

"Secret society of monster worship? Who is Minister Wickstave?"

"Are we going to die now that monsters are free?"

And there were also pictures. Apparently, their little trip out had not been as calmly received as they'd thought, and they had been seen but quite a few people. That was made obvious by the sheer amount of candid photos that had been taken and uploaded. There were many shots of Alphys and
Undyne in their incognito gear walking together, though their outfits luckily didn't give those photos much to focus on. There apparently were also some from their very first day in the municipal buildings, including - to Alphys's shock and Undyne's anger - one of them kissing in the lobby.

"Why would they take that picture? Why would they post it?" Undyne snarled, glaring at the phone so hard that Alphys wondered if she would somehow blow it up with her mind. "That's so fucking rude!"

"Well, yes," Alphys agreed, her face crimson, now. "I agree. Why they needed a picture of that I'll never know. The others, I understand, but that one..." She glared. "Rude is putting it nicely."

They were interrupted by a tentative knock to their door.

Alphys put her phone aside and sat up, brushing over her clothes and looking nervous.

Undyne gave her shoulder a pat as she got to her feet and opened the door just a little to peer out. She could see Laurel, Michael, and several of their guards, so she opened it wider and let the two in with a smile and a greeting.

Laurel and Michael looked tired, but also alert.

Michael usually had a very calm and quiet demeanour, so to see him rather ruffled was strange. Laurel, too, looked rather faded, her eyes showing rings beneath her glasses and her hair a little ruffled from touching it nervously - something they knew was the cause, because she did it right in front of them.

Clearly, it had been a challenging day already.

When they were seated again, Laurel said, "I'll get right to the point: do you have a friend named sans? And he's a skeleton?"

Alphys blinked, and Undyne narrowed her eye. "Yes," she answered carefully. "How did you know that?"

"He came by to visit us this morning," Laurel explained, her eyebrows going up a little. "And he basically said he expected us - myself and the government - to fail." She sighed. "He has full faith in you, but not in any of us humans."

Alphys was bright red, and Undyne was frowning, her cheeks a little pink.

"He visited us last night," Undyne said. "And he offered us his help. I'm sorry he wasted your time and insulted you that way. He doesn't talk for me or my politics, okay?"

"That much is obvious," Laurel replied with a kind smile. "But maybe tell him to have a little faith in us, at least in me. I'm not abandoning you, even if the government does."

"And do you think that's likely?" Undyne wondered.

"Well, that depends. Let's see that speech."

Undyne grabbed the stack of papers and handed it over, grinning proudly. She'd written it in her own hand - one only slightly more legible than Alphys's - and was excited to hear what Laurel thought about it.

Laurel leaned back with it and started reading silently, and for a moment, that was all there was: a
deep, thoughtful silence.

Alphys sat looking at her hands, while Undyne watched Laurel closely. Michael was on his phone, but clearly he was still paying attention.

Then, Laurel said, without looking up, "Huh. I'll be damned."

Undyne leaned forward, and Alphys looked up. "What?" Undyne asked excitedly. "What, what? Good, right?"

"Well, so far," Laurel agreed, looking up at her briefly. "I'm impressed by this part in particular, the one where you mention how things are in the Underground. You have a big city there?"

Both monster women nodded easily.

"O-of course," Alphys agreed. "Th-those who travelled around with King Asgore, there were m-more that remained with him than th-those who settled elsewhere. After a while, things got very... crowded."

"It amazes me, because I truly never anticipated you guys to be this advanced," Laurel admitted with a slight blush. "I mean, you have phones, yes, and you also seem to have modern tech, but I never expected you to. How did you learn?"

"Exposure to human media," Alphys explained, looking more relaxed, now. "I don't know all of the details, as much of it was before my time, but my predecessor was able to find a way to receive human television and wireless signals in the Underground. From that, we learnt a great deal about not only your culture, but your advancements in technology." She smiled. "Your creativity is amazing. Many of us were raised on human television, despite us growing up wary of humans. It was only when we learnt how to make our own that we didn't as much."

Laurel stared at her, her eyes wide, clearly impressed by this ramble of revelation. "We underestimated you, clearly," she said softly. "I don't think anyone up here ever expected you to be able to do that." She paused. "You know, some people will probably be afraid of you for being able to do that. But, me? I think it's fantastic." She grinned, and Undyne found herself grinning back. "You have to show me some day, alright?"

"Y-you mean go to the-the Underground?" Alphys wondered, sounding confused by this.

Why would a human want to see the Underground, willingly and on purpose?

But then again, Laurel wasn't a typical human, whether that was a good thing or not.

"Yes!" Laurel agreed. She turned to Michael, who looked up at her from his phone. "We could visit there for a weekend, make it a mini-break!"

He smiled, the idea clearly making him happy.

"Go on, go on, read more!" Undyne interjected eagerly, waving at the papers in Laurel's hands.

Laurel smiled and did so, and Undyne watched her again.

It took another silent ten minutes, but Laurel eventually lowered the papers and looked back up, meeting Undyne's gaze seriously.

Laurel then nodded. "This looks really good, Empress," she admitted, smiling. "You're honest, to the
point, but also willing to listen. You don't demand too much, but ask for what's reasonable this soon. It's a great speech."

Undyne beamed, her grin so wide it almost hurt. "Excellent," she said happily.

"Can I take this?" Laurel wondered. "I can take it to the Mayor tonight, so that she can read it as soon as possible and make any changes she needs to."

Alphys nodded. "I've already taken pictures of it, so yes."

"Alright." Laurel stood up, and Michael joined her, putting his phone in his pocket. "I'll go right now, and let you know what she says when I get back. I'm not sure when she'll let me know when the edits are done, but I'll bring it back as soon as she gives it to me. Sounds good?"

Undyne nodded and stood up as well, slapping a hand to Laurel's shoulder, something that made her stumble and smile.

"Whatever you can do, I'm grateful," Undyne admitted.

"We're going to make this work, Empress," Laurel said seriously, her smile fading for a moment. "We need this. It's time to fix our mistakes, and make things right. It's been way too long."

"Well," Undyne said. "We want that, too. So we're all in the same boat."

Laurel shook her hand, then Alphys's, before she and Michael left.

Alphys sat down on the couch at once, her hand to her chest and her eyes clothes. "That's a relief," she admitted.

Undyne sat down beside her, smiling at her. "We're not done yet, Alphy."

"I know," Alphys agreed. "But at least we're closer, now, than we ever were."

"But what the hell are we gonna do about sans?" Undyne wondered, resting her chin on her hand and frowning. "He shouldn't be threatening people, least of all those we need help from."

Alphys thought about it for a moment. "I think it's less threatening them and more testing them to make sure they're sincere," she said, her voice soft. "I honestly think it's his way of looking out for us." She looked at Undyne. "He did lose his brother, after all."

Undyne winced, pain unexpectedly hitting her from that, and Alphys put a gentle hand on her knee, rubbing gently. "What should we expect from him, then?"

Alphys shrugged. "Only sans has the answer for that," she admitted. "I don't know him too well, but I know at least that."

"How do you know sans, anyway?" Undyne wondered, finally remembering to ask her.

Alphys smiled faintly. "He and I talk online about science - and sometimes anime. Though he'd deny the second one."

Undyne laughed, not expecting something so benign, but loving it all the same.

"So I guess we're staying in, tonight," Alphys added, sighing a little. Though it made her nervous, she did want to see more of the city.
Undyne grinned. "Order in? What do you want to try?"

"Everything." Alphys admitted with a smirk.

Undyne was already typing in her phone - the perfect way to start a peaceful, quiet night in.
"Undyne, um..."

Undyne looked up, blinking her eye open and raising her head from her hand. She'd been curled up on one side of the couch, finding herself drifting off, when Alphys's voice suddenly woke her completely up.

The tone was worried, and serious.

Alphys had stayed awake, going online and getting updated on the Underground, while Undyne rested, feeling oddly tired again.

"What's up?" she wondered sleepily.

Alphys looked up at her, then moved closer to her on the couch, holding out her phone for her to see. "I'm... I'm starting to think we need to find some way to contact the Underground," she admitted. "Everyone is... really worried about you."

Undyne took the phone and read over what Alphys was pointing to, and found this to be the very least of what was going on.

People, it seemed, had taken to the message boards of the news website and started opining on what they thought really happened to Undyne (and Alphys and Asgore along with her), some of which involved the human still being alive and hiding in the castle, the human reviving and killing everyone left in Waterfall and Hotland, or something going wrong with the souls resulting in her death. Others were saying that Undyne had abandoned everyone to the surface after going crazy from using the souls.

None of it was very reassuring or flattering, but the longer she looked, the more similar threads popped up, getting worse and worse as she watched.

Honestly, she could understand the panic and anger. She'd left everyone behind after she'd killed the human, and then Alphys had left them behind, too, at her command. There were rumours that Asgore was back in the Ruins (confirmed by Gerson), but the rumours were absolutely wild when it came to Undyne and Alphys. It made her feel incredibly guilty, if she were honest.

"Shit," she muttered, handing the phone back and rubbing her forehead. "You're right. We have to do something. Mettaton can only do so much, really."

She sighed, looking over at Alphys, who was setting the phone aside with thoughtful eyes. "What do you suggest we do?"

"Well," Alphys replied, her hands tangling together in her lap. "I-I think we need to make a video."

Undyne stared at her, frowning. "A video? Why the hell can't we just write something?"

"I thought of that," Alphys admitted. "But those kinds of things can be easily faked and forged, and they likely won't believe it's actually you or me. We need a video, because it's harder to fake, and that way, they can actually see us and know we're alive and well."

Undyne sighed. "Yeah. You're right. Okay." She sat up and smoothed out her hair, then adjusted her clothes a little. "Let's just get it over with."
Alphys set it up so that her phone would be able to take footage of them both, propping it up against a few books.

"What should I say?" Undyne wondered nervously, eyeing the phone.

"Whatever comes to you," Alphys replied with a smile, placing a hand on her knee and squeezing it, before removing it and leaning towards the phone. "Ready?"

Undyne nodded. "Go."

Alphys pressed the record button and sat back.

Undyne immediately sat up as straight as possible, swallowing hard, before she stared into the tiny camera of the phone and started speaking.

"Hey everyone. It's me, Undyne, and Dr Alphys--,"

Alphys waved a little and smiled crookedly.

"--and we're here to tell you that, uh, we're okay. We're safe."

She looked at Alphys for a moment, and Alphys nodded.

"We're on the surface. I broke the barrier using all of the souls, and Alphys is with me. Please, do not come to the barrier." She narrowed her eye. "Don't. If you do, you'll be stopped anyway, but please, stay in your homes and don't come to the Palace at all. It's not safe, yet. Not even close."

She hesitated, looking at Alphys for sudden help, finding herself bereft of words.

"E-er," Alphys said quickly. "Currently, we're in the municipal care of the city, in contact with the humans in charge. We're in the midst of negotiations, and are about to submit a proposal as to why we deserve to return on the surface with the humans. We're being treated very well, and we're going to do every single thing in our power to do our best to get what we are long-deserved."

Undyne was smiling at her by the time she was halfway through, proud that she hadn't stumbled or paused over her words.

"But we're okay," Undyne added, keeping the smile on her face. "We're doing okay. We've made friends, here, and though we don't know how long it's gonna take, we'll stay here until we succeed, okay?"

Undyne hesitated, her smile fading. "I know things are really, really hard right now. And I know things seem scary and uncertain. But the one thing all of you can count on is that I - Alphy...s and I - we're fighting for you, with everything we are, and you're not going to be forgotten. So just... hang on, okay? Just hang on."

"Thank you," Alphys concluded, before turning the camera off. She smiled at Undyne, who leaned back with a relieved sigh, before she picked the phone up and started uploading the video on the news site, so that everyone could see it and finally see for themselves.

Alphys posted it, then put the phone aside. "Now, hopefully, things will relax."

Undyne smiled at her, leaning over and resting her cheek on her shoulder. Alphys put her arms around her and pulled her into a close embrace, one she snuggled into with a sigh.

For about ten blissful minutes, they sat that way in their little cuddle, lost in a tiny world between
them.

Then, both of their phones started chiming, startling them both into jumping and sitting up as though burnt. They picked up their phones and stared at them in unison as their inboxes started to fill with emails, most containing titles consisting of capital letters and exclamation points.

"Er," Alphys murmured between chimes. "Sorry."

Undyne laughed a little. "Honestly, Alphy, I'm just happy they know."

They spent much of the night on their phones, trying to answer as many emails as possible. They had the time, as the speech was done and they weren't needed, yet, so this was the perfect time to do so.

"What the fu--Alphy," Undyne growled, holding her phone out. It was later, the sun long gone and night having fallen, and they were sitting in the bed together under the covers and in front of their phones. "Look at this bullshit!"

Alphys leaned over and looked, and then made a face, blushing. It was a post with a freeze-frame of the video, a frame that was of Undyne looking right into Alphys's eyes and smiling, as Alphys was doing the exact same thing.

Alphys had to admit, it was kind of a nice picture of them, and she made sure to save it later, but it was what was written underneath that made her cranky.

"Captain Undyne and Doctor Alphys are alive and well... and IN LOVE?!?!" And all around the headline were animated gifs of yellow and blue hearts.

"Because it's their fucking business and all!" Undyne snarled.

Alphys sighed, then bit her lip, thinking. In a way, she wondered if this was something they should start getting used to, as now that Undyne was Empress - something they hadn't even mentioned, yet - she was likely always going to be in the spotlight, especially online.

And as someone clearly involved with Undyne (she touched her ring with a small smile for a moment), she was also going to be in a similar - albeit smaller - spotlight. This was probably only the beginning.

"Well," she said finally, "m-maybe it is. You... you are their Empress, now. They used to do the same thing with Asgore, remember? Especially wh-when Toriel left him. They-they still sometimes bring that up when there's a story about him."

Undyne scowled, not liking this information, but also unable to refute it. It was true, and she didn't like it, but it was undeniable all the same.

"It was always funny when they did it to Asgore," she muttered. "He was always confused whenever they did. It was hilarious."

Alphys blushed. "S-sorry..." she murmured, looking away. "Th-they may tease you for... for being with me. Es-especially as you are, now."

Undyne turned to her and glared, and she jumped when she saw it. "Alphy," she growled. "I don't give a shit. If they tease me, they're idiots, and I'll know who to ignore or kick the crap out of, okay?"

Alphys smiled shyly, her blush deepening. "You don't have to," she said softly.
"Yes, I do!" Undyne answered. "Because I love you, and you're with me, and that's that. I'm not breaking up with you just because of some stupid childish garbage on the internet."

Alphys had thrown herself at Undyne before she even finished the sentence, burying her face into her shoulder and hugging onto her tight. Undyne stumbled a bit, then sat back up and held her close, smiling and kissing her forehead gently. When Alphys sniffled, Undyne nuzzled her cheek with her own. "Hey," she said softly. "It's okay."

"I love you, Undyne," Alphys answered, her voice shaky and her claws digging into Undyne's back. "I love you so much. Don't leave me, please?"

"Do you see me going anywhere, nerd?" Undyne teased.

Alphys laughed softly, then sniffled again, closing her eyes. "N-no one's ever been willing to stand up for me before," she admitted quietly.

"I'm always gonna stand up for you, Alphy," Undyne said truthfully, rubbing her back. "Otherwise, why the fuck are we even here on the surface in the first place?"

"Undyne," Alphys giggled, "you make it sound like you're here just to make me happy. Don't be ridiculous."

Undyne frowned. "Okay, fine, but it's part of the reason. I want to make this world good for you, Alphy." She pulled away to look at Alphys, who looked back with a shy smile. "Good for us both. I want to watch it grow with you, for you, for us. Does that make sense? If we can make it good for each other, we can make it good for everyone else, too. Don't you think?"

Alphys stared at her with a wider smile, her hands now on Undyne's cheeks. She nodded slowly, her eyes wavering with such intense affection that she couldn't speak. That was Undyne in a nutshell, she realised: wanting the make the world the best for those she loved, first. Undyne grinned, then leaned close and kissed her nose, then her lips. Alphys kept her close and returned the kiss, and soon, they were able to easily ignore the constant alerts of their phones, and focus only on each other.
Interlude Four: Speak

Undyne's speech was the following:

"Greetings and good morning/afternoon to all of you here today. My name is Undyne, and as you can see, I'm a monster, as is the woman next to me, my partner, Doctor Alphys. We're from the Underground.

I'm well aware that both monsters and the Underground are thought to be fairy tales told to you as kids so that you'll behave. Despite that, we're not here for that, so tell your kids to calm down, okay?

We're here because, what we want above all, is peace between us and you. We don't even want there to be an 'us' and 'you', but rather just an 'us', for both humans and monsters.

Decades ago, we were sealed in the Underground by humans who were afraid of our power. Only human souls would be able to set us free, and therefore none of us ever dreamt we would make it back here. But we got both lucky - and unlucky.

Things weren't all bad in the Underground. People love telling jokes, and play games, and make puzzles to keep each other's minds sharp. From your garbage, we were able to form our own technology, one that couples both regular and magical forms of the medium. We're actually not that different from you when it comes to a great deal of things. We have cities, and jobs, and even the internet. We have grid electricity, sewer systems, and mass-production agriculture. Though things could be dismal and gloomy, we did our best to adapt. But we knew - know - that we deserve better.

Negative circumstances have brought us here to the surface, and back in the world with you. A lot of us got killed, including friends of mine and Doctor Alphys. But it doesn't matter, now. Or rather, it matters, but not enough to keep us from favouring peace. I imagine many of you feel the same way.

I'm not asking for everyone to leave their homes or give up their jobs to allow us to live with you. On the contrary: we want to work with you as well as for you, and want you to work with us. We want to be partners with you, and the only way we can hope for that is with a good start, one I think I've managed to come up with.

First, for those of us who want to join you here on the surface, we'd like to be able to use the land around the city and close to the mountain for a temporary campground, until we can find jobs within the city proper. It would be something just for now, in no ways permanent, and it would of course be open to humans visiting, just like the city would stay open for us.

Once we get used to the surface, I'd like to propose that we start integrating with you. We could have more apartments built along the edge of the city leading to the mountain, as well as some office and retail spaces, too. We could even build it all ourselves - we would just need permits and permission, of course. We would also welcome help and support from any of you, of course, but we don't mind doing it ourselves.

You see, we don't want you to have to change everything to accommodate us. What we want the most is to live with you, but not in a manner that would force you out of your comfort zone. Things will have to change, but not in a way that would be drastic for any of you. We don't mind staying close to the mountain, and we don't mind keeping to ourselves most of the time. But we would have the expectation that we'd be welcomed whenever we were in the city, just like we would welcome you.
Eventually, we'd like to extend our rights, right up to things like marriage or driving licenses. We want to be legal on the surface, too, and want to have the same rights all of you enjoy, so that we can be your equals. Ultimately, that's what we want: peace and equality.

We don't want revenge. We don't want to take over your city. We don't want to hurt anyone. Despite how fearsome we may look, we don't want anything bad to happen - to ourselves and you. We just want to live in peace, on the surface, at last.

When it comes to me, personally, I'm currently the ruler of the Underground. I was put in charge by the former king, and I was given the power needed to take down the barrier - power I still have, and will probably have for the rest of my life. You'll likely be seeing a lot of me, as I intend to keep close to your government while things progress. If you see me, don't hesitate to talk to me, because I want to talk! I want to get to know all of you, just like you'll get to know all of us! And I'm sure you'll also see Doctor Alphys, too, and though she's a little shy, she'll be certain to chat with you if you ask her to.

Ultimately, all I want is for us to one day look back on today and be able to say that this was the first real and true step towards the ultimate peace between humans and monsters. I want us to make history, together. And above all, I want us to start to grow up, together.

Please, give us a chance. I know you won't regret it. And I know we won't, either.

Thank you.”
That night was one Undyne would always remember, no matter how much time passed or how old she got. The details of that night were etched on her entire soul, as the next day would change everything once again - and irreversibly so.

After spending another hour trying to keep on top of emails - and failing - they put their phones aside and decided to spend time focusing on each other, instead. They made love once again, completely taken over by each other, more than once with little space in between, and late into the night.

By the time they were both exhausted, it was well past midnight.

"Oops," Undyne whispered, picking up her phone and checking the time without moving from where she was - currently atop Alphys in a delightful tangle. "S'late."

"Uh huh," Alphys mumbled, her eyes closed and her breaths quick. She was grinning, but she was also exhausted. "Okay."

Undyne set her phone back and rested her head back on Alphys's shoulder, sighing deeply and closing her eye again, a smile playing on her lips, now, too. "You make me get lost in time, Alphy."

Alphys snorted, then giggled, and Undyne couldn't help but join in.

When they had calmed down, Alphys leaned close and kissed her gently on her cheek. Undyne smiled at her, one hand gently trailing over Alphys's arm, her fingertips feather-light. Alphys shivered and closed her eyes, pulling Undyne closer.

"Alphy," Undyne murmured, nuzzling her cheek. "Whatever happens, at least we have this, y'know?"

"You mean, these moments together?" Alphys wondered, her eyes still closed, one hand trailing through Undyne's hair slowly.

"Yup," Undyne agreed. "I love this. I never thought I'd give a shit about it, but here we are."

Alphys bit her lip, wondering if she should say what she wanted to say. "Er," she murmured. "Uh. I... kinda thought about it. A-about you."

"Before we met?"

"N-no," Alphys admitted. "After. I, uh, r-really liked you... and wh-when we became f-friends... it kinda got... worse?" She blushed.

Undyne grinned. "Yeah? Did you picture it?"

"Undyne..." Alphys whined, her other hand going over her face as it went even redder.

Undyne sat up excitedly, her grin all teeth, now. "You did! You pictured it! Alphy!" And she laughed, so hard she lay back down on Alphys, tears coming to her eye.

"Shut up," Alphys pleaded, covering her face with both hands. "I was just... you w-were so... Undyne...!"

Undyne coughed, choking on her laughs for a moment before she managed to calm down. "Sorry,"
she choked out. "It's just... that's so cute!"

"It's cute?" Alphys echoed. "My fantasising sexually about you is cute? I think you mean 'creepy'."

"No, nerd, I mean cute!" Undyne answered, leaning close and nuzzling her face into Alphys's neck, making her burst into giggles and squirm beneath her.

"See?" Undyne added happily.

Alphys looked at her, her face practically glowing with giddiness. She reached up and touched Undyne's cheek, swallowing a sudden lump in her throat.

Undyne nuzzled her hand gently, her eye closing as she did, and again Alphys had to swallow back that lump, feeling overwhelmed with how much she felt, at that moment, for Undyne.

Undyne rested her head back on Alphys's shoulder, sighing deeply, her arms - and legs - slipping around Alphys. Alphys in turn did the same, resting her cheek on the top of Undyne's head.

"Gonna sleep, now?" Alphys wondered softly, and Undyne nodded, still smiling.

Alphys reached over and turned the lamp off, then curled back against Undyne, feeling her own sleepiness catch up with her.

"Alphy," Undyne whispered, her voice loud in the dark.

Alphys jumped, her eyes snapping open, and she found Undyne looking at her already, her expression barely visible in the dim light. She looked sombre.

"Yes?" Alphys answered, keeping her voice soft, too.

"Whatever happens, I will always make sure to be with you, okay? Where you go, I go."

Alphys smiled, her heart aching and her eyes stinging a little; Undyne was so sincere that it almost hurt.

"Where do you think I'm going to go?" she wondered.

"It's not that," Undyne replied. "I just... don't want you to leave me. I don't want you to leave me behind."

"I'm more worried about you leaving me, eventually getting bored of me or tired of me," Alphys admitted.

"Never," Undyne growled, moving closer and holding onto her tighter. "Over my drifting dust."

"No!" Alphys suddenly blurted out, her stomach clenching. "No, Undyne. D-don't even joke. Don't, please..."

"Hey..." Undyne sat up on one elbow, reaching down and rubbing Alphys's shoulder gently with her other hand. "Hey, I'm just teasing, Alphy. I don't plan on being dust anytime soon. I promise, okay?"

Alphys nodded, looking up at her with tears in her eyes. "Okay. Thank you."

Undyne kissed her gently, then lay back down, holding her close again.

Alphys closed her eyes and buried her face into Undyne's hair, getting lost in her scent.
"I love you," she whispered.

"I love you, too, Alphy," Undyne replied gently, smiling.

It didn't take long after than for them both to fall asleep.

The sound of Undyne's phone ringing - actually ringing, and not just the text alert - woke them both up rather early.

Undyne growled and groped for the phone, and Alphys curled up into Undyne's side with a slight whine, keeping her eyes closed.

"What?!" Undyne snarled, lying back and closing her eye, her other arm going around Alphys.

"Empress-Captain-Whatever Undyne!" It was Laurel, and she sounded as if she'd had a dozen espressos. (In reality, she'd only had three.) "Get up! Quick, get up and get ready! I need you ready in an hour!"

"Why?" Undyne grumbled, not moving.

"The mayor fast-tracked your speech, Undyne. It was approved with little to no edits, and any edits that they did, I corrected back. The presentation is scheduled for today!"

Undyne jolted, sitting up and opening her eye, wide awake now. "Today? When?!"

Alphys sighed, having been dropped, but she didn't move otherwise.

"Like I said, I need you ready in an hour. The presentation is set for noon. It's nine, now. I need you for ten, so we can go over everything before we go to the mayor."

Undyne covered her mouth, her hand shaking a little. She hadn't anticipated this at all. She figured they'd have at least a week to prepare, like Cathy said.

Apparently, the humans didn't fool around when they said they didn't want to waste any time.

Her heart started racing with excitement. She grinned, then said, "Okay. Cool. See you in the lobby in an hour."

"See you soon," Laurel agreed, before they hung up.

Alphys was sitting up now, rubbing her eyes. "Wh-what was th-that about?" she wondered softly. "You s-sound happy."

"Alphy," Undyne replied, before getting to her feet and leaning over her. "It's today!"

Alphys blinked in confusion for a moment, before her eyes focused and widened, then met Undyne's. She clased her hands together in front of her mouth. "Oh! G-get in the shower! We-we need to - an hour, you said?"

Undyne nodded, then grinned mischievously. She then grabbed onto Alphys and scooped her up into her arms, startling Alphys into squeaking and clinging onto her.

"Undyne!" she cried with a laugh.

With that, Undyne laughed in triumph and carried Alphys into the bathroom - then shower - with
Undyne again wore her robes, but Alphys fussed for a long time over what to wear. She wanted to look nice, yes, but so that Undyne didn't look bad. She wanted to reflect how Undyne was trustworthy and meant well, and she knew she could do that in silence by what she wore.

When she reached into the dimensional box on her phone, and her hand fell on familiar material, she froze and went pink, feeling a little dizzy when she recognised what it was. She pulled it out and held it, smiling faintly.

"Mettaton, you dork," she thought fondly, laying the garment on her lap and running her fingers over it lightly.

"Wear that!" Undyne suddenly demanded, standing at her side and looking at it.

Alphys looked up at her with a start.

Undyne grinned and pointed at it. "Wear it! It'll look so cute on you!"

Alphys looked away shyly for a moment, before she nodded. "O-okay," she agreed softly.

Undyne grinned wider in delight, the gesture only surpassed once Alphys had the dress on and was adjusting her labcoat over it carefully. She then looked up and Undyne and smiled; Undyne looked both lovely and intimidating in her robes.

"Hey," Alphys said, "let me braid your hair?"

Undyne's eye sparked, and she sat down, turning so that, when Alphys stood up, she had her back to her. Alphys grabbed a brush and elastic - one Undyne had asked for from Mettaton - and sat down behind Undyne and started brushing her long, frizzy hair carefully.

Undyne closed her eye, loving the feel of Alphys's hands going through her hair.

"You're going to do fine, Undyne," Alphys then said softly. She put the brush aside and started braiding her hair carefully, with such skill that Undyne was impressed. "You're going to convince everyone that we deserve to be here. I know you will."

Undyne smiled wryly. "Oh? You're so sure?"

Alphys nodded. "Of course I am. It's you. I know you'll make it work. You always do."

Undyne's smile faded. "Not always."

Alphys paused, then held the half-done braid in one hand, the other moving forward and rubbing one of Undyne's shoulders slowly. "It's not your fault," she insisted.

"I..." Undyne shut her eye, biting down on her lip, hard.

"You did everything you could," Alphys finished for her, digging her fingers into her shoulder a little. "You did, Undyne."

Undyne nodded, though her throat was stopped up and her eye stung. "Would you be proud of me, Papyrus?" she thought. "Would you see me where I am now, and know you could count on me?"
"Undyne." Alphys tied the elastic at the end of the braid, then set it down to lie flat on Undyne's back, before she slid her arms around Undyne and hugged her tight.

Undyne grabbed hold of one of her arms, burying her face into it for a moment, and Alphys stayed quiet and held her close as she cried a little.

It took a bit, but soon Undyne was calm - and embarrassed. "Fuck, I'm so sorry," she muttered. "I'm such a baby."

"No, Undyne," Alphys answered, her tone so gentle it was soothing. "You're allowed to mourn. You deserve to mourn. He was your best friend." She kissed Undyne's forehead softly. "Don't ever hold back your pain, okay?"

Undyne bit her lip, clinging onto Alphys tight. "I love you so much, Alphy," she whispered.

"I love you, Undyne," she replied with a sad smile, her heart stuttering a bit like it always did when Undyne said that to her. "Ready?"

Undyne opened her eye and moved away, taking a deep breath and letting it go as she brushed her tears away.

"Yeah," she agreed. She smiled a little, looking right into Alphys's eyes and seeing so much, there. "Let's fucking do this, Alphy."

Alphys nodded, and together, they went.
Laurel greeted them at the door, practically beaming. "Empress Undyne! Dr Alphys! I could just--!

Then she did, hugging first Undyne, then Alphys.

Both blushed bright red and froze, unsure how to react to something like that, but it was fine, as Laurel kept talking, anyway. "I'm so excited! Are you?"

"Uh," Undyne was taken aback a bit by her enthusiasm. She wondered if she'd ever get used to it, as she suddenly realised that, in truth, Laurel was a very hyper person.

Laurel was already closing the door behind her, waving them in and picking up her phone.

"So they made edits, stupid ones, and I just put it all back, like I said." She grinned. "The mayor approved of my interference, in case you want to know."

Michael was sitting on the couch, and he looked over and waved at them with a smile, as his wife chattered away in barely-restrained excitement.

"I know it's sooner than you anticipated," she continued, "but you're okay with it being today, right?"

"Hell, yeah," Undyne agreed, unable to keep back a grin. "The sooner, the better! Let's get it over with, so we can finally get started for real."

Laurel got Undyne water and coffee for Alphys and herself, then they went to join Michael, where they noticed a box of doughnuts lying open on the coffee table, there. Alphys wiggled her fingers towards them, blushing, and Michael laughed softly and nodded, nudging the box in her direction.

Once they were all seated and eating, Undyne asked, between mouthfuls, "So... what do I need to expect?"

"Well," Laurel answered, looking cheerfully thoughtful. "You should expect it to be crowded, and with a lot of flash-cameras, and a lot of annoying people wanting to ask you questions."

Undyne looked over at Alphys, who looked back with raised eyebrows.

"Should we have some kind of bodyguard system with us?" Alphys wondered.

"there's always me."

Walking in from the hallway of the suite was sans, already holding a mug of coffee with a grin. He walked over to them casually, then sat down beside Alphys, ignoring their stares.

"Uh, hello again, Mr sans," Laurel answered slowly, her eyes wide. "Where... did you come in?"

"That's very disconcerting," Michael added dryly.

"He does that," Undyne replied, rolling her eye but smiling.

If she had to be honest, she was actually rather glad to see him; there was always strength in numbers, after all. She would never admit it, but she felt safer, already.
"You d-don't mind, sans?" Alphys wondered, and he smiled at her, his eyes bright.

"not even a little," he agreed. "i'll stand with you, on undyne's other side, and make sure she's safe."

Alphys smiled at him, but Undyne scowled. "Because I need protecting?" she growled. "I don't!"

"Well, it doesn't hurt to be prepared, regardless," Laurel broke in gently. "You're more than welcome, Mr sans."

"good, because i was gonna show up, anyway," he replied coolly.

"Oh, sans, stop being such a jerk," Undyne growled. He shrugged, winking at her, and she sighed and let it go. "Whatever. What else should I expect?"

"Probably heckling?" Laurel offered with a wince. "I actually don't know. I'm worried that what I'm missing will ultimately end up happening."

"Like what?" Undyne wondered.

Laurel laughed. "Like I said, if I knew, we wouldn't have a problem!"

Alphys frowned, tapping her left hand against her mug so that the ring she wore made a clinking noise.

"I-I wonder if we should be more prepared," she said softly. "Sh-should we ask Mettaton?"

"Who's... that, again?" Laurel wondered.

"Our friend, the one watching the barrier," Alphys explained, still tapping her hand. "He's a..." She blushed, looking down for a moment.

"He's a ghost," she admitted, her voice soft and her hand going still. "He's a ghost who has merged with a corporeal form, one I made for him."

Undyne stared at her, as did Laurel and Michael. sans, however, simply sipped his coffee, his eyes closed. (This annoyed Alphys, as it made it obvious that he knew about Mettaton already.)

"Mettaton is what?!" Undyne demanded. "Are you yanking my chain to watch me dance, Alphy?!

"N-no," Alphys murmured. "It's the truth. R-remember... I lied a lot..." She winced, her face falling to an expression of one very close to tears.

Undyne leaned over and put her arms around her without hesitation, pulling her close.

"Hey," she murmured softly, for the moment forgetting everyone else but them. "It's okay. You're being honest, now. That's awesome. Thank you."

Alphys laughed weakly. "When did you become such a good psychologist, Undyne?" she teased softly.

Undyne grinned. "TV!"

Laurel coughed softly, discreetly getting their attention, and they looked back over at her with a shared blush.

"I don't think we need that much force," the Minister said. "Some people may also see it as a
negative gesture, as though you don't trust them."
"we don't," sans replied.

Alphys and Undyne said nothing, though it was clear that they agreed.

"Well, okay," Laurel sighed, "but they don't need to know that, do they?"

"No," Undyne agreed. "Okay, no Mettaton. Got it. So just Alphy, sans, and me, and your team of human brick shithouses."

Michael snorted a laugh into his coffee, choking on it as a result, and Laurel scowled at him, then Undyne.

"Please don't call my staff that to their faces," she said flatly. "They are kind of protecting your life, Empress."

Undyne raised her hand and grinned. "True, fair enough."

"The mayor's not an idiot," Laurel continued. "She'll have her own security there, too. I do think we should expect some rabble, but I don't think we should be too worried about anything breaking out into violence."

Undyne was quiet, her smile fading. She really wanted to believe that, to be able to trust Laurel's assessment of her fellow humans.

But any time she tried to picture the scene in front of the cameras, she kept seeing that damned child-demon in the background, holding up its knife and grinning at her in such a feral way that sent a chill through her.

"well, okay then," sans was saying, his voice still almost frustratingly casual. "so we'll have security, and undyne won't be without allies from her home turf. what happens after the speech, then?"

Laurel paused, blinking. She lowered her mug, glancing at Michael, who looked back at her for a moment with the same expression.

"Well," she said slowly, in a way that they were learning meant that she was stalling to give herself time to think fast. "That's a really good question, to be honest. I assume you'll end up going with the Mayor to her office after, so that you can start going over the details, and start co-writing a treaty."

"A treaty?" Alphys echoed.

Laurel nodded. "Oh, yeah. One of the first things we should do is set up the ground rules right away, and the only way to do that is through a treaty, one so solid and unchangeable that even the Mayor's coworkers can't do anything to it."

Undyne chewed on her lip for a moment, thinking about this. "What do I need to know when thinking up a treaty?" she wondered.

"Basic rules, essentially," Laurel explained. "Your basic rights, the ones that can't be taken away from you regardless of how much time passes, should be first and foremost in mind."

"Like basic living n-necessities, or the r-right to own l-land, or seek m-medical help," Alphys offered, and Laurel nodded in agreement.

"and should we even expect to get any of that?" sans wondered. "we're monsters, after all."
"I'm well aware," Laurel snapped, clearly finding his method of questioning irritating. "And that doesn't make a spot of difference when it comes to my approach."

sans eyed her closely, something she didn't balk or flinch from, and after a moment, he leaned back, looking oddly impressed, if such a thing were possible for him.

They went over a few more details, then Laurel said, "We should probably make our way to the mayor. Are you ready?"

Undyne blinked, suddenly aware that everyone was looking at her. She swallowed, then sat up straighter, narrowing her eye and setting her jaw.

"Born ready," she replied with her usual grin.
The mayor actually smiled when she saw them. "Empress Undyne! Doctor Alphys!" She shook their hands and gestured for them to sit down. "Welcome back!"

Everyone sat down, and once they were settled, Cathy went on. "I'm so glad that we were able to fast-track your speech. Are you ready?"

Undyne nodded, her eye like steel and her jaw set. She was more than ready.

"Good. Laurel tells me you have another friend?" Cathy raised her eyebrows. "A... skeleton?"

sans had offered to stay in the hallway during this, and it was at this time that Laurel decided to bring him into the office with them, something he smirked at.

Undyne scowled at him, and he shrugged and held up his hands, before standing beside her.

"sup," he greeted the mayor, who stared at him for a moment before nodding.

"He's good to have on our side," Undyne explained. "Mostly. When he's not being a pain in the ass."

"thanks, empress."

"Well, in any case," Cathy said carefully, "you're welcome, of course, to stand with the Empress while she presents her speech."

Undyne had to admire her for this; despite being thrown a curve, the mayor was still acting calm and cool about it.

"Er," Alphys spoke up, raising her hand a little. "Madam Mayor, I-I have an idea, about the speech. W-we want to broadcast it Underground, as well, and I have a m-method to do so. I-I just need your permission...?"

Cathy raised her eyebrows, unable to hide her surprise, this time. "Yes, please do. I was going to suggest something similar, but if you can stream a live broadcast, that's excellent."

Alphys nodded, her eyes glinting, and she pulled out her phone and hunched over it, her tongue out as her claws flew over the screen (which distracted Undyne for a moment, her cheeks pink).

"Are you sure you're ready to do this, Empress?" the mayor then asked softly. "We are rushing you, after all."

Undyne nodded, her attention back on Cathy. "I want to rush - but not in a way that makes us careless." She frowned. "I want to make sure we've covered everything."

"We have," Laurel said confidently. "Your speech is inclusive and fair."

Alphys then looked up. "Done. My friend in the Underground is telling everyone the access key as we speak. They're going to see it live, just like everyone else."

Alphys smiled, her cheeks pink. "I-I'm glad," she admitted. "I want... I want us to be connected from now on." She paused. "D-does that make any sense?"

Undyne smiled at her, unable to speak for a moment. In those words, Undyne heard a monarch, and
was very, very proud.

Cathy stood up suddenly, startling them into doing the same. "Well, shall we go get the room ready?" she wondered with a smile.

She didn't have to ask twice.

Undyne refused to let go of Alphys's hand.

This had been going on the entire time they stood and watched the tech team and other staff run around and get things set up for her speech. They hung back out of the way and out of sight in order to not scare those humans, but from where they were, they could still see the goings-on, and for whatever reason, Undyne wouldn't let Alphys's hand go.

Sans noticed, and nudged Undyne's other side gently. "hey," he said quietly. "you're gonna be okay, captain."

Undyne swallowed, her eye carefully following the humans as they worked.

"I guess," she answered shortly.

It was starting to creep up on her, the fact that she was pretty much the only person capable of doing this.

Only 'this' was no easy feat; everything depended on what she said and how she said it, and not just for her or Alphys, but for everyone.

She was scared she would make a mistake, and ruin everything. She was afraid that, no matter how hard she tried, no matter how much effort she put into her words, she would somehow make it fail, and destroy everyone's future.

And these were people she loved, people she wanted to protect, people she wanted to thrive.

"Undyne."

She blinked, then looked over and down at Alphys, her heart racing, now. Alphys looked back at her with a small, gentle smile, and carefully she rubbed the back of Undyne's hand with her other.

"Undyne," she repeated, her voice gentle. "I believe in you. We all do. You can do this, alright?"

Undyne swallowed, unable to say anything. She bit her lip, and Alphys nodded in return, still smiling. It was clear that Alphys believed in her.

But am I even worthy of that? she wondered.

I guess this is the only way I can find out.

Well, then. Fine. If this was the only way, then she'd make sure to put everything into it.

Because that's what depended on it: everything.

She smiled faintly at Alphys, squeezing her hand a little, before looking back over at the humans and watching them work.

Alphys looked over at sans, who was already looking at her, and they exchanged a look, one of both
nervousness and dry humour. They knew Undyne could do it, because already she'd done the most impossible, and that was survive against the human. Added to that was the fact that she not only survived breaking the barrier, but also with the souls intact, and even sans was quite positive that if it went wrong, Undyne would not be the one to blame for it.

But then, even they agreed: there was only one way to truly find out.

The entire room was now set up and full of humans, so full that the three monsters huddled close together out of sight, unable to keep the slight tinge of fear at the sight - even sans. They were all facing the small, hastily-made podium that stood situated as close to the back wall as possible, and surrounding that was a ring of Laurel's staff, looking like human pillars, again - and uncompromising ones at that.

"Fuck," Undyne whispered, her hands shaking.

Her eye was wide, and it glinted with her fear, no matter how many times Alphys reassured her or rubbed her hand. She hadn't expected so many humans to show up. She either kept the mental number small to comfort herself, or to delude herself, but either way, she was overwhelmed.

sans noticed and tuned to her, facing her and making her look down at him. She stared at him, unable to speak, so he did, instead.

"captain," he said, his tone oddly sharp. "you need to be strong, out there. you need to show confidence, and make sure every single human in there knows that you mean what you say and will fight to make sure it stays that way."

Undyne bit her lip, nodding, the words cutting through that fog and bringing her back down.

"think of everyone left in the underground, undyne," he continued. "think of all of the people who will be watching - including kids. they will never forget this moment, no matter how it goes. they need you to be their empress. you need to show them you already are."

Undyne swallowed, her breaths slowing down along with her heart. They were the right words, words she needed to hear - and take to heart.

"because you are, captain," sans continued, winking at her. "you're definitely already empress. you've proven that much already to me, and to everyone else around you. now, you just gotta make the rest see it, too. and you can do that. just believe you can, okay?"

Undyne's jaw set, and she nodded, her eye narrowing. "Okay," she agreed.

sans clapped a hand to her shoulder and nodded. "good. i'd hate to see you flounder out there."

Undyne glared at him, Alphys groaning beside her and slapping a hand to her forehead, and he laughed.

It was time.

The mayor had just concluded a speech of her own, introducing Undyne, Alphys and sans, and had just stepped aside amidst polite and tentative applause. Undyne gritted her teeth, then let go of Alphys's hand and stood up as tall as she could.

Then, she moved out of the shadows and walked towards the podium, sensing sans and Alphys
walking behind her.

The moment she came into view, there was silence, and some audible intakes of breath and whispering. Undyne heard it and tried to ignore it, though her stomach clenched a little from it, anyway. She kept her eye on the podium as she made her way to it, noticing that the whispers soon turned to quiet murmurs - especially when they saw who she walked with.

However, the moment she stood at the podium, they fell in beside her and flanked her, and the crowd went silent, so she was forced to look at them at last.

They stared at her, clearly shocked by what they saw, as though they hadn’t even believed her to be real until that moment. In fact, she figured that it was likely that was the exact case, and for some reason, it made her feel braver.

She took a breath, closed her eye briefly, and began.

Her voice was a little weak to start, but as she continued, it grew stronger. Pretty soon, she couldn’t control the volume of her voice, feeling herself merging with her words and striving to make them real, to make them the new reality that she would have to face once they were all spoken.

She spoke, and the humans filmed her, recorded her voice, or scribbled down impressions of her, but they all listened. They listened to her, and that was what kept her strong, and kept her standing.

When she said, "Thank you," and stepped back a little, there was another brief silence, one that seemed almost perversely loud in comparison to Undyne’s voice.

However, soon it was filled, and filled with dozens of voices, not shouting in anger or rage like she expected.

No, these voices were declaring that they agreed, that they had more questions, that they wanted to learn more about her people.

And even when she tried to answer their questions, they spoke over her, clearly too excited to listen, just yet.

It was not what she'd expected at all. She'd expected name-calling, things thrown at her, screams that she was a demon or a beast.

Instead, she’d gotten exactly what she only dreamt was possible.

And she grinned, her heart racing. She’d done it. In that moment, she’d secured the future.

But in the next moment, she’d destroy it.
Engulf

It that moment, it happened so fast - so suddenly - that it seemed almost as if it hadn't, at first.

Undyne was turning from the podium with a triumphant grin, elated to hear clapping and shouted words of encouragement, and Alphys immediately jumped up to hug onto her tight, her arms going around Undyne's neck tight and with no hesitation - making her even happier.

Then, there was a loud, sharp sound that cut through it all, and the smile, that blushing, proud smile, suddenly vanished from Alphys's face, her eyes going wide in disbelief.

Undyne stared at her, suddenly staggering as she felt Alphys lose her footing, and begin to fall.

And that's when she felt it: something hot and wet soaking through her clothes.

Undyne looked down, and there, as it spread onto her clothes from the front of her chest, was blood.

But it wasn't hers.

Alphys stared at her in shock, now, before she uttered a small, surprised sound. With it, her eyes suddenly dimmed and shut, her body going even heavier.

"No!" Undyne cried, grabbing hold of Alphys as her arms fell from Undyne's neck.

Undyne dropped to the floor on her knees with Alphys in her grasp, utterly blind and deaf to the chaos that was going all around her. Instead, she gathered Alphys into her arms, tapping Alphys's cheek lightly as she did, trying to rouse her.

From the front of Alphys's chest came even more blood, flowing freely and fast, soon soaking the front of her dress and dripping to the floor below her. Her breaths turned to gasps once the pain suddenly crashed into her, and she gritted her teeth.

When she did, Undyne saw that they were already stained with red.

"Alphy," Undyne suddenly begged, shaking her a little, her own breaths quick and sharp, feeling terror fill her.

Alphys opened her eyes a little bit and met hers, and they filled, tears running down her cheeks almost right away. She reached up with trembling fingers and touched Undyne's cheek, trying to speak, wanting to speak, needing to say so much...

"Stay with me," Undyne said, her voice breaking, grabbing her hand and holding it in place upon her cheek - which by now was also wet. "Alphy, stay with me!"

Alphys searched her gaze, blood running down her chin as she tried to talk again, but she failed, instead almost choking on her words - and her blood.

Undyne realised right then that it wasn't going to work: Alphys was hurt too badly, and would be dust before anyone got here to save her.

When she understood that - truly understood it, as she saw it in Alphys's eyes - she cried out, holding Alphys to her so close that she felt blood seep through her clothes again - but she didn't care.

Everything within her was going cold - her blood, her breath, her heart - and she didn't care, because
nothing mattered, now.

She felt Alphys's fingers twitch on her cheek. When she tried to talk, again, she coughed, the action causing her to flinch and then gasp out from the pain, her breaths already catching.

Undyne closed her eye, then, shaking her head and holding onto Alphys desperately.

"No, Alphy," she kept begging, over and over. "No, Alphy, please... Alphy, please!"

Undyne felt so cold already, shivering all over, and when she kept breathing in, she felt colder and colder, even as Alphys's blood touched her skin and almost thaw her out. She gritted her teeth, focusing on Alphys, listening to her breathing and making sure she kept doing so, begging her silently, now.

Around her, so gradually that it seemed to creep up on her instead of come from her, the air began to crackle with her power.

The more she begged, the thicker it felt, until soon, it began to knit closer and reach out from within her, stretching out behind her back like two giant wings made of midnight. She felt that cold flare up in her, and she pushed it out to join the power behind her.

As she did, those wings grew, and soon, began to almost bleed midnight, turning anything - and anyone - it touched into the same stuff.

Undyne felt it, knew that she was doing something - or that something was using her - but she couldn't focus on it.

All she could hear were Alphys's breaths, and all she could feel was her blood, gushing everywhere, so much of it leaving the one person in the world she needed...

She heard, in a choked, broken voice, Alphys say, "Un...dyne... l-love... I-I.. l-love... y-..."

And following it, too quickly for her to even say anything back, she felt Alphys exhale slowly, her whole body going limp as she did.

Undyne's eye snapped open, blazing with bright green - and fathomless black.

And in that second, she felt the souls rise up within her, and she threw the entire world into hell.

Undyne opened her eye to darkness.

She hadn't even known she closed it until she opened it, again. When nothing but dark met her gaze, she looked around, her breath catching.

Then, she looked down, her heart racing, and found Alphys still in her arms, only she was still injured, and not moving, her eyes still closed. She could at least see Alphys, but she also saw that though she was still there, still solid and not dust, she wasn't breathing.

"Alphy?" Undyne whispered, touching her cheek gently.

Her voice sounded so loud, despite the fact that it was said so softly. Alphys's cheek was cold, and she didn't react.

Undyne called her name again, leaning closer, trying to catch the sound of a breath or a heart beating.
But there was nothing.

Undyne shouted her name, shaking her a little, then tapped her cheek, but no matter how hard she tried, nothing happened.

Alphys remained limp, unmoving, and silent.

A silence that threatened to kill Undyne, too...

"She won't wake up, Undyne."

Undyne's head jerked up, her eye spilling over and her teeth bared.

There, still in this strange pocket of night, stood a small human with a cap of soft hair and pink skin, wearing a shirt that looked weirdly familiar.

In fact the human themself looked familiar - but she couldn't figure out why - and then, didn't care.

It wasn't important to, not now.

Not yet...

"Who the hell are you?" she snapped. "Where is this? What's going on?"

"You don't recognise what you've done, Undyne?"

Undyne hesitated, feeling sick inside. She knew exactly what she'd done, and she'd done it without hesitating, without even thinking about it.

"I... I panicked," she admitted weakly. "Alphy was... She was..."

She looked down at Alphys, and still there was nothing, no reaction, or even a slight movement.

"You destroyed the world, Undyne. The moment Alphys took her last breath, you ended it." The human was watching her closely as they spoke, their reddish eyes almost glittering, despite how dim it was. "This is the void. This is where I usually play - and alone at that."

"I..." Undyne swallowed. "I didn't mean to."

It was true. She hadn't meant to do this.

All she wanted was to save Alphys.

It was her fault that Alphys was injured, because the bullet had not only gone through Alphys once, but had bounced off of Undyne and returned into Alphys.

A bullet couldn't hurt Undyne, but it could easily kill Alphys...

It had easily killed her...

"No..." Undyne whispered, closing her eye and lowering her head, pressing her forehead against Alphys's cold one. "Alphy... god, no, please don't be dead... please..."

"Everyone is, Undyne," the human said. their voice calm and measured. "Not just Alphys, but everyone in the entire world."

"I don't want this," Undyne whispered. "I don't want this at all... I don't want anyone to die... I just..."
I just wanted to save Alphy..."

"You need to reverse it, Undyne," the human answered. "When you reverse it, the world will revert back to the way it was before you unleashed your power, and it will be like you never did it."

Undyne looked up, a nauseating jolt hitting her. "But... if I do that, Alphy will still die!" she protested.

The human nodded slowly, their expression calm. "Yes. But everyone else will live. You need to think about everyone else, Undyne. That's your job, now."

"My job?" Undyne echoed. "I could never do this goddamned job, alone, not even close! I can't lose Alphy! I need her."

"The world needs you, Undyne."

"And I need Alphy!" Undyne snapped.

"You're selfish," the human observed, blinking slowly. "You're very selfish."

"Then I'm fucking selfish!" Undyne snarled, her voice breaking. "I never asked for this! I never asked for some human to fall and start murdering everyone I loved! I never asked to be the one who broke the barrier, least of all lead us to the surface! But I did it, anyway! Except it was never alone!"

"So you're dependent on Alphys for success?"

"Yes!" Undyne answered, blinking hard and trying to keep her tears at bay.

There was a silence between them, Undyne glaring furiously at the small human who didn't even twitch an eyebrow.

Then, the human said, very softly, "There's one way we can both be happy, Undyne."

"Who the hell are you?" Undyne answered, her heart beating painfully in her breast, feeling scared and confused and a minute away from full-blown panic. "Seriously, who the hell are you to tell me any of this?"

"Do you want my help or not, Undyne?" the human answered, their voice still even and calm.

Undyne hesitated, then swallowed, hard, looking down at Alphys for a moment, before returning her gaze back to the human.

"Yeah," she whispered. "I want your help. Please, if I can save her, tell me how..."

"You'd have to give up your ultimate power, Undyne," the human said, surprising her. "You'll have to lose part of your power, and thus lose the ultimate power that comes with seven souls. You would never be able to do this again, and though you'd be strong, you wouldn't be as powerful and invulnerable as you are, now. If someone shot you, it would hit. It would take a while to kill you, but it would hit."

"Yeah," Undyne said, nodding. "Okay, whatever. Yes. Please."

"Wait," the human said, holding up a hand. "You'd still have access to that power in a way, but not the way you do, now. If you truly needed it, you could access it, but not by yourself."

They paused, their eyes serious. "Do you understand what I'm saying to you?"
Undyne searched that gaze for a moment, thinking hurriedly, before she jumped a little.

"Oh!" she breathed out. "Oh... I can... I can do that?!"

The human nodded, lowering their hand.

"Then I'll do it. I'll do it, please, just tell me what to do!" Undyne agreed quickly.

"Look inward," the human said. "Look for the souls within you. Then latch on, and from there, you'll know what to do."

Undyne closed her eye, instinctively holding Alphys closer to her as she did. She inhaled slowly, reaching inward with everything she had, and when she did, she felt herself actually looking within, able to actually see those souls that she'd absorbed.

They were beautiful, glittering shapes of colour that were attached to her own white one, keeping hers together with their power.

She focused on them, one hand pulling one of Alphys's upwards and towards her chest, and she pressed Alphys's cold, limp hand flat between her breasts and right over her heart. The souls pulsed in time with her heartbeat, their power like ripples on water, and for a moment, she watched them, spellbound.

She then focused on one of them - the yellow one, she couldn't help it - and started concentrating her power on it, specifically. She felt it give a little shudder as her power touched it, almost as if in protest, but she didn't pull away.

Instead, with everything she had, she gathered her power and gave that yellow soul a nudge.

Again, it shuddered, only this time, she saw it slowly coming loose from her soul, and she nudged it again, grittying her teeth so hard her jaw hurt. This time, it finally slipped free, and as she pulled on it, she saw the other six souls shift and move closer around her soul, making up for the new space.

The moment that soul was pulled free, she felt a jolt in her belly, followed by what felt like a tremor beneath her. She decided to ignore it, instead pulling the yellow soul further and further away from hers, pulling it towards her hand with everything she was.

Soon, she could feel it touch her chest almost tentatively, before it pushed itself free and touched Alphys's palm.

Undyne's eye snapped open, seeing the shimmer of the soul held beneath their hands. Carefully, she closed her hand, in turn closing Alphys's hand, around the soul, then pulled Alphys's hand away from her chest and moved it to Alphys's own.

Again, she felt a tremor beneath her, stronger this time, but again she ignored it.

"Come on, Alphy," she growled between her teeth, her breaths short.

She pressed Alphys's hand to her chest, feeling the soul trying to disappear under the skin, but skitter off, as though rejected, and return again to Alphys's hand.

"Come on! Take it! Take the soul! Please!" She tried again, and again the soul slipped away.

Undyne looked up, just as a third tremor hit. Her eye met the humans, and she shouted, "I can't get her to take it!"
The human looked unruffled by all of this, and barely blinked when Undyne yelled at them. "Keep trying. If she doesn't take it, then you need to reabsorb it and leave her behind."

"No!" Undyne snapped, looking back down at Alphys. "Alphys, absorb the soul! Please, if you can hear me, just reach out and take it! *Come on!*

Her words trailed off, choking for a moment, before she added, "*I need* you, Alphy, please, don't do this!"

When she felt another tremor hit, she knew this was her last chance to make it right, so she made it count.

She used everything she had, everything she could touch, and once more nudged the soul towards Alphys.

This time, so slow that Undyne almost missed it, the soul began to vanish at last.

Undyne sobbed, holding their hands steady as she felt that power finally leave her, and felt Alphys's power respond, latching onto the soul and bringing it towards her soul.

And with it, she felt Alphys shiver, then actually take a small, weak breath.

The moment Alphys's soul had absorbed the yellow one, Undyne looked up and met the human's gaze, gathering Alphys close to her.

The human nodded slowly.

Undyne smiled faintly in return.

Then, she reached out--

--and let go.
When Undyne opened her eye, she was confused by what she saw - or rather, that she saw anything at all. But what she saw was real, judging by the cacophony that came along with it.

"Undyne."

The voice brought her gaze down to her arms, where she realised she was still holding Alphys to her chest.

She loosened her hold - and heard something hard and metallic drop to the floor beneath them.

She looked down and saw that it was a bloodied bullet.

She stared at it, until she felt a slightly-cold hand on her cheek, and heard her name, again. She looked back down - and felt her eye overflow.

Alphys's eyes were open, their colour bright - the brightest Undyne had ever seen them - rivalled only by the smile Alphys wore.

Undyne sobbed once, pulling her back and bursting into tears. She felt Alphys laugh softly, her arms going around her neck lightly, and she only cried harder, barely able to believe it.

It worked; Alphys was not only alive, but healed, only having to deal with blood loss and bruising.

And if Undyne reached out with her own power, she could feel Alphys's not only respond to hers, but touch it, as though reuniting with an old, dearly missed friend.

At that moment, all Undyne cared about was that she'd saved the woman she loved.

It would be years later that she - and Alphys - would actually be able to understand what she'd truly done - and what it would mean for their future.

But that was later. Now, they held each other, both laughing and crying, ignoring everyone else around them and only caring about each other.

"My dress... is ruined..."

This was the first thing Alphys said when she woke up and focused on Undyne.

Undyne scowled at her, grabbing her hand and squeezing it, before shaking it a little. "Are you pulling my leg again, Alphy?" she growled. "That's the first thing you say?!"

Alphys smiled up at her, blushing, and with her other hand, she pointed to the IV bags at the side of her bed.

Undyne peered at it, and sure enough, she saw that Alphys was on some amazing painkillers. "Why the hell do they have you on that shit?" she demanded.

"Dunno," Alphys admitted, rubbing her chest a little - though she didn't notice, it was right over where she'd been shot. It would be a habitual gesture she'd have for life, one that occurred when she was thinking or confused. "I... d-don't really remember th-that much, to be honest, Undyne..."
Undyne sat down on the cot, still holding her hand in her own, one finger absently tracing the ring on her finger. She studied Alphys closely, noticing that her eyes were a little glassy and dark - probably from the medications - and she looked confused.

Undyne could understand; almost immediately after the world was restored, she and Alphys found themselves surrounded by Laurel's team - too late, true, but it was still helpful - while Laurel was shouting into her phone, sounding panicked.

Sans had moved forward and raised a hand, his left eye bursting into orange flame, and he growled, "Nope."

In that moment, someone in the crowd froze - while still holding the gun pointed at the podium.

From there, it was a blur, even for Undyne.

She refused to let go of Alphys, which was fine for Alphys, and she was both exhausted and barely able to stay awake and weirdly energetic - though why, she didn't know or understand, yet.

When the human medic teams came, they were completely confused and had no idea what to do, and not just because Alphys was a monster. Rather, they were confused, because both she and Undyne were covered in blood, and yet there was no visible wound between either of them.

When they asked Alphys questions, she wouldn't remember, later, but she went into lecture mode, her voice soft as she rested in Undyne's arms and told them exactly how to take care of her; she was a doctor, too, after all.

They were then taken to the nearest human hospital in an ambulance - something that scared Alphys so bad she almost fainted, but Undyne kept her awake by distracting her with stupid stories from training her fellow Guards. Alphys listened and stayed awake, and the human paramedics, on Alphys's instructions, hooked her up to an IV and started giving her fluids and blood, assured by her that human blood would work and wouldn't hurt her (though to be honest, she wasn't sure, herself, and was taking a risk).

It didn't take too long for them to get Alphys and Undyne into the hospital and into a partially private room. They took the time to examine Undyne - who was fine - before they checked Alphys over and made sure she was alright, too.

By then, she was fighting sleep, and once they were alone, she lost the fight and drifted off.

Undyne had stayed with her through it, and maybe two hours later, was greeted with a comment about a dress, of all things.

"Well, whatever, as long as you're okay," she grumbled, and Alphys giggled, squeezing her hand.

"I'm fine," Alphys agreed. "I'm only still here - er, here in the hospital - because of the blood transfusion. I should be done in another hour or two, and then we can leave."

Her smile faded, and her eyes moved around the room. "Uh, are we alone, Undyne?"

"We are now," Undyne agreed.

The other patient who had been in the room had been moved to give them either privacy - or keep them apart from other humans.

"And we're covered. Laurel's team is outside covering the room and the area around it. No one's
This was true, as the human who fired the shot was already arrested and in custody. Sans had kept hold of them until they were in police custody. He was then asked to go with them to the station, as they would need his witness statement. Despite his initial scepticism, he went along and cooperated - though he probably dropped far too many puns than the humans appreciated.

"Undyne," Alphys then said softly. "I... I feel strange." She looked worried and uncomfortable. "I'm physically weak, but my mind..." She closed her eyes, rubbing her forehead. "My mind and my magic... I feel endless..."

"Uh," Undyne answered. She was surprised. "You... you can't tell what's happened?"

"Oh, I know what's happened," Alphys answered, her eyes still closed, though her face was drawn, now. "I c-can feel it. B-but I don't get why, and how." She opened her eyes, their colour sparking for a moment. "What exactly happened, Undyne? H-how did you... how did you save me? Where did... this... come from?"

Undyne hesitated, biting her lip. She was afraid that if she mentioned it, Alphys would be freaked out. But then again, she couldn't lie to her, so she took a breath, looked right into Alphys's eyes, and told her everything, all of it - including the human she'd seen, to the point of describing them.

Alphys's eyes kept getting wider and wider, and by the end, one hand was over her mouth, her grip with the other on Undyne's hand so hard that their hands shook.

"Oh my god..." Alphys whispered. "Oh my god... Undyne..." She shook her head slowly, her eyes lowering to the floor, unfocused.

Undyne reached out and touched her cheek gently, and she closed her eyes.

"Oh god, it's right there," she whispered. "I-I mean, I knew it was, but... U-Undyne, you don't understand..."

"Then explain it to me," Undyne answered gently; though, if anything, she was probably the one person in the world who did understand.

"I-I feel..." She blushed, keeping her eyes closed, before she opened them slowly. "Strong. R-really strong. Especially when you touch me."

"When I touch you?" Undyne echoed, blinking in confusion.

Alphys nodded. "I feel amazing when you touch me. M-more than before, even - something I never even knew was possible."

Undyne was quiet for a moment, realising that this was true for herself. In fact, when she touched Alphys, she felt almost as she had before she gave Alphys the yellow soul.

"Well, it's probably just some residual connection or something," she offered with a crooked smile. "And..."

She leaned close and pressed her forehead to Alphys's, and Alphys bit her lip and closed her eyes, leaning into it.

"It gives us an excuse to keep touching each other," she concluded slyly, making Alphys laugh.
That sound was something Undyne would forever cherish, no matter how many times she heard it, and no matter the context.

On the outside, Undyne looked the same. But inside, she felt different. She still felt incredibly strong, and when she summoned magic, she was amazed by how easy it was.

But there was no doubt that she’d definitely lost a degree of the power she had.

When Alphys was finally discharged and they were free to leave, it wasn’t as easy as it should have been. They’d expected their release from the hospital to be peaceful, thinking that even humans would understand that, when it came to health, even monsters needed space and time.

But the moment the IV was pulled from Alphys's hand, Undyne got a call from Laurel.

"You can't leave out the front," she said at once, barely sparing time for a greeting. "The place is a mob."

Undyne was stunned by this. Monsters would never act that way, even if it had been someone as beloved as Asgore was the one in the hospital. "Why?" she wondered.

"Undyne..." Laurel sighed audibly, then continued. "The shooting was broadcasted, Undyne. Everyone saw it."

That wasn't good. At all.

"What did they show?" she asked, her voice soft with surprise.

"They showed Alphys and you go down, and you using magic," Laurel explained. "There was this weird flash of white, and next, you held Alphys's hand to your chest and brought them both down to hers. And then Alphys woke up, and you both started laughing and crying. It ends when the view is blocked by paramedics."

Laurel paused. "Undyne, how did you save Alphys?"

"I..." Undyne swallowed.

She wondered if the Underground was in another panic. She hoped not. She really hoped that they kept watching, so that they would eventually see that she and Alphys were well.

"It's hard to explain," she concluded weakly.

"Well, work on it, because people are going to ask you, and in volume," Laurel replied. "Michael should be at your room soon. He and a bunch of my team will lead you and Alphys out through the parking lot and back to the hotel. How is Alphys?"

Undyne smiled at this. "She's safe," she admitted softly. "She's doing fine."

"That's wonderful," Laurel breathed out. "That... was really fucking scary."

Undyne laughed; it was the first time she'd heard Laurel swear, and she found it oddly charming.

Michael escorted them back to the hotel, all the way to their room. They ended up very grateful, as it turned out that even the below-ground parking lot had a lot of gawkers waiting for them.
By the time they'd gotten there, they were both exhausted and desperate for a change of clothes or a shower, and then a long, long nap.

"M-my phone, it won't sh-shut up," Alphys complained a little, holding it loosely in one hand while she shuffled over to the bed.

She held it out, and Undyne took it, before Alphys fell onto the bed and groaned, burying her face into the sheets and curling up into a ball, her tail hiding her face.

Undyne held Alphys's phone, and soon felt it vibrate over and over again. She glared at it, tossing it over her shoulder and onto the couch, doing the same to her phone, before she walked over and started undressing, desperate to get her robes off; the blood was starting to dry, and it felt uncomfortable. She practically ripped them off, then sighed when she saw that the blood had soaked through. She glanced at Alphys, then sat down and touched her shoulder gently.

Alphys poked her head out, her eyes open. Undyne smiled at her.

"Hey," she said softly, "let me help you."

Alphys sat up slowly, and Undyne did just that, carefully pulling off her coat, then the bloodied dress, and setting them with her robes.

Alphys sighed, her hand rubbing her chest with a frown. There was only a small scar where she'd been shot, on both her chest and her back, but it was still visible if you knew it was there.

Undyne bit her lip, the sight of it sending a spike of pain into her.

Alphys noticed and smiled faintly at her. "I'm okay," she reassured her.

Undyne said nothing. Instead, she kissed her, then gathered her into her arms and picked her up, then walked with her to the bathroom.

They showered together, nothing going beyond some soft and gentle touching, as both were exhausted. They helped each other wash the blood and the stench of fear from their skin, and once they were finally clean, they wrapped each other in towels and curled up on the bed under all of the sheets, as well as around each other.

There was much to be said, even more to be done.

But right now wasn't that time.

Instead, they both fell asleep, eager to regain their strength for another day - and together.
When Undyne awoke next, it was dark.

Her eye snapped open, waking up from a dream that she quickly forgot, though it made her heart race and her body sweat in fear. She lay there, catching her breath, trying to remember what had scared her, only to fail and give up. She breathed slowly in order to calm herself down, her eye closed, and when she felt her heart beat normally, she opened it again, shifting it from the ceiling to beside her.

Alphys was still fast asleep, still buried under towels and blankets, her face being the only part of her that was still visible.

Undyne moved onto her side, propping her head up on her arm, her other hand reaching out and touching Alphys gently on her cheek. It made her stir a little, but not enough to wake her, and Undyne smiled a little, feeling a pang hit her heart.

_We did it_, she thought, biting down on her lip as she traced Alphys's facial features carefully. _Though we've only just started, we still survived it. Though things changed and got complicated, we're still strong. We still made it. And we'll still keep going, because there's still so much we need to do._

_And we'll do it together. I'm no one without you at my side, Alphy. Or if I am someone, it's someone I don't want to be, if it means being without you..._

On that thought, she shifted closer and wrapped her arms around Alphys, blankets and all, and pulled her close. Again, Alphys stirred, but when she shifted, it was to move closer to Undyne - something that was followed by a deep, contented sigh.

Undyne closed her eye, feeling it sting with tears of relief, and she kept Alphys close, soon drifting back to sleep, herself.

After that, if she had any bad dreams, she didn't remember them.

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The sound of someone knocking at the door woke them both up the next morning.

Actually, perhaps 'knocking' is too polite for what they heard; it's more accurate to describe it as 'extremely loud pounding'.

Undyne sat up and had a spear in one hand and was halfway out of the bed before she even fully woke up. Alphys jolted awake as well, her eyes going right to the door and her heart immediately speeding up.

"Who is that?!" Undyne growled, her eye blazing, now.

Alphys wrapped the towels back around herself and moved over the bed and to Undyne's side, her own eyes glinting with a light Undyne now recognised. Her fingers twitched, and to Undyne's surprise, she saw sparks dance around her claws.

"Open up this damned door now or you're going to regret it, Alphys!!"

"Um," another voice added, "I can remove him, if you want."
Undyne's magic faded and she went scarlet, her eye going to Alphys, who was also blushing, now. They both recognised that voice.

"What time is it?" Undyne whispered, and Alphys shrugged, shaking her head.

Undyne bit her lip and rushed to the bathroom, just as Alphys shrugged off the towels and reached for clean clothes.

"Okay, it's okay," Alphys said once she was ready, going to the door.

She opened it, and there stood Mettaton, looking furious, with Michael right behind him, looking confused - but amused by it.

The moment the door was open enough, Mettaton marched right in, shooting Michael a glare as he did. Alphys nodded to Michael, who had raised his eyebrows in question, before she smiled weakly and shut the door.

"Chill the fuck out, diva!" Undyne shouted from the bathroom.

"No!" Mettaton shouted back, before he turned to Alphys and set his glare on her, his hands on his hips. "Alphys!" he snapped.

Alphys blushed, lowering her head a little, her hands tangled in front of her. "E-er... hi... h-how did you...?"

He held up his phone and waved it, and she glanced at it.

"O-oh," she murmured. "The tracking key I g-gave you...?"

Mettaton lowered his arm and put his phone away, before he darted forward and grabbed her into a hug so tight she coughed, surprised. She then bit her lip, closing her eyes and returning the hug as hard as she could.

Mettaton was shaking, and she could feel it. With that, she realised that he hadn't known that she was safe until just now, and she felt terrible.

"You're okay..." he whispered, proving her right and bringing tears to her eyes. "Oh, I'm so relieved... you have no idea..."

"I'm so sorry," Alphys murmured, her voice breaking. "I didn't kn-know th-that you didn't know..."

"No one knows," he answered. "The feed cut out the moment everything went white. We were so sure... we thought you both had..."

She felt him shudder, and she pulled him closer, rubbing his back as if trying to warm him from a chill.

"I'm okay," she reassured him. "I'm okay, and so is Undyne."

"How?" he wondered, his voice still soft.

She pulled away and walked him over to the couch, and they sat down together. He grabbed her hands - his fingers hesitating over her ring for a moment in surprise - before he looked right into her eyes and waited. She then told him everything, from the moment the feed had cut til she fell asleep last night.
By the time she was done, Undyne was dressed and had joined them, sitting between them and frowning at Mettaton but staying quiet.

This ended up a good thing, as the moment Undyne sat down next to him, Mettaton grabbed her and hugged her. She froze, going scarlet, her eye going straight to Alphys, looking a little panicked. Carefully, she reached up and patted his arm, and he let go and met her gaze, looking very serious - the most she'd ever seen him look.

"Undyne," he said, sounding the most serious that she'd ever heard him, and he kept hold of her shoulders. "Thank you."

"Uh," she answered helpfully, looking confused, her eye going to Alphys again before returning to him.

"For saving Alphys," he explained, seeing her confusion.

She blushed, relaxing, and she smiled a little, reaching up and touching one of his arms gently. "Of course, diva," she replied. "The day I abandon Alphy is the day I'm dust."

"Don't even joke," Alphys snapped.

She was being serious, and yet both Undyne and Mettaton grinned at her in reply, irritating her.

"S-stop that," she added, glaring. "I'm s-serious!"

Undyne reached over and grabbed her hand, and Mettaton let go of Undyne's shoulders.

"Okay, sorry," she said, still smiling, and Alphys sighed, rolling her eyes.

Mettaton decided to change the subject. "Alphys," he said, focusing on her, now. "How does it feel? I need to know!"

"Feel?" Alphys echoed, her eyes widening. "I... I feel fine!" It was the truth, after all.

Mettaton sighed, giving her a sour look. "Darling," he said flatly. "I figured you felt fine. But what does that soul feel like?"

Alphys's hand went to her chest, and she blinked, considering the question seriously. She thought about it for a moment, finding it easier when she felt Undyne rubbing the back of her other hand gently.

"Strong," she admitted. "Very strong. A-and... energetic... like I want to run and run until I can't even walk anymore. It's... so weird!"

Undyne laughed, incredibly tickled by this; it was true, after all, especially for Undyne, herself.

"B-but..." Alphys went on, smiling shyly. "I feel... I-I'm..." She hesitated, scratching her cheek a little. "Damn, it's really hard to explain. I feel... like I have... a lot of potential, almost."

Undyne nodded in agreement, and Alphys felt better.

"You always had that," Mettaton replied, looking unimpressed. "Though it's nice to know you see that in yourself at last."

"Yes! Thank you!" Undyne agreed, grinning at him. "See, I'm not the only one who knows you're wonderful, Alphy!"
Alphys lowered her head and blushed, before she said, "A-anyway! U-uhm, Mettaton, how... how b-bad is it Underground?"

Mettaton was immediately sombre. "Bad," he admitted regretfully. "There's something I haven't told you, yet."

"So tell us," Undyne answered, waving her hand at him.

He sighed. "I went to the Ruins and gave Asgore the broadcast code."

Both Undyne and Alphys jumped in surprise when they realised what that meant.

"Fuck!" Undyne yelped, scrambling to her feet and lunging for her phone.

"Oh, no," Alphys murmured. "Oh, no... y-you don't think he'd--?"

"I came up here expecting him already with you," Mettaton replied. "I have no idea where he is, but he's on the surface: that much is for sure."

"Shit," Undyne said. "He doesn't have a code to find us. He has no idea where we are. Oh, fuck, he better be safe..." She was glaring at her phone. " Fucking answer, you stupid goat!"

She paused, then put her phone to her ear and shouted, "Where the fuck are you?!"

"Don't shout," Asgore answered. "It truly does hurt my head."

"I'll hurt you brains if you don't tell me where you are!" Undyne snapped in return.

"She's yelling," Asgore said, though he sounded muffled, as though something was covering the mouthpiece of the phone. She listened, and heard another voice respond, but she couldn't make out the words.

"Undyne, my dear, please calm down," Asgore then said into the phone. "I am fine."

"Where the hell are you?!" she answered. "Who is that with you?! Where can I find you, to come get you?!"

Asgore, to her frustration, chuckled in reply. "I do not need rescuing, Captain," he said cheerfully. "I've been rescued already by sans."

Undyne paused, thrown by this. "Uh, you know sans?"

"Doesn't everybody?" he replied, making her mad again; it was clear sans had told him to say that - made definite when she could hear his laughter in the background.

"Asgore," she grumbled.

"I'm with sans at the judicial building," Asgore said, still sounding cheerful. "I did get lost, but those nice humans near the base of the mountain found me, and once they stopped panicking, they contacted... ah... the Minister, yes? And then sans was here."

"Undyne?" Alphys whispered softly, now standing close to her and hoping to overhear.

"What did Laurel say when she saw you?" Undyne asked.

"She... laughed. A great deal. It was very peculiar. Is it normal?"
"For her? Yeah, I think so." Undyne paused, then blurted out, "Asgore, I want to see you. Can... can you come to the hotel? When it's convenient or whatever?"

"Yes," Asgore replied. "I would like that, also."

"Thank you," Undyne said softly. "For... everything, really."

"From what sans tells me, I should be thanking you, dear."

"No," Undyne growled. "Whatever, get your ass here soon, or else I'll hunt you down and drag you here by your stupid ears."

"That sounds quite painful," Asgore admitted dryly. "So I'll do my best to avoid it."

She thanked him again, and then hung up, lowering the phone and taking a moment to just breathe, a hand to her chest.

"Everything okay?" Mettaton asked her.

She turned to him and grinned. "Yep," she agreed. "Asgore's gonna come by at some point."

Alphys lit up. "R-really?"

Undyne nodded, sitting back down beside her. "Really." She was still grinning, and she gently touched Alphys's cheek, something that made her smile.

That smile, Undyne decided, was worth everything, made everything almost balance out. It certainly made her feel that way.

"That will be really nice," Alphys admitted. "H-having everyone together... as-as much as we can..."

Undyne nodded, her heart aching when she thought about it. She wondered, perhaps for the hundredth time, if she would have made Papyrus proud, or at least made him happy. He would have loved the surface...

"I wonder, though, what this all means, now," Mettaton said thoughtfully, breaking Undyne away from her thoughts. "I mean, sorry, Alphys, but, well, getting shot, ah..." He winced a little. "It probably threw things a little."

"Oh," Alphys murmured, her face going pale. "Y-you mean, that by getting hurt, negotiations are set back?"

"No," Undyne answered sharply. "I don't think that's the case at all, and neither should you."

"Either way," Mettaton said, raising an eyebrow at Undyne, something she sneered at a little. "We should probably call Laurel and get her to see us, right?"

"We should start somewhere," Alphys agreed. "Especially if Asgore is on the surface."

"Okay," Undyne agreed. "I'll call, and we'll have a party."

She winked, which in turn made Alphys laugh, and Mettaton sigh - sounds she already found she adored, and that continued to give her hope.
Last smut warning, I promise :3, but yes, this chapter has the smuts. Plot-related smut, but if you skip this chapter, don't worry - I'll touch on what occurs in the next chapter.

"Mettaton?"

"Yes, oh flippant one?"

"Get out."

Both Alphys and Mettaton stared at Undyne when she said this. "Er, but Undyne? W-we need to stick together, u-until we can regroup a-and..."

Undyne's face was bright red. They'd been sitting together just fine, chatting, when suddenly Undyne stood up and said this.

"Laurel said that it would be at least an hour, right?" she answered, her eye narrowed.

This was true; Laurel had texted them both with this news, as all three - Laurel, Asgore and sans - were currently, in a way, trapped in the judicial building until their statements were taken and their questioning finished. And then there was the small issue of Asgore being on the surface at all, something that the mayor was very interested in - which meant another stop before they could reach the hotel, again.

"Yes," Mettaton answered, his eyes narrowing in return. "Why do you want to get rid of me? Where am I even supposed to go? I don't trust anyone out there, yet. I barely trust the Minister's own husband."

"Oh, you can trust him!" Alphys said. "He's very nice! He seems closed off at first, true, but he's actually very nice!"

Undyne started pacing, something that surprised Alphys and annoyed Mettaton.

"Undyne, what has crawled up your ass?" he wondered.

Alphys peered at her for a moment, noticing how red she was and how frustrated she looked.

"Er, Metta," she said to her friend with a small smile. "D-do you need to, uh, charge at all?"

Undyne stopped and stared at her, her eye flashing and her lips twitching upward a little.

Mettaton, however, looked very irritated, now. "And if I do?" he answered thinly.

"Now would be a good time to do it, before everything gets hectic. You wouldn't want to miss anything, would you?" Alphys replied.

Mettaton's expression darkened. "I have a feeling I'm about to miss something..."
"No, you're not," Undyne answered. "Go charge!"

Alphys blushed bright red at that, her eyes widening for a moment, and she scratched her cheek.

"Er," she added, nodding. "It would be a good time to do so."

Mettaton sighed. "Neither of you are as clever as you think, you know," he answered calmly, though his voice was as cold as Snowdin - maybe colder. "I'll go ask Michael if I can use his and his wife's suite while I charge. I hate you both right now."

He stood up, but Alphys followed and hugged him, stopping him - as well as mollifying him a little.

"Details, remember?" she whispered shyly. "I still owe you details?"

Mettaton rolled his eyes. "Yes, well, there is that."

But he returned the hug and gave her a light kiss on the top of her head, anyway, managing to smirk.

Alphys smiled up at him, and when she did, Mettaton noticed a new glint to her eyes that both surprised him and made him pause. "I owe you one," she said softly.

He nodded. "You owe me three," he replied with a wink.

He let her go, gave Undyne a full view of his smirk - something that made her blush deeper and look away - before he went to the door and opened it, calling to Michael before he closed it behind him.

Undyne looked at Alphys as soon as the door closed, and Alphys looked back at her, smiling. Undyne saw that smile and felt her already-blazing need increase even more, and she immediately closed the distance between them and pulled Alphys into her arms, holding her so tight that she staggered a little with a small laugh before she could return it.

"You know, Undyne," Alphys murmured, her lips so close to her ear that she shivered and clung to Alphys tighter. "We had all night..."

"We did not," she answered hoarsely, closing her eye and burying her face into Alphys's neck. "We were both exhausted." She nuzzled the soft skin there gently, and this time Alphys shivered and held tighter.

"I... can't argue with that..." Alphys admitted, her breath catching when she felt Undyne kiss her neck. "But... Mettaton will... never let us live it down."

"I don't care," Undyne replied, her hands slipping down Alphys's back and grabbing onto the hem of her shirt, before her hands darted beneath and trailed over bare skin.

Alphys moved closer, closing her eyes and making a small sound, her own hands tugging on Undyne's shirt a little.

"Undyne..." Alphys whispered. "I-I... r-really... I really, really, w-want you."

Undyne's breath caught this time, the simple sentence sending her into a unique haze all on its own. "Then stop teasing me," she replied with a grin, grazing her teeth along the curve of Alphys's neck slowly - and was rewarded when she felt Alphys's tail hook around one of her legs and cling tight.

"Ah..." Alphys squeaked out, tilting her head back. Undyne, by then, had already unhooked her bra, and her hands moved to her front, reaching under the loosened garment to touch beneath, and Alphys squirmed a little, losing her balance for a moment. "Y-you're teasing me..."
"Trust me," Undyne answered. "I'm not."

To prove it, she leaned back and grabbed Alphys's shirt, pulling it over her head and tossing it aside, before grabbing for her bra; Alphys shrugged it off herself, catching Undyne off-guard when she grabbed Undyne's shirt and tugged on it eagerly, trying to reach to get it over her head but failing.

Undyne smiled and finished the job, herself, grinning when she saw Alphys's reaction to her lack of a bra: glee. Alphys immediately stood on her toes and hugged onto Undyne, closing her eyes and smiling, loving the feel of her bare skin touching Undyne's.

Undyne went a step further, reaching down and undoing Alphys's pants, making her stagger back a little and grab onto Undyne's arms to stay on her feet, and they both laughed a little.

"Bed?" Undyne offered, and Alphys nodded, kicking her pants off as they moved towards it, something Undyne noticed with a grin - and something she copied, so that once they were finally seated on the bed, they were both naked.

"C'mere," Undyne whispered, and Alphys moved closer to her, slipping her arms around her neck and reaching up to loosen her hair, something Undyne rather liked; Alphys was certainly more confident with her than she had been at first, and she found she quite liked it - especially when Alphys went a step further and straddled her, before catching her into a kiss at last.

That kiss was the first sign to them that something was different.

The moment their lips met, they both felt something like a shock go through them both, but one that was pleasant, as if it were made of pure energy. They both gasped softly, pulling away for a moment and staring at each other in surprise, before leaning back and kissing again, this time deeper and without pause. That feeling only increased, and instead of stopping, they kept going, deepening the kiss and clinging onto each other tighter, hands exploring eager flesh.

Undyne was lost to Alphys; there was no other way to describe it. She had thought, before this moment, that she had always been lost when they were intimate together, but this was... different. This was strangely different.

Every time they kissed, she felt a jolt right to her heart, one that made her utter a soft cry in reply and increase the kiss even more, flooding with eagerness as well as sudden heat. She shifted and lay down on her back, pulling Alphys with her, and Alphys didn't even hesitate - something else that surprised her.

Alphys couldn't even think about hesitating. She felt amazing; her heart felt so full, and her blood felt like it was made of pure oxytocin, making her feel like she had in the hospital - only so much better, because it was completely natural. Her hands were on Undyne's shoulders, her claws digging in, and her tongue was licking along Undyne's lips, prising them open so that their tongues could meet. The moment they did, they both made a sound and shut their eyes, pressing closer in the sudden increase of desire that came with it.

"Fuck, Alphy," Undyne then groaned out. "Oh, god, I need you, _I need you, please, Alphy..."

Her hands were on Alphys's hips, her fingers digging in and pulling them down towards hers as close as she could, something Alphys eagerly followed through with, making an eager cry of her own. She reached down with one hand and slipped her fingers between Undyne's legs, trailing the tips along sensitive skin slowly - and feeling a jolt right to her belly when she felt how wet Undyne already was. She moved her fingers up and to Undyne's clit, but Undyne shook her head and grabbed her hand, pulling it away.
Instead, she reached up, grabbed Alphys around her waist, and rolled them both over so that Undyne was on top. Alphys squeaked, but her eyes were bright, and she was smiling in such a way that had Undyne's heart racing.

Alphys shifted beneath her, moving so that their legs entwined, as if she'd read Undyne's mind. Undyne adjusted herself as well, and the moment they were both settled, she angled herself so that they finally touched intimately, something that had Alphys sitting up and grabbing hold of Undyne tight with a cry, her eyes shut tight. Her hips moved up against Undyne's in response, and Undyne was the one who cried out at that.

It was... different.

That was the first word that came to mind. Undyne gently pushed Alphys back down onto the bed, following her and pressing her body right against Alphys's. Whereas before it was intense and pleasurable, now it was intense, pleasurable, and... almost all-encompassing.

The moment Undyne started to move, she felt a jab go right to her heart, one that shocked her, but it wasn't from pain; rather, it was a strange feeling, one she likened to how it felt to summon her magic, something purely enjoyable that also gave her strength.

"Undyne..." Alphys whispered, her eyes wide and her claws digging in sharply into her back, though she didn't stop moving along with her. She didn't want to - not even close. "Do... do you...?"

"Yes," Undyne answered hoarsely, meeting her gaze and nodding, leaning down on her forearms and shifting her hips closer, moving in longer strokes. Alphys closed her eyes and tilted her head back again, smiling without realising it, her tail curving around Undyne's leg again.

"Dunno why," Undyne added, gritting her teeth for a moment to swallow another cry. "But right now... don't care..."

Alphys nodded in agreement, one hand reaching up and getting tangled in Undyne's hair - something Undyne found herself really liking.

"You're... amazing, Undyne..." she whispered. "J-just when I th-think... it c-can't get... b-better...!"

Her sentence trailed off into a sharp cry, and she clung onto Undyne tighter, burying her face into her shoulder, her face hot.

"Are... you okay...?" Undyne wondered, her eye still closed. Every time she and Alphys moved together, that feeling neither of them could name yet grew stronger.

"Oh..." Alphys answered, her voice so thick with need that Undyne shivered. "Undyne... I'm... I f-feel..." She trailed off, her words again trailing off into nonsense, her senses overcome.

Undyne understood, and moved her head towards Alphys's, nuzzling her cheek a little in hopes of a kiss - something Alphys immediately gave her, her other hand going to Undyne's cheek.

To Undyne's surprise, Alphys started to increase the pace between them, making an eager sound from deep in her throat, and Undyne propped herself up on her hands and met her pace, deepening that kiss at the same time with a groan of her own.

"Alphy," Undyne then gasped out, pulling from their kiss to bury her face into Alphys's neck again. "I'm sorry... I'm... already close..."
Alphys nodded, gritting her teeth for a moment, before she managed to get out, "M-me, too... don't stop..."

Undyne was again surprised, but in her haze she didn't dwell on it. Instead, she clung to Alphys, almost desperately, now, unable to keep her body from moving at a pace that was both fast and intense.

And yet Alphys didn't hesitate, didn't seem to have any issue keeping up with her. If anything, she was giving Undyne a challenge by keeping up with her.

"Undyne...!" Alphys then groaned out between her teeth, her fingers getting caught in Undyne's hair, her other hand now at her back, her claws digging in hard enough to leave marks.

Alphys gasped, her eyes flaring open, and she arched up without control. Undyne gasped, herself, uttering a cry so high-pitched that it surprised her, but she didn't stop. She couldn't; she could feel it already creeping up on her, and she didn't want to stop - and neither did Alphys.

It was then, in that moment, that something amazing happened, something they both knew was incredibly unusual, and yet it happened, regardless of logic.

The moment Alphys started crying out as her orgasm started to hit, Undyne felt her own fill her, and she staggered in shock, unable to do much of anything but plead out Alphys's name, just as Alphys was doing the same with hers.

Then, they kissed, as though they'd planned it, and they both came at the same time, mere seconds apart.

And it was also different.

The moment they were both overcome, they both felt something flash between them, something that seemed to connect them not just in body, but in soul - and neither had felt anything like it.

It was not just the pleasure of an orgasm, but the intensity of the contact between their souls - because that was clearly what was happening, though at the moment, neither cared enough to name it despite knowing what it was.

In that sweet moment, all they did was feel, sharing similar cries and eagerness to draw it out, their bodies slowing to make it last. And it lasted, far longer than either of them even knew possible.

The moment it faded to soft aftershock, they both collapsed, Alphys back against the bed with Undyne atop her.

They were gasping, unable to speak; it had been fast, true, but it was the most intense lovemaking that they had ever experienced despite it. They clung to each other, eyes closed and hearts racing against each other, and soon, despite having planned otherwise, they found themselves starting to fall asleep.

Alphys pulled Undyne closer, her grip loose but still comforting, and Undyne curled as close to her as possible, shakily reaching down and grabbing a blanket to pull over them before they could catch a chill. Undyne then kissed Alphys gently on her lips, something that was returned so tenderly that she felt her eye sting a little from how much it made her feel.

Then, they broke apart and relaxed, before falling asleep almost right away, still in each other's arms.
Their doze didn't last as long as either of them expected it, only about a half-hour. Both woke up from the sound of Alphys's phone chiming.

Alphys stirred awake, in turn waking Undyne, who growled but kept her eye closed and her body closer to Alphys.

Alphys yawned a little, reaching over and grabbing her phone off the bedside table, checking it. "Oh," she murmured, her voice barely above a whisper. "It's Laurel. They're done at the judicial building and are now going to introduce Asgore to Cathy. We're invited."

"Mm," Undyne answered. "Blow it off. Make them come here."

Alphys raised an eyebrow but didn't comment, instead texting that message but wording it in a far more polite way.

Then, she set the phone back and closed her eyes again, one hand reaching up to gently finger-comb the knots from Undyne's hair - knots that she'd caused. Undyne sighed deeply and relaxed even more, making Alphys giggle.

"Alphy," Undyne then whispered, her hands suddenly gripping onto Alphys so tight she felt nail. "I love you, so much."

Alphys smiled. "I love you, too," she agreed. "I can't word how much, but it's safe to assume it's pretty infinite."

Undyne didn't laugh, though.

Alphys opened her eyes and looked at her, and saw that she looked sombre, as well as almost... pained.

"Undyne?" Alphys then said, touching her cheek. "What's wrong?"

"Alphy, you almost... I almost... lost you," she admitted, her voice very quiet. "In a split second, too."

Alphys bit her lip. "B-but, I'm here now," she replied, trying to sound cheerful. "Because of you!"

Undyne looked up at her; she looked so sad all of a sudden. "But... because of me, you got hurt..." Her face fell, and she hid it back in Alphys's shoulder, just as her voice caught.

Alphys held onto her tighter, resting her cheek against the top of her head gently. "But I'm here," she murmured gently. "I'm right here, because of you."

Undyne nodded, quiet for a moment, and Alphys didn't push her, instead continuing to comb her hair out with her claws.

"Alphy," Undyne then said, her voice still almost painfully quiet. "If... you want to go back, if you want to not... I mean, if it's too much... I can understand why... getting shot, of all things... If you want to... if you don't want to..."

Alphys felt a wave of dread fill her, these words like a nightmare to her. "You..." Her voice choked up, as her eyes filled with tears she couldn't control. "You want me to l-leave?"
Undyne jumped in surprise, sitting up right away the moment she heard the tears in Alphys's voice. She looked down at Alphys and put a hand to her face, brushing the tears away."

"No, fuck no," she answered sharply, meaning it. "I don't want you to leave at all! I..."

She bit her lip, then shut her eye and just said it.

"I don't want you to leave me. I want you to stay with me, all the time. I want to explore the surface with you. I want to live here with you, get married here, start a new life, but with you!"

Alphys searched her face closely. "Th-then why are you asking me to leave?"

Undyne opened her eye and shook her head. "No! I'm not! I'm offering it to you! You... you could have died, Alphy. And... and I can't promise that that kind of shit won't happen again while we're up here, trying to make things work. Clearly, there are still people who hate monsters, after all, and I'm pretty sure they'll do anything to make us go away."

She winced. "This is dangerous. It's really dangerous. And if you were to marry me, to be my queen, it would make it even more dangerous for you. And you don't need that shit!"

Alphys waited until she was done talking before she smiled. Undyne stared at her, confused, and she sat up, hugging onto her tight.

Undyne blinked for a moment, not hugging back just yet. "Uh, Alphy?" was all she could say to this.

"Undyne," Alphys replied, closing her eyes. "You felt it, didn't you? When we were making love?"

Undyne swallowed, the sudden shift in subject throwing her for a moment, but she nodded. "I... yeah. I felt it. I felt... something."

"D-do you honestly think," Alphys continued, "after experiencing that with you, that I want to be anywhere else but here, right now, in your arms?"

When Undyne didn't say anything, Alphys went on. "I know I almost died, Undyne. But at the same time, I didn't. Of course it's dangerous up here, but with you, it feels bearable. And now that I have a human soul, it's going to be a lot harder to kill me, don't you think?"

Undyne spluttered out a laugh at that, finally reaching up and grabbing onto her tight. "Right," she agreed, her voice wavering a little. "Alphy... what was that? What we felt?"

Alphys thought about it, pulling from the hug to sit back and really think about it. Undyne watched her, smiling, unable to help it, as whenever Alphys thought about something, she always changed her expressions to reflect the thoughts unvoiced, and it was adorable.

"Well," Alphys said, chewing on one of her claws as she spoke. "You gave me one of the souls."

Undyne nodded. "Yours was about to break. I had to."

Alphys met her gaze and smiled. "I'm not angry," she replied. "I'm just stating facts. And honestly, I'm not certain. This is something we'll probably have to do research on, you and I. Er, I mean..."

She blushed, lowering her hand from her mouth. "That sounds weird, but I don't mean it to be. I just mean, there's a connection, clearly, between the soul you gave me and the souls you still have, right?"

"It certainly feels that way," Undyne agreed.
"And, especially intimately, too - though when I do this--," and here she took Undyne's hand and threaded their fingers together, "--I feel a bit of it, too. Like I said in the hospital. It wasn't just the medication, Undyne. When you touch me, I feel... very powerful."

Undyne nodded, her other hand going to her chest, thinking. In giving Alphys one of the seven, she'd lost the power to devour the world, as well as the partial immortality that came with it.

But when she touched Alphys, she felt almost stronger than she had with all seven. "Could it be just left over from before? From my having it?"

Alphys nodded. "Yes," she agreed. "But like I said, we'll need to keep track of it, make notes about it, and study it the more time passes."

She looked right into Undyne's eye and said, very seriously, "But only if you want to, Undyne. Only if you want me here. If you were serious, and you'd rather I go back--,"

Undyne growled and tackled her in reply, making her laugh and grab hold of her.

"No," Undyne answered, pressing her forehead to Alphys's. "If you want to stay, stay. I want you to. More than anything, Alphy. I still wanna marry you, for fuck's sake!"

Alphys giggled, her eyes closing and her arms going around her waist firmly. "Then here I am," she concluded.

"Good," Undyne agreed. She grinned, pressing closer to her. "Hey," she added. "Do we have time for one more?"

Alphys blinked, then blushed. "Er," she replied, though she was already shifting beneath Undyne and holding onto her. "I... dunno?"

Undyne leaned down and kissed her, pausing only to add, "Let's make the time, then."

Alphys wholeheartedly agreed, made clear the moment she returned the kiss - and pulled Undyne down to her as close as possible.

Both were caught in a similar daze when they heard both of their phones go off at the same time.

They were lying side-by-side, their eyes closed but still holding hands tight, when they both jumped and started awake, confused.

The second time had been even better, and both were still reeling from the intensity of it (Alphys would admit it only later, but she'd almost passed out). Therefore, when Undyne stumbled for her phone, she fell over a couple of times before she managed to get up, her hands still shaking. She muttered her favourite cuss and grabbed the phone, glaring at it.

Then she jolted. "Fuck!" she repeated, her voice high. "Alphy, get in the shower, they're on their way here right now!"

Alphys staggered up and grabbed her clothes from the floor, then dragged herself to the bathroom without a word, save perhaps random squeaks of frustration and panic.

Undyne tossed her phone aside and did the same, meeting Alphys on the way and grabbing her up into her arms - something that made Alphys both squeak and laugh - before they both tumbled into the shower.
They had hoped showering together would save time, but really, it only added to it, and both were really to blame for this.

By the time they were finally dressed and Undyne was brushing out her hair, the door was being knocked on quite enthusiastically.

Alphys scrambled around the room and tried to tidy up as much as she could despite her shaky knees, and Undyne waited until the room was a semblance of tidy before she opened the door.

"Asgore!" Undyne shouted with a grin and a pang to her heart, barely taking him in before she threw herself at him and hugged onto him tight.

Asgore caught her and returned it, chuckling a little and giving her a kiss on the top of her head.

"Asgore, you stupid goat, why are you here?!"

"You asked me to be," he teased, and she laughed, tears coming to her eye despite herself.

Suddenly, they both felt a third person hug onto them both, and there was Alphys, already in visible tears and clinging onto them both so tight her claws dug in. She couldn't speak, but she was smiling, her eyes closed.

"Howdy, Doctor Alphys," Asgore said gently, leaning down and giving her a kiss, too.

Alphys nodded, moving closer, and Undyne put one arm around her to make it easier for her.

Alphys then tried to speak, but only ended up getting out confusing gibberish, so she shut up and simply dug her claws in deeper, making both Asgore and Undyne laugh, but kindly, affectionately.

For a moment, the three maintained their embrace, caught in a small bout of tears and happiness that such a simple gesture could bring them. Asgore had known that both Undyne and Alphys had survived when sans had told him, but hadn't truly believed it until he saw them for himself - and held them.

How could he not weep, when the last time he'd seen them was on a grainy TV screen and in shared fear and agony?

"Thank heavens," he whispered, closing his eyes. Both women moved closer to him, feeling the same way, but for him. "When I saw... I was so sure..." He gathered them both closer and kissed them again. "Thank heavens you're both safe."

"You too," Undyne murmured. "You scared the shit out of me, old man. Don't do that again."

There was the sound of someone discreetly clearing their throat, and all three broke apart and moved away from the door, revealing Laurel, sans, and also Mettaton - who looked cheerful and rather refreshed, now.

"Now that we're all together," Laurel said as her greeting, her grin so wide it looked painful. "Let's get down to it, shall we?"
"Alright," Laurel said, once they were all settled on the couch and chair (or standing, in sans's and Michael's cases). "Let's go over the facts, first, shall we?"

When everyone nodded, she continued.

Apparently, though Undyne completed her speech and it was well received - especially online - the shooting threw everyone nonetheless. The fact that someone infiltrated the press conference with a gun (no one knew how or where they'd even found a gun) was unsettling, and while it didn't lesson the support for Undyne, it threw doubt on Mayor Awad, and her ability to actually control proceedings when it came to monster-human relations.

The mayor was, needless to say, enraged that the whole thing happened at all, and was going to press as many charges as she could - she just needed Alphys to confirm it.

"O-oh," Alphys said when she heard this, blushing and wishing she could hide. "I-I don't want anyone to g-get hurt..."

"Then let her press charges," Laurel answered sharply. "The sooner that person is out of the public, the safer you will be."

Alphys looked up at Undyne, who was holding her in her lap on the chair (there wasn't much choice, as Asgore, Laurel, and Mettaton took up the couch, but neither minded, truthfully). "Undyne?"

Undyne thought about it. "It's up to you," she concluded honestly. "You were the one hurt, Alphy. If it were me, I'd throw everything at that asshole. But it's up to you."

Alphys hesitated, then nodded. "Okay," she agreed. "Sh-she can press charges."

Laurel made a note of this on her phone, then went on.

Another issue was the fact that the Underground was still waiting for approval to come to the surface - something both Asgore and Mettaton nodded to - but the reality was that it was going to take a lot longer than they hoped.

"We're looking at - at least - six months," Laurel admitted with a wince - something everyone shared, even Michael. "I know, it's BS, but there's little I can do right now. I'm hoping to keep pushing as time goes on, but even I can't promise less than three on that."

"It's not ideal, Ms Minister," Asgore admitted softly. "But it's something, I must admit. More than I ever thought possible, given the circumstances."

"Asgore," Undyne said, then, her eye on him and focused. "Now that you're here, on the surface, did you want to, uh, be King again?"

Asgore stared at her for a moment before bursting into unexpected but real laughter.

When he calmed, Undyne was scowling, and Alphys was staring at him with surprise. "Good heavens, no, Undyne, my dear," he choked out, brushing the tears from his eyes. "After what I've
seen - and am seeing, now - I would have never even come close to the success that you have achieved, not even if I had years."

It was then, and only then, that Undyne realised something: he wasn't wearing his crown.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Undyne answered sharply.

"What it means, my dear daughter," he replied, making her blush a little, "is that your handling of everything that has come up to you has been a marvel, and a good one, at that. I mean... look at you, my dear. You're..."

He swallowed for a moment, looking away, his smile twitching a bit. "I'm so proud of you, Undyne..."

Undyne lowered her gaze, biting down on her lip, before she gently stood up, placed Alphys back on the chair, and lunged at Asgore, hugging onto him so tight he gasped - then laughed, returning it with as much fervour as he could.

"I knew you could," he whispered into her ear, so that only she could hear. "I always knew you could."

"Asgore, you have no idea," she murmured back. "If it wasn't for Alphy..."

"I'm certain that Alphys has had a great deal of help, Undyne," he agreed. "But you must accept that a great deal of it is just you."

Alphys grinned from the chair, nodding. "I-I told you so, Undyne," she added.

Undyne laughed and pulled away, giving Asgore a kiss on his whiskered cheek before going back to sit with Alphys.

The others, it should be mentioned, had watched this with similar looks of affection - even sans, though if you'd asked him he would deny it.

"Good god," Mettaton suddenly whispered, a hand to his forehead. "Has it really been only a few days?"

"Yes," Laurel agreed. "And look at what you've already achieved. This is just the beginning. We have so much more to do. Which is why I'm here."

She turned to Undyne, who was already looking at her. "Undyne, the next step you need to make is one I already discussed with you: a basic treaty."

She nodded. "Yeah, I remember. That's something I need to do with Cathy, right?"

"It would probably be best if you wrote it out on your own first, then showed her that draft. She can make edits and additions to it, and you both can go from there, but I think the initial first draft should be up to you," Laurel explained.

"question," sans broke in, holding a hand up. "what about the shooting? you said the mayor was spooked by it. won't that affect the treaty, or any future negotiations?"

"I said she was pissed off," Laurel corrected gently. "And she is, but she's more than willing to keep going. Especially because of the shooting. To her, it's a sign that you all need rights, and now. Even her coworkers agree on that."
Alphys looked away, rubbing her chest a little. She felt embarrassed that something to do with her was causing so much upheaval.

But then, another part of her wondered if they had actually gotten lucky, and that by getting attacked, they would actually help things go along smoother, and faster as well.

It was confusing, and it kept her quiet.

"Okay, then," Undyne agreed, her eye glinting. "I'm definitely up for that. I want us to have rights, and the sooner, the better."

"When, Ms Minister, do you think people can start coming up to live here?" Asgore wondered gently.

"Have you told them that Undyne and Alphys are safe?" she asked.

He nodded, as did Mettaton and sans. Mettaton had posted not only an online letter, but also a video, describing what everyone had missed and reassuring everyone that they were alive and well; sans had added to the post, and Asgore had called Gerson and told him to tell as many people as possible.

"That's good," Laurel sighed, looking relieved. "In that case, if they're calm, they should probably know: it won't be for a while. Like I said, at least six months, according to Cathy." She brightened a little. "But I know your citizenship, including you three, will get passed through sooner, as you're all seen as politicians and diplomats."

sans snorted out a snicker at this, and Undyne scowled at him, but he didn't shut up.

Alphys finally found the words to say. "Citizenship...?" she echoed softly. "S-so, we'd be able to l-live here? Have a home? Have... c-civil rights?"

Laurel smiled at her coyly. "You mean, can you get married?"

Alphys went scarlet, but she nodded, and Undyne grinned down at her. It was so like Alphys to have her priorities focused on other places.

"Yes," Laurel agreed, delighting them both. "I should be able to arrange that for you in a month, living arrangements sooner. But for now, if it's big enough for you and comfortable enough, living here in the hotel is what you have to deal with for now."

"We can pay for it," Undyne said.

"I insist," Laurel answered, her voice sharp that it left room for no argument. "You have been through hell in not even a week. Paying for a hotel is the least I can do for you."

"Hm," Mettaton spoke up. "Does that mean the three of us can, too?"

"nope," sans answered. "i'm not living up here, yet. count me out."

"I, too, also need to return Underground," Asgore admitted sadly. "I confess, I fear that our people need me the most, right now, and though I've given up my kingship, I have not given up my love for them."

Undyne smiled warmly at him, clearly agreeing. She felt better knowing Asgore was there, strong enough to be able to take care of everyone, again. She wasn't sure he would ever be able to leave the Ruins. Seeing him not only here, but eager to help out, was a dream come true, really.
"Just me, then," Mettaton added cheerfully.

"You can have the suite Michael and I are currently using," Laurel said with a smile. "Though you'll still be guarded around the clock, I don't think you need either of us here at all times anymore. Am I right?"

"We trust you," Undyne answered in agreement. "You don't need to try to prove it to us anymore that you're trustworthy."

"Then Mr Mettaton, the suite is yours, once we move out," Laurel said, before looking up at Michael and raising her eyebrows. He smiled and nodded, then turned and left the room - presumably to go back up the other suite.

Mettaton looked delighted. "This is wonderful, thank you! Now I can stay close to my darling Alphys, as well as be able to harass the hell out of Undyne!"

"I hate you, you stupid vending machine," Undyne answered him, though she was grinning. In reply, he blew a kiss at her, which made everyone - including her - laugh.

"Well, then," Laurel said. "I think I've said my part. I would like to leave you all to have the rest of the day to yourselves. You certainly have earned it. But tomorrow, Undyne, I think you should call Cathy and let her know you're getting started on that treaty, okay?"

"Deal," Undyne agreed.

Laurel stood up, bringing everyone else to do the same so that they could shake her hand.

Undyne went a step further and hugged her, surprising Laurel, but not enough to keep her from returning it with a smile.

"You're a good person, human," Undyne said. "They picked the right person for this job. Thank you, Laurel."

"My pleasure, Undyne," she replied, letting go and grinning. "Talk to you later, okay?"

And on that, she left.

Everyone returned to sitting down, even sans, who took Laurel's place. Asgore smiled at Undyne and Alphys, who both blushed a little.

"My dears," he said softly. "I'm so proud of you."

"You said that already, you dork," Undyne teased him. Alphys smiled.

"I can't say it enough," he replied truthfully.

"Touching, I know," Mettaton broke in, smirking. "But while I'm fine, I'm certain the bunch of you are hungry. Shall we order in, stuff you all full of food, and make a little party of this?"

"Honestly?" Alphys said, her eyes closed; Undyne was rubbing the back of her neck. "That sounds amazing."

In the end, it was exactly what they did.

It was especially amusing to see Asgore eat and react to what he ate, as he was surprised by the
variety of foods as well as the quality of it. He ate an entire pizza by himself and half of a box of chow mein before he got full and had to lie down. It was hilarious, truthfully, to see a big monster like him felled by a small box of noodles, and it rounded the day off nicely - exactly what they had earned, when it came down to it.

There was still so much to be done.

But now, at least, Undyne and Alphys knew they could do it.

Chapter End Notes

So, here we are, at the second-last chapter of this story. I wanted you who is reading to know that I do not plan on ending this little series, yet. I have at least one sequel already planned in my brain. The question is, would anyone be interested in reading it? I've left a great deal unsaid and unsolved for this purpose, but if the majority feel that this story is done and there is nothing else to add to it, please let me know, and I will end it here and not write the sequel. However, if you want a sequel, please tell me! Otherwise I won't know and won't write it x___x! Thank you in advance either way!
Final Interlude: Treaty

Chapter Notes

MORE AMAZING FANART BY THE UNMATCHED AND FUCKEN STELLAR AERISHIKARI!

The link below contains scenes from the following chapters, in this order: Doubts, Walls, and Engulf.

http://aerishikari.tumblr.com/post/155637937132/fanarts-for-a-great-fanfiction

AAAAA! I LOVE YOU AERIS, I DO NOT DESERVE THIS BUT HOLY FUCK I LOVE THEM SO MUCH, THANK YOU SO MUCH SDFLKHJDFLKH!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Undyne's first draft of her treaty was the following:

"I, Undyne, the Empress of the Underground, hereby swear that I am of calm and sound mind while writing this treaty between the peoples of human and monster. With this treaty, I strive to unite these people under one banner and with the ultimate goal of peace for both, together and upon the surface. The following is how I propose we make this transition work for both peoples in a way that helps greatly and hinders few.

You see, ultimately, I don't want to make things difficult for the humans living here on the surface. I want to make things easy for all of us. I'm aware this will take time, and work, but I know that humans are determined - and I am, too. I know we can make this work.

One of the first things I'd like, above all, is the right to live on the surface as citizens. This would mean a great many things, but the first of which would be to own land and have homes. The land I propose we begin to own is the land around the mountain, both for convenience as well as space. We do not want to rob you of your homes, but live alongside you in homes of our own. This would be near Mount Ebott, as that is where we would be most comfortable.

This also doesn't mean clear-cutting the forests and greenery that are already there. Rather, we plan to use the already cleared spaces as our starting points, and if those are successful, then we will branch out and move outwards towards the city.

We would also like to be able to work, so that we can earn money and pay our way. This would also mean access to health care, which would come along with paying our way. I think it's easy to assume that none of us have any real issue paying taxes, as we did that anyway while we were Underground. We want to be able to work not just for ourselves, but for humans, too, and with you, too, but I understand that, at this time, that for now, monsters helping monsters will be the norm. I just want to make it clear that I don't want it to be permanent.

We also want schools, but not just monsters teaching monsters, but humans, too. We want to be able to be taught by humans, as well as perhaps, someday, have us teach humans, too. With our children growing up together, side-by-side, and with no remembrance of the past that was antagonistic, we can thus count on those future generations to cement this peace that we all want.
We want to be your friends, your partners, and your equals. We don't want war, to be divided, to be segregated. We know that true integration takes time, and we're ready for that. But we also are ready to keep going until our wishes are met.

There is a great deal that we can learn from you, and that you can learn from us. This is just the beginning, but these are the basics that I want, and know my people want, too.

And I am confident that the majority of humans want this, too.

Thank you."

She named it "The Papyrus Pact".

Chapter End Notes

And... we are done! This is the last chapter of this story, and now I have to go back and edit all of the mistakes, but other than that, phew! I'm happy. I hope everyone is happy, too! I hope I didn't get too cheesy and silly for all of you :3. And yes, I've decided, there will definitely be a sequel. I can't leave it here e_e. So there will be at least one! Yay! I will probably start it once the edits are all finished, here, so maybe a few days or at most a week.

As always, thank you so much to all of you who read through to the very end. It means the world to me, and you are more precious to me than gemstones. If I could hug you all I would. But since I cannot, I can only call you darling pancakes and thank you over and over again for your kindness and patience.

I look forward to seeing you in the sequel! :D

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The Seven by SassyDragon

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