Breaking Through Fate

by DeterminationIsNotCrash

Summary

One year has passed since Frisk freed the inhabitants of the Underground and saved the world, but the adventure is far from over.

Papyrus encountering a mysterious man calling himself Gaster in the forest sets off a series of bizarre events in Ebott City.
Supernatural powers have begun to surface in the city's residents, and a strange organisation seemingly after his friends' lives has appeared.

Just what could be the cause behind all of this? Papyrus makes it his duty to investigate Gaster's origins while fending off attacks from the organisation, sending him down the path towards discovering shocking truths.
The Mystery Man

The man was lost in a sea of darkness.

Where was he…?

Who was he…?

He tried to think, but it felt like his mind was being smothered.

No matter how much he attempted to, he couldn’t remember anything.

He couldn’t open his eyes, but from the position he felt his body was in, he could tell that he was sprawled out somewhere. He tried to get up, but it was a futile effort. He was too weak to move even a single finger.

The darkness slowly started to wear away at his consciousness. His awareness, as suddenly as it had come, was taken from him once again.

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Ebott City, 20XX. One year has passed since the Barrier was broken and monsterkind was freed. Having been released from the cramped and overcrowded Underground, monsters were free to explore the surface, with the boy who freed them as their ambassador. However, in spite of having this newfound freedom, many monsters were uneasy immediately coming into contact with a race that they had a painful history with. Because of this, a city was established in the area around Mt Ebott as a place for monsters to live.

Although as the saying goes, “Rome wasn’t built in a day”, the latest technology and magic of the Underground ensured that a fully-functional city could be constructed within a month. The countryside around Mt Ebott, being the source of many rumours and legends of people entering being spirited away, was mostly uninhabited, so there were no objections to a city being constructed.

Another eleven months passed, and on the surface, nothing of out of the ordinary occurred. However, unknown to the residents, a sinister force has been lurking in the shadows of the city, one that would put the world as they know it at risk once more.

Papyrus admired the lush surroundings as he walked down the trail. Even now, he never became tired of the scenery of the surface. The calming atmosphere of the forest outside the city, combined with the crisp, clean air, meant it was the perfect place to go for a morning walk during his usual routine.

Papyrus’ stroll was abruptly interrupted when he spotted what he made out to be a roughly humanoid monster passed out by the side of the trail. Instantly, he rushed to their side.

Were they hurt? They didn’t seem injured, but they looked incredibly worn down, as if they had been stranded on an island or lost in the desert for weeks. Could they have gotten lost in the forest, and only just found their way back out? No… That couldn’t be right. The city council had set up boundaries to prevent people from wandering in. Who was this person and why were they here? In any case, that could be worried about later, because no matter what reason they were there for, they needed help!

“Are you okay, friend? Can you hear me?” Papyrus asked.
The monster only weakly moaned in response.

Papyrus instantly knew what to do. He whipped out his cell phone and called his brother’s number. Of course, it went straight to voicemail. Ten attempts later, Sans finally picked up. “Papyrus? What do you need me for this early?” Sans yawned.

“Sans! This is important! Someone needs our help!”

“Okay, okay… How can I help? I’m still in bed.”

“I need you to get some of the spaghetti I cooked last night from the fridge. Warm it up, put it in a flask, and head to Spring Forest Trail as soon as you can.”

“Sure thing, bro. Give me three hours.”

“Sans…”

“Okay, two and a half hours.”

“SANS!”

“What’s wrong? Strapped for thyme?”

“Someone’s life is in danger! Now is not the time for puns!”

“…I’ll be there in 5 minutes.” Click…

Papyrus groaned and sat down next to the mysterious monster. Now that he had a closer look, the man (going off his build and what Papyrus had heard of his voice) had a rather bizarre appearance, even by monster standards. His head resembled Papyrus and his brother’s skeletal appearance, but he seemed to lack the more defined features of the skeleton brothers, such as a nasal cavity, and for some reason, his hands had two gaping holes in them.

That wasn’t the only strange part. Parts of the man’s body looked partially… melted? The non-skeleton parts of his body comprised of a black substance Papyrus couldn’t tell whether it was a solid or a liquid, or even whether it was clothing or part of the man himself. Thinking about it too much made his head hurt.

“Heya, bro. I’m here.” While Papyrus was absorbed by his inspection of the otherworldly man, Sans had arrived with the flask of spaghetti.

“Great. Can you hand the flask and a fork to me?”

Papyrus unscrewed the lid, and with the utmost care, twirled a bundle of spaghetti around the fork and lifted it towards the man’s mouth. Slowly, the man began to stir. He opened his eyes, and then, unsteadily, sat up.

“You’re awake! Thank goodness. My name is Papyrus. Can you tell me yours?”

There was an awkward silence as the man blankly stared back.

“It’s okay if you’re nervous. You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to. Do you need help going back home? My brother and I can help you. Would you like the rest of the spaghetti? It’s magic food, so it has restorative properties.”

“I-I… I don’t know…” The man shakily responded, his face downcast.
“Oh, don’t be so shy! I have plenty of spaghetti –”

“No, that’s not it. I can’t remember…” The man, still sitting on the ground, clutched at his head and began to hyperventilate. “I don’t remember how I got here, or where I even came from. I can’t remember anything!” The man shut his eyes and started trembling.

“It’s okay! Don’t try and think too hard!” Papyrus reassured. “We’ll take you to the police station. Someone there will help you, I’m sure.”

Papyrus offered a hand to the man, who hesitantly took it and rose to his feet, his body seeming to solidify and take on a more humanoid shape.

Papyrus grinned, and the man awkwardly returned the expression. Nothing was better to Papyrus than the joy of helping others!

Unfortunately, the skeleton’s feelings of satisfaction were quickly cut short when he heard a familiar high-pitched whine coming from somewhere behind the man. He recognised the noise as being identical to the charging of his special attack that was stolen from him one year ago. The man’s face fell when he noticed Papyrus’ change in expression.

“Papyrus! Get down!” At Sans’ warning, Papyrus threw himself and the man to the ground, just as a white-hot laser blast shot straight at them.

TO BE CONTINUED
Blaster Attack!

The two skeleton monsters hit the ground hard. Papyrus’ mind was racing with questions. What was his special attack doing in a place like this!? Why were they being attacked? Who was even using it?

Papyrus looked up to see the identity of their assailant. Just as he suspected! A terrifying draconic skull larger than his entire body – a Blaster – floated in the air a few metres away from him, its gaze firmly fixed on the trio. A low growl emitted from its maw. Sans approached the monstrous skull.

“Oh, man… looks like this day’s really gonna drag-on if I don’t do something about it.” The creature snarled and lunged at Sans, its muzzle opened wide to reveal sharp fangs capable of tearing a grown man apart. Papyrus’ non-existent stomach dropped when he saw that his brother was making no move to dodge, but much to his relief, when the creature’s jaws closed, it was around nothing but thin air. Sans had used that strange ability of his to evade the attack!

“Listen, pal…” A voice from behind the Blaster started, “I don’t like it when people force me to work, and especially this early in the morning. Let’s just get this over with so I can go back to bed.” The dragon skull whirled around and flew straight at what Papyrus assumed to be Sans’ location. Papyrus wasn’t confident that his brother would emerge from the conflict unscathed. Sans was no pushover and possessed special abilities of his own, but if that Blaster was anything like Papyrus’ special attack, a single attack from it could kill him.

“Sans! Run away! You know how dangerous that thing can be!”

Papyrus heard no response. Of course his older brother had to be as infuriating as possible! Even though Papyrus cared about him so much, Sans never, ever, listened to him, no matter how serious the situation was. The next events confirmed his fear that Sans’ unwillingness to listen to Papyrus eventually would get the both of them in trouble.

Sans was annoyed. He didn’t care where the Blaster came from, why a stranger possessed one when he and Papyrus were the only ones who were supposed to have them, or even bother addressing the oddity that the user, whoever they were, hadn’t bothered showing themselves. He was more than capable of defeating the Blaster in an instant, and he wanted end the battle as soon as possible.

Raising his left arm, Sans summoned dozens of sharp bones aimed at the Blaster. Using his own Blasters could end up hurting Papyrus and the other guy, so he had to settle for taking it down with regular bone magic.

Sans threw his arm down and shot all his attacks at the creature at once. To his surprise, however, before his magic hit the Blaster, a wave of blue energy raced towards him, as if it was reacting to his attack, dissolving it and knocking Sans to the ground. He felt as if he had been struck by lightning. Sans’ entire body burned from the strange pulse that the Blaster had emit.

The short skeleton gritted his teeth and struggled back up, but saw stars when a loud crack sounded from his back. Reaching behind him, he noticed that his spine had an unfamiliar feel. Had the Blaster broken something?

He had no time to ponder this, as the Blaster charged at him once more. Sans attempted to conjure up more bones as defence, but his actions were in vain: a searing pain in his chest caused him to lose focus and the bones to dissipate. The Blaster rammed into Sans with full force, sending him flying further down the trail.
“Sans!” Papyrus screamed, finally on his feet.

At the sudden noise, the Blaster’s focus of attention changed to Papyrus and the man next to him.

Papyrus watched the Blaster’s movements intently. He had no idea what was going on, but the fact that it did something to Sans when he tried to attack it meant that charging in recklessly was a bad idea. As far as Papyrus knew, Blasters couldn’t move on their own. They were merely magical constructs that he and his brother could link to in order to use as attack drones. In other words, a user had to be somewhere nearby, and if he could incapacitate them, the Blaster’s attacks would stop as well.

Nervously, Papyrus glanced at the man next to him. The odd monster looked just as confused and concerned as he was. Could the user be…? No, it certainly wasn’t him. Although the Blaster had somehow countered Sans’ attack, it had taken damage from it, which (from Papyrus’ experience) would have injured the man as well if he was the user.

The skeleton monster reasoned that the quickest way to draw the user out would be to lure the Blaster out towards him so that the user would have to show themselves as well: if the Blaster moved too far away from the user, they wouldn’t be able to control it anymore, so they had to stay in range!

But there was still the mystery man and Sans to worry about. The stranger was in no condition to fight, and Sans’ life could be in danger. Papyrus had to consider them as well. The tell-tale sign of another laser blast in the form of a high-pitched whine echoed through the area, prompting Papyrus to make a decision.

Papyrus instinctively grabbed the man and summoned a massive bone the size of a support column a few metres behind them. He then summoned several smaller bones of increasing heights in the gap between them and the large bone to form a makeshift staircase.

If he had a vantage point, then he would be able to reach Sans, protect the stranger, and discover the user at the same time. Three birds killed with one stone! Not like he would throw stones at birds, of course. The Blaster might be able to destroy the bone in a few minutes with a couple of laser blasts, but a temporary vantage point was all Papyrus needed!

Upon reaching the top of the bone, Papyrus frantically surveyed the surrounding forest. They weren’t very deep in the forest, and going off what Papyrus knew, the Blaster couldn’t go too far from its user, so the attacker had to be nearby. Papyrus spotted Sans’ unconscious body down the trail. He wasn’t exactly in perfect condition, but he wasn’t turning to dust, so that was a massive reassurance.

Papyrus turned his gaze away from Sans and continued to search the area for any suspicious activity. The user… was nowhere to be found!! Absolutely no one other than the three skeleton monsters was in the forest! To make matters worse, the bone column that Papyrus had made to stand on chose then of all times to give way to the Blaster’s laser!

Both Papyrus and the man fell through the air, and as luck would have it, both of them landed directly on top of the Blaster, which began to thrash around in an attempt to throw the two of them off. Upon contact with the Blaster, Papyrus was struck by a jolt of pain, which only began to intensify. The same blue energy that Sans was attacked with was coursing through his body!

Papyrus immediately understood why his brother was so affected by the Blaster’s attack. His entire body tingled with energy, and he could feel his SOUL pulsing strangely. Papyrus’ magic had gone haywire, like a flame coming into contact with gas.
The skeleton felt a series of white-hot pains all around his body, accompanied by a sickening series of cracks. It was as if flaming knives were digging into him. Was the Blaster turning his own magic against him?

If an ordinary monster had started to lose control over their own powers, while being attacked by a deadly dragon skull at that, then they would (understandably) panic. However, Papyrus was no ordinary monster! Rather than lose himself in the alarm of the current situation, Papyrus steadied his breathing and focused on controlling his magic, just like he always did when using it.

*I can do this… I’m in control… I’m in control…* The skeleton repeated in his head.

It felt that getting his magic back to the control that he usually had over it was entirely impossible. It was like trying to regain control over a vehicle skidding down an icy road! The strange noises emanating from his body told Papyrus that nothing short of suppressing his powers entirely would help him.

Papyrus took a deep breath, and attempted to repress his magic, as if he was shutting everything away in a box and locking it. As suddenly as it had come, the pain stopped.

Now the only problem left was dealing with the Blaster itself. Papyrus couldn’t do much without his magic, especially the signature Blue Attack that he relied on so much, but he couldn’t let that stop him. Not when people’s lives were in danger! If the user couldn’t be found, then all he could do was incapacitate the creature itself! The Blaster’s thrashing had started to become even more violent, and the other man (who looked like he was about to pass out) was about to lose his grip.

Papyrus slammed a fist into the Blaster’s forehead as hard as he could. Even though he didn’t actually expect much to happen, for some reason, the Blaster stopped its thrashing. Did he tame it? His assumption was soon proven wrong when the skull started trembling, and then crashed to the ground with him and the man still on top, immobile.

Papyrus was dumbfounded for a few seconds, but quickly dismissed the strange behaviour as something to figure out later, taking the opportunity to ‘link’ to the Blaster. He didn’t know why a construct that was supposed to be nothing more than a weapon had begun to act like a wild animal, but if there truly was no user, he could control it himself.

Linking to the Blaster was the same as it always was for him: as soon as he established the telepathic connection, the dragon skull became still, as if it had never been the frenzied animal it was earlier. At the same time, the skull began to hover in the air once more. Papyrus decided to climb off the Blaster (not forgetting to help the rather disoriented man off as well) and recalled it, the weapon seemingly fading into thin air.

Remembering to keep the mystery man’s spirits up, Papyrus put on a smile, turned to him and said, “Wowie, that was a unique experience, wasn’t it?”

Papyrus didn’t know it was possible for a skeleton monster to look pale, but the stranger contradicted a lot of things about skeleton monsters.

“What’s wrong? Do you feel nauseous?”

“N-no…behind you…”

Papyrus flinched and instantly whirled around. What he saw was…!!
Blaster

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: C, A (Laser)

Speed: C

Range: C

Durability: C

Precision: E

Developmental Potential: E

Abilities/Powers

Attack Drone: Sans and Papyrus have the ability to magically link to these and control them. However, damage the Blaster takes directly transfers to them, so they can’t leave the Blasters summoned for too long without risking being harmed themselves.

Laser: Can fire a powerful laser that disintegrates anything in its path.
Gaster was incredibly confused. The past few minutes were such a blur of action that he was completely unable to make sense of the situation and simply followed Papyrus. When he fell on the Blaster and the blue energy had hit him, his own magic (did he even have any?) hadn’t gone out of control like what happened to Papyrus, but instead, the resulting shock had restored the memory of his name.

It was just a single memory. It wasn’t his entire name, and he wasn’t even sure whether it was his first or last name. But it was nevertheless a fragment of his memory which he was grateful to have reclaimed. However, this gratitude was quickly forgotten, overridden by confusion at the peculiar effects of the Blaster’s energy on his saviour.

There was nothing behind Papyrus. The skeleton wasn’t sure what the mystery man was so afraid of.

“Hey, it isn’t nice to scare people like that~” Papyrus started to speak, but as soon as he started to turn back around, he felt something behind his back move with him! Spinning around again, Papyrus looked behind his shoulder, but there was still nothing there.

Is there something stuck on me? The skeleton felt behind him and grabbed the foreign object that he assumed to be the source of movement, but recoiled when he felt the sensation of being grabbed as well. Slowly bringing the object in front of him, Papyrus was stunned at the realisation that he had grown a tail.

That wasn’t all. His fingertips had also become sharper, having lengthened into claws that ripped through his gloves. Now that he had the opportunity to look down, the skeleton noticed that he had been subconsciously balancing on his toes the entire time. No, that wasn’t it… He physically couldn’t push his heels back down to the ground.

His feet had considerably lengthened and changed structure, the sharp claws having torn his boots apart. Now they resembled a canine’s hind legs.

Papyrus felt his face, and although it was mostly the same, he noted that his teeth felt sharp. Extremely sharp. Someone with flesh would easily cut themselves on them. Reaching further up, he also realised the shape of his skull felt rather unfamiliar. The new horns that had emerged from the back of his head brought to mind the Blaster he just fought.

“Are you alright? Does it hurt?” The man asked.

An awkward silence hung in the air for a few more seconds, before Papyrus turned back to the trail and began to sprint towards where his brother was, the man quickly following. If this had happened to him even when his magic was under control now… Then what was happening to Sans!?

The sight that greeted the two was nothing short of horrific. Even rats in the toilet would puke at the sight!

Sans had regained consciousness, but he was breathing heavily, drenched with sweat, and leaning against a tree for support. Papyrus could see a ridge of spikes forming along Sans’ spine, tearing through his jacket, along with wicked claws growing from his fingertips. When Papyrus and Gaster approached, Sans lifted his head, revealing that his usual grin had become warped by sharp fangs that had emerged.
“H-heh heh… Looks like things got out of hand pretty quickly, huh?” Sans said, weakly raising an arm in greeting before doubling over in a coughing fit.

“Sans!” Papyrus rushed up to his brother. “What’s going on!? What’s happening to you!?”

Going off his expression and the disgusting sounds emanating from his body, Sans was in a lot of pain. It looked like he was mutating the same way Papyrus had changed, but because Sans had never practiced controlling his magic, he couldn’t reclaim control over his powers like his brother could. If his magic continued to run wild like this, then just what would happen…?

“Papyrus…” Sans whispered in a hoarse voice, trembling in an effort to disregard the sickening feeling of his body warping, “I don’t… I don’t have much time to explain… I don’t know the specifics… but I’ve experienced this situation before.”

“You have!? What can we do to stop this?”

“An item… in our old house in Snowdin… that you need to get…”

Sans shakily produced a key from a pocket in his jacket and threw it to his brother.

“S-search… behind the house… It’s in the room I never let you enter… You can’t miss it.”

“Alright! Let’s hurry!”

Papyrus and Gaster immediately began to head in the general direction of Mt Ebott, but stopped when they noticed Sans wasn’t following them. Turning back, Papyrus’ metaphorical stomach dropped when he saw that his brother had collapsed. He rushed towards Sans’ prone body.

“I-Is your brother…?” Gaster asked.

“He’s still alive, but it looks like his body’s still being affected by his magic.”

The recent events had stirred up even more questions in Papyrus’ thoughts. What exactly was happening to Sans? What had happened to Papyrus’ own body? What did Sans mean when he said that this situation had happened before? Was Sans’ own magic slowly killing him? If Papyrus found the item his brother had mentioned, then would he be able to save him?

Papyrus looked to the mountain that loomed over Ebott City, where his entire species was imprisoned under only a year ago. He knew his brother had been working behind the scenes more than he let on, but just how many secrets had he been hiding?

Before anything else, he had to call an ambulance. Magic food was the best thing to happen to the surface since sliced bread because it had the ability to instantly heal minor injuries and provide fast rejuvenation, but unfortunately, it was unable to do anything such as cure illnesses or heal major wounds, so facilities such as hospitals were still an important necessity.

In Sans’ case, because his magic was going berserk, adding more magic to it would be like attempting to extinguish a fire using petrol. Even though a hospital might not be able to stop whatever was happening to him, they should at least be able to ease the suffering he was going through.

Sans may be a pain in the neck and consistently unhelpful, but he was still Papyrus’ brother, and there was absolutely no way that he was going to let him die.
“Are you sure you want to come with me, Gaster?” Papyrus asked as he drove up the road to the Mt Ebott entrance.

“I have to.” Gaster insisted. “I’m the reason you two were attacked and your brother is in that state. If I hadn’t passed out in the forest, he wouldn’t have had to come, so I feel responsible for this.”

“You shouldn’t blame yourself. What happened to my brother was completely unexpected. I’m sure he wouldn’t hold it against you.”

“I see…” Even though he knew his rescuer was trying to make him feel better, Gaster was still despondent.

The car ride continued awkwardly for a while, neither of the two able to admire the normally breathtaking scenery along the mountain road. Soon, they arrived at the cave that served as the entrance to the now empty Underground, where Papyrus stopped the vehicle and climbed out.

“Well, then, there’s no use feeling gloomy, so let’s retrieve that item and save Sans! Nyeh heh heh~!” Papyrus exclaimed, his new fangs seemingly sparkling in the sun. Gaster actually had to shield his eyes. Papyrus was quick to bounce back, even after all of what happened that morning.

“I… I’ll do my best to help.” Gaster nervously replied.

“That’s the spirit!”

With that, the duo headed into the yawning mouth of the cave where the Barrier once existed.

“So, Gaster… Just how much do you remember?” Papyrus asked as Gaster rowed (at his own insistence) the River Person’s old boat towards Snowdin. It was a massive stroke of luck that the boat was still there, even after the River Person had decided to leave the Underground to run boat cruises on the surface. Without it, the trip to Snowdin and back would have taken ten times as long, and by that time, Sans would be...

“I don’t remember where I lived, but I can recall a lot of things about the state of the Underground itself. I’m certain that it was far more crowded, and the situation for the people was quite grim.”

“That was indeed true. The situation in New Home was really bad, but thanks to Frisk, the Barrier was broken and the Underground could go empty.” Papyrus elaborated.

Gaster nodded. “I see… Does that mean no one lives here anymore?”

“Actually, there is one person who still lives in Snowdin…”

Gyftrot enjoyed his steaming cup of hot chocolate as he read his newest mystery novel. Even though he was the only one left in the Underground, the deer monster found that living a quiet life in his cottage in Snowdin Forest, away from the rowdy youngsters who used to decorate him against his will, was surprisingly easy. He had managed to buy a custom-made power generator for electricity from Dr Alphys after the CORE was shut down, and the short skeleton who used to live in his neighbourhood was more than happy to occasionally drop by with food and new books every month. It was almost the usual time when he would show up, in fact.

The old reindeer-like monster heard an indescribably strange noise outside. That never happened when the young man came over before. It sounded like a crash of some kind. Had the skeleton fallen over? “Young people these days, always rushing all over the place… I thought he was smarter than
to run.” Gyftrot muttered to himself as he got up from his resting position and ambled towards the front door. The last thing the elderly man felt when he opened the door was a rush of wind and a stabbing pain.

The temperature had significantly cooled since the two had passed Waterfall. Now, it was only a few more minutes before they would reach Snowdin.

“Let’s not waste any time. Once we’re in town, we should find what Sans instructed us to and head back immediately.” Snowdin was a place filled with many fond memories for Papyrus, but by now, it was probably nothing more than a ghost town. The wonderful people who made the community such a great place to live were all now on the surface.

As the two neared the dock to the north of the town, Papyrus noticed that it was snowing. Although the Underground being large enough to have its own weather patterns meant that snow was a possibility, the snow that was falling now somehow felt far more “natural” than what usually constituted as snow. It almost had an ethereal beauty to it.

Papyrus snapped out of his trance when the boat reached the dock. Instantly, he and Gaster leapt out of the boat and hurried towards the skeleton brothers’ old house, with Papyrus leading the way. To the duo’s dismay, when they reached the town, the snow seemed to grow thicker. Being a skeleton, Papyrus wasn’t affected by the cold, but he noticed that if the snowfall kept picking up, their movements would be severely restricted and they would lose precious time in getting Sans back to normal.

“I-I can’t remember much about Snowdin. D-does this usually happen?” Gaster asked, his voice quivering.

“I’ve experienced a few blizzards before.” Papyrus responded, attempting to comfort him. “We should be fine, but let’s hurry up.”

The two quickened their pace. They soon reached Papyrus’ old house. By now, it was completely empty, all the furniture gone and the interior caked with dust. He had moved everything out to his new house on the surface, but the single room that Sans never let Papyrus enter was probably untouched. Papyrus circled around the house to the back and found himself face-to-face with the door to Sans’ secret room.

Wasting no time, Papyrus unlocked the door and hurried in. In contrast to the cosy, log cabin-like atmosphere of the other parts of their home, the atmosphere of the (oddly spacious) workshop was sterile and lifeless, similar to a lab or hospital. Meanwhile, Gaster felt a strange chill run up his spine inside the room, like there was something extremely dangerous lurking just outside of their sights.

Papyrus opened two of the four drawers in the room and started searching, with Gaster searching the other two. There were surprisingly few items in the drawers for their size. At least that was one area where Sans kept himself organised. The pictures Sans had looked like they had enormous sentimental value, but they didn’t seem to have any other function. Papyrus decided to hold onto them just in case. In the other drawer was blueprints to a strange machine, but Papyrus couldn’t make heads or tails of it.

“U-Um… Papyrus? Could this machine be what your brother told us about?” Gaster asked, pointing to a large object covered by a blanket. Papyrus lifted the blanket up and saw the machine that the blueprints detailed. It was massive and metallic, with a single small button on the side and a hollowed-out space in the centre that was large enough for a human adult to fit inside. Several torn cables hung from the walls inside the hollow space.
Papyrus, curious, pressed what he could only assume to be the power button. No response. Papyrus kept pressing the lone button, as if he was expecting a different result, but the machine didn’t respond. Could the item Sans intended for them to find have been broken down somehow?

Papyrus began to feel anxious. Sensing his worry, Gaster tried to calm Papyrus down. “Let’s not jump to conclusions. I’ll keep searching the room.” Gaster walked back over to one of the other two drawers and opened it. Papyrus nearly had the equivalent of a heart attack when a loud bang penetrated the area and he heard Gaster let out a very unmanly “EEK!” There was a party popper in the drawer! Letting out a groan, Papyrus helped clean the streamers off Gaster and finally opened the last drawer, fully expecting to be the victim of another stupid prank.

Inside the drawer was an intricately designed golden badge. Brushing his hand over it, the badge felt supernaturally cool to the touch, and simply holding it made Papyrus feel in control. This had to be it. He let out a sigh of relief. Sans was going to be okay after all!

Papyrus placed his findings in the backpack he brought with him, and then turned back to Gaster. “Okay! We’ve got what we need, so let’s head back.”

“Right.”

Papyrus and Gaster quickly left the building, heading back into the snow-covered town, and powerwalked to where the riverboat was. By now, the snow had become even thicker, more like solid fog than anything else. When the two had left the town centre, Papyrus fell to the ground when he collided with what felt like some kind of statue.

“Ouch… Was that there before?”

Looking up to see what he crashed into, he saw that it was in fact a person he recognised.

“Oh, hello, Gyftrot! I’m sorry for crashing into you, but the two of us are on a tight schedule! We have to go.”

Gyftrot didn’t respond. The reindeer-like monster’s body language was strangely stiff, as if he wasn’t even fazed by Papyrus walking into him. In fact, he unblinkingly stared directly at Papyrus.

Papyrus attempted to walk around Gyftrot, Gaster awkwardly following, but Gyftrot quickly moved around them and blocked the path to the boat. A distinctly menacing atmosphere hung in the air.

“That Fragment you have…” Gyftrot muttered, with his gravelly voice in an uncharacteristic monotone.

“Huh?” Papyrus and Gaster both blinked in confusion.

“…Hand it over.”

With that sentence, the snow suddenly changed in speed and direction!

Pain blossomed in the bodies of the two skeleton monsters as they were assaulted by a storm of ice! The snow was falling sideways like machine gun fire!

Papyrus and Gaster screamed as they were both blown away by the attack, crashing into one of the trees that surrounded Snowdin.

Gyftrot calmly and silently strolled towards his two stunned victims. His movements were almost robotic, as if he was carrying out some kind of order. The deer-like monster summoned a snowball
the size of a basketball, and then launched it at the two.

Papyrus and Gaster managed to struggle to their feet and dodge to the side in time to see the snowball obliterate the tree. Looking around, Papyrus noticed that the odd snow from earlier had stopped. Was Gyftrot somehow causing this?

“Gyftrot! What the heck are you doing!? Why are you attacking us!?” Papyrus demanded.

Papyrus’ question seemed to fall on deaf ears. This time, Gyftrot assumed a position of focus, the quadruped monster’s head bowed and eyes closed.

“Papyrus! The snow!” Gaster exclaimed in horror.

It didn’t take long for Papyrus to realise that the snow was starting to pick up again. The duo took off, sprinting away from the monster as fast as they could while frantically searching for cover.

Papyrus took a sharp right and headed for the Ruins, the place where the Queen used to live. If they could get to an indoor area, the snow probably wouldn’t be able to reach them.

The two ran through the forest into the large stone gate that formed the entrance to the Ruins, pursued by the wave of snow behind them. Papyrus grabbed the door and slammed the gate shut, panting.

“There… That should keep him away for some time. Now we just have to call for help and then wait it out.”

Almost as if responding to the skeleton’s statement, the sturdy stone door slowly started to crack! The two quickly noticed this and retreated further into the Ruins, passing through the Queen’s old home and several ancient-looking corridors. If Papyrus and Gaster looked back, they would have seen the door explode into hundreds of pieces.

Papyrus was unable to use his magic without losing control in his current condition, so he couldn’t fight back, and trying to use Gaster’s magic was also probably out of the question. Even if Gaster was a capable fighter, a normal monster’s magic most likely wouldn’t be a match for the bizarre new ability Gyftrot was using.

All of a sudden, Papyrus slipped on something and fell flat on his face. A yelp to his side told Papyrus that Gaster had also tripped. When Papyrus attempted to stand back up, he found that his legs were restrained. Looking back to see what they slipped on, Papyrus was in complete disbelief. Against all laws of physics, it was snowing inside! An enlarging pile of the icy substance was pressing down on his and Gaster’s legs, pinning them down!

“There’s no escape.” Gyftrot stated from where he emerged, walking towards the trapped duo. Papyrus’ eyes widened when he realised that the white crystals in the air moved with Gyftrot as he approached them. It seemed that the monster could make it snow no matter where he was.

Papyrus hopelessly watched as the snow falling around Gyftrot blew towards him and Gaster in a powerful blast. Would they both perish here, with Sans still dying and Gaster not knowing anything? He couldn’t die here! Not with his brother still in trouble! As the wave of snow washed over him, Papyrus braced himself as strongly as he could.

TO BE CONTINUED

Gyftrot
**Combat Stats**

- Destructive Power: B
- Speed: C
- Range: A
- Durability: E
- Precision: C
- Developmental Potential: E

**Abilities/Powers**

**Snow Control:** Can make it snow anywhere. Regardless of the environment's temperature, the snow produced by this ability won’t melt. Gyftrot has the ability to completely control the snow formed through his power, including the snowfall’s rate and direction, allowing him to perform feats such as shooting high-power blasts of snow and using snow to pin others down. However, the snow takes some time to actually form, and once Gyftrot has used the snow for an attack, it cannot be reused.
The sting of pain that Papyrus expected… never came.

“We’re not dead…?” Gaster was similarly confused.

Gyftrot’s voice was trembling. “You… You’re…!”

Papyrus slowly opened his eyes, and immediately understood why Gyftrot’s stoic attitude had been broken. The Blaster from earlier had materialised in the space in front of Papyrus and protected the two from Gyftrot’s blast of snow! But its appearance was completely different from earlier!

It was no longer a mere dragon skull. The Blaster had taken on a humanoid appearance, having developed a body donning a red suit. The evolved weapon also now sported a pair of sunglasses, and the words “COOL DUDE” were etched in a repeating pattern down its sleeves. Its size had lessened considerably, its whole body being only slightly larger than Papyrus’ and its head having shrunk to matching proportions, but the aura it gave off felt far more intense than a simple Blaster.

All of a sudden, Papyrus felt a rush of wind as the Blaster charged at their assailant and pummelled its fists into him.

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

A mechanical voice similar to Papyrus’ own shouted as the Blaster hammered blow after blow into Gyftrot, sending him flying into a wall. Papyrus’ jaw dropped at the sight of the incredible power it possessed, which far eclipsed his old special attack. Usually, a Blaster was only good for its laser and nothing else, but this one’s abilities made even his normal bone magic obsolete.

The Blaster turned back and gazed expectantly at the two. Could Papyrus control it like he would a normal Blaster? He wasn’t able to use bone attacks in this state, but if it was a Blaster’s power – that is, an external source of magic power, then he could defend himself without the threat of his powers going berserk. The skeleton focused on the mental link that connected him to the dragon-headed skeleton, and found that he could in fact move the Blaster around as easily as his own body.

Gaster suddenly noticed that Gyftrot was no longer in the place where Papyrus had knocked him into. He glanced around, not seeing the deer anywhere, then decided to look up. Gyftrot, beaten and bruised, but still conscious, was hovering on a platform of snow suspended in the air near the ceiling, staring daggers at the two.

“Papyrus!”

This time, snow rained down on the two with the force of strong hail! Papyrus quickly reacted. Using his Blaster’s strength, Papyrus punched away the snow binds that were holding him and his friend in place and threw himself to the side of the large corridor with Gaster in tow.

“Gyftrot! Please, stop fighting!” Papyrus pleaded. “My brother’s life is in danger! I don’t know anything about the Fragment you want, but if you keep doing this, you’ll leave me with no choice!”

For the first time, Gyftrot acknowledged Papyrus’ words, dropping his stoic demeanour entirely. “You youngsters are all the same… Do you have any idea how I felt!? You just stood by there and watched while those ruffians turned me into a laughingstock! If anything, you owe me!” More of that awful snow was being conjured up around him as he spoke. “If I have that Fragment, I won’t be able to be made fun of again! That man has promised me!”
Papyrus grit his sharpened teeth. *That* was the reason they were under attack now? He *had* to break through and save his brother. The skeleton sent his Blaster at the monster, letting loose another lightning-fast barrage of punches! Papyrus expected Gyftrot to at least be knocked out by the attack, but surprisingly, the monster was completely unharmed.

*What’s going on? I’m certain I hit him!* Papyrus thought.

Once more, Papyrus attempted to have his Blaster attack Gyftrot, throwing a single punch. Once more, the attack failed. The punch appeared to harmlessly bounce off the deer! It was around now that Papyrus realised he felt a slight frigid sensation on his fists!

The skeleton slowly looked down (through his Blaster’s eyes) at his Blaster’s fists and noticed that they were covered in small pieces of snow.

“Wax out those non-existent ears and listen closely, boy! My snow is not only useful as attack, but also defence!” Gyftrot explained with a massive smirk. “My blizzard attack works by having snow fall sideways with large amounts of force, but because it’s merely snow that I no longer have control over, it can be blocked or destroyed. My snow shields, on the other hand.” A small sheet of snow the size of a sheet of paper formed in the air to the side of Gyftrot as a demonstration, “ensure that I’m completely untouchable! What just happened now was that snow formed in the places where you would have hit me and absorbed the force of your attack, effectively acting as barriers. Because the snow is telekinetically held together by my ability, it’s tougher than steel. No matter where or how hard you strike me, all your attacks are useless. You can’t lay a finger on me.”

Papyrus’ heart sank at that fact. There was nothing he could do! Even with Papyrus’ new ability, Gyftrot’s power was simply better in comparison!

Suddenly, Gyftrot’s smug expression shifted when he noticed the pieces of snow that he had used as shields were still stuck to him. Huh. He was certain that he had taken them off his body after the skeleton attacked him. Oh, well.

The deer monster shook himself off like a wet dog, trying to get the snow off the sides of his body, but it continued to stick to him! It was around this time that Gyftrot noticed he felt like something was dragging him down. He noticed that strange creaking sounds were coming from the snow platform he was standing on. Looking down, his eyes widened at the sight of the platform, supposedly stronger than steel, snapping underneath his- no, the snow on his body’s weight and the floor quickly rushing up to meet him. Almost comically, Gyftrot had faceplanted into the ground!

Papyrus was astonished. “This is… my Blue Attack?” Impossible. Blue Attacks only worked on things that possessed a SOUL. Objects which lacked them, such as snow, couldn’t be affected by such techniques. Unless… His mutations, coupled with the odd appearance and strength of his Blaster… Were his powers being channelled through the Blaster somehow? Had his abilities evolved?

In spite of being pinned to the floor by the weights stuck to him, Gyftrot simply wouldn’t give up on attacking. He needed that Fragment the skeleton was hiding on him!

Rather than the assault of the small, yet powerful snowflakes, Gyftrot decided to summon a massive ball of snow and chuck it in the defenceless Gaster’s direction. As it flew through the air, it unravelled and wrapped around him like a lasso!

“Uwaaaaa!” Gaster began to question why he decided to accompany Papyrus as he was pulled in towards the deer.
“Now…” Gyftrot declared. “Respect your elders. There’s no use in playing dumb. Hand over that Fragment.”

“I’ve been trying to tell you all this time; I don’t know what a Fragment is! Let Gaster go and we can negotiate!”

Gyftrot’s eyes narrowed. “If you are insistent on keeping up that act until the end, then your friend will pay the price.”

The rope around the deer’s hostage constricted like a snake around its prey, and Papyrus heard an odd squelch. Gaster’s face was frozen in a look of stupefaction as his upper and lower body completely separated!

“Gaster!” Even though he had just met the man, the pure shock at the sight of a person being torn in half crosswise caused Papyrus to lose concentration. Gyftrot noticed that his body began to feel light again. The effect of the increased weight on his snow shields must have worn off.

“I see. If you want to keep something heavy, you need to focus on it.”

The quadruped pushed his hostage away with his head, then started to approach Papyrus. The skeleton was desperately trying to keep his composure, his Blaster called back and now hovering protectively in front of him. By now, the snow in the air had thickened. It had taken on the texture of solid fog that was back in Snowdin. Papyrus had no doubt about what it was going to be used for.

“It seems that your ability is something that manifests outside of your body. Do you really believe that your Blaster will be fast enough to defend you if you are attacked from all sides at once?”

“…”

The skeleton didn’t respond, with his eyes remaining focused on the deer. Of course, if the deer used all his snow on an all-out attack on Papyrus, he would leave himself open. Papyrus was close enough to Gyftrot to send his Blaster at him, and once the deer commenced his attack, he would be unable to use his snow shields.

However, Papyrus sending his Blaster away would mean that he himself would be defenceless. Keeping his Blaster on him was a better option for defence, but he wasn’t sure of its limits. It was fast, yes, but as Gyftrot said, would it really be able to protect him from an attack on all sides? In the end, it all came down to who was faster.

The snow coming to a halt in the air signalled the beginning of Gyftrot’s move. Papyrus readied his Blaster, fully prepared to be hit by a wave of pain from the snow digging into him. The last thing he expected was for the snow blast to barely be as strong as a gentle breeze and Gyftrot to tumble over yelling.

Papyrus glanced back at the deer, wondering why he had collapsed all of a sudden. A black rope was wrapped around all four of Gyftrot’s legs. His sight followed the rope to its source, and Papyrus almost couldn’t believe his eyes.

Gaster was alive! In spite of his body being cleaved in two, not only was the skeleton monster not dead, he had managed to trip Gyftrot over using a rope that extended from the place where his body had been torn apart. He was just as confused as Papyrus, but he seemed not to feel the need to question the situation as he appeared to have successfully incapacitated the monster.

Gyftrot was stammering. “Y—you’ve received a special power too, have you…!?"
Gaster, not responding, turned to his still separated legs, which melted into black goo and merged with his upper body. Gaster’s legs regrew and he shakily stood back up. The rope extending from his body and attaching him to Gyftrot remained, relocating from his torso to his ‘sleeve’.

“I guess... Looks like I could be useful to Papyrus after all.”

Gaster tightened the rope, and then looked to Papyrus. “What should I do with him?”

Papyrus tapped his skull thoughtfully. “We should probably hear him out. We need to find his reasons for attacking us.”

Both of the skeletons looked at Gyftrot expectantly. Gyftrot opened his mouth wide… and chomped on the rope holding his legs together! Gaster let out a yelp of pain, the rope instinctively retreating back into him and his body returning to his normal size as the deer inexplicably blasted off! A snow platform had formed underneath the deer and took off deeper into the Ruins.

Papyrus just realised that his back suddenly felt light. He felt behind him, and his fears were confirmed. “No! He stole my bag! We have to go after him!”

The two skeletons took off in the deer’s direction. They passed through several more rooms, the puzzles in them having already been solved by Frisk last year. The two’s progress came to a sudden halt when they realised the ground in front of them was covered with cracks.

“No!” Gaster exclaimed. “We can’t get past this! This floor’s far too fragile to walk over!”

“No need to fear; the great Papyrus has an idea!” The awakening of his new ability had made Papyrus far more confident. Papyrus summoned his Blaster, then proceeded to grab Gaster and throw him over the floor to the other end which lacked cracks. “Now, throw your rope over!” Gaster complied. “Pull!” The skeleton monster pulled the rope, and to his surprise, Papyrus flew over the floor easily, landing safely in front of Gaster.

“A-amazing… How did you do that?”

“My Blue Attack doesn’t only increase the weight of objects, but it can also make things lighter. I bet now I can even make heavy boulders weigh less than a feather!” Papyrus puffed out his chest in pride as he boasted.

The two opened the door to the next room, only to be assaulted by a blizzard that made Gyftrot’s previous attacks look tame in comparison!

“You idiots! You fell straight into my trap! All I had to do was retreat to the end of this corridor and charge up my snow for a while, then use it all on this attack!”

Papyrus, trying to ignore the blistering pain, sent his Blaster at Gyftrot.

“Take this! Get him, Blaster!”

The fearsome weapon flew at the deer, but stopped suddenly. Papyrus, confused, tried to make it go further towards his opponent, but it just wouldn’t move any further than five metres away from Papyrus’ body. It was as if there was an invisible rope connecting the Blaster to Papyrus, and the rope had reached its limit.

“Looks like I’m out of your weapon’s range, Papyrus.” The deer taunted. “Now you have no choice but to relinquish that Fragment if you want your badge back.”
The snow dug into Papyrus, forcing him to the ground. His concerns were not about him, but rather Gaster’s and Sans’ wellbeing. “I… I understand. I’ll give you your Fragment. Just give us back the badge. I need my brother to live.”

Gyftrot’s snow attack finally ceased. “Good. Stay where you are and show me your belongings.”

Papyrus methodically emptied his pockets, taking out his wallet, his car keys, and a packet of breath mints. At the sight, as if a switch was flipped, Gyftrot flew into a rage, whacking Papyrus with a hoof. “Is this some kind of joke!? Hand over the goshdarn Fragment already! I won’t tolerate being made a fool of again!”

“These are all I have!” Papyrus insisted. “I’m not hiding anything on me.”

The deer glanced at the space next to Papyrus, then his eyes darted around the room, suddenly panicked. Papyrus looked at where Gaster was, and noticed that he was nowhere to be seen. He couldn’t have run away, could he? The skeleton noticed a strange black puddle underneath Gyftrot. From that puddle, a hand – a single skeletal hand, unattached to an arm or body, balled into a fist – launched out and punched Gyftrot.

“What the-”

“Now, Papyrus!”

Papyrus leapt over his gear, using the boost from lightening himself to close the space between him and the deer with ease. As soon as Gyftrot entered his effective range, Papyrus wasted no time in attacking.

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

At close range and with no snow left to defend him, there was no contest. Gyftrot went flying through several walls, knocked out cold.

Papyrus let out a sigh of relief. That was a close battle! The black puddle beside him quickly reformed into a humanoid shape, Gaster’s hand attaching itself back onto his arm.

“Thank you very much for the help, Gaster! I didn’t know you could turn yourself into liquid!”

“I-I’m glad I could assist…” At Papyrus’ second statement, Gaster blinked and gazed at his own hands. “I… didn’t know either…”

“Anyway, let’s keep moving. We need to get that badge to my brother.”

Papyrus followed the trail of destruction Gyftrot left, Gaster following.

The flower garden that the deer had unceremoniously crashed into was surprisingly peaceful. Papyrus and Gaster looked over their attacker’s unconscious form. He had hooked the bag over his horn when he escaped. Papyrus carefully removed his bag from the horn and inspected it. Good. It was undamaged. The skeleton shifted his focus to the deer.

“He looks like he took quite a beating.” Papyrus observed. “I think we should take him with us to the hospital.”

Gaster produced another black rope and wrapped it around the deer. Combined with Papyrus’ lightening magic, carrying the monster was easy. Gaster simply ‘wore’ Gyftrot like a backpack. The
two were about to leave, but Gaster suddenly stopped when he saw something out of the corner of his eye.

“Hmm? Gaster, is something wrong?”

“That flower…”

Papyrus’ gaze followed where Gaster was pointing to and saw that a single, perfectly-shaped golden flower in the bed rose above the others. It looked just like his flower friend from last year. Hmm. He wondered where he was now.

“Yes, it’s very beautiful. But we need to focus on my brother-” Papyrus was cut off by Gaster walking over to it.

“It feels… important…”

“Wait, what are you-” The man reached out and picked the flower before Papyrus could say anything else.

“I-I’m sorry. Can I take this with me? Just in case.” The expression on Gaster’s face resembling a child who had been told off prevented Papyrus from scolding him.

“If you say so! We can give it to Sans as a get well gift.”

With that, the two quickly hurried out of the Ruins, aiming to make it to the surface as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, at Ebott City Hospital…

Sans was drifting in and out of consciousness as he lay in his hospital bed. He heard Papyrus and the other guy – Gaster, was it? – resolve to find the power restraint for his sake. Normally, by now, he would have simply let go. His powers would have gone out of control, and then… But his brother and an unrelated man had gotten involved. It was his personal code that he couldn’t leave any unresolved debts or unfulfilled promises. Because it was for his sake… for his brother, Sans had to hold on.

TO BE CONTINUED

Gyftrot – Status: Knocked unconscious by Papyrus’ new ability. Retired.

Papyrus + Bonetrousle

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: A

Speed: B

Range: C

Durability: B

Precision: A
Abilities/Powers

Bonetrouble (renamed by Papyrus himself): A dragon-like weapon of unknown origin that Papyrus picked up and magically linked with. Possesses superhuman strength and Papyrus can control it like his own body, but all the sensations it feels and the damage it takes transfer back to him.

Weight Manipulation: An upgrade of Papyrus’ original Blue Attack. Papyrus now has the ability to control the weight of any object or person, making it as light or as heavy as he needs, as long as either he or Bonetrouble has recently made physical contact with it. However, if Papyrus loses focus, or the object under the spell is damaged, the effect will wear off.
Welcome to Ebott City

Sans was barely conscious. How much time had passed? He had long since lost track. He didn’t know whether it had been one hour or ten since Papyrus and Gaster had left him at the hospital. Stuck in a state between asleep and awake, Sans could only concentrate on holding back his own powers.

It was a losing battle. He had never bothered to train as much as Papyrus (or at all), so his grip over his powers was incredibly loose. Slowly, the skeleton’s body was changing against his will. He could feel the grotesque shifting of his bones underneath his hospital gown.

He barely noticed the thudding of footsteps as Papyrus and Gaster bolted into the room, nor did he perceive his brother hurriedly opening his bag and thrusting the badge at him. Only the cooling sensation and his powers returning to normal when the badge was absorbed into his SOUL snapped the skeleton out of his daze. As the effects of his magic going out of control vanished, Sans’ consciousness fully returned to him.

Slowly, Sans rose up. The sight that greeted him was his panicked-looking brother and the man from earlier. Before he could say anything, Papyrus leaped on him, embracing him in a tight hug.

“Sans! Thank God you’re okay!”

At a loss for words, Sans awkwardly pat Papyrus on the back. Moments passed as Papyrus continued to hug his older brother.

“Now that you’re better, I think we should head home. Let’s get a doctor to check whether you’re fit to be discharged. I’ve already brought your clothes.”

Sans moved the covers off himself and was about to get out of the bed, but grimaced at the sight of his mutated body. Even though the changes had stopped, his body hadn’t reverted back to its original state.

His hands had claws even sharper than Papyrus’, his legs had become digitigrade, and a tail extended from the base of his spine. Sans felt around his head and realised that its structure had become completely alien to him. He couldn’t see his exact appearance without a mirror on hand, but he could tell that his face had pushed out into a muzzle of some kind.

“Anyways, Gaster!” Papyrus stated cheerfully, interrupting Sans’ self-inspection.

“It’s gotten quite late, so how about you spend the night with me and Sans as thanks for earlier? You’ll also get to try some more of my fantastic cooking!”

“Thank you...” Gaster quietly accepted.

The amnesiac young man felt slightly guilty that someone he only knew for a day was doing so much for him, but he didn’t have any other choice than to accept. After all, he had nowhere else to go.

The deer monster Papyrus had knocked out earlier lay in the hospital bed, a rope tied around him at Gaster’s request in case he tried anything. The amnesiac peeked in through the doorway. It looked like Gyftrot was still unconscious.
“Is he awake?” Papyrus asked from the corridor.

Gaster shook his head.

“Then we’ll just have to leave him here for tonight. Closing time’s soon.”

Wordlessly, Gaster crept into the room. It was just out of curiosity to get a closer look if their former assailant was injured, but when he brushed against Gyftrot, his hand began to glow with a white light! Gaster recoiled and instinctively drew his hand back, and as abruptly as it had appeared, the white light faded. What had just happened?

“Gaster, we have to go. We can come back later, I promise.” Papyrus urged in a gentle tone, sneaking in and lightly pulling on Gaster’s sleeve, taking him out of Gyftrot’s room before he could say anything else.

By the time the trio got to leave the hospital, it was already dark. The white streetlights illuminated the road as Papyrus led the way to his house. Gaster was even more confused than when he first awoke in the forest. What on Earth had happened in that hospital room…? What was he…?

“…and that’s what happened after we dropped you off at the hospital.” Papyrus concluded his recount of the events that transpired in the abandoned Snowdin.

“I had no idea… You two went through all that trouble, and for me…” Sans responded, scratching the back of his neck, a solemn look on his face. It was the most serious Papyrus had ever seen his brother in a while.

“At any rate, I’m glad you’re okay. Defeating strange assassins is snow problem for the great Papyrus, huh?” Never mind. Sans wasn’t being serious at all. Papyrus gave the shorter skeleton a look while Gaster let out a small chuckle.

Papyrus turned to his new friend with horror. It couldn’t be… Gaster liked those putrid puns as well!? They weren’t even good! What did people see in them? Shaking his head, Papyrus cleared his mind and focused on the more important matters at hand.

“Could you explain what happened to you? What was that badge? And why did Gyftrot attack us?” Papyrus questioned.

“That badge is something I’ve had for a while. It’s a safety measure designed to keep my power under control. Now that it’s fused to my SOUL, I’m fairly certain I’ll be safe. It won’t come off without a lot of effort. As for what happened to Gyftrot… I have no idea.”

The walk continued, with nothing but silence among the trio as they passed through the streets. They eventually came to a halt in front of a large house. “Here we are! The home of the great Papyrus and his brother!”

The inside of the house was as comfortable as the outside looked. It was decorated simply and cleanly, having a soothing effect on whoever entered. Passing through the entrance hall and the living room, Papyrus led Gaster to the dining table and sat him down there, with Sans pulling out another chair (which Gaster presumed was from his room) to sit opposite him.

“You two wait right there. I’ll get dinner ready.” Papyrus placed his backpack on the bench beside the table, then went to the kitchen, leaving Gaster alone with Sans.
“So, uh, pal… You say you have amnesia?”

“Yes.”

“You can’t remember anything? At all?”

“Actually… I can remember facts about the Underground, but I don’t remember anything about any actual people.” Gaster summarised.

“Huh.”

A short silence passed between them for long enough for Gaster to believe that the conversation was over, but Sans unexpectedly posed another question.

“What do you know about Hotland?”

“?”

The tell-tale sign that Sans was looking for… The sign that Gaster could be lying… Would it appear?

“It’s, er… Hot?”

“Anything else?”

“There was… A power facility? I think… Also, apartments… And, u-um…”

The man attempted to recall everything he could to satisfy Sans. Gaster’s expression was nervous and confused, but otherwise innocent.

“I see…”

“So, he’s telling the truth… Gaster really isn’t involved in anything suspicious.

If Gaster was involved in those horrific experiments that took place in the Hotland labs, the mention of it would provoke some kind of response. Hesitation, shock, guilt… None of those emotions were present on Gaster’s face.

“Thanks for answering my questions, bud.”

Papyrus re-entered the room with two steaming hot plates of what looked like extremely appetising spaghetti.

“Looks like the grub’s arrived.” Sans observed.

Papyrus placed the food onto the table before sitting down himself. “Bone appetite~! My special spaghetti marinara dish takes a lot of work to make! I didn’t want to keep you waiting, so you two can have the spaghetti while I’ll have last night’s leftovers!”

Gaster twirled some of the spaghetti around his fork and lifted it up to his mouth, but stopped before he took a bite. He noticed that although Papyrus was happily digging into the quiche, Sans hadn’t touched his own plate. Was he doing something wrong?

“Oh, no,” Sans stated, seemingly replying to Gaster’s thought, “You can start, I’m just not that hungry. I’m a pretty slow eater.”
Shrugging, Gaster placed the fork in his mouth and swallowed the spaghetti. His eyes widened, and the fork fell from his hand to the table with a clunk.

“!!!”

“T-this… This is…!”

“Gaster!?” Papyrus shot up from his chair and rushed to his side.

“Delicioussss! It tastes so gooood!” The skeleton resumed eating with three times the speed.

Papyrus, letting out a sigh of relief, went back to his chair and sat back down. “Jeez, like I said before, it isn’t nice to scare people like that. I thought you were choking.”

Sans, on the other hand, was utterly dumbfounded.

No way… He actually likes his cooking!? There’s definitely something off about this guy!

Papyrus continued eating his own meal, which just as quickly disappeared. Sans gulped down the food as fast as he could, then tried to wash the taste out of his mouth with a glass of water. His brother was the coolest, but his cooking wasn’t really to his (or anyone’s, for that matter) tastes. Actually, speaking of cooking…

“I almost forgot. Tori’s been cooking again. She and the kid decided to try making some honey sesame dumplings this time.” Sans got up out of his seat and sauntered towards the kitchen, but cringed when he felt his tail brush against Papyrus’ bag and knock it over. Crap. He had forgotten about that.

“Sans!” Papyrus got out of his chair, squat down and started to gather the spilled contents.

“Ugh… Sorry, bro.”

Sans attempted to help Papyrus, but his eyesockets darkened when he saw the blueprints to his machine among the scattered goods. For a moment, the skeleton was frozen in place.

“What’s wrong? Why did you stop?”

“…It’s nothing. I’m fine.”

“Is this about those diagrams? Do you know what they mean?”

“They’re, uh…” Sans stumbled to come up with something. “…not important to you. Or relevant to this situation at all, for that matter.”

“Okay, then. If you say so.”

Sans paused, then removed the blueprints from the pile.

“I’ll hold onto these. They need to be kept safe.”

With that, the two finished cleaning up the mess and Sans brought out the dessert.

“Here, have some. They’re specially made with an explosive surprise.”

Papyrus took a small dumpling from the box and popped it into his mouth. “Wowie, these are good! Gaster, you should try some!”
The skeleton handed Gaster a dumpling, which he timidly rose to his mouth to take a nibble.

“Wait!” Sans shouted uncharacteristically. “You’re not supposed to eat it like tha-”

*SPLURT!*

The filling of the treat exploded all over Sans, coating his entire face in a dark sticky substance.

“…Welp, you can’t say I didn’t warn ya.” The mutated skeleton walked off to the bathroom to get himself cleaned up.

Papyrus glanced at the clock. 10:30PM already?

“We should probably go to bed. I have school tomorrow.” Papyrus beckoned for Gaster to follow him to his room. “You can use my bed for now. I can sleep on the couch.”

“Thank you very much.”

Papyrus left the room and closed the door, letting Gaster lie down. Inspecting the spacious room, Gaster found that it looked closer to a preteen’s room rather than a high school student’s. There were several novels on the bookshelf, some well-built robot figures from some kind of anime displayed on the table, and framed next to them were several photos of Sans and Papyrus with a group of other monsters – Gaster noticed a fish-like lady and a lizard was shown most prominently among them - and a human.

*Do I have friends like that…? If I did, would they be looking for me right now?*

Seeing how happy the brothers looked with their friends made Gaster feel empty. Moving into bed, he tossed and turned for what felt like hours, before finally falling asleep.

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Sans groaned at his reflection in the bathroom mirror. He had mutated far more than Papyrus, to the point of being completely unrecognisable.

His skull had taken on an appearance similar to a Blaster, giving him an intimidating set of features. Vicious-looking horns protruded from the back of his head, and the sharp teeth of his new muzzle didn’t look like they were just for show.

Sans hadn’t noticed in the hospital, but spikes had also grown along his spine, shoulders, and arms, tearing holes in his shirt.

The only aspects of his body that remained similar to its regular state were its proportions and its height. In other words, he now resembled a short bipedal dragon skeleton. If it weren’t for his brother also developing bestial qualities, Sans wouldn’t even look like the same species as him anymore.

“Ah, well,” Sans said aloud, throwing his arms up in his trademark shrug, “no use in complaining.”

It wasn’t like it mattered that much, anyway. Monsters which looked much stranger existed out there, so he figured he could still blend in. What he should really be concerned about was the odd battle his younger brother described to him.

The nice old man he used to bring down supplies for so often suddenly attempting to take his brother’s life just screamed suspicious. Sans finished washing up and made his way towards his room, sitting down at his desk and booting up his laptop.

Careful not to damage the keyboard or mouse with his new claws, Sans clicked on the button to
compose a new message. It wouldn’t hurt to keep tabs on this situation, just in case.

Meanwhile…

“Hello? Are you there? Ow, not so loud, not so loud… You don’t need to use your fake voice with me, remember? Yes, I have a task for you. I need you to track down a certain something in this city. No, it doesn’t matter if you have to kill anyone. Just bring it to me, whether you need to take anyone’s life or not, and as soon as possible.”

Sighing, the man hung up. He wasn’t sure what had happened with the deer he ran across earlier. He had failed in his objective, and on top of that, he wasn’t able to control him anymore. But that didn’t mean anything in the big picture. All he had to do was create more Fragment Users, and then he would certainly achieve his goal.

TO BE CONTINUED
Gaster was jolted awake to the sound of Papyrus’ alarm. He rolled over to check the display of the clock. It was 7:00AM. The skeleton got out of bed and moved towards the living room. Papyrus was already awake, having set the table. Two bowls of oatmeal had been prepared and placed on opposite ends of the table. It looked like the horned skeleton had just finished making breakfast.

When he saw his guest, his face lit up. “Good morning, Gaster!”

“Good morning. Is this one for me?”

“Yes. I thought that I should be a good host, so I made you some breakfast as well.”

“Thank you.” Gaster quietly responded, feeling his face heat up. He was grateful for Papyrus helping him, but being waited on hand and foot like this made him feel guilty. The amnesiac took a seat and started eating. The oatmeal was delicious. The sweetness of the sugar and the flavour of the pieces of fruit Papyrus added blended together to form a wonderful taste sensation.

“Wow… This is really good!” Gaster exclaimed.

“Thank you! It’s my favourite meal, so I always take care to prepare it just right!”

Gaster looked around. Sans was nowhere to be seen.

“What about your brother? Isn’t he eating?”

“He told me that he had to do something and left early. He always does his own thing.”

As the two continued to their meal, Papyrus noticed Gaster seemed to be troubled. His mind was clearly elsewhere, going off his unnatural silence and how he seemed to be having a staring contest with his breakfast as he ate.

“Is something wrong?”

“Where will I go… after this…?”

Ah. His amnesia.

“Well… Today’s a school day, so I can’t stay at home, and I feel sending you to the police station would be unwise…”

Papyrus hummed in contemplation. Suddenly, he had an idea.

“How about you come to school with me?”

“…? But, I…”

“You look around Sans’ age… You may not be able to enroll as a student, but you can help around the school grounds for a while. The school gardener is very nice, so I’m sure he’ll let you.”

The two walked through the city on the way to school. Now that the sun had risen and there was time to stop and smell the roses, Gaster could fully appreciate Ebott City. In terms of its design, it looked no different from a surface city that he would have heard of while he was still in the
Underground, but its atmosphere felt far brighter. The buildings were free of graffiti, the parks the two passed through were colourful and lush, and the air was crisp and clean.

Gaster’s expression of wonder at the usual sights of the place warmed Papyrus’ (metaphorical) heart. As they continued towards the school, the skeleton spotted a familiar face.

“Greetings, Frisk!”

The middle school student paused, studying Papyrus for a few moments, before approaching him with a relaxed smile. The two skeletons also noticed that a boy Papyrus had never seen before was walking alongside Frisk, silently approaching them at the same time. The boy looked around Frisk’s age, but he wasn’t wearing a uniform. What could he be doing there?

“Hey, Papyrus! How are you doing? That’s an interesting makeover you got there!”

Papyrus’ tail wagged in response to the complement.

“Why, thank you! Do you think it makes me look cooler?”

“Yeah! It’s a breath of fresh air. Don’t get me wrong, your usual look was cool, but changing things up once in a while is always nice.”

Thank goodness his friend was accepting of his new appearance. Mutating was rather inconvenient, especially with his usual attire and the fact that Golden Flower Academy required all students to wear a uniform.

The bone spikes on his arms ripped through his blazer, he had to cut a hole in his pants for his tail, and his changed feet meant that he couldn’t wear shoes anymore. Making others uncomfortable on top of all of that would have been terrible!

With that out of the way, Frisk turned to Gaster. “And your friend is…”

Upon getting a closer look, Frisk did a double take.

“You!?”

Gaster’s attention was immediately roused.

“You know me!?”

“Yeah, I saw you in Waterfall one year ago. I tried to talk, but you-”

Gaster grabbed Frisk by the shoulders and frantically fired off a series of questions.

“What was I doing!? Where did I go!? Was I with anyone else!?”

Frisk yelped when he felt a burning pain where Gaster was holding on to him.

“Hey, get off! You’re hurting him!” Frisk’s friend yelled.

Gaster, noticing that the holes in his hands were starting to dig into the teen, let go.

“S-sorry…”

In response to Gaster’s apology, Frisk’s friend flinched.
“Gaster has amnesia.” Papyrus explained as Frisk rubbed one of his shoulders. “He’s staying with me while we look for leads on his identity.”

Upon hearing the name, Frisk’s expression turned serious.

‘Gaster’…? That Gaster? But that couldn’t be…

Frisk and the boy in the green and yellow striped shirt next to him exchanged nervous glances.

“Gaster”…? That Gaster? But that couldn’t be…

Frisk started, but was interrupted by the sound of the school bell.

“Oh, crap! It’s 8:25 already? We’ve got to get going! Toriel’s going to get angry if I’m late.”

“But—” Gaster tried to protest, but Frisk had already taken off, the mysterious boy floating(??) beside him.

Frisk dashed through the streets and reached the massive school grounds. Golden Flower Academy was the biggest school in Ebott City, and also widely considered to be the best. Run by Toriel, it took everyone in from kindergarten to high school. It had a similar quality to that of the city – clean and colourful, thanks to the efforts of two certain Boss Monsters.

However, currently, Frisk had no time to appreciate this, as he was on a race against time to avoid his teacher’s fiery wrath! Perhaps he was running a tad too quickly, because as he ran through one of the school gardens on the way to his classroom, his foot got caught on what felt like a tree root and he faceplanted!

“OH, NOOOO!”

To make matters worse, as soon as Frisk hit the ground, all his books went flying! His bag hadn’t been closed properly, so they scattered everywhere.

“Oh! MY! GOD! This can’t be happening! Two minutes until class starts, and if I’m late…”

“HOI!”

Frisk heard a chirpy, high-pitched voice from behind him. It was a Temmie!

“u drop BOOKS??? tEM can halp!!”

“Yes, please!” The student responded with a relieved grin. Thank goodness! He was saved!

Temmie helped the student gather his books back up and neatly placed them back in his bag. Frisk thanked the monster, then resumed running. He was so focused on getting to class, he didn’t realise that there weren’t even any trees on the path he took.

Frisk dashed into his classroom and slammed his school books on the desk. He checked the time.
Yes! He had made it! 8:30 on the dot!

But something was amiss. Although all the students would have normally arrived by this time, the classroom was completely empty. In fact, upon closer inspection, the classroom didn’t even look like his homeroom!

Frisk’s stomach dropped at the thought of having somehow wandered into the wrong room and made his way towards the door, but for some bizarre reason, the entrance had vanished. There was nothing but a blank wall where the classroom door used to be.

“What is this, I don’t even…”

Suddenly, Frisk heard a cracking sound around him as the walls around him began to warp, like some kind of special effect on television. He had no time to react as the entire classroom around him imploded.

CRASH!

Papyrus dropped his pen from the sudden noise. That sound! It had come from the section of the school where Frisk was!

“Hey, what happened?”

“Wasn’t that from the middle school?”

“My little sister’s in there… I hope she’s okay…”

The other students in Papyrus’ class began to gather around the window of the classroom, wanting to see what had happened. Papyrus joined them, peering at the nearby school buildings.

Some sort of hole had been punctured in the middle school. A section of the building had just... sunk in, as if it had been moulded like silly putty. Papyrus, at the thought of the people who could have been injured, had to get a closer look.

Ignoring the protests of the teacher, the skeleton student rushed out of the classroom and ran towards the middle school section of Golden Flower Academy. Passing through the gardens that were between the high school and middle school areas, the skeleton felt something slide under his leg and trip him up.

Looking back, Papyrus realised that a thick tree root was wrapped around his leg. Following the root to its source, he saw that it was connected to one of the several trees that were planted near the path.

Wait a minute... Were there always trees there? And why are they moving!?

The skeleton almost couldn’t believe his eyes, but the trees were sliding along the ground towards him! Their branches stretched with unnatural elasticity and wrapped around him. Papyrus felt like the life was being squeezed out of him!

“Bonetrouble!” At its master’s command, the sharply-dressed dragon skeleton materialised.

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

His Blaster’s barrage easily tore them into chunks of wood and leaves, leaving Papyrus to wonder what on Earth had just happened.
Another strange occurrence… It’s just like what happened in Snowdin! Could there be someone else like Gyfrot…!? What if they’re attacking people right now?

At this realisation, Papyrus doubled his speed, sprinting to the classroom as fast as he could.

Temmie grumbled from her location on the school roof. With the special ability her employer granted her, no ordinary monster or human should have been able to stand up to her.

The boy she sensed was her target could easily be incapacitated by redirecting him into her trap, and it should have been child’s play to prevent anyone else from interfering. So how did that tall skeleton do it!? No one but her and her fellow organisation members should have those kinds of powers, so how did that Papaya (or whatever his name was) guy get past those trees?

“Oh, well…” The creature muttered, having dropped the obnoxiously squeaky voice she put up in front of strangers. “That dragon-headed guardian he has may be strong, but he’s no match for my ability.”

Her plan hadn’t changed. She would simply stroll to where the child who freed the Underground was, find the Fragment she sensed on him, and then deliver it to that man. If the skeleton got in her way, she would just dispose of him.

Papyrus burst into the broken classroom. The room was a mess! Tables and chairs were strewn everywhere, but that wasn’t the strangest sight. Parts of the walls appeared to have stretched out, like handless arms, and wrapped around an object in the middle of the room like a cocoon. And standing before that cocoon was…

“Temmie!?”

The monster’s head spun around 180° at Papyrus’ exclamation. The skeleton stared the feline creature down for what felt like an eternity.

The creature’s body oriented itself to match the direction of her head, then she did several forward somersaults towards Papyrus with astonishing speed and locked her arms around his neck!

“W-why are you… Argh…!”

Papyrus vision started to blur as her grip tightened. Struggling, he summoned Bonetrousle and punched Temmie away.

The creature, knocked to the other end of the room, landed on her feet. A scowl was on her face and blood trickled from her split lip. “So it’s true… You do have powers like mine! You, too, are a Fragment User!”

A menacing purple aura seemed to appear around Temmie as she spoke. “I thought the biggest threat to our goal would be that kid over there, but I was wrong.” The monster wiped the blood off her mouth with a paw and licked it, then glared at Papyrus with intensity comparable to the likes of Undyne on her bad days. “He can wait, you must be eliminated first!”

Toriel frowned as she checked the daily attendance. All of the students were there except for Frisk, which was rather odd, considering how her ward always arrived punctually. Despite wanting to walk to school with Frisk together, the boss monster usually had to arrive earlier at school than him, so Frisk usually travelled to school on his own.
“Kid, could you please come over here?” Toriel called.

The reptilian child approached the teacher’s desk. “Yes, Ms. Toriel?”

“How very strange... The goat lady wondered. He was well this morning, and I do not believe that he would play truant. Where could he be?

Temmie dodged yet another of Bonetrousle’s blows. No matter how hard or fast Papyrus attempted to hit her, she kept darting left and right like a professional acrobat. Papyrus was definitely no slouch when it came to fighting, but compared to Temmie’s speed and flexibility, he may as well be trying to catch a fly with a pair of chopsticks.

“Stop moving, darn it!”

Papyrus attempted to go in for a grab using his own body, but his claws barely scraped Temmie as her entire body contorted to the side as if she were made of rubber! Following up her dodge, the monster threw a punch at the skeleton’s chest, knocking the wind right out of him!

Temmie smirked in triumph at her adversary’s apparent defeat, but let out a squeak of surprise when the recoil sent her flying back. Why did she feel so light all of a sudden!? Recoil from a single punch shouldn’t have knocked her back so far! Papyrus rose back up. “I made you light when I scraped you earlier! That was my real attack!”

“AAAAAAHHHHHHH!” The girl screamed as her body rebounded around the walls of the classroom like a ball. She couldn’t regain control over her movements! Just as she hurtled towards Papyrus, Bonetrousle swung its arm at her.

“NYEH~!”

The weapon’s blow sent Temmie into the ground. This time, Papyrus increased her weight so that she wouldn’t be able to get up. The monster spewed several expletives as she was plastered to the floor.

The skeleton walked over to the cocoon, then using Bonetrousle, ripped it apart with ease. Inside was the student, slightly shaken from the ordeal earlier. “Are you okay, Frisk?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. What’s going on? What’s with that Temmie over there?”

“I’m not sure myself... She seems to be working with other people. Someone with similar powers attacked me earlier, as well.”

Frisk cautiously approached the creature, who was still struggling on the ground. The boy carefully asked, “Who are you? Why are you and your people after me?”

“For a better future, obviously!” Temmie growled. “Our dream isn’t going to come true until you’re out of the picture!”

‘Better future’? Their ‘dream’? What is she even on about? Frisk wondered. “Chara, do you know anything about this?”
The boy from earlier manifested next to Frisk. “Nope. This is the first time I’ve ever heard of something like that.”

Papyrus’ eyes bugged out at seeing the odd boy appear out of nowhere. “What the- You again? Who in face are you!? Why are you following Frisk around?”

Frisk coughed sheepishly. “It’s kinda complicated… Now isn’t a good time to-”

“You too, skeleton!” Temmie interrupted, drawing the trio’s attention back to her. “If you insist on getting in my way, you’ll have to disappear too! I know exactly how to counter techniques like that Blue Attack of yours!”

With that, Temmie’s SOUL manifested in front of her. True to the name, Papyrus’ ability had turned it blue. The monster raised a paw, and then sliced it, tearing the blue coating straight off! Several bloody gashes appeared on Temmie’s body from the damage to her SOUL, but her weight had returned to normal.

“Ah~ Much better.”

The monster, free of the weight, pounced at the three, but they leapt out of the way.

“You really want to fight?” Frisk warned, the student taking a fighting stance while Papyrus resummoned Bonetrousle. “I’ll gladly hear you out if you stop, but if you insist on attacking us…”

The monster smirked. “Really, now? You three believe you’re in a position to negotiate? Think again.” Temmie backed away from the trio, moving to the other end of the room. “My ability allows me to warp inanimate matter. No matter what it is, anything I touch I can warp and move as easily as my own body.”

The trio tensed up, expecting a move from Temmie at any moment. “Anything I touch…” Temmie repeated. “For instance, where my paws are now…”

Chara’s eyes widened in realisation. “SHIT! The floor is-”

The spirit couldn’t complete his sentence before the floor rose up around him and his two tangible companions, engulfing and crushing them in a dome.

TO BE CONTINUED
Temmie cackled like a demon. “Gyahahahaha! Yes! I did it! I won! He’ll be pleased with me now!” Defeating those kids was easy. The skeleton’s special ability may have been a slight bother for her, but the power granted to her by that man was still superior.

Indeed, the dragon-like guardian entity the high school student could summon looked scary and packed quite the punch, but that meant little if it couldn’t touch her. Now, what was it that man said to do again? Once she located the Fragment, take it through whatever means necessary, then deliver it to him. She should do that.

The girl trotted over to the dome roughly the size of an exercise ball and cracked it open, but a vein popped in her head when she realised that neither her target nor the student defending him were present inside.

“What!?” She couldn’t believe her eyes. How did they escape!? Upon closer inspection, beneath the dome, there was a hole. She looked through it, and at the other side… was the ground floor.

“THOSE SHIT-EATING BITCHES!”

The two students fled through the halls. They were well aware their pursuer could launch an attack against them at any moment.

A split second before they were crushed, Papyrus increased both his and Frisk’s weight to fall through the floor and escape. Hitting the ground would have been painful, but Papyrus managed to make their bodies light as they fell in order to decrease their impact velocity and prevent any major injuries. The spiky skeleton thanked his lucky stars he had the reflexes to do that on time.

“Where are we headed?” Frisk asked.

“It doesn’t matter! All we have to do is hide!”

Papyrus and Frisk continued to run through the middle school building, ignoring any staff members who tried to stop or question them.

“Ah! Over there!” Frisk pointed ahead towards a door labelled ‘Cleaning Supplies’. “We can hide in that closet!” He threw the door open and jumped in, Papyrus following behind.

Papyrus noticed that Frisk was practically wheezing. “Frisk? Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine… Running so fast for so long is exhausting.”

That’s weird… Papyrus thought. He was running at the same speed for the same amount of time, and his stamina was roughly equal to Frisk’s. So why was Frisk tired and not him? The skeleton shook his head and adjusted his now fingerless gloves. Never mind; there was a much bigger, fluffier problem they had to deal with right now!

Temmie may have looked disarming, but she was an extremely dangerous opponent. She may be even more of a threat than Gytrot was. Her special power appeared weak in comparison to the blizzard-summoning deer monster that attacked him in Snowdin, but her unnatural flexibility and spatial warping ability meant that as long as she could see something coming, she was effectively invincible against all of his attacks.
The trick he used to escape probably—no, certainly wouldn’t work a second time. He no longer had the element of surprise on his side. The only way to defeat Temmie was to corner her through an ambush. One type of surprise attack would be to use a long-range attack to hit her from a distance, but given his mutated state, the skeleton no longer had the power to use such techniques.

Another method would be to grab Temmie’s attention with something else and catch her off-guard, but looking at how Temmie was focusing on defeating both Frisk and Papyrus as her top priority, he doubted anything could distract her. Papyrus groaned and rubbed his at his temples. There had to be something he could do to defeat her…!

Chara spontaneously manifested in between the two friends. “This is just great… Like this, we’re sitting ducks.”

The older student decided that seeing as they were here now, he should point out the elephant in the room. “Seriously, who are you? How do you keep appearing and disappearing like that?”

“I guess I should introduce him.” Frisk responded. “Papyrus, this is Chara. He’s helped me out since last year.”

“Chara!?” Papyrus responded. He thought he had heard wrong back in the classroom, but… “You have the same name as the first fallen human!”

“Actually, I am the first fallen human.” Chara corrected.

“What!?”

“Shh!” Frisk pressed a finger to his lips. Papyrus giving away their location would be bad.

“Sorry!”

“Chara’s a spirit who I met when I fell into the Underground.” Frisk explained. “He helped and guided me through my journey. He’s just as responsible for breaking the Barrier as me.”

“The first human, who gave the Underground hope,” (Chara blushed at that comment) “helped the final human realise that hope… Wowie! That’s so cool! He’s just like Bonetrousle!”

“Bonetrousle?”

“The dragon skeleton I summoned earlier. We both have guardian spirits!”

Papyrus grinned at this discovery and continued. “If both of us have guardian spirits, then that means we both can defend ourselves from Temmie. If we can both act against Temmie, then—”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on.” Chara cut off Papyrus before he could finish. “You’re misunderstanding. I’m nothing like the dragon thing you can summon.”

“What do you mean?”

Chara shifted uncomfortably in the cramped closet. “I’m completely intangible. I can’t actually touch anything. You and Gaster are the only people who even consciously acknowledge my existence aside from Frisk. I’m just a ghost who can only observe…”

“Oh.” Were they back where they started?

“Let’s stay determined.” Frisk encouraged. “There has to be another way around this problem.”
“At any rate, we need to come up with something, fast. Temmie’s going to find out where we are at any- Aah!” Chara felt something snake around his leg and swatted it, drawing out a dog-like yelp from Papyrus. The space was so small, Papyrus’ tail must have wrapped around Chara by accident.

Wait.

Chara started at his hand in shock. He could see that Papyrus and Frisk were equally surprised by this development. Did he just… feel something on his own? Did he just… touch something on his own? That was the first sensation he had experienced in a long time.

Today… really was a strange day.

Temmie stomped through the corridors, shoving aside anyone who dared get in her way. Where had that horned skeleton and human escaped to!? She was turning the whole place upside down, but she couldn’t find either of them!

The moment I find those two, I’ll make them pay!

The girl noticed a late student casually strolling to class. “You! Answer me!” She warped the floor to wrap around the student. In spite of his life being threatened, he seemed relatively unfazed. In fact, he wasn’t even paying attention to her! The (actually kind of ugly) student was still messing around with his smartphone, muttering something about how the Wi-Fi signal sucked. Only by constricting him further did she manage to catch his attention. “Have you seen a skeleton and a human pass by here?”

“Them? Yeah.” The student replied nonchalantly, still finding his phone more interesting than whatever was going on around him. “They’re hiding in there.” Without turning his head away from the phone, he pointed a greasy finger towards the cleaning supply closet.

Temmie threw the student aside, denting the wall. She wasn’t familiar with the school’s layout, so she couldn’t warp the inside of the closet to crush the people hiding within unless she could directly see them. Opening it was her only option. She had to give them credit; it was smart of the two to hide in a place out of her field of vision.

She marched over to the closet and threw the door open violently, ready to attack whatever was inside! To her surprise, she was knocked over the moment the door opened. She could feel a massive weight of some sort pinning her to the ground.

“Urgh…!?”

As she was stuck underneath the object, Temmie could hear the two students’ footsteps become softer as they escaped from her. Damn it! How annoying! The skeleton had made it so that the broom would fall on her the moment she opened it!

Utilising her power allowed her to flatten her body and slide out from underneath the trap, Temmie avoided being crushed, but by the time she managed to get back up, her target and his friend had already disappeared around the corner. Those little bastards! She wouldn’t let a couple of teenagers make a fool of her! Temmie hauled herself back up and took off after them.

Gaster, slowly and carefully, finished trimming back the bushes around the primary school area.

“Good work, Gaster.” Asgore complimented. “You’re a natural at this.”
“T-thank you…” The amnesiac responded, his form somewhat destabilised. His previously more humanoid body structure had melted into a big blob of black goo, perhaps from his nervousness. Asgore Dreemurr was an extremely large and imposing man, not someone Gaster wanted to disappoint. Working with the former king felt very pressuring, as if messing up here meant letting the entire city down.

On the other hand, the school gardener’s mood had actually improved from the usual. Papyrus bringing a new friend to assist him that day was a wonderful surprise. He loved gardening, but being Golden Flower Academy’s only gardener could be quite time-consuming and monotonous.

Having someone to talk to as he worked, even if it was mostly just smiles and nods, make his job feel a lot more enjoyable. A second set of hands also made work far more efficient.

A sudden chill down his spine interrupted Asgore’s train of thought. Toriel had approached him. “Dreemurr.” The warm and kind tone his ex-wife’s voice usually possessed was completely absent.

“Yes, Tori- I mean, Toriel?”

“Have you seen Frisk today?”

“I have not.”

Without another word, the teacher turned and left, cutting off the minimal interaction before Asgore could get another word in.

What could that have been about? Gaster wondered.

Frisk and Papyrus dashed towards the exit as quickly as they could. The older student hoped that the strategy they decided on would work. The patter of Temmie’s rapid footsteps could be heard just behind them. Whatever she planned to do to them if she caught them wasn’t good.

The two friends weaved around another set of tendrils trying to wrap around them. By now, the school hallway they were running through barely resembled its usual state. The ghastly appendages growing from the walls and uneven lumps racing along the floor as if waves were racing across the ocean made the school resemble a combination between a haunted house and an obstacle course.

Jumping over another hurdle Temmie created, the exit leading outside came into Frisk’s view. “There it is!”

“You’re not getting away, you little brats!” Before they could reach the door, the surrounding wall around it closed it off and plugged it shut. Temmie had used her spatial warping ability again!

“Bonetrousle!”

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH!”

The dragon’s barrage of fists tore the wall apart as quickly as it had formed. Even if it was magically warped, the wall was still a normal wall. With his new guardian entity, Papyrus could break through it easily.

Leaving the building, the path split into a left and right turn. If Temmie recalled correctly, the left turn led to the primary school area. Were they trying to get help from someone? She wouldn’t allow that. It would be a gamble, but if she got the timing right, this could give her the chance she needed to corner them. Bonetrousle, or whatever it was called, could tear through her techniques easily, but the
Temmie’s front leg shot out at the two! Naturally, at that distance, they could both easily dodge. However, they weren’t Temmie’s actual target! She wasn’t aiming for them, but the part of the school building that continued to the left! The moment the teens turned around the corner, like some kind of massive baseball bat, a solid chunk of the building swung towards them and knocked them away!

Thanks to Papyrus’ reflexes, he managed to use his tail to grab onto Frisk and had Bonetrousle break both of their falls, but now they were stuck at the end of the right side of the path, which was a dead end. Temmie was slowly advancing towards them with a confident sneer. Frisk and Papyrus slowly backed away until their bodies were pressed against the wall of the school building.

The pursuer leapt at the skeleton, ready to make him suffer for being so intrusive, but in mid-air, she felt a burst of pain on her scalp and her world was plunged into darkness! Temmie, stunned, crashed into the wall and stumbled around blindly. *What the actual… How…!? Why…!?* She had little time to react before she pressure on her head increased and she was scrunched into a ball.

In reality, Papyrus knew from the start that she would have tried to corner him and Frisk. Everything went exactly according to his plan! When Frisk and Papyrus escaped from the closet and Temmie was distracted by the broom falling on her, Frisk had Chara split up with them and follow them through a different pathway outside of Temmie’s field of vision.

Before they were discovered, the skeleton entrusted Chara with a bucket which he decreased the weight of to the point of near-weightlessness. The distance the spirit boy could move away from Frisk wasn’t as restricted as Bonetrousle and Papyrus, so he could tail the group at a safe distance.

Papyrus and Frisk deliberately ran to a dead end directly beneath a window, from where Chara could turn the bucket upside down and push it into the air above Temmie. Thanks to the skeleton’s power, it remained suspended in mid-air.

The moment the fluffy menace pounced at the skeleton and was inches away from his face, the spell was released! The bucket instantly regained its normal weight and fell directly on her head, covering it entirely.

All it took was a single tap from the skeleton to increase the bucket’s weight and trap the girl inside. The malleability of Temmie’s body worked against her in this case, with Papyrus squeezing her inside the container easily. Frisk slamming the lid of the bucket on and trapping Temmie inside sealed her defeat.

“Excellent work, Chara!” Papyrus high-fived Chara, who had jumped down from the window to join the students. It was strange… The boy claimed to be a ghost, but for all intents and purposes, to Papyrus, he felt like a normal human being.

The skeleton shrugged and turned to the rattling bucket in Frisk’s hands. Temmie was cursing and trying to break out from the inside, causing the surface to push out in several places, but it didn’t break. She may have possessed powerful constricting power and flexibility, but she didn’t have enough raw physical strength to punch her way out.

Now only two problems remained: what should they do with her, and how would they explain all of this to the school?
Alphys had no idea what Sans was thinking. Last night, she received a message from him asking her to meet him in the park, but at the meeting place they arranged, her friend was nowhere to be seen.

The lizard monster was confused. She had even arrived fifteen minutes late (she forgot to set her alarm and slept in) but Sans still hadn’t shown up. Was she waiting in the wrong place? Maybe she passed by him without knowing. She decided to try asking around in case anyone else saw the short skeleton.

It was a Monday morning, so not many people were in the park at this time. Alphys spotted a peculiar monster sitting on the nearby bench. Being a scientist, she was familiar with the various types of monsters in the Underground, but she had never seen one like him in her life.

He was a skeleton monster, just like Sans, but rather than resembling a human’s remains, he looked closer to a beast. The monster also looked quite intimidating: in spite of his relatively short height, those teeth, spikes, and claws gave him a ferocious aura. Honestly, if given the choice, Alphys didn’t want to go anywhere near him, but there wasn’t anyone else in the nearby area.

“E-excuse me?” She tried to catch the monster’s attention. The lizard girl expected him to have a personality to match that fearsome appearance, but when he saw her, he smiled gently.

“Heya, Al.”

That voice!

“Sans!? Is that you!? W-why do you…”

“Stuff happened.”

“O-oh…” His expression hadn’t changed, but the abrupt response indicated that he didn’t want to talk about it any further. “Anyway, I got into the hospital and ran some scans on Gyftrot like you asked.”

“Was it any trouble?”

“N-no, actually… He was just as nice as he usually was. A-although, he said he had an awful headache and he looked guilty about something.”

“Huh.” Strange… Sans thought. That doesn’t match what Papyrus told me. “So, how did it go? Did you find anything?”

“Yes. What I found was mindblowing.”

TO BE CONTINUED

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Temmie

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: C

Speed: B
Range: A

Durability: C

Precision: D

Developmental Potential: B

**Abilities/Powers**

**Spatial Warping:** Anything nonliving that Temmie touches she can bend and reshape to her will. However, these objects must be within Temmie’s field of vision in order to be manipulated accurately. If Temmie does not know the structure of an area or cannot see it, her powers cannot function effectively.
Explanations

Ring, ring!

Papyrus was preparing to head home, but the notification on his phone that someone was calling somehow told him that he wouldn’t be able to just yet. He swiftly moved to answer, but cringed when he accidentally scratched the screen with his claws. The mutated skeleton made a mental note to be more careful with his new spikes. Not wanting to further damage the phone with the points on his skull, Papyrus held it slightly away from the side of his head when speaking.

“Hello?”

“H-hello? P-Papyrus?” A nervous, shaky voice could be heard on the other end.

“Alphys! How are you? Can I help you?”

“I-I… U-um… U-uh… (Why is he making me call?) W-well…”

Remembering how anxious Alphys was over the phone, Papyrus patiently waited for her to get her thoughts in order. Suddenly, he heard the sound of fumbling as the phone was passed to someone else.

“‘Sup, bro.”

“Sans? What are you doing with Alphys?”

“We’ve got something important to show you. Come to Alphys’ house after school. Bring Frisk and Gaster along as well.”

Click…

That was abrupt. But if his lazy brother bothered to go all the way to Alphys’ and Undyne’s house, whatever he wanted to discuss had to be important.

After subduing Temmie, Papyrus, and Frisk could continue their day as usual. When the thirteen year old finally managed to get to class, Toriel got mad at him for his unexplained absence, but he had agreed with Chara and Papyrus beforehand to say that he had just slept in and stuck to it no matter what.

Meanwhile, Papyrus got a real earful from his teacher, and his classmates asked him about what he saw, but he just said there was nothing there and that he just tripped over a few times. Part of him suspected that it wouldn’t work, but surprisingly, all the students accepted his story. He must have been better at making stuff up than he thought.

They had no idea what to do with the captured Temmie, so Papyrus decided to leave the bucket she was contained in inside his locker until after class had finished.

Strangely, the distortions that the girl created as a result of moulding the buildings to attack the two had disappeared with her defeat. In fact, most of the student body and staff had no idea anything strange had happened in the school in the first place!

According to the other students, Papyrus, Temmie and Frisk were seen running in the hallways, but nothing supernatural or out of the ordinary had been observed. Luckily, the path the students had
been chased down was empty at the time Temmie started to use her powers, so no one saw the bizarre battle that occurred.

Also, the strange ‘sinking in’ of one of the school walls disappeared after a couple of hours, and no one was harmed, so people eventually just shrugged and continued to go about their business.

Now that school was over for the day, it was time to sort things out. Papyrus put on his school bag, picked up Temmie’s makeshift prison, and then went to meet with his friends.

Conveniently, Frisk didn’t have anything planned for after school and Gaster was free by default, so getting them to tag along wasn’t a problem. Papyrus also noted that leaving the school grounds in the direction of Alphys’ house meant that they would also most likely run into…

“Frisk! What’s up, punk?” Frisk flinched when his hair was suddenly ruffled from behind by a scaly hand.

“Good afternoon, Undyne!” Papyrus turned and greeted his friend with a wave and a smile.

The response from the fish lady wasn’t what Papyrus expected. Similar to what happened with Frisk that morning, the beam she had when she greeted Frisk changed to a neutral expression as she studied her friend’s new appearance.

“Undyne…?” The skeleton’s smile turned nervous at the former head of the Royal Guard’s unnatural silence. Suddenly, Undyne’s grin returned, twice as big.

“Whoa, Papyrus! You look awesome!”

“I do? I mean, of course I do! The great Papyrus always looks cool!”

“Yeah! You look like you’ve come straight out of an anime! I especially like the work you’ve done on your skull.”

Papyrus let out the breath he was holding. He suspected that as she was the type who jumped to conclusions quickly, Undyne might have reacted irrationally. Seeing a good friend with a warped and bestial appearance may not have ended well.

Thank goodness for anime. The skeleton thought.

The group of four continued towards Alphys’ house while Undyne chatted with them excitedly.

“What did you use to style yourself like that? Did you start combing like your brother does?”

“E-er… That’s… Well…”

Papyrus cleared his throat and gathered his thoughts before explaining, summarising the events that transpired from the attack in the forest outside the city to what happened that morning at school, as well as introducing Gaster. Undyne was practically sucked into his story, listening intently.

Although at first she was enthralled by the thrilling events her friend experienced, upon further consideration of the implications, her expression changed to one of worry for the skeleton’s wellbeing. It wasn’t another of his secret styles, but a mutation? And on top of that, Papyrus was being attacked by strange people?

What if he was being pursued by a cold-blooded killer?

What if his mutation meant that he was sick or dying?
What if…

“Undyne!” The gym teacher was snapped out of her trance by a car horn. She had inadvertently stopped in the middle of a traffic crossing.

Papyrus frowned. Was telling her everything a bad idea? Now that the student thought about it, he remembered how he found out the truth behind his ‘private training lessons’ with Undyne shortly after the Barrier was broken.

As it turned out, she believed Papyrus was too naïve for real combat and she was secretly trying to persuade him away from becoming part of the Royal Guard. At that time, he felt dismayed and slightly betrayed, but eventually managed to get over it. After all, there wasn’t even a need for a Royal Guard anymore.

“At any rate, what are you guys doing in this part of town? Aren’t your houses in the other direction?” Undyne inquired.

“Alphys invited us over to your place.” Frisk answered. “She said that she and Sans have something important to show us.”

Undyne was surprised. Her girlfriend occasionally invited Papyrus’ weird older brother and that flamboyant robot over, but she rarely brought over this many guests.

The group soon arrived at the couple’s house. Undyne unlocked the door and held it open, allowing the two students and the amnesiac to enter. They made their way into the lounge, where Alphys and Sans were.

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“Take this, Saaaannnssss!”

“I’m not gonna lose!”

Sweat was beginning to form on the bestial skeleton as his in-game avatar barely avoided Alphys’ character’s intense and unrelenting strikes. Her attacks were close-range in nature, but extremely dangerous.

Just two or three more hits from the character Alphys picked would finish Sans off. Getting stuck in a combo or super would mean instant defeat!

*Could this be the tiebreaker?* For the whole time they knew each other, in every friendly competition between the lizard and skeleton, their skills were about even.

However, since she met Frisk, Alphys’ attitude and self-confidence (at least around Sans and Undyne) had improved tremendously. Was this where his friend would finally overtake him?!

“I’m not done yet!” *Time to put up a last stand!* Sans, moving so fast his claws left scratches on the controller, input the button combo for his character’s ultimate attack.

Sans’ character’s super move was earth-shattering, filling up the screen with wave after wave of projectile! There was no way Alphys would be able to avoid it!

To the skeleton’s utter shock, Alphys’ character gracefully hovered around the attacks, weaving in between each blade or lance like dancing. The lizard monster’s reflexes were honed from years of playing games like these!
“Y-you’ll have to try harder than that!”

Alphys’ turn to attack! Sans’ meter was entirely empty. The former royal scientist used her character’s own ultimate technique!

Sans’ avatar was blasted by several energy beams, quickly depleting his health to zero and vaporising his body.

“I did it! I won completely!” Alphys jumped onto the table and struck a dramatic victory pose just as her friends entered.

Alphys blushed, turning away. “S-sorry you had to see that.” She was comfortable showing that side of herself to Sans and Undyne, but with the two students and a total stranger witnessing her like that… If embarrassment was a source of electricity, the whole town would be set for a month.

“There’s no need to apologise, Al.” Sans reassured. “We were just having fun while waiting.”

Once everyone had been seated on a couch or chair, Sans turned to Alphys and nodded. In response, the lizard monster plugged her laptop into the television.

Displayed on the screen was something resembling the outline of a deer with a pulsating heart in the middle. The SOUL was unlike anything Papyrus had seen before. It wasn’t the white of a monster’s SOUL, nor was it the one of the seven single colours a human SOUL could assume.

The shape had been inverted to become similar to a human SOUL, and the seven colours a human’s SOUL could be – cyan, orange, blue, yellow, green, purple and red – were evenly spaced in separate areas around the white centre.

But who was this a scan of? Upon closer inspection, Papyrus and Gaster recognised the shape. “That’s Gyftrot!”

“Y-yes…” Alphys confirmed. “M-more precisely, it’s something like an analysis of his body’s make-up.”

“He might look the same, but the entire structure of his body has changed.” Sans continued. “As you can see, from our magic scans, we would normally be able to see things like his organs and skeletal system, but now, aside from that weird SOUL of his, the machines don’t pick up anything. But, when Al used this…”

Alphys pressed a button and the image changed to reveal the regular structure that would be expected from a creature like Gyftrot, except the SOUL part was missing. “This is the physical scan of Gyftrot.”

“He’s developed a physical structure?” Papyrus asked.

Sans nodded. “Not only has his SOUL and magic gotten way more powerful, he’s become more substantial. That old guy’s a lot less fragile.”

“What does this all mean?” Frisk inquired.

“I-it means that he’s a lot stronger now. W-when I saw the analysis’ result, I couldn’t believe my eyes. I thought he had stolen a human SOUL at first, but his new SOUL and form may be even more powerful.”
“Yeah. I’m guessing ordinary monsters and humans would be no match for him now. I wouldn’t be surprised if he could even handle Determination.” Sans left this part unsaid, but a physical structure also meant that Gyftrot wouldn’t crumble to dust if he died. If, hypothetically, whoever sent Gyftrot wanted to eliminate him now, it would be hard to do without leaving loads of evidence.

“I’m surprised you managed to get those scans without getting hurt yourself. You were pretty brave to approach a dangerous guy like that, Alphys.” Alphys’ face turned beet red at Undyne’s compliment.

“O-oh, no…! It wasn’t like that at all! G-Gyftrot was actually quite nice and cooperative.”

“Yes?” That didn’t make sense to Papyrus. “He was a lot less polite with me and Gaster.”

“Are you sure he wasn’t behaving suspicious at all?” Gaster asked.

“A-actually, he did look pretty guilty about something. Did it have anything to do with you?”

“Well…”

As Papyrus explained the current situation to Alphys, Gaster went over that day’s events in his head. Could it be…? The light from earlier was… The amnesiac glimpsed at the rattling bucket on the floor behind the sofa. He reached down, then placed a hand on the bucket and focused. The same white light appeared!

“Gaster!? What are you doing!?” Gaster was suddenly the centre of attention in the room. The man remained quiet, focusing until the light faded away.

As the light faded, the bucket stopped moving. Papyrus, worried that Temmie somehow died, opened the lid at once and let her out. Gaster and Frisk prepared to defend themselves, but to their surprise, the girl was trembling.

“W-what… What have I been doing? Why would I try to…?”

Tears began to fall from Temmie’s face as the realisation of what she did set in. “How could I!?”

The group stared at her in silence, unsure of whether she was faking. Eventually, Papyrus slowly approached her. Undyne tried to stop him, but he ignored her and crouched down to eye level with Temmie.

“There, there… Everything’s going to be okay…” The student soothed his former attacker.

“I… I’m sorry…”

The group patiently waited for Temmie to calm down before questioning her. “Can you tell me who sent you after us?” Papyrus asked.

The moment those words reached her ears Temmie let out a wail of pain and clutched her head. “What’s wrong!?”

“I-I… I can’t remember… It’s like there’s some kind of lock on my mind…! I-it hurts…”

“Calm down! There’s no need to think if it hurts you.”

The girl looked ill, so Undyne let her rest in another room while the friends consolidated their facts in the lounge. Papyrus started by going over his experiences. “From what Gyftrot and Temmie said, it
sounds like those attacks in Snowdin and Golden Flower Academy were motivated by them needing something that only Frisk and I had. Temmie wanted to capture Frisk and Gyftrot wanted something called a ‘Fragment’.”

“And they’re not using regular magic, either.” Sans continued. “They’re using weird powers and their SOULs and bodies have changed.” Papyrus didn’t get a good look at Temmie’s SOUL during the short time she had it exposed, but she most likely also had a changed SOUL.

“Not to mention what Papyrus and I can do, now.” Frisk added. Now that it was brought up, Frisk and Papyrus remembered that they hadn’t actually seen their own SOULs in a while. The two students brought them out to check, and were surprised to see that theirs had also become multi-coloured, similar to Gyftrot’s.

“It looks like we’ve developed the same kind of abilities.”

“Temmie referred to herself as a ‘Fragment User’ so maybe Frisk and I have become Fragment Users as well? Using that reasoning, what Gyftrot said would make sense.” Papyrus added.

Perhaps the ‘Fragment’ that Papyrus apparently had was Bonetrousle, the creature he found in the forest. But where did that leave Frisk and Chara? Did Frisk have a Fragment too? If so, why could Chara only start affecting the material world now?

At first, he thought that Fragments were guardian entities that people could summon, but Temmie and Gyftrot didn’t have them. And at the same time, Gyftrot wanted the Fragment Papyrus apparently had. Was there a difference between a Fragment User and a Fragment Holder?

Chara decided to manifest and catch Frisk’s attention. “When I was running through the school this morning, I noticed something strange. I could touch objects and people, but no one other than you, Gaster, Temmie, and Papyrus could see me. I guess it’d make sense if the Fragments you all talked about had something to do with my recent state.”

Frisk looked around the room at Sans, Undyne and Alphys. “Can any of you see Chara?”

The fish and lizard couple just looked around the room in confusion. Papyrus mentioned the spirit of the Dreemurrs’ deceased adoptive son helping them, but they couldn’t see him anywhere. Sans, on the other hand, looked straight at Chara. “I can see him.”

Papyrus assumed a thinking pose. “Hmm… Sans came into contact with Bonetrousle’s berserk form in the forest. That definitely means Bonetrousle is involved in this Fragment business.”

Alphys cleared her throat. “What I’m more concerned about is the fact that Gyftrot and Temmie weren’t chasing Papyrus and Frisk of their own wills. Someone or something manipulated them into attacking.” It was just like Mew Mew Kissy Cutie… The thought of someone going around kissing people and ordering them to attack was amusing, but it wasn’t funny at all if her friends had become targets.

“And I could cure them…” Gaster muttered. His amnesia and the fact that those people only started appearing after his arrival felt very suspicious. What if the person who made Temmie and Gyftrot attack was also responsible for his memory loss? Even if it wasn’t true, Gaster still felt like he should help Papyrus and his friends. He was certain he was somehow involved in this from the beginning!

“A-at any rate, it’s too dangerous for Frisk to be out in the open! We should hide him and Papyrus somewhere safe before s-something worse happens!” Alphys insisted.

“That isn’t going to work, Alphys.” Frisk retorted. “None of the people we know have abilities like
the ones the people after me are using. Lying low or getting others to protect me won’t help because these people will just get past them anyway. Besides, maybe I could hear whoever’s after me out and see their reasons for this. That’s how I made friends with all of you, right?”

In spite of finding out that he was being targeted, Frisk didn’t seem worried at all. “I’m far from powerless. With Chara’s new abilities, I’m pretty sure I can defend myself.”

“And if this mysterious organisation really knew all about us, we would be under attack 24/7! In other words, either they’re having trouble pinpointing our location, or we’re not the specific target of their attacks! The danger isn’t as bad as you think!” Papyrus contributed.

“In that case, all we need to do is live our lives as usual and look out for anything strange.” Sans concluded.

By the time the group had finished discussing things, the sun was already starting to set. The skeletons and human decided to head home before it got dark. As Frisk left the building, he felt someone tap his shoulder. When he turned around, he recoiled at the sight. Sans’ new face would need some time to get used to. “Frisk?” The skeleton was attempting to greet Frisk with his usual welcoming smile, but he felt it might not be working with the vicious fangs on his new muzzle. “Can we chat for a bit?”

“Okay. What would you like to talk about?”

The skeleton lowered his voice and leaned in closer. “Can you make a Save point here? Y’know, just in case.”

“Of course.” The student looked around for a source of Determination before settling on the golden spark near Alphys’ and Undyne’s house. The satisfaction that the two could finally admit their feelings for each other and move in together… filled him with Determination.

“…” Frisk’s brow creased. What?

“You okay there?” Sans noticed his friend was focusing on the house so hard he could burn a hole in it.

Frisk ran his hands through his hair. “It’s not working.”

“Not working?”

“I have no idea what’s going on… I’m filled with Determination, but I can’t create a Save point.”

“You sure?”

“I’m sure.”

That was slightly worrying. Sans thought that everyone could just carry out their usual lives, given that Frisk as the Anomaly could take everyone back to this point if something went wrong. But were his powers were being blocked?

“I think I might know someone who knows about this.” Frisk stated.

“Who?”

The monster-human ambassador didn’t want to tell Sans about Asriel under any other circumstance, given the previous experiences Flowey had with the skeleton, but desperate times called for
desperate measures.

“There’s a talking flower still in the Underground. He’s used Determination for a long time. Maybe he can tell us what’s going on!”

Exactly as Frisk expected, Sans looked suspicious of him. “A flower? You mean the echo flower I told you about at Grillby’s last year? You still remember that?”

“Yeah! It wasn’t an echo flower, but an actual flower-like creature! We have to find him!” Frisk tried to run in the direction of Mt Ebott immediately, but a firm grip on the back of his collar stopped him.

“Hold on a second, kid. It’s already sunset. If you travelled into the Underground now, it’ll be nighttime by the time you get there. Who knows what might happen then?”

Frisk saw the point Sans was making. Travelling into an uninhabited area at night was just asking for trouble.

Papyrus and Gaster took that as their cue to show themselves, walking out from behind a nearby tree. Frisk raised a brow. “You two were there the entire time?”

“Was the flower a golden flower?” Papyrus inquired.

“Yes. He was your friend, wasn’t he?”

“We found a peculiar golden flower in the Ruins.” Gaster explained. “It clearly looked different from the others, but it wasn’t moving or talking at all. It’s in a pot in Papyrus’ house right now.”

“I guess that was solved easily.” Sans put his hands behind his head. “Papyrus, can you drive over to Frisk’s with it tonight?”

“Yes, I can do that.”

“Right.” Frisk concluded. “In that case, I’ll see you later.”

The flower Papyrus brought over looked exactly the same as Flowey, except the area where his face would normally be was completely blank. The horned skeleton had placed the pot on the desk in Frisk’s room. Chara poked it experimentally. “I’m sure that’s Flowey.”

“Hello, Flowey!? Can you hear me!?” Papyrus shouted at the flower. It didn’t respond at all.

“Maybe it’s just a golden flower that happens to look like him?” Frisk offered.

“That can’t be right. Flowey looks distinctly different from all the other golden flowers.”

“Well, what would you like to do with it? I can keep holding onto him if you want to.”

The spirit boy stared intensely at the flower. “…I think we should keep it here. I don’t know why, but I’m getting this feeling that it’s important to us when I look at it.”

“That’s what Gaster said when he saw it. I wonder what he and you see in it.”

After Papyrus left, Frisk finished his homework and spent the rest of the evening watching TV. Chara sat next to Frisk on the couch in front of the television. Ahh, it was nice to feel things again.

“Why do you think I can’t Save anymore?” Frisk inquired.
“Huh?”

“I couldn’t Save until I fell into the Underground and met you. At first, I had no idea what those golden sparks did, but when I accidentally used too much force on Toriel to get past her and she…”

“I know. I was shocked, too. We ended up just half an hour before that confrontation.”

“We managed to get past her non-lethally, and then Flowey revealed what happened…”

“The power to Save, as well as the fact that he could use it too, but our powers overrode his.”

A light bulb went off in Frisk’s head. Our powers… overrode his…?

Was the presence of an even stronger force of Determination in the city the reason that Frisk and Chara couldn’t Save or Reset anymore?

The thought that someone out there potentially not only incapacitated Flowey, but could negate Frisk’s Determination was extremely unsettling.

“…Again. I lost contact with another.”

Something strange was definitely going on. Not only the deer, but he had lost his connection with Temmie, too. It was almost certain that someone was interfering with his people’s efforts to collect the other Fragments.

The man sighed and sat down on the bench near the local river. He wasn’t in a hurry to find the other Fragments, with the Anomaly’s power negated, but he still didn’t like it.

When he heard the sound of footsteps, he quickly looked up. Oh, right. He was waiting for those young men he talked to online. Two bird-like monsters approached him.

The blue bird-like monster’s voice was trembling. “A-are you Hopebringer? Can you really make my mother better?”

The man nodded. “Then you must be Snowy96 and Chilly96, correct?”

“Yeah… I-I didn’t think that it would turn out to be you, of all people.”

The hooded man tilted his head. “Hmm? I’m afraid I don’t know what you’re talking about. Are you mistaking me for someone else?” His features were completely obscured beneath his cloak. No one should be able to see his face at all, let alone recognise him like this.

“N-never mind… It could just be my imagination. A-anyway, asking us to meet you alone this late at night is really dodgy!”

“It’s so no one else can hear what I’m about to tell the two of you. What you’re about to learn is extremely sensitive information that is too dangerous to transfer over the internet.”

“R-right…” The teens looked nervous, their gazes darting left and right. Honestly, the man couldn’t blame them.

“Please, don’t be anxious. It’s just the three of us here, and I mean no harm. Thank you for trusting me.” The man attempted to comfort the two, speaking in a gentle voice.

“Okay… So what do you want us to do in order to get my mum back to normal?”
“I’m afraid it isn’t an easy process. You’ll have to do as I say. But if everything goes to plan, we can make everybody happy.”

“Understood! I’ll do everything I can!” In spite of being afraid, the blue bird had a look of resolve in his eyes.

The cloaked figure turned to the green bird wearing shades, who had remained silent until then. “And you?”

“I’m willing to help Snowy in any way I can.”

“Good! In that case, I will unlock your special abilities. You two are going to become Fragment Users. With the power you will receive, I would like you to find something for me…”

TO BE CONTINUED
School had finished. Frisk sighed as he stared out the window. He couldn’t concentrate at all during class. The implications of his Determination being nullified drained his confidence like a bathtub with a pulled plug.

On that fateful day last year, Asriel had ascended to godhood and attempted to seize control over the timeline. Somehow, Frisk found the power to stand up to the prince’s terrifying abilities and save him from his madness, but now an even greater force may be out there.

The fact that nothing had happened yet was somewhat reassuring, but still… Frisk had to be careful, now that he was playing by a normal person’s rules again. Saving, Loading, or Resetting weren’t options anymore.

As he left the school grounds, Frisk noticed that there was someone waiting for him at the gate.
“Sans? What brings you here?”

“Afternoon, Frisk. You like laser tag?”

Where did that come from all of a sudden? “I haven’t played it before.”

“Then this’ll be a great new experience for you.”

The short draconic skeleton pulled out two tickets from his pocket. “You see, Lesser Dog and I got invited to Xtreme Arena with the guys from Snowdin, but laser tag isn’t really my thing and Lesser Dog has other plans for tonight. So there are two spare tickets I have to give away.”

“Why can’t you just give one to Papyrus?”

“I tried, but he’s got to study for a test tomorrow.”

“I see… Sure, I’ll go.”

Frisk took one of the tickets. But who else should he take? The skeleton brothers couldn’t go. Laser tag probably wasn’t Alphys’ thing either. Maybe Undyne…?

Frisk cringed at the thought of the passionate athletic fish lady going completely crazy with the equipment and suplexing the poor teens. Never mind, that would be unfair to the other players.

But who else… Ah! There was Papyrus’ new friend. The shy strange skeleton monster looked like he could use the company.

“Can you give the other ticket to Gaster? I’d like to get to know him some more.”

“If you want to invite him, he’s right there.” Sans pointed behind Frisk. His eyes followed Sans’ claw to the man focused on trimming the Papyrus-shaped hedge.

The student approached the amnesiac gardener. “Gaster?”

Gaster flinched and dropped the clippers, his body losing his cohesion immediately. His formerly solid structure melted into black goo which fell through the ladder onto the ground.

Frisk looked sheepish at what he had done. “Sorry about startling you like that.”
“No, it’s fine.” The skeleton monster resolidified and turned to face Frisk. “What would you like me for?”

“Want to go play laser tag with me this evening?”

“I’m not sure… Is it really okay for me to?”

“Of course it is! I’d like to get to know you better.”

Gaster briefly considered the invitation, then nodded with a small smile on his face. “Okay. I’ll come.”

“Yeah… I know… Everything’s going just fine right now. Toriel and the others are all good, too. … Thanks. See you later.” Frisk put down the phone. His parents were always so kind.

On the fateful day he fell down Mt. Ebott while him and his family were on holiday, upon emerging, they made quite the scene. They were afraid he had either been kidnapped or killed by wildlife, so they went as far as to gather a search party.

When the boy emerged from the mountain accompanied by an entourage of strange creatures, there could have been a disaster. Thankfully, Frisk managed to defuse the situation.

They even let him stay with Toriel in Ebott City while they went back to their home. Frisk gazed at the unmoving golden flower on his bedside table.

…take care of Mum and Dad for me, okay? Those last words he had with Asriel still remained in his heart. He had to honour the prince’s last wish.

That was why he didn’t say a word of what he had discussed with his friends to either Toriel or Asgore. The fact that neither of them could see Chara meant that they were only ordinary people and couldn’t fight those wielding the power of the Fragments. If they tried to get involved, they would only be putting their lives in danger.

“Looks like someone’s a mama’s boy~” Chara chose that time to manifest, his whole body lying on the desk lazily.

“What!? No!”

“You were on there for an hour, you know~”

“It wasn’t that long.”

Chara pointed to the clock on the desk. Huh. It really had been that long.

“And getting homesick whenever you couldn’t make your weekly call doesn’t help your case~”

One of Frisk’s eyes twitched cartoonishly. “Ugh… You really drive me up the wall sometimes…”

“That’s weird… I’m the one who gets driven up the wall!” The spirit boy’s body pressed his back against the wall and started to levitate.

Frisk would have facepalmed, but a sharp pain suddenly blossomed at the top of his head. “Ow!” The student and spirit yelped in unison as Chara’s head knocked the ceiling. Eh…? How did…? Chara’s head hit the ceiling, but Frisk felt the pain too?
Well, whatever. No use worrying about it now when he had a laser tag match to play!

_Xtreme Arena_ was quite far away from both Frisk’s and the skeleton brothers’ houses. Located in the central area of the city, both Frisk and Gaster had to take the bus in order to get there from the residential area.

The two met in the front room of the venue fifteen minutes before the appointed time. When they arrived, they noticed Asgore was also present. “_Xtreme Arena_… Hmm…” The school gardener scratched his beard as he contemplated the flashy posters inside the building.

“Hey, Asgore!”

“Oh, if it isn’t Frisk! Good evening.”

“I never expected to see you here. How often do you play laser tag?”

“I’ve never tried it before. I was on my way to do some shopping, but this place looked interesting.”

Gaster observed the conversation with a hint of curiosity. “You’re friends with the former king?”

“Yeah, something like that.” Frisk responded.

As the trio were talking, a group of teens entered chatting amongst themselves. Frisk recognised them as Snowdrake, Chilldrake, and the blue Ice Cap. “Seriously? The other Ice Caps couldn’t make it either?”

“Sorry…” Ice Cap apologised. “I tried to convince them, but it is a school night…”

“Oh, man…” Snowdrake sighed. “At this rate, there won’t be enough people to play a proper game.”

“Excuse me… If you’re short on people, may I join?” Asgore queried.

The teens went quiet when they saw him. A grownup? They were cool with Sans because he was still nineteen, but wouldn’t playing with an old guy like the former king cramp their style? But then again, he was friends with Frisk… “Okay, you can join our game.”

The rules of that laser tag game were quite simple. It was a three-on-three battle: the blue team consisting of Frisk, Gaster, and Ice Cap versus the red team of Snowdrake, Chilldrake and Asgore. Each player obtained a vest, a pack, and a phaser (specially modified to be usable depending on the person who equipped it) displaying which team they were on.

Every time a member of one team got shot, the opposing team would gain points. Whichever team had the most points by the end of the game would be the victor.

However, being simple didn’t mean the game would be uninteresting! The arena was filled with (virtual) traps such as mines and powerups! The layout was full of vantage points to snipe opponents from and spaces to hide in!

Frisk may have just been a beginner, but his experience of dodging magical bullets back in the Underground meant he was more than prepared for this battle! He made great use of his surroundings: the red team couldn’t land a hit on him, the beams from their phasers instead hitting an obstacle or wall he was hiding behind.
On the other hand, Gaster wasn’t in such a good position: being inexperienced and unused to this type of game, the opposing team aimed for him the most. For a good few minutes, the poor young man was used as target practice for the Drakes, and the red team ended up taking the lead.

However, the two teens were soon in for a nasty surprise! Realising that he would cause his team to lose if he stuck around, Gaster had fled. He had run down a narrow corridor, forcing Chilldrake to go behind Snowdrake as they gave chase.

As they reached the end, Snowdrake’s pack gave off the ping that signified he had been hit. Chilldrake had no time to react before his pack shortly followed. “The hell!?” Gaster had hidden around the corner and shot them the moment they emerged.

Because the rules of the laser tag game meant that the packs temporarily deactivated upon being tagged, a hit-and-run strategy proved effective. The Drakes’ packs deactivating when they were shot gave the skeleton monster just enough time to escape.

The Drakes attempted to give pursuit and get him back for it, but Gaster’s skills had already vastly improved from before! His reflexes were good enough to deactivate their packs before they could even aim at him. Eventually, Gaster had evened the score between him and the bird monsters.

“Heh… For a newbie, Gaster’s pretty good.” Snowdrake chuckled.

Meanwhile…

“What is this guy!?” Ice Cap exclaimed in horror.

Frisk and Ice Cap were double-teaming Asgore, but in spite of both of them shooting at such a large target, neither of them could land a single hit! Despite his girth, he was extremely fast and light on his feet. Undyne described Asgore at his peak strength to Frisk, but it was surreal actually seeing him in action.

In their climactic battle for the fate of the world in the Underground, Asgore was haunted by his grief and pulled his punches. However, in this place… in a fight purely for entertainment… the former king was like a battle demon!

Nothing the two kids were throwing at the school gardener was working! At close range, Asgore was fast enough to outright dodge all the lasers the two were shooting at him. From long range, he could hide behind the surroundings to shield himself. Was there any way to win…? Asgore’s stamina seemed endless, and both students were starting to tire.

Just as Frisk and Ice Cap attempted another close range attack, the golden-haired man’s pack suddenly deactivated. He had been hit! But neither Frisk nor Ice Cap had fired yet. Asgore acknowledged his defeat with a grin. “Well done, you three. You got me!” While he was distracted by evading the teens’ attacks, Gaster had snuck in from behind and shot him.

The blue team took some time to catch their breath. The fact that they managed to work together to defeat the former king was a great feat on its own, but Ice Cap secretly wished that they scored more points for the effort they put in.

As a good sport, Asgore decided to let them rest, even when his pack reactivated. Unfortunately, his fellow team members had other ideas. Three pings sounding and all of the blue team members’ packs deactivating indicated that they had been shot!

“Mr Dreemurr! Over here!” Chilldrake called from the ramp leading to upstairs. Wanting to keep the
game going, Asgore hesitantly followed, disappearing around the corner.

“That’s it!” Ice Cap shouted. “I’m going after them. Time to get those points!” He quickly gave chase, also going upstairs.

Frisk smiled at his teammate. “This is pretty exciting, isn’t it?”

“Yes!” Gaster was starting to enjoy himself. Even though he still knew nothing about his past, just getting to know others was fun. He wished Papyrus could have come as well.

“Let’s go in the opposite direction.” Frisk suggested. “We’re going to pull off a pincer attack!”

The two moved towards the upstairs ramp on the other side of the arena, but movement nearby warned them not to get close. Snowdrake was guarding the other path upstairs. “It looks like they’ve already planned ahead.” Gaster muttered.

“In that case, we’ll have to force our way through!”

Trying to not make any noise or attract attention, Frisk and Gaster edged towards Snowdrake, hiding behind the surroundings when they could. Moments before Frisk could get a clear shot at the teen from Snowdin, Snowdrake suddenly turned in his direction. Frisk instinctively gasped before cringing. Great. Now we’ve been noticed for sure.

Surely enough, Snowdrake began to move towards the wall the two were hiding behind. Frisk would have prepared a counterattack to catch him off guard, but something about the bird monster struck him as strange. Why did he just take off his vest and phaser? The look in his eyes made the hairs on the back of Frisk’s neck stand on end, and a feeling of dread was starting to bubble in his stomach.

He didn’t know why, but his subconscious was screaming at him to attack or run! Before Frisk could process why this was the case, his body moved on its own and dropped to the ground.

Just as this happened, something flew through the space where his head used to be, barely missing it. If Frisk hadn’t moved when he did, he would have been skewered!

Gaster felt the wind from the force of the strange object as well. “W-what on Earth…!? Something definitely flew by him, but when he turned back, he couldn’t see anything. The arena was too dimly-lit for him to see any small objects.

Snowdrake clicked his tongue in irritation. “Damn… I missed.”

Gaster leapt into action immediately! He threw off his laser tag equipment and charged at Snowdrake, but several stabbing pains pierced through his chest.

Falling to his knees, the skeleton monster had no idea what just happened. Blood slowly seeped out from the places he had been hit. He couldn’t liquefy himself in time, so the attack hit him full-on.

Did Snowdrake sneak an actual gun into the arena? No, nothing was grasped in the bird-like teen’s wings. His laser tag equipment lay discarded on the floor. He wasn’t using a weapon, so it had to be some kind of magic attack! But whatever had hit him was much faster than a regular monster’s magic. Unless… It couldn’t be… This type of power…!

“You’re a Fragment User!”
The bird monster ignored Gaster’s exclamation, instead turning his attention to Frisk. The student froze up when he saw the look in Snowdrake’s eyes. It was as if black fires were burning inside the teen’s pupils, telling Frisk that he wasn’t going to show any mercy.

Chara appeared, standing next to Frisk in an attempt to protect him. He hadn’t helped Frisk during the laser tag match to keep things fair, but the situation had changed.

Snowdrake glanced at the spirit boy. “I don’t know who you are, but if you’re trying to get in my way, I won’t hold back.”

Chara clenched his teeth, feeling sweat begin to trickle down his forehead. He may be a guardian spirit for Frisk, but he couldn’t punch his way out of trouble like Papyrus’ Bonetrousle. In terms of physical capabilities, he was more-or-less just an ordinary human.

The blue bird monster’s wings moved ever so slightly, but the two knew the danger that action signified. Chara vanished to avoid giving Snowdrake another target, while Frisk attempted to roll out of the way. Just when he thought he had avoided the attack, he felt a tremendous force send him flying!

The projectiles were too fast to dodge all at once! He managed to avoid most of them, but the back of his shirt was caught on the last one, pinning him to the wall! The boy tried to pull it out, but it wouldn’t budge! Upon closer inspection, he could see that the projectiles resembled long, thin needles.

They looked deceptively fragile, but were strong enough to dig deep into the material of the building and Frisk’s efforts to snap the one that immobilised him were in vain. As Frisk whirled around back to face Snowdrake, he saw the bird drawing his wings back to launch another attack. If things continued like this…!

The student slowly inhaled, attempting to calm down the frantic beating of his heart. *I haven’t used this in a long time… But here goes…* Countless needles shot out from Snowdrake’s wings, but none of them hit their mark! Instead, the attacks harmlessly bounced off a force field a few centimetres in front of their intended target.

Concentrating all his Determination and Hope into a protective barrier bought Frisk a precious few seconds to concentrate all his effort on pulling out the needle and put some distance between him and the older teen. Frisk already felt exhausted. Dammit… He forgot how draining it was to use abilities like that.

The battle wasn’t going in Frisk’s favour at all. Snowdrake had the total advantage! Those needles were too fast to dodge at the range he was at, and the lighting in the area prevented Frisk from predicting their trajectory.

The boy didn’t have enough energy left to sprint away, and Snowdrake was quickly closing the gap between them for a point-blank shot. His guardian spirit, who had reappeared next to him, was just as alarmed. Even if they tried to dodge, at this distance, they weren’t going to make it before Frisk would be turned into a pincushion!

Just as Snowdrake prepared to fire what would have been the final blow, time seemed to slow down for Chara. What was going on?

Everything looked clearer. It was as if he was suddenly seeing in HD in comparison to how his vision was earlier. Every speck of dust around the arena. The drops of sweat sliding down his partner’s face. And, most importantly of all…
“Frisk! Jump to the right!”

The boy followed Chara’s instructions, feeling the force of the wind as the needles narrowly missed him. He had expected to be pierced by the attack, but somehow, he had dodged every single needle.

Snowdrake’s jaw dropped in shock. How did his attack miss!? He could fire needles stronger than bullets, and Frisk was just an ordinary human! Unless, that weird other boy who appeared and gave Frisk directions to dodge… Did he have powers?

The teen threw his needles in Chara’s direction, aiming for a headshot, but as if he supernaturally read Snowdrake’s thoughts, he dropped to the floor and slid towards him! The scissor kick he did with the momentum brought Snowdrake down!

Chara pinning Snowdrake to the ground and firmly gripping his wings behind his back prevented him from firing his needles! This can’t be! I lost in a fight against middle schoolers!?

In the time Snowdrake was stunned, Frisk ran up to his injured friend. This would probably drain his energy even more, but it would be worth it. Focusing with all his might, Frisk poured his energy into healing Gaster’s wounds with a Last Dream. In terms of healing, it was a very rudimentary ability, but it was the only one Frisk had.

Gaster quickly got back on his feet. “You okay?”

“Yes… Thank you.”

Frisk whipped his cell phone out. He needed to call Papyrus for backup! However, when he powered it on, rather than his usual home screen, he saw several lines of black text against a solid white background. Snowdrake was going to…

“Whoa!” Frisk grabbed Gaster and pulled him down to the ground as a wave of needles passed through the space where their heads used to be. While he was healing Gaster, Snowdrake had thrown Chara off and launched a surprise attack at Frisk from behind.

Frisk jumped back up, turning to face Snowdrake. “I’m surprised you’ve lasted this long, but this changes nothing! I’m still gonna win!” The bird-like monster boasted.

The teen threw needles at Frisk in several different patterns and waves. Frisk’s eyes weren’t focused on the projectiles, but his own cell phone screen.

‘The first wave of needles is coming in an ‘X’ shape.’ Then the best way to evade was by ducking.
‘The second wave of needles is coming along the ground.’ Then Frisk could dodge by jumping!
‘The third wave of needles is aimed at Frisk’s chest.’ Then he could twist his body to the side.

Gaster watched in awe. Those moves were amazing for a thirteen year old! But something was wrong. In spite of Frisk dodging all the attacks and slowly getting closer to Snowdrake, the enemy Fragment User wasn’t panicking at all.

Just a few steps before Frisk could reach the teen, pain erupted in his back. “W-what…!? But how!?” Needles had struck Frisk from behind!

TO BE CONTINUED
Frisk + Chara

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: C
Speed: B
Range: A
Durability: C
Precision: A - E
Developmental Potential: B

Abilities/Powers

Determination – Hopes and Dreams: Although he has lost the power to turn back time, Frisk can use his Determination to heal himself and others, as well as create temporary force fields to shield himself. However, these abilities are rather limited: the force fields created by hoping can only appear in close proximity to Frisk’s body and are only large enough to shield Frisk alone. Additionally, dreaming isn’t as effective as regular healing magic on anyone other than Frisk.

Guardian Spirit: Chara can interact with tangible objects despite being invisible and intangible to regular people. To non-Fragment Users, this appears as if Frisk has telekinesis.

Super Senses: Chara can process information about his surroundings down to every precise detail.

Analysis: The information about the surroundings Chara processes can manifest on an electronic device (i.e. cell phone or camera) that Frisk has. However, the further away Chara travels from the electronic device, the less precise the information is.
Frisk collapsed to the ground face-down, blood slowly seeping out and staining his shirt. Chara dropped to his knees, wincing as several stab wounds opened in his own back. “Frisk!” The air was knocked out of Snowdrake as a small blur slammed into him.

Someone had thrown a black blade-like object at his chest! His reflexes causing him to raise his wings at last minute, coupled with his enhanced durability from becoming a Fragment User stopped the weapon from doing major damage. However, the sheer power it was launched with was enough to blow his whole body away!

The bird monster was knocked into the darkness of the laser tag arena while Gaster rushed to Frisk. The boy tried to get back up, barely lifting his head a few centimetres before gasping in pain and dropping back to the ground. “Dammit… It hurts too much to move.”

Gaster wasn’t sure what he could do for Frisk. He didn’t have any healing magic, and those needles sticking out of the boy’s back looked like they had done a lot of damage. He almost looked like a human pincushion. As if sensing this worry, Frisk reassured his new friend. “Don’t worry… I can use Last Dreams to heal myself. It’ll take time, but I’ll live.”

“What the hell happened…?” Chara hissed, trying to endure the second-hand pain he felt from Frisk. “How did that guy end up getting us from behind? Gaster, you saw what was going on, right? Is there another enemy?”

“No, there isn’t.” Gaster promptly answered. “The moment the third wave of needles passed you, they just… flew back! So did the other needles!”

The spirit bit his lip. Damn… Snowdrake could reverse the direction of his projectiles? That made evading the needles just that much more difficult.

The amnesiac skeleton monster took a look around the laser tag arena. He had lost sight of the teen, and he couldn’t see him just letting them go.

That disturbing look in his eyes… Gaster felt that Snowdrake wanted Frisk dead, no matter what. He was certainly going to try to launch another attack.

“Frisk… How long is it going to take until you and Chara are healed? We need to get out of here as soon as we can.”

“These wounds are pretty bad… I’d say twenty minutes.”

Not good. Twenty minutes of dealing with those deadly needles? Gaster wasn’t confident he could last that long. At least he had a new long-range technique to counter it.

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The laser tag arena had quickly become an actual battleground. A simple game between kids had changed into a life-or-death battle.

Moving Frisk would risk further injuring him, so Gaster and Chara decided to guard the boy, pacing around him while watching for enemy attacks. The spirit shared his injuries with Frisk, but because the needles weren’t actually stuck in him, he could still move.

They were positioned in a bad location: they were right at the ramp to the upper floor, where the path
branched off in all directions, so they were exposed from all sides. An attack could come from anywhere around or above them.

Chara’s senses had been vastly enhanced, and Frisk had handed Gaster his cell phone for extra help, but it would only show Gaster information Chara processed. If his attention slipped for even a moment, it could spell their doom.

Wiping the sweat off his brow, Gaster looked at the cell phone.

‘The arena is dark.’

‘I can’t see any movement yet.’

If Chara couldn’t see anything, then Gaster doubted he would be able to see anything with his own eyes. But where could Snowdrake be hiding? What was he doing?

As Gaster pondered this, the cell phone’s screen changed.

‘Needles coming from Gaster’s right!’ Immediately, Gaster drew his body backwards. Snowdrake’s attack just grazed his chest. Both the young man and spirit boy turned their full attention to their right, scanning the arena for Snowdrake. No matter how hard they looked, they couldn’t find him. Was he moving too quickly!?

Another wave of needles came at Chara, this time from his left! The spirit jumped away from the path of the projectiles, then searched for Snowdrake in that direction as soon as he could.

The bird was still nowhere to be seen. But he had to be able to see them (or at least sense them in some form) if he could shoot at them! Was he just that good at hiding behind the terrain?

All of a sudden, time seemed to slow down for Chara once more. The next wave of needles fired weren’t heading for him, but for the still immobile Frisk!

The spirit wanted to do something to stop the attack, but there was nothing he could think of. Shielding his partner with his body would just injure Frisk, and attempting to forcibly move the boy out of the way would cause internal damage because of the needles already inside him.

As the needles (at an almost tauntingly slow rate from his perspective) edged further towards his friend, another black blur knocked them away! “Gaster!?”

“That was my long-range technique.” The amnesiac explained, his right arm outstretched in the direction the needles were. “I turned a part of the inside of my arm into goo, reshaped it into a blade, and then shot it from the hole in my palm as a solid.”

Chara eyed him curiously. “Aren’t you going to run out of ‘yourself’ if you keep doing that?”

Gaster looked down at himself. “Strangely… I don’t think so. I don’t feel like I’m shrinking or anything from using it. But I can only-”

The pair couldn’t continue their conversation, interrupted by more needles coming at them from their right, seemingly out of nowhere. Chara could dodge, but Gaster gasped as a needle got him in the arm. Darn it! There was no way they could survive for much longer against Snowdrake!

Just as he thought this, the cell phone screen changed again. ‘Needles coming down from the upper floor!’ Another wave of the deadly projectiles flew down at him from above, travelling in a clockwise arc towards his head. Raising his undamaged arm, Gaster shot a black blade at the
needles, destroying them.

That was odd. The needles curved? When Snowdrake used them to attack at close range, they fired straight. Suddenly, it all made sense. Of course! That would explain how he could attack while remaining invisible.

“Chara!” Gaster whispered. “Snowdrake’s redirecting the needles! The places the attacks are coming from aren’t where he actually is!”

“No way! Is this another one of his special abilities?”

“I don’t know… But I think we need to change our strategy.” The young man briefly glanced at the long needle sticking out of his arm. “The way we’re going now, we’ll just be worn down.”

“What do you think we should do?”

“…” Gaster thought over his options, his eyes still trained on the cell phone. “I suppose… We could try to track Snowdrake’s movements. He’s still relatively close by, so let’s try to focus on looking for any signs of movement other than where the needles are coming from.”

The spirit and the amnesiac continued to survive Snowdrake’s relentless assault, either dodging or blasting away the needles. However, during every lull in the attacks, Chara was trying to focus on searching for the sound of footsteps or breathing. Even though Snowdrake was redirecting the needles to attack, he was still close enough to fire at them accurately.

If the spirit strained his ears, he could pick up the sound of footsteps approaching. Was Snowdrake coming in close to finish them off personally? He didn’t need to tell Gaster this, as the cell phone already warned him.

‘Someone is going to approach from behind.’ was the phrase Gaster read. Ready a throwing blade, the man prepared to beat Snowdrake to the punch. The moment the shape emerged from behind the corner of the ramp, Gaster blasted the attack at him.

“What the hell, dude!?”

“Ice Cap?” The blade had embedded itself into the wall a centimetre away from Ice Cap’s hat.

“Why are you still here? Asgore completely decimated-” Gaster quickly clasped his hand over Ice Cap’s mouth. Unfortunately, the hole in his palm made his manoeuvre ineffective.

“Let go! Where’s Frisk? Why did you just throw a knife at me?”

“We’re under attack! We’re all in danger!”

Ice Cap only responded with a look of disbelief and fear. It couldn’t be… did the teen think that he was the dangerous one?

The cell phone screen changed again! Gaster reacted accordingly, knocking away needles aimed directly at Ice Cap with a blade.

“What the hell is…?”

“Please stay calm.” Gaster assured. “I promise I’ll do my best to protect you. Just stay close to me.”

The teen shakily nodded, then discarded his laser tag equipment and crouched down next to Frisk. Gaster and Chara resumed their battle with Snowdrake, making sure both Ice Cap and Frisk were
safe.

As he was fighting, Gaster couldn’t help but wonder what was happening to the players who were unaccounted for. *Chilldrake and Asgore… I hope they haven’t been attacked.*

Nothing else mattered to Snowdrake other than seizing that Fragment. The deal he struck with that cloaked man was pretty sweet. All ‘Hopebringer’ asked him to do was look out for a special mystical object he called a Fragment. The teen and his friend had both received the ability to sense whether the item was nearby, along with special powers that would help them attain it by force if need be.

Snowdrake had no idea that it would be in this place and with Frisk of all people, but there was no way in hell that he would let this opportunity pass him up. All he had to do was rip the Fragment right out of him, and his mother would be her old self again.

Frisk and his new friends were putting up more of a fight than he expected, thanks to that annoying phone telling them how to dodge. But looking at how Gaster accidentally attacked Ice Cap… There must be a limitation to the detail of the information he was receiving. He could work with that.

Against the odds, the young adult and three teens somehow managed to survive nineteen minutes. “Just a little longer…” Frisk muttered. The Last Dreams had almost done their job, with the needles that had pierced him falling out as his injuries healed.

Strangely, Snowdrake’s attacks had ceased entirely for a good five minutes. That did nothing to lessen the tense atmosphere that Gaster and Chara felt. If anything, the lack of action meant that they were going to be in even more danger.

What was he going to do? Was he adjusting his position for a surprise attack? Was he setting up needles to attack them with all at once? Or… was he going to get reinforcements? No one could let their guard down.

Then, it happened. ‘Needles coming from the right! Someone’s there!’ Whirling around as fast as he could, Gaster shot the needles down. He could see movement from the ramp leading upstairs! Snowdrake had to be there! The young man instantly fired in that direction.

Gaster heard a grunt and a squelch. Asgore fell backwards, a black blade sticking out of his chest.

“Gaster!” While he was still in shock from shooting the school gardener, needles came at him from behind. He didn’t even process Chara’s warning before the needles were too close to dodge.

Before they made contact, Frisk shoved him out of the way. The boy’s injuries had healed just in time. “Shit! I was too late!” Snowdrake, who was approaching from the other side, turned tail and ran.

“You two go after him! I’ll take care of Asgore and Ice Cap!” Frisk urged.

Gaster and Chara chased Snowdrake further into the arena. Now that the teen had lost the element of surprise, they should have the advantage! The two couldn’t lose sight of him!

Snowdrake fled! His strategy to misdirect Gaster, the only one who had any ranged capability, then ambush them from up close had failed. Now that he had shown himself and entered his enemies’ range, he couldn’t fire any more needles, because Gaster would just deflect them.
Glancing behind his shoulder, he could see that the strange skeleton and the brown-haired boy he had never seen before were still in pursuit. With a grunt, he turned the corner. If he continued down the path, he should make it to where he wanted to.

Gaster followed Snowdrake around the corner. The surroundings looked familiar. Wasn’t this the narrow corridor where he got the Drakes in laser tag? But something seemed different about it… Gaster shook his head and looked at the end of the corridor.

The teen had knelt down there to catch his breath, blocking the path. Feeling a little bad for Snowdrake, but wary of the possibility of a sneak attack, Gaster kept his distance and silently prepared to launch a blade before speaking. “If you surrender now, I promise I’m not going to hurt you.”

Snowdrake remained silent. Suspecting he was planning something, Gaster looked at the cell phone screen to check whether Chara could see anything. When he read the text, he broke into a cold sweat. “So… you finally… realised…” Snowdrake panted.

One line stood out amongst all the rest. ‘Chilldrake caught me.’

As if responding to a cue, Chilldrake appeared on the other end of the corridor, his wings restraining a struggling Chara. Gaster was trapped!

“You were working with Snowdrake?”

“That’s right. He’s been an awesome help. Without his ability to redirect my needles, I would have been defeated by now.”

“But… how did he get Chara?”

“That’s for us to know, and for you to not know.” Snowdrake flatly responded.

He didn’t want to cause any lethal damage, but he didn’t have a choice! Gaster launched the blade he had prepared at Snowdrake’s wings to stop him from shooting his needles, but the weapon swerved upwards and hit the ceiling instead.

“Tsk, tsk… Nice try. But it’s too late.”

The air was filled with needles! Not just a single wave or shot, but they almost completely covered the space between the two birds! At such high speed and number, anything that passed between the teens would be obliterated. And Gaster was stuck right in the middle!

TO BE CONTINUED

Snowdrake

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: B

Speed: B

Range: A

Durability: D
Precision: C
Developmental Potential: D

Abilities/Powers

Ice Needles: Snowdrake has the ability to shoot powerful needles from his wings. He can shoot them in different densities and patterns. He mainly prefers to use a straightforward approach of multiple needles tightly clustered together for maximum efficiency.

Needle Recall: Snowdrake can recall needles he already fired back towards him. They usually return with equal force they were shot at, but if more force is required, they gain it accordingly. If Snowdrake wishes, the needles will return to him, no matter what.

Childrake

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: E
Speed: C
Range: A
Durability: C
Precision: B
Developmental Potential: C

Abilities/Powers

Projectile Redirection: Childrake can telekinetically control any inanimate object travelling through the air to a limited extent. Although he cannot stop their movement, he can redirect them.
Ever since Snowdrake’s mother passed away, he was never the same. From that fateful day onwards, the boy’s demeanour completely changed. Becoming more aggressive, skipping classes, attacking other students at his school… It was no surprise that the following month, Snowdrake was expelled. After that, he ran away from home to live in Snowdin Forest.

His concerned friends brought food for him every day, but his father never came searching. Of course, the boy expected that reaction. His mother was the only reason his father was nice to him, and with her gone, his ties with Snowdrake had been severed. Two years passed in this manner.

When Snowdrake heard that the ill people who had been taken to Hotland for treatment had actually survived and were coming home, his heart overflowed with joy. He ran home as fast as he could, where his loving parents were waiting. Sure, his mother might have become a little slusher, but she was alive, and that was what mattered! He could make a fresh start with his family on the surface!

That hope Snowdrake received from the Barrier being broken and his mother returning… was short-lived. When organising his family’s moving to the newly-constructed Ebott City, the teen noticed. His mother wasn’t all ‘there’.

Being broken down because of some foreign substance being injected in her body and getting combined with sixteen other people’s minds didn’t do any favours for her mental state.

When Snowdrake initially learned that she was sharing her mind with others, he accepted it. That was fine. But the state she was in now, she wasn’t even herself anymore. After a few months on the surface, things were essentially the same as they were after his mother’s death, except now he was stuck in his house rather than the forest.

This time, his father didn’t acknowledge him or his mother. And there was also the issue of the monsters she fused with. Siblings, children, parents… Some people weren’t okay with her staying with Snowdrake. Many disputes were had over who his mother (if she could be called that anymore) belonged with.

There was even one Vegetoid – apparently an elder brother of one of the creatures fused with his mother – who tried to sneak into his house by masquerading as a carrot at his local grocery. The teen didn’t see vegetables the same way again.

Snowdrake just wanted things to go back to normal. Was a happy family life like the one all his friends had really so much to ask?

And then, one day, when he was just aimlessly surfing the net… he came into contact with a certain man.

Snowdrake peered down at the lifeless body of Gaster. The trap he had led the clueless man into had worked. No one could survive being pierced by their Twin Needle Storm. But, just to be sure… Better use science to see if he’s dead.

WHACK! Kicking the needle-filled body yielded no response.

“Yep. He’s dead.”

“Come on; let’s not waste any more time on that.” Childdie urged.
“I just have to be sure. People like us don’t turn to dust when they die, so we have to be cautious. You keep the kid restrained and I’ll go take care of Frisk.”

The two avian monsters set off. Once he was sure they were gone, Gaster sprung back up, gasping for air. With a grunt, he pulled the needles out of his body, leaving black trails of goo as they dropped to the ground. Resolidifying his body and inspecting himself, he found that he was uninjured.

That was a really close call. When Gaster had chased Snowdrake into the corridor, he saw something off about the appearance of the walls. From top to bottom, it looked like there were needles sticking out of them. He didn’t know what the teen would try to do with them, but he was cautious enough to liquefy his body after seeing them.

Because the laser tag area was so dark, Snowdrake couldn’t see that Gaster’s body had ‘melted’. With the amnesiac’s body turned into goo, the needle storm didn’t harm him at all. The viscosity of his body in that state meant that the needles still dug into him, but that only made him uncomfortable, as if a few pebbles ended up stuck in his shoes.

The person he really had to worry about now was Frisk. Did they intend to use the same technique they almost got him with? The mental image of Frisk being caught in the Drakes’ Twin Needle Storm sent a chill down his spine.

He had to warn or help Frisk somehow. Where did the Drakes run off to again…? Gaster noticed a faint glow coming from the floor. The cell phone had had dropped during the attack was still in working condition, albeit just barely.

Gaster picked the phone up, wondering whether Chara could communicate to him like this. The sentences of information on the screen were less detailed, but they were still getting the main points of what the spirit was experiencing across. Most importantly, it told Gaster where Chilldrake was headed.

The skeleton advanced cautiously in the direction the phone told him they went, trying to make as little noise as possible.

Chilldrake was taking a different path to Snowdrake. His intentions were most likely to get Frisk in the same pincer attack he caught Gaster in. But Gaster wouldn’t let that happen!

Even though Chilldrake’s ability let him redirect projectile attacks, Gaster could counter it! Following the information displayed on the cellphone, he eventually reached Chilldrake dragging a struggling Chara through the arena.

What he was about to attempt next was extremely dangerous! Gaster would only get one shot at it, and if he failed… He didn’t want to think about what would happen.

The amnesiac skeleton charged up to the sunglasses-wearing teen as fast as he could and smashed his fist into the back of the bird’s head. Chilldrake went out like a light.

Chara dragged himself out from beneath the teen’s unconscious body and dusted himself off. “Thanks, Gaster.”

“You’re welcome. Let’s protect Frisk and the others before Snowdrake gets them!”

The two hurried to where Frisk, Ice Cap, and Asgore were.
Frisk was drenched in sweat. He felt like he had run a marathon. Asgore’s wounds had vanished, but healing them sapped a lot of energy. On top of that, he didn’t know why, but his entire body felt sore. Like someone had roughed him up. What had happened to Gaster and Chara?

The gardener gazed at his friend with concern. “Frisk… What’s going on?”

“Asgore…” Frisk panted. “Please take Ice Cap and get out of here. It’s too dangerous to stay in this place any longer.”

The golden-haired man remained stationary. “I won’t leave.” If there was anything he learned from the time he spent as the lone ruler of the Underground, trying to ignore all his problems and pretending that nothing was wrong only led to tragedy. “If you’re in trouble, I can help you.”

“That’s not the problem! I’m trying to protect you!” Frisk was starting to become irritated. Asgore meant well, but he wouldn’t stand a chance in combat against an actual Fragment User.

“G-guys…” Ice Cap’s voice was quivering. “He’s here.”

Frisk spun around to face the intimidating Snowdrake. His legs felt like buckling underneath him. Damn it… He was too exhausted to do anything. All his Determination-based abilities were too draining on his stamina. Asgore moved in front of Frisk and Ice Cap protectively, summoning his trident.

In spite of being confronted by the imposing former king, Snowdrake wasn’t fazed at all. With his powerful SOUL, defeating any monster or human was easier than smothering an infant. Magic weapons were no more than children’s toys before regular humans, and they were even weaker in comparison to the power he had received.

Snowdrake raised a wing to fire at Asgore, but the sound of a blade whistling through the air behind him caused him to spin around and shoot it down instead. The force of the needles and the blade cancelled each other out, falling to the floor with a thud. What…!? Gaster’s still alive!? The skeleton and spirit stood in the corridor leading to the area posing dramatically.

What the hell happened to Chilldrake!? The teen would have bit his lip if he didn’t have a beak. He turned back to Asgore and tried to shoot him again, but Gaster shot the needles down in mid-air.

“Damn you!” Snowdrake turned back to Gaster and fired at him. His attack wasn’t like the previous one. Instead of the precise shots that his earlier attacks were, Snowdrake fired several needles wildly and with huge force! The teen’s assault had changed from sniper rifle shots to heavy machine gun fire!

Snowdrake grinned triumphantly when he saw his needles strike Gaster, but his expression quickly changed to one of horror when he realised that the man wasn’t staggering at all. He wasn’t firing his black blades, but he was advancing on the teen unflinchingly.

Even with the extra force he was putting into them, all the teen’s needles did was blow black chunks of goo out of Gaster. Why the hell was Chilldrake not showing up!? Gaster pulled a black rope out of himself and threw it like a lasso at Snowdrake, tightening around the bird’s neck. “It’s over!”

“No! NO! I’m not going to fail! I can’t!”

Snowdrake kept struggling and shooting his needles into the air, not hitting anything but the outermost walls and ceiling of Xtreme Arena. “That’s enough!” Gaster yelled.

The teen abruptly went limp. For a moment, the arena went completely silent. Then… the building
started quaking! “What now?” Frisk groaned. Chara looked around in realisation, going pale. “Oh, crap… Snowdrake’s recalling all his needles at once!” Every single one of the needles Snowdrake fired was returning to him. Even the ones that were stuck in the walls and ceiling!

They had dug in so deeply, when they returned, a sizable chunk of the building came with them. There were so many, it was like they were caught in a sandstorm with chunks of plaster instead of sand.

Snowdrake closed his eyes in resignation. This was his last resort. He couldn’t get his normal life back. But… if that man got the Fragment he was looking for, maybe he would be able to heal his mother anyway. His mother, who always cheered him up when he was feeling down… who always laughed at his jokes… Sacrificing his life for her didn’t sound bad. It wouldn’t be much longer before the building’s ceiling came down.

Gaster wanted to stop Snowdrake’s attack, but he couldn’t use his black blades when he was goo! He was attempting to resolidify himself to shoot the needles down, but nothing was happening.

When he looked at his body, he realised that he was only half his usual size. When he was advancing on Snowdrake, the needles had blasted the goo that made up his body into several different pieces! There wasn’t any time to gather himself back up!

“Waaahhh! We’re all going to die!” Ice Cap wailed.

“Shut up. You’re not helping!” Chara slapped the teen across the face. That only caused his crying to increase. Oops. Chara forgot he couldn’t be seen or heard by ordinary people.

In the commotion, Asgore steadied his breathing and calmly faced the ceiling. He didn’t quite understand what was going on, but…

Lifting his trident, a fireball the size of a tennis ball appeared at the very end. Spinning the weapon in a circle, the single fireball multiplied into several, filling up the air around the group in a dome-like pattern. Just as the ceiling of the arena came down, the former king commanded his attack to launch in every direction. “Special Technique: Fireball Rush!”

True, the most powerful of monsters were pathetically weak in comparison to even a sufficiently violent human child in a real fight. However, inanimate objects were fair game! The magic fireballs destroyed the debris, leaving a cloud of dust over the arena.

Snowdrake coughed, trying to cover his beak with his wings. Shit…! He couldn’t even see a metre in front of him!

“Got you!” One of those troublesome black blades soared at the bird-like monster. It didn’t hit any of his vital areas, but it was enough to pin him to the debris.

Footsteps rapidly approached! By the time he could see who it was, it was already too late! The last thing Snowdrake saw before passing out was Chara’s fist.

The lobby hadn’t been damaged from Snowdrake’s attacks in the arena. Frisk, Gaster, Asgore, and Ice Cap were crouched inside the room where the laser tag packs were stored. Snowdrake and Chilldrake’s unconscious bodies had been ungracefully dragged out of the arena and dumped on the ground beside them.

“I really don’t think sneaking out is a good idea…” Asgore fidgeted with his beard.
“We should be honest with the staff!” Frisk protested.

“Look, this is the most efficient option! Feel free to be honest, but you’ll have to pay for the damage!”

The middle school student winced at the thought of his wallet. He doubted his entire life savings would be enough to cover the cost. “Frisk, Ice Cap’s right. We’ll get into more trouble if we admit to this.” Chara urged, putting his arm around Frisk.

Gaster poked his head out the door. It was a school night, so it wasn’t very busy. There wasn’t another group coming in. What about the staff? There was only a single man on duty that day. He kept taking his glasses on and off as he spoke to them and instructed them on how to play.

According to Frisk, he had some kind of eye disorder where he could only perceive moving objects, so with the help of the Royal Scientist, he received glasses which helped him reverse his condition. Unfortunately, the reversal was literal: with his glasses on, he could see stationary objects, but not moving ones!

Because his vision was still dangerously impaired, he kept his guide dog around him at all times outside his house. Said guide dog was currently walking around off-leash in the lobby. Gaster checked the employee’s face. No glasses. Good.

The skeleton let his body melt into goop. The feeling of his arms, legs, and torso becoming one big amorphous blob was strange, but not uncomfortable. He could make rope and blades, so he hoped he could pull this off. With a still solid, skeletal hand, Gaster pulled a chunk of goo out of his body and shaped it into a ball. It was felt a little soft, but it looked like it would hold together. Probably.

Gaster threw the ball, which soared out of the building through the open window. Instantly, the dog perked up, jumped up onto one of the tables, and leapt out of the window to pursue the ball of goop!

“Aaargh! Spot! Come back!” The employee jumped up and gave chase, leaving the room entirely empty.

“The coast is clear! Go! Go! Go!” Gaster signalled wildly to the rest of the group, who wasted no time in getting out, with Asgore carrying both unconscious Drakes on his back.

The odd group caught their breath in an alleyway a few blocks away from Xtreme Arena. Gaster was still in his goopy state, due to being unable to solidify without all of himself collected. “Are you just going to leave a part of yourself with that dog?” Chara inquired.

“No… It’s coming back right now.”

The spirit flinched as a black blur flew past his ear, just narrowly missing it by a few centimetres. Not noticing the unimpressed look from Chara, Gaster resolidified his body and turned his attention to the Drakes.

“Okay. It’s time to fix these people.”

Going off the fact that they were both Fragment Users, Snowdrake and Chilldrake had to have been brainwashed by that mysterious organisation. Gaster knelt down next to their unconscious bodies and placed his hands on them. The familiar white glow enveloped the two Drakes, then dissipated after a few seconds.

“There… They should be back to normal now.”
As the group watched intently, Snowdrake’s eyes slowly fluttered open. “Are you-” Gaster was interrupted by the teen’s wing slamming into his face. The skeleton fell onto his behind, more shocked than hurt.

What the…!? Why was Snowdrake still hostile? Did Gaster’s powers not work? The bird-like monster was exhausted, but he didn’t want to give up on attacking. He raised a wing to attack, but Gaster was one step ahead of him! Snowdrake shrieked as a black blade stabbed through his wing.

Gaster ran back up to Snowdrake and tried to cure his brainwashing again. The white aura was appearing around the teen, but his aggression wasn’t decreasing at all!

“I won’t… fail… I won’t… fail…!”

Could it be… Snowdrake wasn’t brainwashed from the beginning!? The teen pointed his other wing at Gaster, only for it to be quickly disabled by a black blade. The battle had already been decided, but he just wouldn’t accept defeat.

“I-I… w-won’t…” Tears streamed down Snowdrake’s face as weakly attempted to headbutt Gaster. Finally, his body just didn’t have the strength to move anymore, and the teen collapsed. “I’m sorry… Mum… I couldn’t help you after all…”

“‘Mum’?” The pieces of the puzzle fit together in Frisk’s head. The middle school student didn’t have perfect memory, but he remembered hearing about the teen’s issues with his parents back in the Underground.

Being considered an embarrassment by his father… Seeing his mother reduced to a zombie-like state… Frisk didn’t approve of Snowdrake’s actions, but he could definitely understand how the teen would end up doing something like this.

Taking care not to let his guard down too much, Frisk spoke up. “What would your mother think of you, if she knew what you did to help her?”

“Huh…”

“I know you love her, but do you really think she would be okay with her son killing people? How would she feel about herself, knowing that her health came at the cost of someone else’s life?”

“That’s… Aah…” Snowdrake blankly stared up at the night sky. So, he had no chance of winning from the start. It was almost laughable. “…Do whatever you want with me. I don’t care.”

The teen closed his eyes, prepared for the end. The last thing he expected was to be hugged by the boy he had tried to kill. “What are you…”

“You realised your mistake. You had good intentions, but you chose the wrong way to achieve them. I’m glad you figured that out.”

“You’re not going to kill me?”

“Killing isn’t going to solve anything. Besides, you said we could do whatever we wanted with you. So please, tell us everything you know.”

“Alright… Where should I start…”

“Can you tell us about who sent you?” Gaster asked. “Others like you have attacked us, but they were brainwashed. Who or what gave you the motivation and means to come after us?”
"I met someone on UnderNet a couple of weeks ago."

"Was it just one person, or a group?" Frisk inquired.

"Just one guy, but I think he was using a throwaway account."

"Um… Excuse me, but could you please explain what UnderNet is?"

Snowdrake stared at Gaster incredulously. "Dude, have you been living under a rock for the past five years? UnderNet is one of the world’s most popular social networking platforms! Everyone and their grandmother uses it!"

"At any rate, what did he talk to you about?"

"He was offering help and advice. The conversation he opened with me didn’t require me to give any personal information away. You know how on UnderNet, you can contact people while giving them different amounts of information about your profile? It was a dark time in my life, and all I had to give him was my username, so I figured there was nothing to lose.

"His screen name was Hopebringer. We hit it off quite nicely, and I even introduced my best friend to him. Without going into too much detail, I told Hopebringer about my life. At first, I was vague about my mother’s state, but his genuine words of encouragement caused me to open up about everything.

"He listened to my story patiently. Once I had finished, he asked me a strange question. ‘How far are you willing to go to return your mother to normal?’ I told him that I was willing to do anything to get Mum back. Then he told me and Childdrake to meet him in person.

"When we met, he showed us a mystical item called a Fragment. That’s how he gave us powers. Hopebringer told us he was looking for other Fragments, and if they were all together, he would be able to make Mum herself again."

Gaster took some time to process all of this information. "When you met him in person, what did he look like?"

Childdrake was the one to answer this time, having also regained consciousness. "When we met him by the river, we couldn’t see his face, or even any other part of his body. We couldn’t see anything underneath that cloak of his."

The gears in Frisk’s head started turning. A feature-obscuring cloak, meeting the Drakes next to a river… No way.

"Yes, exactly. He denied it, but I’m sure that the identity of Hopebringer is the River Person."

The journey back home was awkward. Frisk had healed up the Drakes and let them go, while Ice Cap had agreed not to speak a word of what happened in Xtreme Arena that night and headed off. That left just Asgore and Gaster.

The gardener and amnesiac were concerned for Frisk after the attack, so Asgore drove the student back home, with Gaster accompanying him in the back seat. The golden-haired man kept glancing at Frisk uncertainly through the rear-view mirror during the journey. Once they approached the street Toriel lived, Asgore stopped the car and turned to face him directly. "Frisk. I know little about your current situation, but I want to be useful. If you’re in any kind of trouble, I’ll gladly lend a hand."
Frisk grimaced. He was grateful the former king was offering his assistance, but he was just an ordinary person. The student didn’t want to involve more people in his troubles than necessary, and he had also promised Asriel that he would look after his parents. Asgore saved everyone from being crushed by rubble, but in a direct confrontation with a Fragment User’s strange abilities, he would be in great danger.

He was extremely fond of the former king. If anything happened to Asgore, it would end up shattering the hearts of not only the middle school student, but several others. If it was Frisk’s fault on top of that, he wouldn’t be able to live with himself.

“Asgore… please forget about what happened tonight.”

“But-”

“I don’t want you to get involved! I understand that you want to help me, but you’ll be putting yourself in danger.” The unwavering expression the student had reminded Asgore that Frisk was no average middle school student, but the boy who travelled through the Underground and freed monsterkind. Even though he was just thirteen, he had enough resolve to make it through almost any problem.

“Alright. Good luck. Just remember, if you need help, I’ll always be there.”

Asgore let Frisk out of the car and quickly drove off. He was almost halfway home before he remembered that there was another passenger in the back seat. “Er… Gaster, would you like a ride home too?”

“Yes, please.”

The driver quickly changed his destination to the skeleton brothers’ house. Gaster leaned back in the seat, observing the scenery of the city centre. He should probably pass on what he heard to Papyrus and Sans. Alphys and Undyne were already involved, so he would also inform them.

TO BE CONTINUED

Snowdrake – Status: Persuaded to stop pursuing Frisk.

Childrake – Status: Stopped his attack alongside Snowdrake.

Gaster

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: B

Speed: B

Range: B

Durability: C

Precision: C

Developmental Potential: A
**Abilities/Powers**

**Self-liquefaction:** Gaster can melt his own body into viscous black goo. Although he is impervious to attacks which would damage his solid body in this state, he is unable to use his black blades. If he is separated into parts in this state, he is unable to resolidify.

**Black Rope:** Gaster can create black rope from his body. However, this rope is not very dextrous and Gaster only create as much rope as there is much of him available.

**Limb Detachment:** In his liquid form, Gaster can detach parts of his body and still control them.

**Black Blades:** In his solid form, Gaster can mould pieces of his body into blades and launch them, but he can only create one at a time.
Papyrus’ car screeched into the carpark. Sans unsteadily stumbled out of the vehicle. “I’ve gotta say, bro, you’ve almost mastered this. I only got carsick once!”

“Thank you! I hope to turn that one into a zero eventually!”

Eversunny Bay, a couple of hours’ drive away from Ebott City. Being a sunny beach town with pleasant weather all year round, it is a very popular place to go for trips and outings. However, the skeleton brothers didn’t come here today for leisure!

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Tuesday night, after the events that transpired at Xtreme Arena...

“The River Person is suspicious?” Papyrus looked up in surprise from the notes he was writing.

“Yes, that’s what Frisk and Snowdrake believe.”

“What makes them say that?” Sans inquired.

“I don’t know what the River Person looks like, but, er…”

“Hmm?” The bestial skeleton cocked his head to the side while munching on another handful of kibble.

“Why are you eating dog food?”

“What’s wrong with dog food? Someone’s gotta eat it.”

“…Anyway, the man who recruited Snowdrake was wearing a dark, feature-obscuring cloak. He also specifically chose to meet them near a river. Frisk thinks it’s too much to be a coincidence.”

“Okay.” Sans stood up. “If that’s what Frisk thinks, then we’ll investigate.”

The short skeleton brought out his laptop from his room. He typed on it a bit, then turned the screen to face Papyrus and Gaster. “The River Person hosts fishing cruises at Eversunny Bay on the weekend. If we book a cruise, that gets us in direct contact with him.”

“Great!” Papyrus grinned. “We can all go there this Saturday and ask him to stop sending people after us!”

“No.”

“Nyeh?”

“I don’t think all of us going is a good idea. Think about it: let’s say the River Person is Hopebringer. We know he wants to collect all the Fragments, whatever they are. If both you and Frisk come, it’ll be delivering them to him on a silver platter. Someone should stay behind in case something goes wrong over there.

“Besides, I only have enough funds available for two people at most to go. You have to pay through the nose for one of the River Person’s fishing cruises.”

“I see…” Papyrus leaned back in his chair. “In that case, I can stay back and take care of the house
while Frisk and Gaster talk things out with the River Person.”

“So, actually, I was thinking you and I should go. We need Bonetrousle’s strength in case of a fight, and I’m good at reading people. I know how to check whether the River Person is telling the truth or not.”

“Wow! You’d really help me out? It’s not like you at all to go out of your way like this!”

“Hey, I’ll have you know I’m very hardworking!”

“I can’t come…?” Gaster looked downcast. Papyrus put his hand on the amnesiac’s shoulder.

“Sorry, Gaster. I promise I’ll ask the River Person about you and tell you everything I find out.”

The week passed without incident, and before anyone knew, it was Saturday.

Ding dong!

To Gaster’s surprise, when he rang the doorbell to Frisk’s house, the person who answered was the lady who spoke to Asgore the other day. Now that Gaster got a good look, she looked quite similar to the gardener. Could they be related? The lady was smiling politely, but her eyes had the typical ‘wariness of strangers’ look. “Greetings. Who might you be?”

“My name is Gaster. I’m one of Frisk’s friends.”

“Ah, yes. Frisk told me about you. Come inside.”

Frisk’s house was just like the skeleton brothers’ residence: just about anyone could feel at home. Gaster hoped he didn’t get too comfortable — that would be impolite of him.

Toriel took the amnesiac into the kitchen, where the middle school student was holding a freshly-made pie. “Hey, Gaster! Toriel was just teaching me how to bake. Want a slice?”

“Only if it isn’t too much trouble.”

Frisk cut out three generous slices of the pie and served them out on individual plates. The three moved to the dining table and sat down.

The pie tasted pretty good for a first attempt. Gaster reckoned Papyrus’ spaghetti was still better, though. It was a savoury flavour, filled with meat the skeleton couldn’t identify. As he was eating, he took some time to look around the house. Where were Frisk’s parents? Toriel looked old enough to be Frisk’s mother, but he highly doubted a goat monster could give birth to a human.

“Are you Frisk’s guardian?” asked Gaster.

“Yes, that is correct. Frisk wanted to stay with me after the Barrier was broken. His parents are trusting me to take good care of him.”

Gaster glanced at Frisk. “How come you wanted to stay with Toriel?”

The boy’s face heated up. “Uh… I… Well…” Crap! I can’t tell the truth here! Who knows how they would react?

Noticing Frisk’s discomfort, Toriel changed the subject. “How old are you this year, Gaster?”
“Papyrus said I looked around Sans’ age… so I think I’m nineteen.”

“Oh, yes. I forgot. Frisk told me you have amnesia. I hope you can be friends with our little group while you recover.”

“Thank you, Miss…?”

“Just call me Toriel. Only the students need to call me Miss.”

“Alright.”

“Speaking of Sans, how is he now? I heard he had to go to hospital last Sunday.”

“He’s fine. He’s gone on a fishing trip with Papyrus. I hope they’re going to be okay…”

“Do not worry. The weather is clear, and the waters are calm. They will be fine.”

“…”

“By the way, Papyrus… How come you’re not wearing your battle body today?” The tall skeleton’s usual costume was nowhere to be seen. Instead, he had chosen to wear one of his regular t-shirts and pants for his weekend attire.

“I feel I shouldn’t wear it right now. I managed to repair it during the week, but if I put it back on, these things-” Papyrus turned his back to Sans, showing off the spikes and tail tearing through his clothing, “will just end up ruining it again.”

“Fair enough. What a tearable predicament.”

“Why, you…!”

“RIP, battle body. You will be missed~”

“I just repaired it!”

“Okay, okay. Let’s get to the point.” Sans checked his smartphone. “The River Person said he wants to meet us at the pier. Let’s get going.”

Unbeknownst to the skeleton brothers, one of the people they passed by noticed a strange aura coming off them. I did it! I found it! He could barely resist doing a little happy dance. Staying close enough to keep his eyes on the brothers, but not too close to be noticed by them, the monster began to tail them.

The River Person was patiently waiting for them at the pier. In spite of the fine weather, the man was wearing a thick cloak which obscured all of his features. Beside him in the water was a large cabin cruiser boat.

“Heya.” Sans was the first to approach, greeting the River Person with a wave and a smile. In response, the tall cloaked man tilted his head to the side in puzzlement. Eh? Was there something on his face?

“How are you going to fish without any equipment?” Oh. Uh-oh.

Luckily, Papyrus chose that time to intervene, dashing towards his older brother carrying said
equipment. “Sans! You forgot your fishing rod! And your bait! And your... well, everything!”

Sans would have let out a sigh of relief if it didn’t make him look even more suspicious. Dependable as always, bro.

“I suppose everyone can make mistakes sometimes. Well then, shall we be off?”

As the boat left, the monster jumped into one of the other boats by the pier. Of course, that attracted the attention of the vehicle’s owner. A brawny-looking human stormed up him in a huff. “What are you doing!? Get out of my-” He couldn’t finish that sentence before being blown away by an invisible force.

The sea breeze felt absolutely wonderful. There was nothing like it back in the Underground. The Papyrus of one year ago would have never thought that he would have been able to experience this in his lifetime. The high school student wasn’t sure how Frisk broke the Barrier, but he was grateful to the boy for being able to let him discover the joys of the Surface.

A sudden tug on his line snapped Papyrus out of his reverie. Had he caught something!? Eager to see what was biting, the skeleton reeled the line in. His excitement quickly turned into disappointment when he found the only thing he had caught was seaweed.

He sighed and threw it back into the water. That was ten bunches of seaweed in a row. How did Sans do it!? It looked like he wasn’t even trying, but he had managed to catch a bunch of relatively large fish already. There had to be some trick to it! If even his lazy brother could fish, he should be able to as well.

Persevering, the young man cast out once more. Please... just this once...! Almost as if it was in response to this thought, there was a massive tug on the end of his line! Papyrus was being dragged into the water! “Bonetrouble!” The student kept himself steady and used the help of his guardian entity to pull the creature out of the water.

Even Sans couldn’t hide his surprise at what he saw. “A shark!? That sure came out of the blue!”

Bonetrouble’s strength kept the massive shark restrained, preventing the situation from getting out of control.

“Wowie... I really did it! I caught something!”

Papyrus hugged the beast, ignoring its thrashing and attempts to bite him. “Okay! Now that I’ve had my fun, I better put this guy back.”

“Eh? You’re not keeping it?”

“Of course not! The shark’s friends would be sad if they never saw it again.” Sans paused for a moment, looking at his own bucket full of still living, potentially delicious fish. Then, he picked it up and emptied it into the ocean.

“Anyway, we shouldn’t be distracted from what we really came here to do.” Papyrus glanced at the cabin of the boat.

“Yes.”

The duo entered the inside area, where the River Person was gazing out the window humming a tune. Once he noticed the two approach, the open part of the hood turned to face them. “Can I help
you two?"

Papyrus stepped forward. “There’s something we need to ask you. These questions may sound strange, but please answer them. It’s very important.”

“Of course, ask away.”

Keeping his tone neutral, the student asked, “Where were you at 8:00pm last Monday?”

The River Person answered without hesitation. “I was at home eating dinner.”

“What about last Sunday?”

Once more, the cloaked man responded instantly. “I was hosting a fishing cruise.”

“And have you spoken to any Temmies recently?” Sans inquired.

“No, I have not.” Either the River Person was very good at keeping in control of his body language and tone, or the skeletons were barking up the wrong tree in interrogating him. Sans couldn’t see any ‘tell’ at all that the cloaked man could be lying or making something up. In that case, he would have to…!

“I know who you really are!” The draconic skeleton balled up his left fist and threw a punch at the hooded man! The River Person flinched and tried to guard. Sans’ fist stopped just before it would have hit him. “…Welp, that’s all I can do.”

Ignoring the protests of his younger brother, Sans left the cabin. If the River Person was a Fragment User, he would have responded to the bluff and fought back using his powers, but he didn’t. Sans couldn’t find any incriminating evidence on the River Person aside from the testimonies of the Drakes, so he had no actual reason to attack him. They had been chasing the wrong person from the start.

Papyrus looked at the River Person with pleading eyes. “My friends and I have been attacked by people under the orders of someone named Hopebringer. We’ve been suspecting that it’s you.

“Please, if you are that man, tell us. Why are you attacking us? What do you have to gain from trying to take our lives? What you’re doing now… It feels like your life is heading down a dangerous path. If you and your friends just calmed down and talked things out with us, we can have a nice, non-violent resolution!”

If the cloaked man had been moved by the skeleton’s words, Papyrus couldn’t tell. All that he could see were the dark shadows from the hood obscuring his face as he wordlessly stared back.

Sans’ stomach grumbled. Dammit, he shouldn’t have thrown those fish away. At least the view was nice here. The blue of the ocean, the lovely town and white sand of the beach on the horizon… The short skeleton closed his eyes and soaked up the atmosphere.

He heard the noise of another vehicle approaching. Opening his eyes to see, Sans noticed a motorboat coming his way. Was there someone else coming out here to fish?

A fireball came at the River Person’s boat, easily blasting it to smithereens! Thanks to his transformed body, Sans had the reflexes to throw himself off in time, sinking underwater. Another Fragment User!?
The draconic monster tried to swim back up to the surface to get a better look at what was going on, but panic seized him when he hit a large solid object. He put his hands against it and tried to push it away, but it didn’t budge at all – it felt like some kind of ceiling.

Even though he resembled a skeleton, Sans still needed to breathe! Whatever constituted for lungs in his body were screaming for air. At this rate, he was going to drown…!

TO BE CONTINUED
Papyrus and the River Person emerged from underwater, gasping for air. When the attack hit, they managed to escape from the boat unscathed by jumping off. Upon attempting to surface, Papyrus noticed that there was something like a ceiling stopping him, but he just punched through it using Bonetrousle.

The surface of the water looked completely different. Even though it was a sunny day, Papyrus’ surroundings wouldn’t have looked out of place in the Arctic. The skeleton’s claws had hooked onto a massive slab of ice that extended for several metres around him.

The realisation struck him. Sans was still underwater! His older brother didn’t have the power to break through the ice. As fast as he could, Papyrus dived back underwater and searched around. He spotted a familiar shape a few metres away from him. *Sans!* Using Bonetrousle to help propel him, Papyrus swam over to his brother and smashed through the ice above him. The draconic skeleton gasped for air as he surfaced.

“Are you okay!?”

Sans coughed as he grabbed onto the ice to stable himself. “Yeah, thanks to you.” He looked around the area. “It looks like another Fragment User’s attacking us. You know what that means, right, Hopebringer?” The skeleton’s eyes darkened as he glared at the River Person, who had climbed onto the ice from the hole Papyrus created.

The cloaked man fidgeted awkwardly under Sans’ gaze. The skeletons climbed out of the water and closed the distance between them, stepping carefully so that they didn’t slip on the ice. Papyrus’ expression remained neutral. “My offer still stands. If you call off whoever’s attacking us, we can work things out.”

“I…”

A second fireball broke them up. The three leapt away from it, with the River Person and the skeleton brothers dodging in opposite directions. *The River Person’s being targeted, too!?* Was he in reality just a bystander? As the magic attack hit the ice, Papyrus noticed that it wasn’t affected by the fireball’s heat. The slab was dented, but the heat from the scorching fireball didn’t melt it at all – a clear violation of the laws of physics. Could that be a clue to the enemy’s ability?

More importantly, Papyrus had to worry about his current position. Ice was slippery. The skeleton found it scarily easy to adapt to his mutated structure and balance, but his clawed feet had much less grip than his old boots. The force that he and Sans dodged with sent them sliding across the ice! Both skeletons fell off the slab’s edge and plummeted straight back into the water. “Dammit!” Sans cursed. Papyrus, on the other hand, made a beeline for the motorboat.

“We’re going straight for the boat! Trying to get onto solid ground is just wasting our time!” He glanced at the River Person, who was still clinging to the ice. “I’m sorry for suspecting you! Get out of here while you still can!” The cloaked man did as he was told without complaint.

The skeletons swam to the enemy’s vehicle as fast as they could while keeping their heads above the water to see any attacks coming. From their distance, they couldn’t see who was on the boat attacking them, but if they got only a bit closer...

As the figure of the Fragment User was about to enter Papyrus’ view, another fireball flew at the
brothers. Papyrus grabbed Sans and used his Blue Attack, temporarily making them both heavy. Their increased weight forced them underwater, narrowly avoiding the attack.

The brothers swam back up, expecting another thick layer of ice between them and the surface. To their surprise, there was nothing of the sort. Papyrus and Sans surfaced, but instead of being surrounded by ice, the area between them and the motorboat was filled with steam. It was like dense fog. The brothers couldn’t make out the shape of the motorboat at all! First ice, and now steam…?

If the enemy was doing what Sans thought they were doing, he and his brother were in huge trouble. Just as he expected, an attack emerged from the steam just in front of Papyrus. “Ah!” The horned skeleton had no time to dodge! Having closed the distance between him and the enemy meant that by the time he saw the fireball, it was too late to evade. Instead, he summoned his guardian entity and attempted to deflect it with a punch.

“NYE-AARGH!” The moment Bonetrouse’s arm touched the fireball, Papyrus felt pain blossom in his corresponding limb.

“Papyrus!? What happened?”

Papyrus’ arm had been frozen. He would no longer be able to use his signature punch barrage. Sans cursed his uselessness in this battle. He was a Fragment User too, wasn’t he? So why couldn’t he do anything? He didn’t even know what his new powers were! At the very least, he should use the abilities he already had to help his brother.

“Bro. Get behind me and take care of your arm. I’ll fight too!” The dragon-headed skeleton cautiously swam in front of his brother, peering into the wall of white before him. He should be able to do this. With his secret special ability, Sans could perform a better job of dodging.

There it was! A fireball from above! Now that he knew where it was coming from, all he had to do was… huh? He was swiftly pulled back by Bonetrouse’s undamaged arm when the fireball was just a centimetre away from his muzzle, hitting the water in front of him and freezing it solid. “Be careful! You were nearly hit!”

Sans felt like kicking himself because of his stupidity. How could he have forgotten about the badge? “I can’t use my powers.”

“What!?”

“I just remembered. The badge from my lab is meant to stop my powers from going out of control. It accomplishes that by stopping me from accessing them entirely.”

“I can’t believe you forgot about something so important!”

“I suppose it makes sense I’d remember it here in the ocean. It is a seal, after all, heh.”

“…”

“But seriously, if we don’t come up with another plan soon, we’re both going to die.”

In response, Papyrus grabbed his brother and dove back underwater. There was another way they could solve this problem. Underwater, their vision wasn’t obscured by steam.

Although it was uncomfortable to open his eyes in the ocean, Papyrus could see the shape of the boat on the surface. The skeleton turned towards his brother and pointed at it. Hopefully he would get the message. Sans nodded, and they both swam towards it.
Papyrus summoned Bonetrousle, then offered Sans its arm. The skeleton took it, not knowing what his brother was going to do, but trusting him anyway. He nearly had the skeletal equivalent of a heart attack when his SOUL turned blue, significantly reducing his weight.

He had no time to react as the guardian entity lifted him up and threw him out of the water! He landed on the boat’s deck with a crash, Papyrus soon joining him. They quickly got back up on their feet and prepared to fight.

The brothers expected whoever was on the boat to fight back immediately, but there was no such reaction. In fact, looking around the outside area, they couldn’t see anyone on board at all. “No one’s here.” Sans observed.

“That can’t be right! Someone was consciously attacking us! They’ve got to be hiding somewhere.” Papyrus ducked into the boat’s small cabin and started searching, leaving no stone unturned.

In comparison to the River Person’s boat, the room was very small, but there were storage spaces a child or smaller adult could hide in. However, all the skeleton could find were things like half-empty bags of snacks and bottles of water. Sighing, he returned to Sans.

“Did you find anything?”

Papyrus shook his head.

“ Weird…”

“Do you think they’re hiding underwater?”

“Nah, that couldn’t be. We’d have heard a splash if they jumped off the boat as we arrived, and swimming creates noise.”

Papyrus agitatedly glanced around. He didn’t like this one bit.

The boat’s surroundings were blanketed by the dense steam created by his attack, so the skeletons didn’t notice the enemy. Anyone thinking about it using regular logic wouldn’t have been able to figure it out anyway. After all, there was neither solid ground nor the big slabs of ice he created nearby the boat.

He was in attacking range! The monster summoned up a fireball as large as possible and blasted it at the skeletons.

_FWOOSH!_

From behind Sans, a fireball twice the size of the previous attacks appeared. “Sans, look out!” Papyrus shoved his older brother off the boat and out of the attack’s path. The tall skeleton himself took the blow. The attack collided with him, his body being enveloped by flames and collapsing to the ground unmoving.

“PAPYRUS!”

Why did he do that!? Sans scrambled back onto the boat, digging his claws into the hull for grip. His brother had been charred by the magic attack. The shallow breathing from the skeleton’s body confirmed he was still alive… for now, anyway.
Sans heard a dull thud. What was that? It sounded like a child jumping. Was he starting to hear things? There was no way a kid or solid ground could be here in the ocean.

The thud repeatedly, slightly louder. No… it was real. And it was getting closer.

The draconic skeleton raised his head to see who was there. A short volcano-shaped monster was calmly approaching the two, a dissonant smile on his face. Hadn’t he seen him somewhere before…?

The boy was perched on a small platform of ice, barely large enough to support his weight. A ball of fire appeared above his head, then dropped into the ocean just in front of Sans. The water didn’t evaporate, but instead froze into another stepping stone. The boy jumped onto the platform and greeted the skeleton with a beam.

“Hi there! I’m Vulkin! I’m going to kill you.”

TO BE CONTINUED
Vulkin had stated his murderous intentions alarmingly casually, as if it was as normal as greeting someone. Despite being balanced on a small platform of ice and about to engage Sans in combat, his body was relaxed and he was smiling innocently. A sharp contrast to the pulsating orb of fire forming above his head.

Sans, on the other hand, was trembling and on the verge of collapse. He was no stranger to the feeling of hopelessness, but his life being in actual imminent danger was something else entirely. Papyrus was unconscious. His powers didn’t work. He had nowhere to run. Was there anything he could do to get out of this mess?

The mutated skeleton focused and searched deep inside of himself for any hint of his powers. It was like scraping through a nearly-empty jar of spread just to get enough for one serve. He was focusing so hard; his head was starting to throb. *C’mon… I need this to work!* A single bone, light enough to hold in one hand, materialised and dropped onto the floor. Guess that would have to do.

Sans grasped the weapon with both hands, then swiftly closed the distance between him and Vulkin. The boy was just a little bit away from the edge of the boat. Sans noticed that Vulkin’s attacks took some time to charge up. If he managed to get up close, then he would have the advantage!

The Blaster-headed skeleton barely managed to take a few steps before Vulkin shot the fireball at him! However, Sans didn’t slow down! *If I’m not directly touching it, then…!* He swung the bone like a baseball bat at the magic attack. However, the moment his weapon touched the orb, pain coursed through his hands! Sans yelped and instinctively flung the bone away from himself and into the ocean.

Upon contact with the object, the water started bubbling. The bone had become insanely hot! Even indirect contact with the Vulkin’s attacks was dangerous! The skeleton, now lacking a weapon, was forced to back away.

Should he turn tail and run…? Sans immediately scolded himself for even considering that as an option. He couldn’t abandon his brother, especially after he saved his life twice. Now it was time for Sans to return the favour.

Not taking his eyes off Vulkin, he produced another bone. It didn’t feel as difficult as the first time. Sans couldn’t telekinetically control his bones like he normally could. Throwing it was his only option.

Putting all his strength into the throw, Sans lobbed the bone at the volcano monster like a javelin! It soared through the air and hit him straight in the face! The next fireball Vulkin was charging dissipated.

Upon being hit by Sans’ attack, the volcano monster stopped moving entirely. The boy’s eyes were opened wide and his mouth was in a solid O shape. Then, he crouched down and started trembling. Sans thought he could hear the boy’s breathing become ragged. The skeleton flinched when Vulkin sprung back up and burst into laughter. He was chortling so hard, he almost lost his balance. The boy quickly stabilised himself before addressing his opponent. “That was sooooo weak! I barely felt a thing! Was that seriously an attack?”

The draconic skeleton’s chest tightened. *Shit.* Sans threw another bone with all his might. This time,
the volcano monster was prepared. Even though he had no time to charge and fire a regular-sized attack, he could still launch a tiny fireball.

The attacks collided in mid-air. Even though it was so small, Vulkin’s attack easily overpowered Sans’. The bone was knocked away like it was nothing!

Vulkin’s grin widened as another fireball swelled above his head. Sans was starting to hyperventilate. The world was beginning to spin and he felt weak at the knees. Just like always, there was nothing he could do… Nothing he could do… Nothing he could-

Just before the fireball hit Sans, a shape moved into the space between him and the attack. Sans snapped back to reality. Bonetrousle had taken the hit for him. But then that would mean…!

Sans whirled around just in time to see Papyrus collapse back down, Bonetrousle vanishing as he lost consciousness. Even though he was injured so much, Papyrus was still willing to protect him at all costs… That’s right. Even though Sans wanted to so much, he couldn’t afford to throw in the towel here.

With this resolution, it was as if all his panic had vanished. Sans’ mind felt clear and serene. The skeleton focused his gaze on the enemy. There was no longer any trace of fear in his expression!

Vulkin pouted. “Aww… You’re going to keep fighting? I thought I’d be able to help him by getting rid of the interferences…” There it was! ‘Him’ again. Vulkin was definitely talking about Hopebringer!

“Who are you talking about? Who wants us out of the picture!?”

“That doesn’t matter to you. You’re both goners anyway!” The volcano monster flung a fireball at Sans. The skeleton was too weak to deflect it, and he wouldn’t be able to dodge without it hitting Papyrus. For Vulkin, victory was guaranteed! No matter what his opponent did, he would get at least one of the brothers!

Sans closed his eyes and focused, then launched a bone in response to the attack. “That again? You already know your attacks are useless!” The boy quickly ate his words when he realised there was something different about the bone: it was spinning. When the two projectiles clashed in mid-air, the bone dug into the fireball! The rotational energy Sans’ bone was infused with overcame the fireball’s power, dispersing it into thin air before continuing towards Vulkin!

“Wah!” The boy quickly backflipped onto another of his stepping stones. He could feel the rush of wind created by the attack! If that had hit him, it would have been game over! He looked back at the draconic skeleton. Some kind of gold aura was glowing around him and a look of determination was in his eyes. A bead of sweat rolled down the side of the young boy’s head. Had the tables turned?

Vulkin hurriedly charged up a fireball and dropped it into the water. Steam quickly rose around the area, obscuring the boy’s position. Sans narrowed his eyes. Was that kid trying to use the same tactic as earlier? He wouldn’t let that happen!

The skeleton summoned a bone, then focused his powers on it. Energy flowed from his claws into the weapon, causing it to start spinning. Sans didn’t have a clue what his new ability was, but if he could make it work in battle, he was good.

He hurled the spinning bone into the steam, the wind from the rotation blowing it all away. The scenery was clear once more. Sans scanned his surroundings. Vulkin couldn’t have gone that far. The skeleton turned 360 degrees, with nothing but water and ice platforms to be seen, before the
realisation became apparent. *Don’t tell me, he’s…!*

If Sans had a heart, it would have started racing. Vulkin was going to attack from beneath the boat! With great difficulty, the skeleton picked up his brother’s unconscious body and carried him on his back. Instantly regretting turning down all the offers Papyrus gave him to train with Undyne, Sans threw himself off the vehicle.

The skeleton aimed to get underwater. Sans couldn’t afford to stay beneath the surface for too long because of Papyrus, but he should be able to avoid Vulkin’s attack… or so he thought. When he landed in the water with a splash, he came face-to-face with the child’s cheerful grin.

_Ha, you fell for it!_ That was what the volcano boy’s expression was saying! It couldn’t be… Vulkin was expecting him to jump off the boat!? The kid’s attack smashed into Sans’ chest, launching him out of the water and onto one of the ice platforms. Papyrus landed back on the boat.

Vulkin surfaced and hopped onto the ice platform, where the skeleton was clutching at his chest and moaning in pain. A chill radiated from his torso. The attack he had been hit with was potent enough to freeze anything it came into contact with solid. “Hee hee, I knew you would react that way! If you thought I was hiding under the boat, naturally you would jump off to avoid me! That’s applied psychology!”

The boy skipped over to Sans, seemingly unaffected by the slipperiness of the ice. One more direct hit would be a certain killing blow! But Vulkin didn’t have the opportunity to even start charging it up. As he crouched down to prepare the attack, something cold, hard, and painful smacked him right in the face.

“W-what!?” It felt like a miniature cannonball! There was so much force behind it, it launched his body into the air!

“Oh, man… That attack would have _killed_ me if it actually hit me!” Sans stood back up, as if he hadn’t been hurt at all. How was he still…!? The skeleton opened his jacket, and groaned at the sight. “You ruined my collection, too.” Several frozen whoopee cushions, condiments, and joke books were stuffed inside. They had taken the hit for him!

Sans was starting to get a good idea of what he could do. He wasn’t limited to making things rotate. He could also ‘charge’ things up with his magic and affect their kinetic energy. Honestly, it felt weaker than his unsealed powers, but if he applied it effectively, it could be very useful. It was a new spin on things, that was for sure.

For instance, what he hit Vulkin with was a whoopee cushion. A hilarious prank under normal circumstances, but with the help of Sans’ magic energy, a powerful weapon! The fact that it was frozen solid also helped. Soaring high up, the boy had no control over his movement – an easy target for Sans!

The draconic skeleton produced a spinning bone and threw it at the boy. Vulkin countered by launching a fireball in the opposite direction. The recoil sent his body flying back, avoiding the bone. Sans grimaced and prepared another attack, but flinched when his claws closed around nothing but thin air. He could only summon one bone at a time!?

Vulkin’s body flew towards the motorboat. Even if that dragon-like skeleton’s spinning attacks were too much to counter, he could at least still get the unconscious one!

Sans’ eyes widened when he realised what Vulkin was planning. He sprinted towards the boat faster than he had ever run in his life, fumbling for anything he could use as a weapon. He didn’t even
realise that he was running on water until he ran out of breath and fell in. After a moment of shock, the skeleton quickly regained his bearings and began to swim the rest of the way.

The boy had already made it to Papyrus, having charged his attack while falling. “And this is goodbyeyyyyeeeee!” Vulkin was just one step away from victory. If it weren’t for the frozen ketchup packet Sans charged up with energy slamming into his body, the fireball would have hit its target.

“Blurgh…!” Vulkin was knocked to the side of the boat, his attack harmlessly passing through the space to Papyrus’ right. The sparks around the ketchup packet stung like intense pins and needles. He couldn’t move!

A claw, followed by the rest of Sans’ body emerged from the water. In his left hand was a spinning bone. His eyesockets were hollow. The volcano monster, stunned from the previous attack, could only do one thing. “Ah… ah… AAAAAAAAAAA-

“One moooorreee!” The bone smashed right into Vulkin’s face, knocking him out cold.

Sans cautiously examined the boy to make sure he was unconscious. Then he collapsed, panting heavily. That was the most exercise he had done in his life!

After pausing to catch his breath, Sans took out his cell phone. Papyrus needed either medical attention or Frisk to heal him. He raised an eyeridge when the screen remained blank no matter how many times he pushed the power button. Oh, right. It must have broken when he fell in the water.

He gingerly approached the boat’s controls, careful not to accidentally step on the unconscious people on the floor. Remembering to keep an eye on Vulkin, Sans drove the vehicle back to shore as fast as he could.

TO BE CONTINUED

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Sans

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: D (alone), B (with Spin)

Speed: C

Range: E (alone), B (with tools)

Durability: B

Precision: C

Developmental Potential: A

Abilities/Powers

Ripple Energy: Sans can use magic to charge up his fists or anything he’s touching with energy, giving enemies a shock on contact or causing objects to fly with incredible force.

Spin: An extension of Sans’ Ripple Energy. By making clever use of Ripple Energy, he can charge up objects with rotational force and use them as weapons or tools.
Sans’ regular powers have been sealed away. As he is now, he can only summon one bone at a time and he cannot use his other abilities.

**Vulkin**

**Combat Stats**

- Destructive Power: A
- Speed: C
- Range: B
- Durability: E
- Precision: C
- Developmental Potential: D

**Abilities/Powers**

**Temperature Control:** Vulkin’s fireballs can control the temperature of anything they touch, able to freeze or burn with ease. Although they take some time to charge up, they have immense destructive ability.
Let's Go Camping! (1)

It was the middle of a blizzard. Two skeleton children struggled through the storm. Their bodies were weary and their movements were slow. It was clear that they wouldn’t last much longer.

One of them collapsed to his knees, sobbing. “Damn it… How could… something like this…”

The other stopped and tried to pull the boy back up. “No! Big Sis told us to get to safety. We have to live! For her, and the others!” The older boy, his body shaking, nodded.

The duo continued to push through the extreme conditions. Eventually, they reached a collection of buildings. Had they made it to town? The younger boy cried for help, but the blizzard drowned out his voice. The older one’s eyes settled on a building. He faintly made out the words “Snowed Inn” written on the sign.

The children struggled over to the door and pounded on it as hard as they could. A young woman answered. Her eyes widened in shock and concern at the sight of two boys left alone in the blizzard. She instantly let them in, no questions asked.

Chara flew back to the outdoor table Papyrus, Gaster, and Frisk were sitting at. “Guys, the chocolate cupcakes they’re selling at the cafeteria look amazing! Can we get some? Pleasepleaseplease?” No one responded. The spirit huffed. “Yare yare daze… What happened now? Did someone’s pet die or something?”

The two Golden Flower Academy students and temporary gardener had got together during lunch break, but the atmosphere was awkward. The older student seemed distracted, whereas Gaster just sort of focused on his meal. Frisk tried to make small-talk, but it quickly died back down.

“As blunt as he is, Chara’s got a point. Seeing you this down is a rarer occurrence than winning the lottery. What’s wrong?”

“The great Papyrus is doing just fine!” The bestial skeleton responded with an exaggerated grin and a thumbs-up.

“Clearly, you’re not.” Chara quipped.

The smile immediately vanished from Papyrus’ face. He sighed and rested his chin on his hands. “… Fine, I’ll tell the truth. I’m a little frustrated that we’re almost back to square one with our investigation.”

The skeleton reached into his pocket and unfolded a piece of paper with a few lines of writing. “This is literally all we know.”

Chara recoiled when he saw the note. “Papyrus? Seriously?”

“Yes?”

“I’m talking about the font! Why do you still use it? That’s disgusting! No wonder you have a negative follower count online!”

The skeleton shrugged and allowed the other two to examine the sheet. The note read:
After the weekend’s battle, Sans confirmed that the River Person was completely uninvolved with the recent incident. The alibi he gave matched up with other witnesses. Additionally, upon meeting with Gaster and Frisk for healing Papyrus, it turned out that Vulkin was brainwashed by (who everyone assumed to be) Hopebringer, with the same ‘memory lock’ Temmie and Gyftrot received. In other words, they had made next to no progress.

Chara raised an eyebrow. “Is that really it? You’re discouraged because we’re not making any progress? I thought with how you usually are, that wouldn’t be- Mmph!” Frisk clasped a hand over his companion’s mouth while giving him a withering look.

“What Chara means to say is, is that all?”

“Well, not really… There’s also this strange dream I had last night. I can’t stop thinking about it, and it’s driving me crazy!”

“What was it about?” Gaster inquired. It must be some dream if it was enough to get Papyrus down.

“Two young skeleton monsters were struggling through a snowstorm. They were talking about someone called ‘Big Sis’, and some kind of tragedy. It looked like they were running away from something.” Seeing Chara about to mouth off again, Papyrus continued. “I know what it sounds like. You’re probably going to say something like ‘Looks like you’ve been watching too much anime.’ Am I correct?”

“Looks like you’ve been watching too much anime… Ah!”

The spirit clasped a hand over his mouth in shock while Papyrus let out a soft “Nyeh heh heh~”

“I don’t even like Alphys’ baby cartoons. I’m fairly certain I wouldn’t dream about them! Anyway, the dream continued. The two boys arrived at a town in the snow, and barely made it to a shelter at a building called ‘Snowed Inn’.”

“You mean… those children in your dream were…”

“Yes, exactly! How could two skeleton children have arrived in Snowdin without meeting me and my brother? It just doesn’t make any sense!”

Everyone except for Papyrus headdesked. Frisk lifted himself back up and wiped the food off his face. “I thought those children in the dream were you and your brother!”

“Nonsense! I would certainly remember it if I went through what those kids went through. I don’t have an older sister, either.”

“Well, what was your childhood like?”

“My time in Snowdin? Nothing particularly amazing happened there. Everything was ordinary. Aside from me, of course~!” Papyrus practically exuded bishonen-style sparkles as he struck a fabulous pose. “Now, tell me about your childhoods! It’s not fair if I’m the only one who has to talk!”
“My childhood was pretty much the same as yours. Nothing really amazing or extraordinary 
happened. Because of that, I tried to make exciting things happen. Man, the trouble I used to get into 
when I was still in primary school…” Frisk sheepishly scratched his head while grinning. “I guess in 
hindsight, it isn’t surprising that I ended up getting lost and falling down a mountain.”

Papyrus nodded in understanding. Without the Royal Guard as a goal to aim for, he would have 
probably ended up doing crazy stuff as well.

“Now it’s your turn, Chara! …Chara?” The spirit wasn’t there. The skeleton supposed that the boy 
was probably tired from flying around everywhere.

“Yo! You guys mind if I join you?” While the group was absorbed in their conversation, Frisk’s 
reptilian classmate approached them.

“Greetings, Kid! Of course, you can join us!” The boy grinned and moved towards Papyrus, then 
turned his back to his friend.

“Uh… Would it be okay, if you could…?”

“Sure!” The high school student opened Kid’s bag, pulled out his lunchbox, and placed it on the 
table. The reptilian boy’s tail undid the hatch and opened it up, then took a seat opposite Papyrus. In 
addition to the standard ‘sandwich, fruit, vegetable, drink’ combo, there was also a dozen 
mouthwatering chocolates inside Kid’s lunch.

“My sister packed me some extra treats! I can share some!” The three students chatted happily about 
their experiences. Frisk talked about how he and some classmates attempted to prove his school 
principal was an extraterrestrial, as well as his journey into the woods to hunt vampires, but ending 
up running for his life from wild animals.

Kid confessed about his previous obsession with Undyne and his ridiculously convoluted attempts 
(one of which involved a giant person-launching catapult) to get her autograph.

Papyrus’ description of his life back in the Underground was true to his previous statement. Snowdin 
was a very ordinary town. However, that didn’t mean Papyrus’ life wasn’t interesting!

His meetings with Undyne were the highlights of his days in the Underground. Every get-together 
was a crazy new adventure. Her enthusiasm was contagious, and Papyrus was inspired to try to pass 
it on to Sans. His attempts to get Sans involved were mostly in vain and incredibly frustrating, but in 
hindsight, it was actually quite entertaining if he looked at it as a puzzle. Between his brother and 
Undyne, he managed to live a pretty fun life up until Frisk’s arrival, and it only got better from there.

Gaster listened with a smile. Learning more about Papyrus’ life in his middle school years, both the 
embarrassing moments and the happy moments… for some reason, it felt like something the 
amnesiac wanted to do for a long time. Everyone was having a good laugh, and they quickly forgot 
their worries.

“So, you guys ready for the school camp?” And the mood came crashing back down.

“What!?”

No one could blame them. Between investigating a strange organisation after their lives and getting 
ready for an extracurricular activity, it was obvious which had higher priority. Unfortunately, that 
didn’t change the fact that they had to go, nor the fact that they hadn’t prepared at all.

Kid chuckled. “Guess not… Well, there’s still this week to pack and stuff. Don’t sweat it, guys.”
“I hear this camp has mixed year level teams! I hope we get in the same group.”

“Yeah!” Frisk enthusiastically added. “It’ll be way more fun like that!”

“Asgore said that I could go, as well. Although I’m not so sure what camp’s all about… I don’t remember ever going on one.”

“It’s great! You’ll have a wonderful time, Gaster.”

Papyrus hoped Gaster was having a good time, because he sure as heck wasn’t. Not only did the high school student not end up with any of his friends, he wound up in the same team as Jerry. And, as luck would have it, he also had to share a tent with him.

All the other student did was sit around complaining while Papyrus did all of the work setting up the tent. Not to mention his snoring was extremely grating. The skeleton liked to see the positives in everything, but Jerry had literally no redeeming qualities!

The day’s events weren’t very fun, either. Despite the weather taking a turn for the worse, Undyne forced the group to keep going, insisting that it built character. By the end of the planned activities, everyone was drenched by the rain and several of the younger kids were crying because they slipped and fell. This whole trip was a mistake.

Papyrus tried to bury his head in his pillow and drown out the noise, but Jerry’s disgusting voice was all-encompassing. The gross student biting Papyrus’ tail in his sleep was the last straw. “Aargh! I can’t take it anymore!” The skeleton jumped up and stormed out of the tent.

“Today wasn’t so great, huh?”

“Yeah.” Frisk agreed. Frisk, Gaster, and Kid sharing a team and a tent was the only saving grace of this horrible day. Because Kid lacked arms or hands, Gaster was assigned to his team to help him out.

“I wonder how Papyrus is…” Gaster muttered.

“You really care about him, don’t you?”

“Yes… He saved my life.” That wasn’t the only thing, but Gaster couldn’t quite put his finger on his other reasons for caring about the seventeen-year-old so much.

“I bet he’d be glad to know that. Just between the three of us… He doesn’t have many friends. Outside of our ‘group’, I mean.”

“He doesn’t!?” Kid exclaimed. “But he’s so cool! How could anyone dislike him?”

“I overheard what some of his classmates say about him. They think he’s… special.”

“Huh? If he’s special, then-”

“I mean they think he’s weird.”

Papyrus poked his head into the tent. “Who’s weird?”

*Speak of the devil!* “N-no one! No one’s weird!” Kid blabbered.
The skeleton frowned. “You know, it isn’t nice to badmouth people behind their backs. I only heard ‘he’s weird’, but if whoever you were talking about found out, he would be very upset.”

“S-sorry… Anyway, what brings you here?”

“I couldn’t sleep, my tentmate was too loud. May I stay here?”

“I’ve got a better idea! The weather’s cleared up now, soooo…” Kid’s tail dipped into his backpack, then came out wrapped around a gigantic pack of marshmallows. “Why don’t we have a little midnight snack?”

“How many sweets do you have?”

“Enough to give everyone in my class diabetes!” Kid stated as he got up. “Come on, let’s go! It isn’t camping without toasting marshmallows.”

The group had found a forest clearing away from the main campsite. After several attempts, Papyrus managed to start a campfire, and the four were sitting around it while toasting their treats. It wasn’t long before Kid piped up again.

“Now that we’re here, let’s tell scary stories! It isn’t camping without telling scary stories.”

“I’m not so sure…” Gaster fidgeted with his ‘sleeve’. “We won’t be able to sleep if it’s too scary…”

“Come on, dude! Live a little!”

“Okay… What scary stories do you have in mind?”

“Well, the story Frisk told me about going to hunt vampires in the forest back at school made me think: we’re camping in a forest now, right? There are bound to be all sorts of supernatural creatures hiding up here.”

Papyrus was intrigued. “I wonder what they’re like! I would love to make friends with them!”

“Oh, they’re not interested in your friendship…”

“Really? That’s a shame…”

“They’re interested… in your BLOOD!”

The sudden raise in volume was intended to make the others recoil. Everyone just blankly stared back. Darn it, am I not scary enough? Whatever, this should scare them! Kid continued sinisterly. “I did some research before we came here. The area around Ebott City was uninhabited until now for a very good reason. This place especially is known for its many unresolved deaths and disappearances.

“In the 1980’s, I hear a group of people who came here to camp disappeared without a trace. All their tents and gear had been left behind, but the campers themselves never returned.” Gaster felt bad for the friends and families of the deceased. Their loved ones just disappeared, without even a little closure.

“In the 1990’s, two dead bodies were found. The scary part? They were all shrivelled up, like deflated balloons! There were puncture marks all over them, as if their insides had been sucked out. The police called it a sick murder. You know what I call it? A vampire feasting on its prey!”

“And that’s not even mentioning what happened in the 2010’s! Remember the camping party from
the 80’s? Well, one of the campers had a daughter. She and a friend came to the forest to pay her respects to the deceased, but only her friend returned.

“According to the friend, she claims that the girl started hearing the voice of her mother, and the moment the friend took her eyes off her, she disappeared! She had to have been spirited away by the ghost of her mother! The spirit took direct control, and walked her daughter’s body into the forest to join her!” At the mention of ghosts, Frisk flinched. That girl was possessed by someone from beyond the grave…? A spirit like Chara…?

Kid’s story continued. “A few decades passed without anything else happening, but just three years ago, a family of four – a happy couple, and two teenage boys – who came here for a camping trip also disappeared. It wasn’t like the last group: this time, there was evidence about their disappearance.

When the police discovered the campsite, there were shredded clothes on the ground and claw marks everywhere. Later, there were reports of four huge wolves roaming around the forest.”

“What does that mean?” Papyrus asked while fidgeting with the stick he was holding.

“So you know what werewolves are?”

“Not really.”

Kid chuckled ominously. “Werewolves are humans who are cursed. How it happens and why it happens can depend, but they have one thing in common: they bear the burden of transforming into beasts!”

A chill ran down Papyrus’ spine. An uncontrolled transformation into an animal-like state… Why did this story feel so familiar?

“Yes. Gigantic, bloodthirsty, beasts! The story of the curse doesn’t end here! The thing with werewolves is that the curse transmits. Even a single bite or scratch, and you’re doomed to join their ranks as an unstoppable killing machine! And, the worst part is? They’re in this very forest right now, looking for new companions.”

If the skeleton had ears, they would have been ringing. A killing machine!? Was that what he and Sans nearly turned into? If Papyrus couldn’t control his magic back then, what would have happened to him? What would have happened to Sans if he couldn’t get the badge to him in time? Could he lose control now? …What if he transmitted it to everyone at school!?

Surprisingly, Gaster seemed sad rather than scared, but Kid managed to get the reaction he wanted from the other two. The boy grinned in satisfaction. He made the whole story up, but they didn’t need to know that. However, that feeling was short-lived. Seeing Papyrus practically hyperventilating made him a little worried whether he was too spooky. The boy’s guilt encouraged him to tell the truth.

“Okay, guys, I’ll be honest… I made that all up. Those things don’t actually exist.”

“Y-yes, of course I knew that…” Papyrus’ voice and hands were trembling. The long-forgotten marshmallow at the end of his stick was pitch-black. It sounded like he was speaking more to reassure himself than anything else. “Y-you would have a better chance at finding a seven-leaf clover than meeting one of those! Werewolves? Evil spirits? Nothing like those could possibly exi-”

Before Papyrus could finish his sentence, the fire went out. The skeleton barely suppressed a scream.
“Guys, don’t panic, I’ll try to light it back up…” Frisk didn’t even have the opportunity to stand up before he heard rustling in the bushes. A strange noise, not unlike a bass drop sounded, and the group felt the force of the bushes being torn apart by something. Not wanting to be noticed, the campers stayed as silent as they could.

“Chara.” Frisk whispered.

“I’m on it.” The summoned spirit scanned the area. His eyes widened at what he saw, but he didn’t say a word. Frisk reached for his phone, but a skeletal hand stopped him.

“I don’t think you should bring it out.” Gaster recommended. “The screen’s light will give our location away.”

Papyrus chuckled nervously. “N-nyeh heh heh... It would be very cliché if we were attacked here!”

A shape rushed out of the bushes! “NGAAAAHHHHHHH!”

“AAAAAAAAAAH!”

“Black Blade!” Gaster fired a projectile at the creature.

“Blasting Strike!” The creature(?) produced a spear and thrust it forward. With the same bass drop-like sound from before, a translucent sphere rapidly expanded from the tip of the weapon and blew Gaster’s attack away.

Frisk turned his phone’s torch on and shone it at the figure. “Undyne?”

Having quickly recovered from the shock, Papyrus’ face lit up. “Wowie! That attack was so cool! How did you do it?”

“A picture is worth a thousand words!” Undyne summoned her SOUL and proudly displayed it to her friends. It was multicoloured.

“You’re a Fragment User too?”

“Yeah! I bet I can do all sorts of awesome crap now!”

Kid looked confused. “Fragment… User…?”

“Basically, her magic’s stronger now.” Frisk explained.

“Huh.”

Undyne surveyed the group of teens in the dim lighting. “What are you guys doing out here this late?”

“I couldn’t sleep, so we came out here to toast marshmallows and listen to scary stories about supernatural creatures! When I heard rustling, I thought one had come after us. I’m glad it was just you and not some bloodthirsty beast.”

A deep, bestial growl emanated from somewhere very close by.

“That’s a very convincing impression! Yes, I imagine it would sound exactly like that.”

“Oh, Papyrus… That wasn’t me.”
The campers slowly turned around. Then they promptly turned back and ran for their lives.

An angry bear! The first instinct of everyone except for Undyne was to flee screaming. Of course, the former head of the Royal Guard was a different story. The lady stood her ground! The bear was right in front of her, but she didn’t even flinch!

“You want to fight, punk!?”

The bear roared and charged at her. Undyne readied her spear. No one would attack her friends and get away with it.

“NGAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!” A fast flurry of stabs blew the wild animal away like a piece of paper in the wind. Like in one of the anime she watched with Alphys, the bear blasted off! If Undyne looked up, she would have been able to see a small twinkle appear in the sky.

“See, guys? That bear wasn’t so scary after all! …Guys?”

Her friends were nowhere to be seen.

The four friends ran as fast as they could. They didn’t care where they were going, they just wanted to escape from the bear! In their panic, they slipped and rolled down a slope, further into the forest.

Papyrus got straight back up. “Is everyone unharmed?”

“I’m okay…” Kid muttered.

“I’m not hurt. What about you, Gaster?” Frisk said.

“I’m fine.”

Chara suddenly shouted. “Aah! Look out! Above you!”

When Papyrus looked up, he couldn’t believe his eyes. The bear was falling from the sky. The enormous creature going to crush his friends!

“Bonetrousle!”

“NYEH~!”

The sharply-dressed guardian spirit jumped into the air and punched the bear away from the group. Like a furry meteor, it smashed into a tree. Unconscious, but surprisingly still alive. “Crisis averted, all thanks to the great Papyrus!”

No sooner had the young man finished brushing the dust off his hands did the tree begin to creak.

Chara gave the skeleton a dirty look. “I’m beginning to wonder whether you should stop talking.”

One after another, the trees toppled over! Papyrus had set off a disastrous chain reaction! “OH NOOOOO!” It may as well have been a violent earthquake. It felt like the entire forest would come down around them!

“We’re all gonna dieeeee!” Kid wailed, screwing his eyes shut in anticipation of the end.

“Not if I can help it!” The eldest student was determined to correct this mistake.
Bonetrousle swiftly moved through the collapsing trees, tapping each and every one that was falling towards the four. When a tree knocked Kid’s head, he only felt a light weight resting on it. “Huh…?” He opened his eyes to see Papyrus gasping for air, clutching his head. The trees had fallen, but they didn’t feel heavy at all.

The skeleton’s voice sounded strained as he spoke. “If… everyone’s okay… I would like us to change position as soon as possible. My Blue Attack won’t last for much longer…”

Having made sure there weren’t any more falling bears or unstable trees, the group decided it was safe to take a short rest and catch their breath. Papyrus stroked his chin as he considered what had just happened.

The forest wasn’t reported as being very dangerous, so clearly the reports were misinformed! He ought to correct them later. A place where wild bears roamed and trees fell like dominoes was no place for campers! Why wasn’t anyone responsible enough to mention this to the appropriate authorities before a large-ish group of kids visited? Unless… No, he couldn’t jump to conclusions. Not everything was the work of an enemy Fragment User.

The skeleton got up and stretched. “Is everyone ready to head back?”

“I think that’s a good idea.” Gaster agreed.

“Great! Let’s get back. Which way is the campsite?”

Gaster’s, Kid’s, and Frisk’s eyes widened in panic as the realisation suddenly struck. Where were they? After slipping and rolling down the hill, they most likely weren’t anywhere near the campsite anymore. The night sky was visible through the trees, but that didn’t give a good indication of where they were at all.

To the left, trees. To their right, more trees. In front of and behind them? Trees. Everything looked the same! As they processed this information, the group could only come to one grim conclusion.

“We’re completely lost!”

TO BE CONTINUED
“Er… Papyrus?”

“Yes, Frisk?”

“I think we’ve passed this tree already.”

“Three times, actually…” Gaster added.

“Wait, you knew this whole time and didn’t say anything!?”

The skeleton’s face went red. “A-ah… I thought you knew…! I’m sorry… I should have spoken up earlier…”

Papyrus gently patted him on the back. “It’s fine. You can speak up if you need to. Communication is important.”

“Yes…”

The group had been trying to navigate the forest for a solid hour, but they weren’t getting anywhere. The scenery looked the same no matter where they turned, and they were all beginning to suspect they were just going in circles.

The first course of action was for Frisk to use his cellphone to call for help, but just like the cliché in TV shows, it had no reception. He really shouldn’t have decided to go with that budget carrier… After finding out they had no way of navigating, the campers opted to go by their gut feeling. Of course, that wasn’t working at all.

The student whispered to Chara. “Can you try floating up above the trees? We need to orient ourselves.”

“Sure.”

The spirit began his ascent, but stopped dead in his tracks. Papyrus and Gaster abruptly halted, too. Kid and Frisk stared at the older teenagers in confusion before quickly realising how much danger the group was in.

Animalistic growling could be heard from all around them. It wasn’t just the singular noise of the bear that attacked them at the campfire. It reverberated from their entire surroundings, like a more menacing version of crickets on a summer night. Dozens of glowing eyes lit up in the darkness of the forest around the group.

The creatures paced forward one after another, revealing large, ferocious-looking wolves. Was the story Kid told really true!? The group had little time to ponder this before the canines leaped at them, eager to their them to pieces! Fangs, fur, and claws came at the teens from all sides! Papyrus took a deep breath and summoned Bonetrousle.

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

Bellowing its ridiculous cry, the dragon-headed skeleton moved faster than even Papyrus himself could see, defending the group from the crazed animals with its barrage attack. The creatures were knocked out and blown away. Its task performed, Bonetrousle vanished.
Papyrus looked over the rest of the group. They were all unharmed. The wolves hadn’t managed to even touch the teens. Kid’s eyes sparkled in awe. “That. Was. AWESOME!”

“Eh?”

“That dragon-thing you summoned! It was so fast and strong! It even does a good impression of your laugh! How did you learn to summon something like that? It’s dressed like a butler, so does it do your chores for you? Can I touch it?”

“Nyeh heh… Well…” The high school student surveyed the unconscious wolves lying around them. “We should move to a different area before talking. I don’t know how long it will be before those wolves regain consciousness.”

“U-um, Papyrus…” Gaster caught his friend’s attention. “I think we should do something so that we don’t get lost…”

“Good idea! Do you have any suggestions?”

Gaster moved to a tree and placed a hand on it. “I believe we should mark the trees we’ve already passed. Like that, we’ll know we’re not moving in circles.”

“Excellent thinking!” Papyrus strode towards the same tree. “I think an ‘X’ will suffice.” The skeleton forcefully stuck a sharp claw into the trunk. It gouged into the thick wood like a knife through hot butter, leaving a deep gash.

Frisk observed this destructive ability with concern. “Those… look really unsafe. Have you tried to blunt those?”

“I tried. I used everything from a filer to a belt sander, but the end result was me having to pay for all the broken equipment.” Upon noticing Frisk’s expression, Papyrus gave a reassuring smile. “Don’t worry, I won’t accidentally hurt anyone! I’m a very careful guy!”

Frisk, Chara, and Papyrus led the way while Gaster and Kid kept watch over the group’s rear to avoid any nasty surprises. While the group was moving, Kid, not taking his eyes off the surroundings, spoke up. “So, about that dragon butler…”

“Ah, yes. Its name is Bonetrousle. You could say it’s like a second set of arms for me. You can take a closer look at it, if you like.” Papyrus summoned the guardian and had it walk alongside Kid. The boy examined it with enthusiasm. Enjoying being the centre of attention, the skeleton had his guardian spirit assume his signature pose.

“So cool…! You trained it to pose like you too!”

“I’m the one making it move!”

While Kid and Papyrus were chatting, something moved in Gaster’s peripheral vision. Remembering Papyrus’ advice, he alerted Kid.

“What’s up?”

“I thought I just saw something moving over there.” The reptilian child’s gaze followed Gaster’s finger, but he didn’t see anything in the darkness of the forest.

“I don’t see anything.”
Maybe he was just imagining things. It was easy to do so, especially in an unfamiliar location and with everyone on edge as they were after the recent disasters.

“This forest sure is dense…” Frisk commented.

Gaster looked at the scenery uneasily. “Will we really be able to make it out…”

“Cheer up! If we stick to one direction and keep going, I’m sure we’ll eventually find an exit! This place can’t go on forever!”

With Papyrus’ encouragement, the lost campers pressed on…

Undyne dashed through the forest. Where the hell did her friends go!? How did they end up getting so far away!? The gym teacher spotted a short-ish shape in the distance amongst the trees. Frisk!? A feeling of relief welling up in her chest, she made a beeline for person, but relief quickly turned to disgust and frustration when she saw who she was really chasing.

“Jerry.”

“H-huh!?”

“What are you doing here?”

Rather than answer in his usual irreverent manner, he panicked and sprinted away as fast as his stubby legs could take him. Undyne’s thoughts quickly drifted to the worst possible scenario. What if he was an enemy!? It had already been proven that just about anyone in the city could be one of Hopebringer’s associates. Jerry could be planning to attack the unsuspecting campers right now!

The fish woman charged after the monster. “Get back here!”

The sight that awaited the group at the end of the forest was breathtaking. The campers had finally managed to make their way out of the maze-like area, and arrived at the top of a ledge. Below them stretched a beautiful field. Even with the only the natural light of the moon illuminating it, the scenery was beautiful.

Colourful flowers bloomed in the meadow, swaying gently in the breeze. The pleasant sound of the river rushing through it eased the senses of the teens. It was like a far more picturesque version of Waterfall. For a few moments, the campers just stood there, taking in the view.

“This is amazing…” Gaster whispered in awe. “I can’t believe there was a place like this around the forest…”

“I’m not surprised.” Chara mused. “The bus ride from the city took three whole hours, and the area around Mt Ebott has still been mostly unexplored.”

“I bet there are lots of cool surprises to find around here!”

“Yeah. We can find our way back here afterwards. Right now, let’s focus on getting back to camp.”

“Got it.”

Before the group could do anything, Papyrus heard familiar voices coming from within the forest. Two people were shouting and rustling could be heard from their footsteps. The sounds started off soft, but steadily escalated in volume.
“Do you guys also hear that?”

Before the campers could react, a shape leaped out from the forest, slamming into them and pushing all four of them off the ledge. They tumbled down into the river, where they were swept away by the turbulent current!

Papyrus and Gaster reacted by instinct. The amnesiac threw his rope towards the riverbank, while Papyrus had Bonetrousle pull him to safety using its strength. The two scrambled back up onto land, gasping for breath, but they didn’t have an opportunity to rest. The others were still in the water!

The rushing river was very beautiful, but it was extremely deadly. A common saying is that every beautiful rose has its thorns. In the river’s case, it would be a beautiful rose in a rosebush filled with knives and chainsaws. The current was fast and strong enough to wash a fully-grown adult away! In the space of a few seconds, the kids had already been washed out of the older teens’ range.

Kid’s head kept disappearing beneath the water. Having no arms to balance himself, swimming in calm water was enough of a chore. In unstable conditions like this, there was no way he would be able to survive much longer.

Papyrus could see the person who knocked them into the river – Jerry – was making things even more difficult. He couldn’t swim either, but he kept trying to cling to Kid and use him as a floatation device. The repulsive student’s weight was making it even more difficult for the boy to keep his head above the water.

Frisk took notice of this, managing to regain stability long enough to shove Jerry off his friend. The revolting monster vanished downstream.

“Hey! Guys!” Papyrus and Gaster looked back up at the top of the ledge to see Undyne emerging from the forest. She leaped down onto the riverbank. “What’s going on!?”

Papyrus pointed a claw further down the river, where the kids were struggling to stay afloat. “Frisk and Kid are in danger!”

Undyne’s visible eye widened in shock. She hurried towards the water, taking a diving position. The two young men quickly realised what she was going to do and held her back. “Don’t be reckless!”

Papyrus screamed.

“If you jump in, you’ll be washed away too! Even the world’s best swimmer wouldn’t be able to control their movement in a current like this!”

The gym teacher glared at the two. “What do you guys suggest!? We just sit here and watch those kids drown!?”

Gaster shook his head. “T-that’s not it! We need to save our friends, but we also need to use our heads! If we rush in without thinking, we’ll just cause more trouble.”

The skeleton turned and ran down the riverbank, Undyne and Papyrus following close by. Even though all three of them were sprinting as quickly as they could, the river’s current was too strong. The kids were being pulled away faster than the three could run!

An idea popped into Papyrus’ head. He grabbed Undyne and Gaster. “Papyrus!?”

“Gaster. Can you wrap your rope around the three of us?”

“Yes, I can.” The young man did as he was told. The horned skeleton then turned to Undyne.
“Undyne! Use Blasting Strike on the ground!”

“What? Why?”

“Just do it!”

Trusting her friend, Undyne thrust her spear at the ground and let the attack loose. The trio felt the force of the air rushing past them as the recoil from the technique blasted them high into the air. The view from high up made Gaster’s head spin, so he screwed his eyes shut. Papyrus, on the other hand, kept his vision focused on the river beneath them.

“NYEH-!” Papyrus’ Blue Attack sent the group back down onto the ground several metres downstream from where Frisk and Kid were. Wasting no time, he pulled Gaster and Undyne back up.

“Undyne! Can you use your Blasting Strike to knock the kids out of the water? By throwing a spear or something?”

The former Royal Guard leader shook her head. “I can’t use that ability through one of my throwing spears. I have to be physically holding the spear if I want to activate that power.”

Papyrus clicked his tongue. Now what could they do? Gaster was quick to act. He retracted his rope from around Papyrus and Undyne, then cast it out into the river. “Frisk! Kid! Grab on!”

The group collectively breathed a sigh of relief when Frisk (who had wrapped an arm around Kid) managed to grab hold of the rope, but their panic quickly resumed when they realised the kids weren’t stopping. Gaster’s rope wasn’t strong enough to hold onto the weight of the two. The man was pulling with all his might, but he simply didn’t have the strength to fight the river’s pull. With a snap, the rope broke, leaving Gaster in his goopy form.

“SHIT!” Undyne cursed. “Now what!?”

Papyrus wiped the sweat off his face and examined the area downstream. “We need to find something stronger for them to grab onto!” While struggling to keep up with the kids’ position, the trio frantically scanned the nearby scenery for anything like a large tree or log, but they could only see flowers.

Eventually, Papyrus threw his hands in the air. “Aah, to heck with it! There’s no choice! Gaster! Rope!” The goopy skeleton pulled out some more rope from himself and tossed it at his friend. The skeleton gave a nod of thanks, then tied it around himself. Without even giving the other two time to realise what he was doing, he plunged into the water.

“And you say I’m the reckless one!?” Undyne’s words didn’t reach Papyrus. The roar of the rushing water filled his hearing as he swam down the river with the help of Bonetrousle’s strength. Everything was a blur of action for the skeleton. His mind had entirely focused on one thing: saving his friends, no matter what. The river concealed several dangerous obstacles, but Papyrus didn’t care! He didn’t even notice when he hit several sharp rocks and branches. In that determined state of mind, pain didn’t mean anything.

Eventually, he managed to get his friends within Bonetrousle’s range. “Frisk! Kid! I’m here!” He enveloped himself and the two in the dragon-like spirit’s arms, as if engaging in a group hug. Papyrus activated his Blue Attack, then yelled as loud as his voice would let him. “Gaster! Undyne! Puuuuullllll!”

Undyne and Gaster, who had been chasing Papyrus along the riverbank, heard his cry. They both
grasped the black rope, then pulled it towards them with all their might.

“NGAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!!”

“HAAAAAAAAAA!!”

The three people and the guardian spirit flew out of the water with astonishing speed! Like a scene out of slapstick comedy, they collided with the two and knocked them to the ground. Because Gaster was still in his more goo-like state, he splattered into several parts before slowly reforming back into his solid form.

Papyrus stumbled back up. “Well! I never want to do something like that again!”

Kid’s and Frisk’s bodies trembled violently as they coughed up water. Papyrus and Undyne slapped their backs to help them get the river water out of their systems. After a while, the coughing died down. “Are you two feeling any better?”

“Yeah, I’m fine…” Frisk replied.

“What about you, Kid?”

When the skeleton could see the boy’s face, his eyes were once again sparkling. “Best… camp… ever.”

With that out of the way, Papyrus decided to confirm the details of the recent events with Undyne. “What were you doing chasing Jerry? Why was he running away from you?”

“I thought he was an enemy! With all the weird crap that’s been going on, would it really be strange for an enemy who can make animals go wild? When I saw him alone in the forest, he panicked and ran away. That’s fishy behaviour if I ever saw it!”

“That makes sense.” Papyrus nodded before blinking and looking around. “Wait a minute, where is he now!?”

Undyne looked even further downstream and spotted the familiar lumpy mutant potato shape. The group moved downwards to see the boy clinging to a boulder for dear life in the middle of the river. “Uuuu… Help me…” Jerry moaned.

The fish-like woman folded her arms. “Why should we help you? You’re the one who got us into this mess.”

“You were chasing me! This is your fault!”

“Well, you were the one who used your powers to sic those animals on my friends!”

Jerry blinked dumbly. “H-huh?”

“Don’t play dumb! You’re one of Hopebringer’s minions! Show us your SOUL!”

The monster displayed his SOUL. It was the white, inverted heart shape of an ordinary monster’s SOUL. “I just followed you guys for fun! I followed Papyrus out, and when shit started going down, I thought it would be hilarious to record it and post the video online.” The boulder was moist from the spray of the stream, and Jerry’s arms were starting to slip. “Please, help me! I’ll never do it again!”
Papyrus really didn’t like Jerry, but it would have left an extremely bad taste in his mouth if he just left him there. Jerry was stationary, so he was in Bonetrousle’s five metre range. Papyrus had the evolved Blaster float over, pick him up, then throw him back onto land.

The moment he was back on solid ground, Jerry squealed in delight! “Yeah! I’m safe! Thankyouthankyouthankyou!” He started clinging to Papyrus’ leg and kissing it, leaving foul-smelling saliva on the skeleton’s pants.

“Uh… You’re welcome.”

The student fished around in his pocket, then brought out an extremely expensive-looking smartphone in waterproof casing. He pressed the screen (licking his fingers every second touch) a few times, then showed it to Papyrus. “See? I’ve even deleted the recording!”

“Good! I hope now you know not to do it again.” Upon closer inspection of the screen, the symbol that displayed how much reception the phone had was nearly full. “Hey, wait a minute! That phone is connected to the network! We can use that to contact the main camp!”

“Papyrus…” Undyne held up her own phone. “I’m the one holding the main camp’s mobile.”

“I’ve got an idea!” Frisk piped up. “Now that we’re out in the open, we can have Chara search for a path back. My phone’s broken from the river, but he can still search on his own.”

The spirit soared up into the sky. He surveyed the area from his vantage point, then came back down to the group’s level. “I found a path back. Follow my lead.”

That weekend…

THWAP!

That was the sound of an old sock blowing into Papyrus’ face when he opened the door to his and Sans’ house. In the one week Papyrus was on camp, the house had turned into a pigsty filled with several self-sustaining tornadoes of garbage.

His draconic brother was sleeping curled up like a dog on the floor. Papyrus stomped over to him and shook him awake. “Sans! Get up right now!”

“Huh? Wha? Oh, Papyrus. ‘Sup?”

“Stop saying ‘sup’ when you clearly know what the problem is! It’s only been one week, and you let this happen to our house!”

“Good grief, bro… Don’t be blown away. It ain’t exactly a breeze to do both my and your chores alone.”

“That’s no excuse not to try at all! You’re going to help us clean up!”

Sans exhaled, releasing a puff of blue steam from his muzzle, before getting up.

Sans took down another pair of underwear from one of the garbage tornadoes and passed it to Papyrus, who then neatly folded it and placed it in a pile. “So, Papyrus, Gaster… How was camp? Didja have fun?”

“Well…”
Frisk was following Chara’s navigation instructions, while Jerry was walking behind the group. That left Kid to speak to the three older campers.

“You three all worked together using your powers to save us?”

“Yes, we did!”

“That’s so amazing! You’re like superheroes!” Lacking the arms necessary for a hug, Kid instead nuzzled against Papyrus and Gaster before addressing Undyne. “Uh, Undyne… Sorry for annoying you so much in the past. I thought you were really mean, but I guess I was wrong.”

“Don’t worry, Kid! It’s fine. I used to be like that when I was a kid myself.”

“Whaat? Seriously?”

“Fuhuhu~ Maybe I’ll tell you some other time.”

“Anyway, I changed my mind about who’s cool and who isn’t. You guys are all cool! Thank you so much for saving me.” The boy practically glowed with admiration. Seeing someone so happy as a result of his actions touched Gaster’s heart.

“Yes.” Gaster smiled. “It was fun!”

TO BE CONTINUED

Jerry – Status: Reprimanded for not helping the lost campers when he could. Stuck with two weeks’ worth of detention.

Kid – Status: Fine. His admiration for Papyrus and Undyne has increased tenfold. He also seems to have started to bond with Gaster.
The Town at the Edge of Existence

Papyrus’ phone screen indicated Frisk was calling. When the skeleton answered, he scratched his device again, this time with one of his horns. Curse those troublesome spikes! Seeing as how it was impossible to get rid of those mutations, he thought about investing in a protective case. He was glad he didn’t take his mobile to camp because it would have broken when he jumped into the river, but it would end up destroyed anyway if he didn’t do something about how his own body had become a hazard.

“Good morning, Frisk!”

“Morning, Papyrus. Want to go out for lunch today? My tastebuds feel understimulated after eating nothing but camp food for the past week.”

“There’s no need to go out! I can drive you over to my house for my cooking! You can both save money and experience the wonderful flavourful sensation of my amazing-”

Frisk sharply cut his friend off. “No.”

“But-”

“NO.”

“I see… Do you have a place in mind?”

“I know this great café that just opened.”

“Fantastic! We’ll go there.” Papyrus spotted his amnesiac roommate in the lounge cleaning up another stray garbage tornado. “Gaster, would you like to come to a café for lunch with me and Frisk?”

“Yes, please. That sounds nice.”

At that time, Sans happened to pass through the room carrying a large backpack. “Sans, would you like to come too?”

The bestial skeleton shook his head, an apologetic expression on his face. “Sorry, bro. I’ve got to man my hotdog stand today.”

“Oh, okay.” Papyrus raised his phone back up to the side of his head. “Looks like it will just be us and Gaster.”

“What about Kid?” Gaster asked.

The phone picked up the question, so Frisk answered. “He’s not available. He wanted to practice his soccer skills.” Ah, so that was why he asked to borrow Papyrus’ soccer ball the other day.

“I see. Where would you like to meet?”

“The café’s in the inner part of the city. Let’s all meet at the train station and walk from there.”

“Er… Frisk? I don’t mean to be rude, but… Are you sure this is the way…”
The three friends had been walking for a while, but they still hadn’t reached their destination. Frisk believed he knew the city like the back of his hand, but the current events had quickly cast doubt into the boy’s mind.

Despite the sky being completely clear and blue in the morning, clouds had completely blotted out the sun, dampening the spirits of the group. As if to match the teens’ attitudes, the buildings looked drab, grey, and completely unfamiliar. The bright and modern feel of the facilities in Ebott City was completely absent in the part of the town that Papyrus and company had wandered into.

“Don’t worry, Gaster!” Papyrus reassured. “Even if we *are* lost, we’re in the city! There are plenty of options to help us. We could use a map, ask for help… If we find some landmarks, I’m sure we can get our bearings from there.”

“Good thinking.” Frisk spotted a direction sign down the road. “Let’s see what this says… ‘Meat Factory’… ‘Food Plantation’… ‘Research Labs’…”

“Do you know what those places are, Papyrus?”

“No. I have no idea!”

Frisk turned his gaze upwards. The sky had become even darker. “I think we should head for shelter. It looks like it’ll rain soon.”

True to Frisk’s prediction, rain started shortly after the friends set off to explore. Thankfully, they soon found a small shopping centre where they could take shelter. Strangely, even though the inner part of Ebott City was usually crowded and busy on the weekend, ever since the unfamiliar scenery started, the group hadn’t seen a single soul.

When Papyrus entered the poorly-lit shopping centre, he couldn’t help but let out a gasp of horror. The mall was in a state of total disrepair. No… Not disrepair. Something even worse had happened. This damage looked deliberate, like a bomb had gone off in the area. The chunks of debris scattered around the floor and the long-forgotten merchandise strewn about didn’t signify anything good about the fates of whoever once inhabited the building.

“Just what happened here…?” Papyrus muttered.

Chara, who Frisk had summoned to help guide the group, glided over to examine one of the bags on the ground. It was a packet of… ‘chisps’? He dragged a finger across the surface, taking off a thick layer of dust. “It looks like no one’s been here in a long time.” The spirit boy brushed the dust off the bag, opened it, then started eating.

“Chara, don’t do that! That could have expired ages ago!” Frisk yanked the bag out of his guardian spirit’s hands before turning it around to check the expiry date. Although the back of the packet listed the ingredients, there was no date listed on it at all.

Chara snatched the bag back and continued munching on the snack. “Relax, Frisk. Magic food doesn’t go off. You wouldn’t have been able to carry all that monster candy and ice cream around the Underground if it did.”

“We don’t know whether it’s magic food, though…”

“It’s the same brand as the stuff in the basement of Alphys’ old lab. It’s got to be magic food.” The spirit looked at the other food items distributed around the abandoned mall. “Let’s see what else there is… Ah!” Dropping the packet of chisps, Chara practically leaped at a pile of old chocolate bars next
to Gaster, causing the amnesiac to jump in fright.

The boy giggled in delight as he tore off the wrapping and wolfed down the treats. “Yum! Caramel filling! My favourite!”

Frisk grimaced at his partner. “Chara… You realise all that sugar is probably going to go to my body, right?”

“Even better! I don’t have to work it off!”

The middle school student growled. Suddenly, Chara’s body seized up. “W-what the…!?"

“I just realised something…” The uncharacteristically evil grin on Frisk’s face stretched from ear-to-ear. “I still don’t know how exactly it happened, but you and I are like how Bonetrousle and Papyrus are. If I want to, I can directly control your movements.”

Chara’s body stood up without his input. It picked up the pile of chocolate bars. The boy was dumbfounded as he moved towards a hole in the ground leading to a lower level. The ghost’s stomach dropped as the implications of what Frisk was going to do registered. “N-no… Stop this… Y-you don’t know what you’re doing…! Friiiiiisskkkk!” The bars plummeted down the hole and disappeared into the darkness.

“Nooooooooo!!” Chara, regaining control over his body, tried to throw himself down after the chocolates, but Frisk held him back.

“Come on, man, I don’t want to end up turning into a walking bowling ball because of your chocolate obsession.”

Papyrus nodded in agreement. “Chara, I understand that you’re hungry, but eating so much junk food is very bad for you, especially before lunch! You’ll ruin your appetite!”

The spirit curled up in a foetal position. “If we can even make it to lunch…”

Smack! “Ow!” An unfamiliar voice echoed from the floor beneath them. Frisk winced and ran towards the hole.

“Sorry about that! Are you okay down there?” Before the boy could reach the hole, a massive water spout erupted from it, blowing both him and Chara away from the sheer force! If he had actually looked down through the damage in the floor, his head would have been blown clean off!

Hovering above the water spout was a female reptile-like monster. She looked a lot like Kid… She was probably the same subspecies of monster as him. The main differences between her and Frisk’s classmate were that her eyes were much sharper, and she looked a little older. Papyrus estimated that she was around fifteen. And that expression… no one would have been able to imagine Kid’s face twisted into such a dreadful scowl.

“Who are you people? No… what are you people!!?”

Before any of the four could even open their mouths to respond, the girl attacked! The water pillar vanished as soon as she leaped off it. In its place, the clear liquid danced around her in an intricate pattern before settling into crescent-shaped blades.

The attack sped towards the nearest target. Frisk and Chara had been blown to the other side of the room, so the next closest person to the girl’s location was Papyrus. The skeleton was lucky that his instinctive reaction was to dodge, rather than block.
He could feel the force of the air displaced as the blades sped by his head, slicing through the wall behind him like it was nothing. Surely, if he tried to guard against such absurdly sharp objects, he would have been the one sliced in half!

“Black Blade!” The mysterious girl gasped in pain as Gaster’s attack cut her flank, drawing blood. Her attention turned to the black-garbed skeleton. “T—that was a warning shot! If you don’t stop attacking my friend, I won’t hold back!”

Water danced around the reptile once more, this time launching towards Gaster like a stream. The young man fired at it, but it simply passed through the water. The trail of water closed around Gaster’s head, forming a spherical shape around it.

He couldn’t breathe! Gaster tried to claw the water off, but it held fast around his head. His panicked state increasing his need for oxygen only made his predicament worse.

Chara glared at the girl, his eyes blazing with rage. He lunged at her. Because her attention was solely focused on Gaster, she didn’t even see it coming. The girl was pinned to the ground and throttled by the incensed spirit. “You bitch! Release him! Release him now!”

The girl didn’t comply. Her focus remained on trying to kill Gaster. ‘If I’m going to die, I’m taking one of you with me!’ That was the line of thought that she had!

“Schala! Knock it off!” Another unfamiliar voice, this time a male one, reached the group from nearby. A feline monster dashed in from around the corner. At that moment, the water sphere around Gaster’s head dissipated. The amnesiac gasped for breath, gratefully taking in huge gulps of air. Chara released his grip on the girl’s neck. Schala glared at the boy before getting up.

The odd man had driven the group back to his house to talk. It was a simple, spartan apartment. When the group could see the two mysterious monsters in good light, they noticed something strange. Their bodies were greyscale. It wasn’t like a skin tone or fur colour… It was more like they had walked out of an old black-and-white television program.

The man placed a tray with six sandwiches on the table. Feeling quite peckish, the three friends quickly sunk their teeth into the meal. The sandwiches didn’t really taste like anything, but they were grateful they at least got something to eat.

The feline looked around the area. “Where is the fourth one? Is he going to eat?”

He can see Chara!? Before Papyrus or Gaster panicked and said too much, Frisk quickly spoke up. “He isn’t feeling hungry right now. He’s looking for the toilet.” Chara hadn’t shown himself, but Frisk could feel that he was as just as surprised by this development.

“I see… Anyway, my name is Alvin. I apologise for my friend Schala’s behaviour. We don’t often meet people from other areas, so she’s quite suspicious of outsiders.” He looked expectantly at the greyscale girl.

Schala huffed and turned away. “I’m not sorry! Ordinary people can’t come here! With how blurry they look, anyone with a functioning brain would see them as suspicious!”

Blurry? Papyrus looked around the apartment for any reflective surface. He didn’t look blurry to himself…

“Schala! I was trying to ease them into it!” Alvin scolded.
“Whatever! You should know better than anyone to be careful! Especially after the Fragment was stolen!”

The three friends flinched at the mention of a Fragment. “You know what a Fragment is?”

Alvin and Schala almost jumped out of their seats. “You three are aware of the Fragments!?”

The reptilian girl summoned up her water blades again. “I knew it! You freaks are responsible for what happened!”

“Wait! Stop!” Papyrus raised his arms in a display of non-violence. “None of us know what’s going on right now. We were just walking around the city, and we ended up here by complete accident! Please, we need an explanation.”

Alvin nodded. “Understood. I cannot tell you the whole story, but the fact that you people managed to enter this place from reality is a miracle.”

“Reality…? Does this place not exist anymore?”

“Indeed. Happy Town doesn’t exist on the same plane of existence as the real world anymore. That must be why to us, your features appear so blurry. Because you’re still a part of reality, your form can’t fully manifest here.”

Gaster started to uncontrollably tremble. Something about this place just made him feel uneasy. “If this place isn’t in reality, then how do we get out!? We can’t stay here forever!”

“Don’t panic. As I just said, you four are still a part of reality. I believe for you, escaping this place is possible.” At that statement, Gaster regained some of his composure. “However, you are the first people to come here that I know of who still exist. Before I show you the way out, there is something urgent I need to tell you. About the Fragments.”

“Of course!” Papyrus smiled. “I would gladly hear your story.” The skeleton was curious about what the Fragments actually were and why Hopebringer wanted them, anyway. Any information at all would be extremely beneficial.

The greyscale man got up and walked towards the apartment door. He turned around and beckoned for the young men to follow.

Alvin had lead the friends through the ghost town and into the lab. The maze-like corridors were dimly-lit and only got darker as the group proceeded. “He’s taking us pretty far in… You sure he’s not going to do anything weird to you guys while you’re down there?”

“Don’t worry– If I wanted to try anything, I would have done it already!”

Chara’s face flushed as he covered his mouth. He had forgotten that Alvin could hear what he was saying! Misunderstanding the cause of the boy’s shock, the feline apologised. “…Sorry. Bad joke.”

The greyscale monster led the young men to a thick metal door. “Alright. We’re here.” He produced a card from his jacket and scanned it on the door. Beyond was a room with intricate machinery. The trio marvelled at the complexity of the contraptions around the lab (despite none of them knowing anything about science) before their eyes settled on a pedestal at the centre of the room.

The empty case firmly secured on top, as well as the fact that it was so deep in the lab, indicated that it was meant to hold something important. However, there was nothing but thin air inside the cabinet.
Alvin rested a hand on the glass case. “This is where Happy Town’s Fragment used to be. I was once a member of a group researching the Fragments – rather, what they were originally a part of – before an incident tore this town away from reality, stranding the few survivors on another plane of existence and outright killing most. We were left with the few objects present in the town during the tragedy and the single Fragment that’s allowing the town to remain here as a ghost.

“What are Fragments, you ask? They are part of something… very great. Even a short amount of contact with a single piece can grant extraordinary powers, and the person in actual possession of one will receive even more fantastic abilities. Even, in theory… the ability to turn back time or reform one’s being after death. If one person were to gather all of them, they would surely…”

The feline shook his head, dispelling whatever thoughts had manifested, before chuckling. “You could say they are similar to the Mystical Arrow or Saint Parts of *Pink Dark Boy*. Is that manga still running?”

“*Pink Dark Boy!*?” Frisk’s eyes gleamed. “I love that series! I heard Mettaton’s going to star in the movie adaptation.”

Gaster nodded his head. “I don’t know much about it, but I’ve seen some of the animated adaptation on TV. It seems very, very interesting.”

Contrasting his friends, Papyrus scoffed. “I don’t touch that stuff. Manga and anime? That’s for little kids.”

Chara raised a brow. “Oh~? So your Gunpla collection is just my imagination?”

The mutated skeleton folded his arms. “That’s different! Those are for battle strategies! Besides, I’m not even the one who buys those kits! Santa gave them to me every Gyftmas, and-”

Alvin cleared his throat, calling their attention back to him. “It is imperative that you know this: Fragments are drawn to other Fragments. The fact that this town could become closer to reality is proof that other Fragments have appeared in your world.

“Our Fragment has recently gone missing, and no one in the town has a motivation to take it. In other words, two things can be deduced: the culprit exists in your world, and they’re gathering the Fragments. Please find them and stop them. These objects are extremely dangerous in the wrong hands.”

“What about Happy Town?” Frisk asked. “What’s going to happen to it without a Fragment?”

“Don’t worry. Even though Happy Town no longer possesses a Fragment, the residual power, among other things, is enough to maintain the town. If there’s anything you should be concerned about, it’s your world.

“Thank you for listening to my story. I’ll take you out of the lab now, and Schala should be able to show you the way out from there. If you find your way back here, you’re always welcome for lunch or dinner.”

“Thank you for your hospitality.”

Alvin led the group out of the labs. Before they parted ways, Papyrus informed the former researcher about the facts he had found so far. “Say, Alvin… We did some investigating earlier. Does the name ‘Hopebringer’ sound familiar?”

“I’m afraid it doesn’t.”
“Ah, I see.” He couldn’t find any more leads on Hopebringer’s identity… Oh, well. At least they had managed to find out valuable information about the Fragments.

Schala had taken the group to the outskirts of town. Although the town itself looked like a normal (albeit deserted) location, the scenery beyond looked downright bizarre. After the point the buildings stopped, there was a steep cliff. No matter how hard the trio looked beyond the ledge, they couldn’t see anything other than the grey clouds. It was as if Happy Town was a small floating island suspended over the sea of the void.

“You can jump off this cliff to get back to your world.”

Chara narrowed his eyes. “Are you sure you’re not just tricking us into jumping to our doom?”

“I have nothing to gain from doing that. I’d gladly jump off to get back to the real world if I could, but…” The girl jumped off the edge of the cliff, only for glass panels to appear that prevented her from falling. “See? I can’t. As a part of the town’s phantom, I can’t leave.”

Gaster anxiously moved forward and tentatively stuck out a foot over the edge. Unlike Schala, no barrier stopped him from going any further. “B-besides,” Schala continued, a faint light-grey blush appearing on her cheeks, “I have relatives who are still alive back in the real world. If you died, no one would be able to check on them for me.”

Papyrus grinned. “We would gladly help you! Tell us their names, and we’ll get back to you!”

“Thanks. You guys are alright. Their names are-” A sudden gust of wind drowned the reptilian monster’s voice out! The four friends were blown over the cliff, falling through the air gracelessly while screaming like little girls.

“AAAAAAAAAAA- Oof!” Papyrus swallowed a faceful of dirt when he hit the ground. “Owowow…” The skeleton got up and checked whether anything was broken. Although it felt like he had fallen off a mountain, all his limbs (and tail) were still intact.

Now that he had confirmed he was unharmed, he should check his current location. Where were they now? The flowers and trees surrounding him as well as clear blue sky confirmed that the group had landed back in a park in Ebott City.

His gaze settled on the gathering crowd of people around them. “Do not worry, civilians! I, the great Papyrus, have everything under control!” After whispering amongst themselves, the crowd quickly dispersed.

He then quickly checked on his friends. “Are you three alright?” Papyrus aimed that question towards Frisk, Chara, and Gaster, but out of all of them, he could only see the middle school student.

“Yeah, I’m fine…” Frisk got up and looked himself over. His clothes were caked in dirt. “Toriel isn’t going to be very happy about this, though…”

Frisk’s guardian spirit reappeared. “I’m okay. I withdrew into Frisk before we hit the ground.” Chara glanced around. “Where’s Gaster?”

The students and spirit scanned the area before all three gazes focused on a certain nearby hotdog stand. Both the stall and its skeletal owner looked like they had been bombarded with black paintballs.
The black ‘paint’ quickly gathered back together and reformed into the shape of a man. Gaster brushed himself down before noticing Sans staring at him. “E-eek! Sans! I’m really, really, sorry!”

“It’s fine, buddy. I’m splattered that you want my food that badly!”

Papyrus sprinted towards his brother and slammed his hands on the counter of the stall. “Brother… You won’t believe what we just saw.”

“I see. So that’s what Fragments are…”

“I wonder how many there are in total.”

Sans groaned. “Yare yare… It’s a pain to have to put effort into searching for the culprit, but I guess it’s less work than having an endless stream of deadly superpowered monsters after our blood.”

“Indeed. We must start our search as soon as possible. After what Alvin said, it is vital that we stop Hopebringer from uniting the Fragments.”

“Here’s the thing, though…” The Blaster-headed skeleton clasped his hands in front of him. “We still don’t have any evidence about who, or even what Hopebringer is. The only criteria we have is that he’s a male adult who uses the internet. That could be a whole lot of people in this town. The chance of us just running into him in the street is low enough, and the chance that we recognise him is even lower.

“The only thing we can do right now is defend the Fragments we have. Like what that Alvin guy said, as long as they don’t all unite, the situation isn’t at its worst.”

Papyrus frowned. He knew that it was realistically impossible to find the anonymous Hopebringer with their current resources, but it nevertheless weighed on his conscience that he was unable to do anything to progress the investigation.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Ebott City…

“Wahhhh! Nooo! This can’t be happening! What do I do? What do I do? What do I dooooooo!”

Kid kept trying to climb up onto the roof of the building, but he was unable to due to his lack of arms. Even after one hour had passed, the boy hadn’t made the slightest bit of progress.

Papyrus was nice enough to lend him the soccer ball to practice with, so it was his duty to take care of it! The reptilian child dreaded the look he would get from the skeleton upon telling him the news that he kicked it up onto the roof and couldn’t get it back down.

“Do you require any assistance?”

“Oh!” A man with arms! He could get the ball down! “Please, mister! I need to get the ball off that roof!”

The stranger nodded, a small smile on his face. “I have time to spare. I can help you.” Despite the shed having no good footholds, the man managed to scale the side of the building with ease. He picked up the ball. “May I throw this down?”

“I don’t have arms to catch it!”

“Very well.” Carrying the ball in one hand, the man descended the shed. However, with only one
arm free, he couldn’t get a good grip on the wall! He slipped and fell off the building, landing on his back with an audible crack!

“No! Mister! Are you okay!?”

The man got back up. His jacket had been torn from the fall, but his body wasn’t even scratched. “I’m fine.” He raised the arm holding the soccer ball. “Here’s your ball.”

“T-th… thanks.”

Noticing the boy’s lack of limbs to carry the ball, the man took his torn jacket off and tied it around Kid, fashioning it into a pouch of sorts before depositing the ball into it. “There you go… Hmm?” The reptile-like monster was staring at him strangely. “Are you worried about returning the jacket? There’s no need to; I can just buy a new one…”

“Are you sure you’re okay? That was a pretty big fall.”

The man flinched. He forgot that normal people didn’t…! “I really am fine. Don’t worry about me. We never had this meeting.” He gently pat Kid’s head before walking out of his field of vision.

The middle school student blinked rapidly for a few moments. Huh…? What was he just…? Oh, right! He kicked Papyrus’ soccer ball up onto the shed roof by accident and he was going to get it down!

But going off the fact that it was safely secured in the pouch in front of him, he had already somehow retrieved it. He should go give it back before anything else happened to it! The boy immediately took off in the direction of Papyrus’ house! He didn’t notice the soccer ball strapped to him pulsating with energy…

TO BE CONTINUED
Phantasm Chain

The evening light dyed everything in shades of orange. Papyrus gazed out the train window as he travelled home. Because the three friends never did get to go to a café in the end, Sans wanted to make them feel better by taking them to Grillby’s. Being a man who cared very much about healthy eating, Papyrus detested the very thought of eating the greasy and oil-filled food.

But as the train neared his stop, he began to question himself. Was it really a good idea to just leave his friends? Frisk didn’t mind the food, and Gaster was open to the idea of trying new things… Ah, well. It wasn’t like one night would open a massive rift between them.

Disembarking the train, the high school student headed back home, carrying the ingredients he bought from the supermarket. He was going to cook a delicious meal that would put anything from that diner to shame! Once Papyrus reached his house, he noticed someone standing outside the door.

“Kid? How long have you been waiting there?”

Upon hearing his friend’s voice, Kid whirled around and ran towards Papyrus with a huge grin on his face. “Ohhh, so that’s where you were! No wonder you didn’t answer the door. I came to give this back.”

The skeleton looked down to where the soccer ball was strapped to Kid. “Ah, my soccer ball! Thanks for remembering to give it back. Keeping it tied to you in a pouch was a good idea!”

“A pouch…?” Kid furrowed his brow. He looked a little confused.

Papyrus reached over and took the ball. “Anyway, I have to prepare dinner now. Would you like to eat with me?”

“Really!? That would be AWESOME! …But I can’t, sorry. I’m going to a classmate’s birthday party tonight.”

“That’s okay. Have fun! Wish them a happy birthday from the great Papyrus!”

“I will! Nyeh heh heh~” Kid skipped away in high spirits.

Papyrus stretched his arms. Time to cook. The meal of the day was his famous signature dish – spaghetti! Despite all his friends loving the food he cooked, he never had the opportunity to try it himself. Today was the day he would change that!

This time, he would serve the pasta alongside a Bolognese sauce, and he would cook utilising the new tools at his dispersal. A new experimental style, for a new experimental flavour. This could only end well!

The skeleton placed the tomatoes and the carrots on the chopping board in front of him. Normally, he would have used a knife or borrowed one of Undyne’s swords to cut them up into a cookable form. Not today! With dramatic, precise movements, Papyrus cut the carrots into tiny pieces with his claws! He then placed the tomatoes in a bowl, and with Bonetrouble’s mighty fists, crushed them into puree!

Next was cooking the meat. The former leader of the Royal Guard instructed him that more passion meant more flavour. By that logic…! Papyrus had developed features like the Blasters he used to
own, and nothing said passion like a laser beam. Firmly grasping the lump of meat in his hands, the skeleton raised it in front of him and opened his mouth.

…

…

Nothing. All that came out was hot air. Slightly disappointing.

That didn’t matter. Papyrus poured oil into the frying pan, then dumped the meat in. Turning up the heat to maximum would make the beef taste fantastic anyway!

Now for the noodles themselves. It was a tough decision to bring out the big guns here, but the self-proclaimed unparalleled spaghettore had a good feeling about this meal!

Papyrus rushed upstairs, but as he ran through the living room, he slipped on something and fell. “Ouch!” The soccer ball? Hadn’t he left it in the entrance hall? He shook his head and kept moving. The meat was still cooking. He could think about that later.

The skeleton opened his drawer and removed the fake bottom. There it was! Finely aged to perfection in an oaken cask, specifically reserved only to be cooked on the most special of occasions! Special vintage noodles from the year 1987! He found the packet back when he was in middle school, and treasured it as an artefact. Here and now, Papyrus would use it to create a meal worthy of the gods!

Making his way back downstairs to the kitchen, the skeleton noted that the meat was thoroughly blackened from the stove’s passionate heat. What great timing! Papyrus swapped the frying pan for a saucepan, then poured all the ingredients he prepared in. All that was left to do was combine them.

The high school student took a deep breath, emptying his mind to achieve a serene state… He summoned Bonetrousle.

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH–!”

After cleaning up the mess he left in the kitchen from the preparation and garnishing the dish with some herbs, Papyrus was ready to dig into his masterpiece! It looked so good, it was almost a shame to eat it! The skeleton twirled some spaghetti around his fork and lifted it up to his mouth. Moments before he could take the first bite, however, his cell phone rang. Now who could that be?

With the trusty new protective case on his device, Papyrus could answer without worrying about scratching it. Looking at the screen, the young man could see that the caller ID was unknown. That didn’t matter. He was always up for making new friends! He pressed the answer button. “Hello?”

The other end of the line was dead silent. He couldn’t even hear any breathing or background noise. “Hello?” Papyrus repeated. “Who is this?”

The skeleton flinched when a massive outpour of static flooded his hearing. Several overlapping voices screeched in union. “LOOK OVER HERE!”

Papyrus took the phone away from the side of his head. If he left it there, he would wind up damaging his hearing. “Hello, mysterious disembodied voice! It isn’t very nice to scream at other people.”

The person (people?) at the other end of the line only laughed and repeated themselves. “LOOK
OVER HERE!” Had they even heard what the skeleton said?

“Look over where?” The high schooler’s gaze darted around the room. Was he being watched from somewhere? The blinds were closed, and the doors were shut. No one could see inside. “I’m looking around, but I can’t see you!”

Something dripped into Papyrus’ shoulder. Slowly, he looked up. The creature he saw hanging from the ceiling was bizarre, even compared to the stranger-looking monsters of the Underground. It was white and amorphous. Several eyes and sharp-toothed mouths swam around the blob in erratic patterns, and a long, thin tail trailed out from behind it.

The tail swelled, then burst, revealing a long, white chain. The cacophony of voices echoed from Papyrus’ phone as the chain rushed at him. “LOOK… OVER HEEERREEEEE!”

From a sitting position, there was no time to dodge before the chain wrapped around his neck. The skeleton felt fatigue begin to set in as the attack latched on. His energy was leaving him…! The voices (which Papyrus could only assume belonged to the creature) cackled as the creature’s many mouths grinned.

“So GOOOOD… YOUR ENERGY… TASTES SO GOOOOOOOD!”

The blob pulsated and grew as it sucked up more of its victim’s life force. Papyrus clenched his teeth. He was grateful he was part-Blaster. If he wasn’t, he wouldn’t have been able to do this! Mustering up the remainder of his energy, the horned skeleton slashed at the chain with his claws, breaking it instantly!

Papyrus scrambled to his feet, then launched Bonetrousle at the monster. “NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!” White goo splattered all over the room, but swiftly gathered back together to reform the creature.

The chain whipped out and wrapped around Papyrus’ arms. He wouldn’t be able to break out of it without the help of his claws, and because of how Bonetrousle was linked to him, it wouldn’t be able to use its arms either. There was no choice! Papyrus bit down hard on the tether between him and the creature. He half-expected to lose his teeth, but fortunately, the chain was the one that broke.

The skeleton bolted out of the room, slamming the door behind him. What in face was that thing!?! More importantly, it was after him! He had to start thinking about the enemy’s abilities. Direct attacks were no good. Getting too close was bad, because the chain would steal his energy. Breaking the chain was an option, but it would reform, so he had to stay on his toes. Not like that was a problem because of how his feet were now, but…

At any rate, he had to buy time while thinking of a strategy to defeat it! Papyrus sprinted towards the garage. He would be able to get away faster by driving. The skeleton yanked his car keys out of his pocket, but he whisked away on hearing a metallic clinking sound behind him. He didn’t even consciously process what it was before he threw his body out of the way, dropping his keys.

What was up with that creature’s chain!? Somehow, it had phased through the wall and kept coming at him! The white tether latched onto his car, and, sliding along it, the creature reappeared. The skeleton glanced at the keys on the ground next to the abomination. Darn it… Going for them now would be too risky!

Papyrus smashed through the garage door and ran into the night. He would have to escape on foot!
The skeleton summoned Bonetrousle to float behind him and watch his back as he ran through the streets. The creature was hot on his heels. For an amorphous blob without legs, it sure was fast!

Papyrus had to think of a way to defeat it, and quickly! He was concerned that since he was running into the inner city, it could attack other people. But he was in no position to turn around now – he would get caught!

He still had his cell phone on him. Bringing up the contact menu, he considered dialling Undyne or Frisk. After staring at the screen briefly, Papyrus switched it off, then put it away. No… His friends were both too far away, and if that creature absorbed their energy, the predicament would get even worse.

Through Bonetrousle’s eyes, Papyrus could see the otherworldly monster’s tail swell again. It was preparing another attack! “I won’t let you!” The guardian spirit punched the ground, grabbing a small, marble-sized chunk of the gravel that formed. As the chain fired, Bonetrousle flicked the gravel at it. It had the speed and strength of a bullet, but it just passed through the chain as if it was thin air.

The attack continued and latched onto Papyrus’ leg. The skeleton quickly slashed it off before it could do major damage and kept running, but from just the second or two it was attached to him, the creature had sucked up more energy. The amalgamate-like being already grown to nearly twice its original size. It only reached his knees when he first encountered it, but now the top of the blob reached his chest.

“MORE… MOOOORRREEEE…!” The creature’s moans motivated Papyrus to run even faster. He couldn’t keep going on like this…! The young man had good stamina, but it was by no means unlimited. Eventually, that thing would wear him down, and then he would be (in Sans’ words) boned.

The part-Blaster skeleton also noticed something strange was going on. A shambling white mass chasing a high schooler around the city would normally draw a lot of attention, but no one had even batted an eye. People just kept going about their daily business as if nothing was wrong.

Could it be that the creature was an existence like Chara’s? Was it that only those with special abilities were able to perceive it? Papyrus supposed that was a good thing – the monster was fixated on chasing him and no one could see it, so it wouldn’t cause mass panic.

Papyrus reached the base of a tall multistorey building. Using his Blue Attack on himself and having Bonetrousle provide a boost, the skeleton crouched down and concentrated all his power in his legs. “Here goes, Bonetrousle…!”

“NYEH~!” The guardian spirit and skeleton soared up, landing on the building’s roof gracefully. If his speculation about that creature was true, it wouldn’t be able to climb the building. It would be stuck in an endless loop of trying to get to Papyrus in order to suck his energy, but failing and falling back down.

The skeleton’s breath caught in his throat when he heard a sound not unlike a lock clicking into place behind him. Papyrus whirled around to see the creature’s chain latched onto the edge of the roof, followed by the creature itself sliding up. In trying to retreat, Papyrus had only cornered himself!

He slowly backed away, looking around his surroundings for anywhere to run. Naturally, the exit leading to a lower level was on the other side of the creature. The rest of the roof had nothing useful to Papyrus. The only way of escape was jumping off, but the skeleton couldn’t control where he was going to land! Chances are, he would end up landing in the middle of the road and getting run over,
or worse!

An idea popped into Papyrus’ head. If he could make the jump up and down a building, then could he make a jump across buildings? The roofs of the neighbouring buildings seemed close enough to make it to if he used Bonetrousle… Looking back at the approaching dripping, shambling creature, he had to quickly make a choice!

The student cast his Blue Attack on himself once more, then made a running start towards a nearby building. “Raaaaaahhhhh!” Screaming to psyche himself up, Papyrus leaped! His eyes bugged out and he shrieked as he soared through the air.

Rushing through the sky above the city should have only taken a few seconds, but it felt much longer. The lights of Ebott City seemed to blend together as he passed above the roads. Finally, he landed on the other building. If he had a heart, it would have been racing. But now, he knew what he could do.

Turning back, Papyrus could see the creature extending its chain to the roof of the building he was on now. It latched on and the creature began to draw itself closer. It had a mechanism similar to a hookshot like in some of the videogames Frisk and Kid played – once it latched onto an object, the creature could retract it and bring itself there extremely quickly.

Papyrus couldn’t waste any time. Gathering up his energy again, he jumped to another building. He wasn’t just running away aimlessly; he had a plan! Even from this point of view, the buildings looked familiar to him. If he recalled correctly, there was a recreation centre with a swimming pool nearby…

Another jump, and the facility came into view. Papyrus could see the swimming pool through the transparent walls of the building. The skeleton took a deep breath and prepared himself. What he was about to do, and from this height… It would surely kill a normal person. But if he just thought about it as a larger-scale version of how he used to jump out of Undyne’s window, he felt more confident.

“Sorry, swimming pool owners!” Papyrus dived at the transparent walls of the building. The glass shattered, causing several of the night-time swimmers to scream and get away from the windows. The skeleton landed beside the swimming pool. Alright! He had managed to make the landing!

He quickly turned around and looked through the hole he made. The dripping creature had sent its chain in after him. Papyrus couldn’t help but grin. It was right where he wanted it!

Before the attack touched him, Papyrus ducked! Instead of latching onto its intended target, it struck the bottom of the pool instead.

The creature flew into the building, but screeched in surprise upon realising where it was headed. It hit the water with a splash! It groaned and struggled, but its shape swiftly dissolved. Soon, it was no more, and the entire swimming pool had turned white.

It was just as the skeleton thought. Because that thing was liquid-like in nature, it wouldn’t be able to maintain its shape in water.

“Eww!” A swimmer who was still in the water squealed in disgust. “The water feels like, totally icky now! Did, like, something fall in through the window?”

Papyrus sweatdropped. He was too concerned with his survival to think about the effect of the liquid on the swimmers’ experiences. At least no one was injured.

“KYAAAA~!” High-pitched screams pierced the air. Had the skeleton made that statement too
soon!? The female swimmer who complained was still fine, but her attention had been caught by something else. Papyrus followed her gaze to the other side of the swimming pool. Two male swimmers were struggling with their own clothing.

Their board shorts, soaked in the creature’s goo, were churning and moving, having taken on lives of their own. Faces appeared on them, and they slithered right off their owners!

“Eeeeeeek! Possessed board shorts!” The remaining swimmers who were brave or foolish enough to stay after a skeleton smashed through the window took off. The female swimmer hadn’t even taken a few steps before her own swimsuit began to churn.

“Aaaaah! Why me!?” Two white blobs broke off the girl. She ran away, in search of something to cover her now-exposed body.

The four creatures surrounded Papyrus on all sides, pacing around him like predatory animals. All four of their tails were aimed at the skeleton. Bursting simultaneously, the chains surged at him, ready to harvest his energy!

They all missed. The abominations shrieked in surprise when they realised their energy-absorbing chains had hit each other! The creatures stood as still as statues for a moment, then slowly, their entire bodies began to throb. The pulsing started off slow, then quickly increased in intensity! When the creatures were pulsing faster than a hummingbird’s heartbeat, a bright light burst out of them!

Papyrus had to shield his eyes. When he opened them, the creatures were nowhere to be seen. It looked like it was safe to come back down. The skeleton let go of the ceiling beam he grabbed onto when he jumped and used Bonetrousle to break his fall. Just what on Earth was that all about…?

TO BE CONTINUED

Memoryhead

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: C

Speed: B

Range: A

Durability: A

Precision: D

Developmental Potential: D

Abilities/Powers

Phantasm Chain: A chain that doubles as a hookshot. It has the ability to phase through other objects in order to latch onto an object of the user’s desire. Once it latches onto something, it becomes solid, but the user can travel across it and through any of the objects it already passed through.

When latched onto a living being, it allows the user to absorb the other’s energy.
When Papyrus told Kid what had happened to the soccer ball over the phone, the boy burst out laughing. “Pfft, ahahaha! That sure is some story, man!”

“I’m serious! If that thing attacked anyone else, they could have been injured, or worse!”

“Wait, that wasn’t a joke? I’m sorry, dude…”

“What did you do to that ball? I’m happy you’re finding your own talent in creating life from sporting goods, but uncontrolled, it could cause serious harm!”

“I just used it to practice my dribbling and aiming skills, then I gave it back! That’s all, really!”

“Did you practice with anyone else? What about that pouch?”

“Pouch? I… uh…”

“Who gave it to you? You couldn’t have put it on yourself.”

“I… don’t… know…?”

Papyrus realised instantly. Kid’s memory had been tampered with! Could it have been that the reptilian monster encountered Hopebringer in person!? “Could you bring it over? I understand it’s late. It can be tomorrow if it’s more convenient.”

“R-right…”

Papyrus grumbled upon seeing the building in front of him. He planned on meeting up with everyone, but did it really have to be here? Just when he thought he avoided having to eat at the place yesterday…

“Grillby’s is the most spacious place to gather.” Sans answered. “Al’s house is a little too cramped for all six of us.”

“But it’s a public space. If we have our discussion there, anyone could eavesdrop.”

“No need to worry about that. I reserved the whole place.”

“Isn’t that expensive…?” Gaster asked.

“Nah, Grillbz is a good friend of mine. Papyrus and I knew him since we were kids, and we even did some volunteer work there. You could say he’s like a friendly neighbour, or uncle to us.”

“Yes, he’s a wonderful person! I just don’t like his fo- ACK!”

“What’s up, nerds!?” Undyne emerged from out of nowhere, giving Papyrus an affectionate noogie.

“H-hi, guys…” Alphys gasped for air, having struggled to keep up with Undyne.

“Afternoon, everyone.” Frisk had shown up, too.

“Alright, looks like everyone’s here!” Papyrus wriggled out of his friend’s grasp, then opened the
doors for the group to enter. “Let’s head in.”

“This is what is most likely Hopebringer’s jacket.” Papyrus had laid the torn black jacket on the table the group was gathered around. “Kid was using it as a pouch when he gave me the soccer ball that transformed into that creature. At first, I thought it was something he made himself, but that wouldn’t make sense because of his lack of arms and the fact that someone had to tie it to him.

“The circumstances surrounding it are extremely suspicious: it was an improvised pouch, meaning that Kid only obtained it recently, and yet he doesn’t know anything about it. I’m confident that Hopebringer’s memory-altering abilities are at work here.”

“It looks pretty torn up…” Frisk observed. “I wonder what situation Hopebringer and Kid were in.”

“At least now we’re getting closer to the culprit. We know that Hopebringer’s either human or humanoid, and he has a fairly large frame.”

Papyrus brushed his finger along one of the holes in the jacket. “That’s not the only thing… It looks like some of the holes were made with the jacket. The edges aren’t frayed at all.”

“It could be custom-made, like Muffet’s clothes.” Sans offered. “Maybe Hopebringer has extra body parts?”

“U-um! Speaking of body structure! M-maybe we could analyse this for biological evidence! Like, skin flakes, hair, fur, shed scales…”

Gaster inspected the jacket, practically pressing his face on it. “I don’t see anything like that…”

“W-wait! Don’t contaminate the evidence! I can take it back to my house for further examination.”

The amnesiac flinched and quickly retreated to his seat. “Sorry!”

“N-no, it’s fine, I s-should have spoken up.”

“No, I shouldn’t have been impulsive…”

Not wanting the awkward atmosphere to set in, Papyrus took the jacket and passed it to the lizard. “It’s settled, then! We’re counting on you, Alphys!”

“I-I won’t let you guys down!”

After talking about what everyone had been up to lately, the six friends went their own ways. Frisk heard a car horn toot from behind him as he walked down the road. A familiar vehicle pulled up near him.

“Howdy, Frisk! How are you doing?”

“Hey, Asgore! I was just heading back from Grillby’s.”

“Would you like a ride home?”

“Sure, I would love-” Frisk was pulled away from the car by a firm grip on his wrist.

“T-Toriel!”
“Do not worry, Dreemurr. I can take Frisk home.” The former queen’s tone was neutral, but the middle school student could practically taste the venom dripping from the gardener’s name.

Frisk glanced at Asgore. The golden-haired man looked as if he had accidentally knocked over a little kid’s sandcastle. He hung his head. “I understand.” The car door closed, and he quickly drove off.

The aura Toriel gave off instantly changed to a warmer one. “Let us go home together, my child. My car is parked nearby.”

“Toriel… Why are you so mean to Asgore? Hate wasn’t what freed everyone from the Underground.”

The boy’s guardian didn’t meet his gaze. “You and I both know why.”

Frisk could feel Chara’s discomfort at the scene he just witnessed.

The next day…

“Undyne? Aren’t you supposed to be at school?”

“Eh, I left P.E. today to Asgore. He’s good with kids, so they’ll be fine.”

Sans’ gaze dropped to the jacket draped over Undyne’s arm. “Make any progress on the jacket?”

“Yeah, kinda. Alphys couldn’t find any biological material on Hopebringer’s jacket at all.”

“Really? None at all?”

“I know. Weird, right? But because the jacket’s custom-made, that narrows down our search to a few shops in this city. My grandma actually works at a place in a shopping centre that makes clothes like that.”

The bestial skeleton looked around. “Where’s Alphys? Isn’t she investigating with you?”

“She doesn’t want to come. She gets anxious around strangers.”

“I see.” Sans began to resume his stroll down the street. “Welp, good luck.”

A yelp escaped the skeleton’s mouth as a sharp pain travelled through his body. Undyne had grabbed onto his tail! “Hold it. Just where do you think you’re going?”

“What? What’s wrong with going home after grocery shopping?”

Undyne snatched the shopping bag from Sans and opened it up. “These aren’t groceries, these are just condiments and bags of junk food!”

“That doesn’t answer my question.”

“Now that we’ve finally found a lead, don’t you want to track down Hopebringer too? The sooner we can stop the enemy Fragment User attacks, the better!”

“Geez, you’re just going to investigate a shop. Pretty sure you can do that without my help.”

Undyne’s grip tightened, squeezing another dog-like yelp out of the skeleton, and she pulled him
towards her. “The attacks on your friends and your own brother aren’t going to stop until we find Hopebringer.” She jabbed a finger into Sans’ chest. “If you care about them at all, you should be putting 110% of your effort into the search!”

Sans threw his arms up. “Alright, alright… I’ll come along.”

And so began the awkward walk to the local shopping centre. While travelling, Undyne seemed contemplative, and kept glancing at Sans. “You know, it’s weird…”

“What is?”

“Papyrus and I are besties. You and Alphys get along really well. But even though our loved ones are such good friends, we’ve barely interacted. This is the first time we’ve actually had a one-on-one conversation."

Sans shrugged. “It’s probably ‘cause our personalities aren’t compatible. You’re one of the most passionate, athletic, and hardworking people I know, and I’m pretty much the exact opposite. Some people just don’t get along.”

Undyne turned her gaze back to the street. “That’s exactly what I thought about myself and Frisk, and look at where we are now. Even though I tried to kill him, we ended up becoming great friends! Don’t forget the new guy Gaster. He’s like a shy, scared kid, but that doesn’t stop him from being friends with Papyrus!”

“And you also… get… even though…”

Sans’ eyelids started to feel heavy. He had planned to take a rest after going shopping that day, but Undyne just had to drag him into this… He guessed… a short nap… wouldn’t hurt…

“WAKE UP!!” A strong pair of arms shook the skeleton back to reality.

“Huh? Ah.”

“I can’t believe you started sleepwalking! Anyway, as I was saying, you also get along great with Papyrus! Even though you two are polar opposites, it’s as clear as day that you both care about each other. Look, my point is, dismissing someone’s friendship without even trying is a really stupid idea! Why are you so lazy, anyway?”

“I’m content with what I’m given, so I don’t need to change it. Sometimes, you simply can’t change the hand life dealt you.”

“That’s horrible logic! What if you’re dealt a really crappy hand? Look at yourself! You’ve turned into a dog! Don’t those spikes feel uncomfortable? Don’t you want to change back?”

“I’m a dragon, not a dog!” Sans protested. He paused, then looked at his claws. “But actually… Apart from not being able to use my powers anymore, I feel more comfortable like this. Like this is how I should be. It’s kinda hard to describe… It’s like earlier, I was wearing clothes that were way too small and now I’ve finally found the ones that are the right size for me.

“Being more Blaster-like is pretty convenient, as well. My sense of smell and hearing have improved. I feel stronger and faster than how I was as an ordinary skeleton. And reaching for the TV remote when my hands are full has never been easier with my tail!”

Of course, given that he was extremely below average in terms of physical abilities before, all these improvements only put him on the same level (or slightly above, taking his smell and hearing into
account) as a normal person. But compared to how a strong wind could knock him over in the past, being able to reach the level of average felt great.

“That’s still an example!” Undyne explained. “If there’s an opportunity that leads to an obviously better way of living, or even if you just want to change things up a bit, you should go for it! You could be pleasantly surprised! And you are a dog! I’ve worked with them a whole lot, so I know!”

“I am no-” Sans’ protest melted into a content rumble as Undyne scratched his chin.

“Who’s a good boy? Who’s a good boy~? …See what I mean?”

The skeleton pulled away, his face flushed from embarrassment. “Hey, hey… Just because I like being scratched there, I’m not automatically-”

“Fetch!” Undyne summoned a spear and tossed it a short distance down the road. Without thinking, Sans rushed to catch it. He caught it in his teeth, then ran back and placed it down in front of the fishlady, his tail wagging. The former champion of the Underground then resumed petting the skeleton. A small part of Sans’ mind knew this was degrading, but it just felt so pleasant…

He rolled over onto his back, allowing the chuckling Undyne to proceed to give him a vigorous ‘tummy’ rub. The bestial skeleton let himself relax for a while, closing his eyes, before the petting abruptly halted. “Something wrong, Undyne? Why’d you stop?”

The aquatic monster was staring at the window of one of the shops along the street. Her mouth was hanging open and her eyes were half-lidded, as if she had witnessed the stupidest thing a person could possibly see. Sans looked at the window too, and instantly realised why she stopped. She wasn’t looking at what was inside the shop, but at her and Sans’ reflection.

“Let’s… never speak about this again.”

“Yeah.”

Undyne retracted her hand from Sans’ torso and helped him up, then the two resumed their journey. “Speaking of how you and Papyrus have mutated… There’s something he told me about that sounded weird. You told him ‘it had happened before.’”

Sans flinched at that statement. He turned away, unable to make eye contact with Undyne. “Yeah… It happened before he met you, four years ago. I was fifteen – still in high school at that time.

“You and I both know, right? How my bro didn’t have many friends in Snowdin. That wasn’t the whole story. Every school has its bullies, and there’s always going to be a group of kids who are unnecessarily cruel. But because of Papyrus’ personality, he was a sitting duck.

“Not only was he completely socially isolated, it was like the other kids actively sat down and thought about how to make his life worse! They vandalised his locker, stole his stuff, spread nasty rumours… They even did horrible ‘pranks’ which injured him.

“He faced this all with a smile, but I knew he was breaking inside. I had no idea how to help him, so I did nothing. In hindsight… I should have at least tried. Because one day, something terrible happened.

“One of his tormentors pretended to regret bullying him and befriended him. Papyrus was – no, he still is way too trusting. He let the guy into his room with him, and showed him his most prized possession – a plush toy based off the character from *Peek-a-boo with Fluffy Bunny* that he got as a birthday present. Of course, the bully asked to borrow it. Papyrus let him take it.
“What happened the next day is something I’ll never forget. The bullies confronted Papyrus in the middle of the school yard, then jeered at him and ripped the bunny to shreds.

“I wasn’t there to see it, but when Papyrus told me what happened immediately after school, I was pissed off. Really, really, pissed off. Before I knew it, I…” Sans paused and took a deep breath before continuing. “A completely alien feeling welled up within me. I took Papyrus back home, then followed those bullies into Snowdin Forest. Once we were out of sight, I ambushed them and started beating them. My normally weak magic, no stronger than the tiny flame of a matchstick, had changed into a roaring inferno.

“Something – an overwhelming bloodlust, a part of me I didn’t even know existed – made me want to hurt those kids. Like a man possessed, I kept smashing them – with bones, my fists, telekinesis – until they were bloody and screaming for me to stop. It started to become less revenge for Papyrus and more that I just enjoyed seeing them suffer.

“I was fully prepared to kill them all. All six of them only survived through luck. I grabbed the one who Papyrus trusted, and dragged him to the river to drown him. But then, I saw my reflection. I resembled some kind of demon! I looked a little like how Papyrus does now – I had grown horns, fangs, and all that jazz.

“I realised what I was doing, and the horror set in. I dropped the boy and ran away. Something in my subconscious told me to seek out my lucky charm – the badge that I have now. I sprinted to the place behind my house, then I grabbed the badge. The moment I touched it, both the changes and my bloodlust faded away.”

“What about the bullies?”

“They’re alive. Even though their parents were outraged at what had happened, the kids didn’t say a word about what happened in the forest. They never bothered Papyrus again.”

Undyne rubbed her temples while processing Sans’ story. “Geez, Sans. That’s the most serious I’ve ever seen you.”

“It’s something even I can’t make light of.”

“If that badge changed you back, how come you and Papyrus aren’t normal now?”

Sans brought out his SOUL. The golden badge was still firmly affixed to it. “I don’t know. It’s pretty weird how even though the badge is directly touching me, I’m still like this. But on the bright side, I don’t feel murderous. The bloodlust and surge of uncontrolled power I experienced four years ago aren’t badgering me at all.”

“What about Papyrus?” Undyne’s eye was piercing and focused.

“What about him?”

“That bloodlust… is that inside him as well?”

“He may look a little demonic now, what with those Blaster horns and tail, but mentally, he’s exactly the same. He’s the same cool bro he’s always been.”

“But has Papyrus ever gone on a rampage like you?”

“No. Never.”
Undyne’s grandmother was a fish monster, just like her. Her hair was grey and her scales didn’t shine as brightly as her granddaughter’s, and in contrast to the fiery sparkle of determination in the former head of the Royal Guard’s eyes, the elderly lady exuded a peaceful, kind aura.

“Oh, good afternoon, Undyne. What brings you here?” Her attention shifted to the skeleton next to Undyne. “And who’s your friend?”

“The name’s Sans. Pleased to meet ya.” The skeleton offered a handshake, but winced when he felt his right foot being crushed.

“Don’t. You. DARE.” Came the loud whisper from next to him.

“Fine, fine… No whoopee cushion.” With a smooth movement, Sans slid the whoopee cushion back up his sleeve before the shop owner’s hand made contact with his.

“Hey, Grandma! We’ve just been… trying to find the owner of this lost jacket. You make custom clothing here, so I was wondering if you knew who this jacket belongs to.”

Undyne’s grandmother carefully inspected the jacket, blinking a few times as she did. “Why, yes… I do know who ordered this!”

“You do!?” Undyne couldn’t mask her shock. Sans had to cover the sides of his head.

“Yes, indeed! He had a very strange name, so I had to write it down in this big book right here…” As she moved towards a book on a bench behind the counter, Sans felt unusually tense. Like the feeling a person would get when walking through a dark forest alone at night. No, this was…!!

The dragon-like skeleton produced a bone, charged it with the Spin, then lobbed it at the elderly lady! “Sans, what the hell!?”

Undyne’s grandmother moaned as the force coursed through her body. The unmistakable sound of a gunshot rang out as a bullet hit her head. However, it didn’t even pierce her skin. Both the bone and the bullet dropped to the ground. She gasped and felt her forehead for injury. “M-my goodness… w-what in the world is…?"

“Grandma! Get down! It’s dangerous!” The tailor shrieked and hid beneath the counter. More gunshots rang out, and more bullets soared Sans’ and Undyne’s way. The fish lady produced a spear, twirling it before thrusting it forward. “Blasting Strike!”

The projectiles were all blown away. Sans scanned the area outside of the shop. None of the other shoppers had noticed anything strange. Where were the attacks coming from? How was someone able to bring a gun into a crowded place like that?

He saw that one of the bullets had landed by his feet. They didn’t look like ordinary bullets. The projectiles that nearly took the life of Undyne’s grandmother resembled small metal crosses, like ones that would be worn as pendants or necklaces.

While he was distracted with this, the passionate redhead sprinted out of the shop and into the main section of the building. “Undyne! Wait!” He feared the worst when he heard another gunshot, and rushed out as well. She was unharmed, but she was frantically searching around, running to and fro. “Who was firing? Did you see them?”

“It was some kind of weird orb! I attacked it, but it sped away before I could touch the thing! Dammit!” Undyne threw a spear at the ground in frustration.
“An orb?” That meant the attack was long-range in nature. Orbs… orbs… what monsters did he know that used orbs as their main form of attack? “Could Hopebringer himself have come to eliminate us…?”

“I can’t believe this! Because of that bastard, now Grandma’s a target!” Undyne’s eyes widened when she saw something behind Sans. “There he is! I’m going to give him 10,000 punches to the face once I catch him!” The fish monster took off, nearly bowling Sans over in her wake. “Make sure Grandma isn’t hurt while I’m fighting! If I see so much as one scratch on her, I’ll kill you!”

Before Sans could argue, two solid weights smashed into his torso, launching him back into the shop and hitting the counter. Recovering and looking up, he saw two black, glittering spheres hovering menacingly above his head. “Old lady, you still there?”

“Y-yes…?”

Sans pushed himself up and summoned a bone. “You better stay down. Because we’re balls deep in danger.”

Undyne sprinted after the cloaked figure. Now that he had shown himself, she wouldn’t let Hopebringer get away! This was the chance to end this whole mess, here and now!

She summoned a spear and hurled it at the man, attempting to pin him down with it, but two orbs appeared from behind him and knocked the attack away. The orbs continued to move towards her.

The other shoppers, suddenly aware of the sound of gunshots, screamed and dropped to the ground. A feeling of disgust welled up in Undyne’s chest as she continued her pursuit. He was even willing to injure the uninvolved!? That freak had no sense of honour at all!

Undyne also noticed something strange about the man’s movement: he was moving way faster than anyone else could on foot, and he was visibly hovering above the ground. Was that, too, a part of his abilities? The man fled out the door and into the indoor carpark. He was going to get away!

Undyne couldn’t-no, wouldn’t let him escape! She remembered what Papyrus asked her to do back in camp. She summoned a spear, and pointed it towards herself. This was going hurt, but it would be totally worth it!

“Blasting Strike!” The energy emerging from the tip of the spear slamming into her felt like being hit by a meteor. The former knight’s body flew like a torpedo, smashing through the door, into the carpark, and directly ramming into Hopebringer!

The cloaked figure fell to the ground. “Gotcha now!” Undyne pinned the man to the ground, and ripped off his hood. Her feelings of triumph were quickly extinguished when she realised what the target she was chasing actually was. “W-what!”?

She threw her body back, a shot grazing her cheek. ‘Hopebringer’ was just an orb holding up an empty cloak! She had been completely fooled! Undyne smashed her spear into the machine and shattered it before it could do anything else.

When she looked back up to see if the true enemy was nearby, she froze. She was surrounded by orbs.

TO BE CONTINUED
Undyne

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: A

Speed: B

Range: E (for Blasting Strike, close-range attacks), B (throwing spear)

Durability: B

Precision: D

Developmental Potential: C

**Abilities/Powers**

**Spear of Justice:** Can summon an absurd amount of throwing spears made of magic, although she usually sticks to a single one for close combat (they lose their effectiveness as they go further away from her, and she can’t use Blasting Strike unless directly touching a spear).

**Blasting Strike:** Undyne channelling magical energy through one of her spears, blowing everything away in a radius around the tip.
The dreaded black orbs fired at once. With the attacks coming from all sides, it was impossible for Undyne to dodge or block! But she wouldn’t let the concept of what was impossible stop her!

She drew her spear. The tip of the weapon glowed with energy once more. “Diverging Slash!” Undyne grabbed the spear with both hands and spun in a circle. The spear’s point drew a solid wall around her, blocking the bullets in mid-air.

The fish lady grinned. The gamble worked! By charging up her spear with the same energy she used for Blasting Strike, but channelling it differently – by swinging it, rather than thrusting it – she could create a temporary forcefield all around her! It was like an enhanced version of her Green Attack!

With this, it would be possible to counter long-range assaults. The woman’s triumphant grin morphed into a terrifying one as she made quick work of the orbs. Their gunshots and the force of their ramming attacks may have been powerful, but the orbs’ durability couldn’t hold a candle to Undyne’s spears.

A single hit from a throwing spear, and several cracks opened in the orb. A Blasting Strike, and the target outright shattered. The entire swarm of six orbs were made quick work of.

“Where are you!?” Undyne demanded. “Show yourself, and I might not kick your ass as hard!”

In response to her cry, more orbs emerged from around the corner. Undyne shrugged and took a battle stance. “Looks like we’re doing this the hard way.”

Sans finished off the remaining orb with a Ripple-charged punch. The machine, cracked from the many blows the skeleton managed to land on it over time, finally shattered. Sans panted for breath, his tongue lolling out of his mouth. Those things really gave him a workout. Having to move his body around that much to avoid their blows was not his forte.

Before even a few seconds had passed, two more orbs flew into the shop. “You’ve gotta be kidding me!” Why did this have to turn into a battle of attrition? Sans may have received a boost in stamina, but compared to the abilities of the average Fragment User, that wasn’t enough to last him at all!

Having to defend himself from the orbs’ gunshots with the Spin was bad enough, but the orbs themselves flew with such force that simple ramming attacks would deal damage. That ability was completely unfair! Where were they even coming from?

Sans threw a Spin-charged bone at the orbs, but to his surprise, they moved around him and towards the back of the shop. Don’t tell me, they’re going to…!!

“Oh, no you don’t!” The skeleton lunged at one of the orbs, pinning it, then bit down on it. Eventually, the sphere yielded. He turned towards the other orb and threw a punch at it. His arm wasn’t normally long enough to reach it, but with the power of the Ripple… ‘Zoom Punch!’ Sans’ arm extended and smashed into the orb. It wasn’t enough to destroy it, but it had enough power to knock it away. Undyne’s grandmother whimpered as the orb’s shot barely missed her head.

Sans shook out his arm. Man, that hurt… But that bought him enough time to get another Spin-charged bone ready. “Take this!” With his other arm, he lobbed the weapon at the sphere. With the power of the Spin behind the attack, the orb shattered instantly.
The bestial skeleton ran to the cowering elderly lady and crouched down. “Old lady? You okay?” The tailor looked up and shakily nodded. “Can you give me your hand? We’re getting out of here.” Sans grabbed onto the woman and ran out of the shop with her. He was going to attack the enemy directly!

If he remembered right, the orbs were a style of an ordinary monster’s magic. They were like automatic drones to pursue and attack targets from a distance. But these orbs were different – their movements were extremely precise and coordinated.

At first, he believed they had been set to track something like sound, motion, or heat, but that wasn’t it at all! The second wave of orbs had moved around Sans and headed towards Undyne’s grandma, when she was lying on the ground. Sans was the one moving around and fighting, so any automated attack system would be going for him!

The one controlling them (Sans wasn’t so sure if it was Hopebringer anymore) was doing it manually, and they knew exactly where Sans and the tailor were. In other words, the enemy Fragment User could see them!

“Eat this! Blasting Strike!” The explosion of energy from Undyne’s spear cleared the second wave of orbs. She sprinted back into the building. Where was the monster controlling the orbs? She halted upon seeing two familiar faces. “Sans!? Why the hell did you not stay where I told you to? Where are you taking my grandma?”

“The enemy can see us, Undyne! If I stayed in there, your granny and I would have been killed!” A third wave of the weaponry appeared from seemingly nowhere. The orbs rushed through the crowd of civilians, knocking them over like dominoes. Sans and Undyne’s grandmother backed away. “Dammit… there’s so many of them! What happened to the guy you were chasing?”

“It was a decoy! Just an orb holding up a cloak! I got ambushed by other orbs when I cornered it in the carpark.” Undyne ran forward and thrust her spear out again, the technique’s power destroying the enemy’s weapons. “If you were in danger in the shop, how exactly did you think running out into the open would help!?”

“I’m trying to find the enemy and directly take them down! That’s the fastest way to get things done!”

Undyne heard a screech reminiscent of a chainsaw from behind her. She spun around, and gasped upon seeing an orb hovering directly behind her. It had been immobilised by the Spin of Sans’ bone, but if it hadn’t been, she would have been shot! She instantly destroyed the machine before it could recover.

“How are we going to find that bastard!? This place is huge!”

“Using logic! Think about it: the enemy was fighting us in the shop and the carpark simultaneously, but they could still control the orbs to attack us both! Even though the two of us were in different rooms, the enemy could see both of us!”

The skeleton’s explanation clicked with Undyne. “I get it now!” She looked at the security camera mounted on the wall. “The CCTV control room!”

“You know where that is?”

“Yeah, I’ll lead the way!” Undyne took a few steps towards the stairs, but stopped and looked back at her disoriented and confused grandmother. “What about Grandma?”
“She’ll have to come. If the enemy’s trying to eliminate all witnesses, nowhere in the building is safe for her!”

Undyne descended through the shopping centre through the stairs – the lift would be too dangerous. As the three turned the corner on the stairs, a single orb emerged. Sans was quick to destroy it with a Spin-charged attack, but many more quickly appeared to take the first one’s place.

Three, five, seven, eleven… There were so many! Sans froze up, staring in horror at the enemy forces. Undyne, in contrast, was quick to act. “Diverging Slash!” The cross-shaped bullets from the orbs were blocked. The fish followed it up with a powerful Blasting Strike, taking down several of them at once.

Gunshots from behind her elicited a rare flinch. The sound came from mere centimetres away, but she hadn’t been hit. Turning around, Undyne could see a spinning bone hovering in front of three orbs. Three bullets had been intercepted by it. She didn’t let the opportunity Sans bought her go to waste, taking down the machines with her spears. Guess she had good chemistry with Sans after all.

The trio made it. They had managed to fight their way to directly in front of the door to the control room. As proof that they were nearing the enemy Fragment User’s location, the number and strength of the orbs increased as they descended. Now that they were extremely close by, the fight would reach its most dangerous stage.

Undyne considered charging forward, but stopped herself when she realised what was in front of her. The walls of the room were lined with attack orbs. She counted three dozen in total.

The enemy must have already noticed the group had stopped, because the orbs activated and started attacking instantly. Shots raced at the three. “Diverging Slash!” Undyne created a barrier, blocking the bullets from the front, but her stomach dropped when she noticed orbs rising above the shield.

Her barrier may have been able to cover the area around them, but it left them vulnerable from above. Bullets came down on them like hail! Undyne hugged her grandma, shielding her from the shots with her body. The temporary forcefield dissipated, allowing more bullets to start hitting the trio. “Sans! Do something!”

“I’m trying!” The skeleton was having an equally bad time. He could only use one shot at a time. The orbs, powered up from the close proximity to their user, had enough speed to dodge the bone.

His Ripple attacks were failing, too. It was an energy he could charge his fists and items up with, but he left his newly-bought tools in the shop. A Ripple-charged punch would do some damage, but the orbs wouldn’t come into his range.

Bullets continued to pepper the friends’ bodies! They had been immobilised by the enemy’s assault. They couldn’t escape, and they couldn’t get through – if things continued like this, they were going to die! Was there anything they could do to get out of this mess?

Suddenly, Undyne started laughing. “Fuhuhu…”

“Undyne…?” Her grandma and Sans looked at her, bewildered.

“FUHUHUHUUHUUHUH!” Undyne cackled, tears streaming from her eyes.

It couldn’t be… Did the pressure get to her? Sans never would have guessed that Undyne, of all people, would end up succumbing to stress like that. “Hey! Undyne! Get a grip! You can’t be overwhelmed here! Are you, of all people, seriously giving up this easily?!”
The redhead wiped the liquid off her face. Even though the bullets were still hitting her, she wasn’t worried at all. “Don’t get the wrong idea, Sans. I haven’t gone insane. It’s just… BAHAAHAHAHA! It’s so stupidly easy!”

“…?”

“Taking down these stupid orbs! The solution’s been with us the whole freaking time!” Without warning, the fish yanked the skeleton towards her. She gripped her grandmother even more tightly. “Use the Spin on us! Toughen us up with your bone!” Sans complied.

Pain coursed throughout the three’s bodies from the force of the Spin. Undyne grit her teeth, then produced a spear. She pointed it at the ceiling. “BLASTING STRIKE!” The energy exploded throughout the room, destroying all the orbs. The three felt the extra pain from the technique hitting them as well, but thanks to the help of the Spin, they weren’t injured any further.

Undyne grinned at her friend. “See, Sans? Easy.” She let go of her grandmother, then moved towards the door to the control room and gestured for Sans to follow. “We bust the door down on three. One… two… THREE!” Gripping their weapons, the two charged at the door and smashed it open.

The man who was at the controls of the room wasn’t someone they expected to see at all. It was a short, scrawny man dressed in a magician costume. Undyne recognised him as Madjick – a mercenary who could be hired for anything from parties to assassination. When they busted the door down, he flinched and pressed himself against the other end of the room. “P-please don’t hurt me! Someone promised me a lot of money f-for this! It p-pays the bills, you see…”

Sans and Undyne weren’t moved by his plea at all. They continued to advance on him with stony expressions and weapons in hand. Tears streamed down from the hat covering the magician’s eyes. “C-come on… please?” Undyne pointed her spear towards him. Madjick suddenly leapt up. “Oh, screw it!”

Undyne’s eyes widened when she heard her grandma scream. The elderly lady had been knocked towards Madjick, where he grabbed onto her and shoved her in front of him. The single orb responsible flew to its master’s side. “Hahaha! I’ve won! There’s no way you would-” Smash! Without a second of hesitation, Sans threw a bone at the elderly lady. The attack hit her, but she hadn’t been harmed at all. The force passed through her and hit the mercenary!

Madjick coughed up blood, his head spinning. As his grip on his hostage loosened, Undyne charged forward.

“NGAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!”

Sans worked on tying up the unconscious mercenary while Undyne checked her grandmother for any injuries. She noticed that the skeleton had stopped and was instead searching through Madjick’s belongings. He was sniffing at the magician, sticking his snout into his clothes. “Don’t half-ass this, Sans! If he gets out, it’ll be all your fault!”

“I know, I understand you’re already at the end of your rope. Rest assured, I’ll make sure he can’t hurt us. But look at what I found here.” He revealed a leather-bound diary. Opening it, he pointed to a certain passage. “This is an even better lead. It should take us directly to Hopebringer.”

“Nice! An awesome opportunity to give him hell.” She glanced at the unconscious mercenary. “I
guess Madjick wasn’t the true culprit after all… Actually, speaking of which…” Undyne looked back at her grandmother. “I’ll tell the truth. The owner of the jacket is someone who’s sending superpowered assassins like Madjick after us. We need to know who he is. Can you tell us his name?”

“Yes, I remembered before the magician attacked. The owner of the jacket looks nothing like the man down there. His name is…” Undyne’s grandmother then uttered the culprit’s name.

Undyne gave her grandmother a nod and a grin. “Alright! We’ll get that bastard good! If we follow the diary’s instructions, we’ll finally be able to punch his face in!”

TO BE CONTINUED

**Madjick**

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: B (orbs), E (himself)

Speed: B (orbs), E (himself)

Range: A

Durability: C (orbs), E (himself)

Precision: C

Developmental Potential: D

**Abilities/Powers**

**Chaser Orbs:** Madjick can summon several large spheres to pursue his targets. They can fire cross-shaped bullets with the force of a powerful gun and ram into enemies. They can be controlled either automatically or manually, and operate relatively effectively at long range, but Madjick cannot sense anything through them.
Chara’s face went red. He felt a little ridiculous doing this… He floated towards the ominous building in front of him, then turned back to face the trees surrounding it. The spirit closed his eyes and thought ‘ aloud’. Testing, testing, one two three… Can you guys see this?

Gaster emerged from the trees, giving a thumbs-up. Good, the plan could work. Now, as long as he didn’t think of any embarrassing or humiliating memories- laughter exploded from within the trees, quickly dashing those hopes. “Seriously!? That was Chara’s first crush?” Chara silently wept.

The previous evening…

Madjick’s diary lay on the dining room table, one of the passages highlighted and circled. On Friday night, Frisk and Undyne had been invited over to the skeleton brothers’ house to help with the investigation.

“According to this diary, Hopebringer said he would retrieve the Fragments from the mercenaries directly before receiving their payment. He also set up a weekly meeting for a progress report every Saturday.” Sans took out a key card. “Undyne managed to force this out of Madjick. According to him, this is the key card that will let us into the warehouse where the meeting is. But what’s also important is this: it only works on a single, small entrance.”

The magician ended up in the hospital from the attack Undyne and Sans landed on him. He promised to never try to assassinate someone again, saying he would purely stick to magic tricks from now on. Undyne said that she would personally hunt him down to the ends of the Earth if he pulled anything like that again. When she described in detail what she would do to him, he went pale and started blubbery like a baby.

“I still think what you said to him was a little harsh, Undyne…”

Undyne snorted. “He was trying to kill my grandma! How would you feel if your parents or one of the Dreemurrs got shot!?”

“She has a point.” Chara added. “If someone tried to harm my parents, I would do far worse.”

“Who are your parents, anyway?”

“You already know them. Toriel and Asgore.”

“No, your human parents.”

“What human parents?”

“Never mind.” Remembering Asriel’s words when they last spoke, Frisk decided not to press the subject any further.

Papyrus cleared his throat, catching everyone’s attention. “Alright! It’s time to discuss strategy! So, we know this warehouse is abandoned, and on the outskirts of the city. This means that a direct attack could be risky – who knows what kind of dangers await? We need to determine a plan to corner the culprit.

“Of course, everyone who can fight will head to the warehouse at the appointed time. According to
what Madjick told Undyne, the building has two main entrances – the fact that the key card only works on a single smaller side entrance could mean that Hopebringer has time to escape or lay a trap if someone betrayed him and gave up the key.

“Because of that, we will have to surround the building. Frisk, Gaster, and I will watch the back entrance, while Undyne and Sans will mind the front to ensure that the culprit won’t try to escape.

“Chara will sneak in with the key card, then unlock the main entrances from inside the building. At that point, we’ll rush in and take on all of them at once in a pincer attack. Are there any questions?”

Undyne whistled. “Whoa, Papyrus. I didn’t know you considered yourself a strategist!”

Papyrus blushed. “Thanks, Undyne! It works if I just think of it as a big puzzle. After all, you saw how fantastic my puzzles were back in the Underground!”

“Yeah… fantastic…”

“Yes! That’s how I managed to become so fantastic at cooking as well! In fact…” The skeleton sprinted to the kitchen, his tail wagging furiously. He returned carrying a large pot. “I made some surprise spaghetti for everyone! The five of us can all share a wonderful meal tonight! Isn’t that great?”

Undyne immediately flew out of her seat. “CRAP! I’m really, really sorry, I just remembered I’ve gotta go to a restaurant with Alphys tonight! See ya!” The gym teacher dashed towards the window and jumped straight out.

Sans was quick to follow. “OH, NO! I left my groceries in the shopping centre! I need to go back and get them! You guys can start without me.” The beastly skeleton escaped from the room with astounding speed.

Frisk slowly backed away from Papyrus. **Whatever’s in that pot, it can’t be good!**

“You brought your bag here. We can work on it together! You can’t think on an empty stomach, after all.”

The middle school student gulped. There was no backing out of this one. He would have to bite the bullet! “Y-yeah…”

The skeleton set the table, preparing three plates of the spaghetti. The unfortunate thing with Papyrus’ food was that it looked delicious, but it tasted horrible. The skull-shaped cloud forming above the otherwise appetising-looking dish gave its true nature away. Frisk wasn’t sure whether the skeleton didn’t see it or he thought it was something good because it looked like his former appearance.

“This is the first time I’m actually going to try my own cooking! I’m looking forward to having it after all this time.” The older student smiled at Frisk. “Of course, it’s only polite that the guest starts eating first. After you!”

Frisk decided he may as well get it over with as soon as possible. Holding his breath in an attempt to dull his taste buds, he shoved the meal into his mouth.

Simply recalling the taste of the meal made Chara shudder. At least it didn’t give him any digestion problems – if it did, sneaking into the warehouse would be even more trouble. Both he and Frisk
were surprised that Papyrus and Gaster actually liked it. Maybe skeletons had a different sense of
taste to everyone else? No… that wouldn’t make sense, because Sans didn’t like it at all. Papyrus and
Gaster were probably just weird—“OW!”

The spirit’s hand had moved on its own, slapping him in the face. Right. He forgot the others could see his thoughts. He proceeded to approach the ominous building. It had supposedly been abandoned, but there were no signs of decay whatsoever. Very suspicious.

Chara hovered around the building, surveying the windows. Even though Papyrus’ strategies in the culinary field were… unique, he had the right idea in choosing him to sneak in. As a non-corporeal being, he could float, so he had more freedom of movement. In spite of his improved senses, he couldn’t see a thing inside the warehouse. It was completely black. He figured that the enemy was probably using blinds to block out whatever went on in there.

He proceeded to the side entrance of the building. A single door was present there, with a key card lock next to it. When Chara inserted the key card, he heard a click. The door unlocked.

After looking around to make sure no one was watching him, the spirit entered the warehouse. His throat itched, and he had to suppress a cough. The corridor the entrance led to was dark and dusty. Even though it looked like a normal warehouse on the outside, simply entering made his hair stand on end.

After making his way through the corridor, Chara came to the main room of the building. Wary of any of Hopebringer’s minions, he decided to stick to the ceiling — that way, even if someone saw him, he would be able to get away before they caught him.

Several crates and barrels lay around the area. If Chara remembered correctly, this warehouse wasn’t a part of Ebott City — it originally belonged to a small toy company from decades ago. Their dolls were notorious for looking creepy, and after rumours began to circulate about their products being haunted, the company went bankrupt. The spirit shuddered at the thought of all the dolls packed together in the boxes.

He made it through the warehouse to the electronic panel responsible for the locks on the main entrances. The electronic locks still being functional, coupled with the fact that the building hadn’t decayed… There had to be fishy stuff going on here.

It was nearly the meeting time noted in the diary. Chara wondered whether anyone would really show up. Even though he passed through the main building, he didn’t see anyone there. The spirit’s hand moved towards the control panel to unlock the door, but he felt something come at him from behind. He tried to dodge, but he was too slow! Pain exploded in Chara’s left arm as he was pinned against the wall.

“GYYYYAAAAAH!” Frisk howled as blood spurted out of his left arm. The phone fell to the ground.

“Frisk!” Papyrus rushed to his side. His left arm looked mangled, as if he had been in a bike accident. Otherwise, he seemed to be uninjured… for now. “Is Hopebringer attacking!? He shouldn’t know we’re here!” Gaster picked up the phone and read the log on the screen. His eyes went wide and his breathing quickened. “What does it say? What’s happening to Chara!?”

The amnesiac thrust the device to Papyrus and sprinted into the warehouse. “W-wait! Gaster!”
Chara was utterly terrified. His left arm had been crushed beneath a heavy staff. Holding it was a massive, armour-clad figure, even bigger than Asgore. It looked like if a knight from the Middle Ages had decided to take up bodybuilding.

“So… you are the one who has been interfering with our plans?” That voice…!? It was female. He recognised it, too… But from where? “I suppose this means our plan worked splendidly. The address and key card in our diaries were actually to throw off anyone in search of our employer. If one of us failed, you would be led to the warehouse and lured into this trap.”

“A-and why are you telling me all of this?” Chara struggled to keep his voice level.

“It is a matter of respect. You will not live to speak to anyone about this, so you should at least know the truth before you perish.” The knight drew back a massive arm, ready to crush Chara’s head with a punch. Immobilised, the boy could do nothing but watch as his demise slowly approached.

Just as the fist was about to turn his head into a pulp, it stopped. The knight’s expression couldn’t be seen beneath her helmet, but Chara could tell from her grunt of surprise that she didn’t voluntarily stop her attack. Upon closer inspection, he couldn’t help but smile. He had never been happier to see that black rope!

Gaster had come to save him! He was pulling on the rope with all of his might, but it was taking everything he could to hold the giant’s arm in place. A combination of sweat and goop was pouring off him as he struggled against the knight’s monstrous strength. Had he only succeeded in delaying Chara’s and Frisk’s deaths by a few more seconds?

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!” With a barrage of fists, the wall on the other end of the room came down. Papyrus and Frisk dashed in through the opening. Bonetrousle charged at the knight and knocked the staff away, freeing Chara! The spirit took the opportunity to fly back to Frisk’s side, while Gaster withdrew his rope and jumped away. The four glared at the giant, the tension in the air peaking.

With a flash of light, the weapon reappeared back in the giant’s hand. She twirled it, and the shadows within the warehouse’s interior were sucked in, letting light shine once more. The knight took a battle stance and roared.

With astonishing speed for her size, the knight came at Papyrus, brandishing her staff! He called Bonetrousle, ready to block, but his vision was enveloped by black. The skeleton had little time to register what was going on before the weapon smashed into him and his entire body was sent flying back!

Gaster shot his Black Blades at the mercenary as fast as he could, but they had absolutely no effect. It was like trying to demolish a brick house with pebbles – Gaster didn’t have enough firepower to do any actual damage!

Now that the shadows had disappeared, Frisk and Chara recognised that armour. The Fragment User they were fighting was Knight Knight – a mercenary Mettaton sent after Frisk in the CORE. He managed to get past her back then by singing her to sleep, but he doubted that would work now.

Gaster continued to shoot at her, but to the knight, his attacks were even less significant than fly bites. Frisk gasped when she swung a tree trunk-like leg at the skeleton. “No!” The boy conjured a forcefield around himself and shoved Gaster out of the way, taking the blow for him.

The forcefield was enough to block the warrior’s attack, but it quickly dissipated after a few seconds. Knight Knight swung her staff once more, and Frisk’s vision went black! *What the…!? Chara!*
Reacting quickly, the spirit allowed Frisk to access his enhanced senses. From the rush of air, Frisk could tell she was attacking with her left arm, to his right side, so he dodged by ducking.

When he ducked, his vision returned. There was a solid black sphere hovering where his head used to be. Was that Knight Knight’s ability as a Fragment User? To manipulate light and shadow? The giant, not expecting for the blinded Frisk to dodge, had put too much momentum into her swing and became off-balance.

“UUUOOOOOHHHH!!” Papyrus, having recovered from the previous attack, took this opportunity to lunge at Knight Knight with Bonetrousle!

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!” Did he have enough strength to pull through…? Normally, from a barrage, the enemy would have been blown back or at least knocked out. When Papyrus looked up, his breath caught in his throat. “No… way…”

Gaster, Frisk, and Chara were equally stunned. “That’s… impossible…”

The mercenary, unfazed and unharmed, towered over Papyrus.

TO BE CONTINUED
“Cornering the bad guy is a lot more boring than I thought it’d be.” Undyne sighed as she munched on some chips. She wiped her hands on her pants and turned back to the warehouse door. Ever since they arrived, no one had entered or left through it.

Sans shovelled another handful of popcorn into his maw, engrossed in the movie he was watching on his laptop. “Wonder what’s taking the others so long.”

Papyrus was completely at a loss as to what to do. His direct barrage, his strongest technique as a Fragment User, had failed! To add fuel to the fire, Papyrus didn’t expect Knight Knight to still be standing from his assault, so his attack left him in a vulnerable position – directly in front of the giant.

The knight clasped her hands together and raised her arms above her head, then brought them down! But Papyrus didn’t feel a thing. The skeleton gasped when he saw that Chara had taken the blow for him. Frisk and Gaster were speechless. Chara, of all people…

The moment didn’t last long, though. Pain exploded in Frisk’s back – the same place the attack hit his partner. He screamed and fell forward. Knight Knight, seeing an easier target, walked up to Frisk and picked him up in a massive hand! He struggled against her grip, but there was nothing the thirteen-year-old could do against the strength of such an enormous enemy. As a last resort, he threw his cell phone. It didn’t even hit Knight Knight. The device clattered to the ground at Papyrus’ and Gaster’s feet. “Do not resist,” the mercenary boomed. “I will put you to sleep as peacefully as I can.”

She brought her other hand towards his head with the intent to snap his neck, but black rope wrapped around her arm. Knight Knight spun to face Gaster, grabbed the rope, and pulled him towards her! She grabbed the skeleton by the head and smashed him into the ground!

Like a tomato dropped from a height, Gaster splattered into black liquid. The goop quickly gathered back together into a rope at the knight’s feet and swept them out from beneath her. The skeleton resolidified and fired a Black Blade at her eye as she fell. Knight Knight gasped and jerked her head away. Her grip on Frisk loosened, and the boy flew out of her grasp.

The student landed on his feet, but cried out when pain shot through his body. The attack the enemy landed on Chara, combined with the damage he suffered from her strong grip, meant that he was in no state to move! Frisk grimaced as he slowly healed himself with his Last Dreams. He had to get himself back in action as soon as possible!

Knight Knight was now focused on eliminating Gaster. The skeleton had reformed back into his solid, humanoid shape. He fired a Black Blade at the knight’s eyes once more, but this time, she blocked it with a swing of her weapon. She thrust the staff at him, and everything went black! The very next instant, all the air in Gaster’s metaphorical lungs was blown out and his body was launched back!

Throwing her Good Morningstar worked brilliantly. True to her plans, the interferer was disoriented from the shadow attack, then blown away by the physical force of the weapon. His body and her weapon flew through the large room and fell behind a crate.

Knight Knight quickly pursued. She saw a large blob of black goop exposed from behind the box. She sprinted up to the crate and jumped over it, ready to crush the Fragment User to death, but she
did a double take when she saw what was really there.

The goop that she saw was just a featureless black blob with her staff sticking out of it. Her opponent had left it as a decoy and the rest of his body was quickly crawling away. Did he think he could get away without his legs? And on top of that, he was abandoning his allies? Pitiful.

The goopy skeleton scurried through an open door into another room of the warehouse. The mercenary retrieved her staff and chased after him, the distance between them slowly closing. The room looked similar to the first one, being a large space with crates and barrels filled with creepy dolls.

His breathing was starting to become ragged. He was running out of energy. Knight Knight’s victory was assured! With a final burst of speed, the young man scrambled up a wooden ramp before wheezing and stopping at the top, his face hitting the floor. The mercenary leaped onto the bottom end of the ramp. “Goodnight, and goodbye.”

The skeleton monster slowly turned around and looked the mercenary in the eye. Then… he smirked. “Wha-!!” A wave of nausea hit Knight Knight as she was blasted up, breaking through the ceiling of the warehouse and skyrocketing into the air above the building.

From behind her, someone laughed. “Nyeh heh heh! You’re probably very confused about what happened, aren’t you?”

“You!” She whirled around and swung a fist at the horned skeleton, but in the air, he dodged easily.

“When Frisk threw his phone, he was actually giving information about the warehouse to me and Gaster. I scrolled back through the information log to find out about the environment in the other rooms of the warehouse, and I could set up a trap!

“You were so focused on fighting Gaster, you didn’t notice I wasn’t in the room anymore. You didn’t notice where he was taking you. You didn’t even notice me tapping you on the back to activate my Blue Attack!”

Knight Knight tried to throw more punches and kicks, but the enemy was hovering just out of her range. The confident boy continued, “Now, I bet you’re wondering how you and I are so high up, right? Well, I, the great Papyrus, will explain this marvellous trap!

“The ramp Gaster escaped to was no ordinary ramp, but a giant wooden plank! Underneath it, I had placed a barrel to create a makeshift seesaw! When he lured you into the position, I turned you, me, and him blue! Gaster became incredibly heavy, while you and I became near-weightless!”

The mercenary had enough of his explanation. She threw her Good Morningstar at the skeleton, breaking the blue effect on his SOUL. He let out a high-pitched scream as he plummeted! Next, she brought out her own SOUL and punched it, shattering the weight-reducing effect of his attack, causing her to fall after him.

She was falling faster than he was, so she would be able to defeat him with a single strike, enhanced by the force of gravity. Papyrus looked up, seeing the terrifying attack coming from above him. But, just like the other skeleton she fought, his face showed no sign of fear. “Bonetrousle!” An aura flared to life around him, and the otherworldly, dragon-headed monster phased into existence in front of the skeleton.

“Are you trying to use that again? You already know that won’t work!”

“NYEH~!” True to her words, Bonetrousle’s punch didn’t hurt the giant at all. But that wasn’t
Papyrus’ intention. Knight Knight realised this when her SOUL turned blue again and the speed at which she was falling increased. Papyrus had Bonetrouble push his body out of the way of her fall, then reapplied the blue effect on himself. Now he was the one above her!

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

And with that, Knight Knight had been bested. With the second Blue Attack contained within the barrage, her body’s already sizable weight had increased by what felt like hundreds of times. The ground rushed up at her like a bullet, and then she knew no more.

The huge armoured figure lay unconscious in the centre of the room, a small crater surrounding her. Papyrus floated down gracefully from the hole in the warehouse ceiling, his Blue Attack reducing the force of gravity on his body. Frisk, Chara, and Gaster had all gathered around the crater to look at the knight.

Slowly, Knight Knight stirred. The group tensed up, anticipating her to resume her attack, but she made no move to do so at all. “You defeated me. In the end, you were the stronger one, and the strong have the right to decide the fates of the weak. You may do with me as you wish. I was willing to kill you all, therefore it is only fair that you may kill me if you desire.”

Papyrus nodded in Frisk’s direction. The boy crouched down and started healing the knight. “Ah…! You are…!”

“You recognise me now, huh?”

“This is the second time I attempted to take your life. You truly are kind to let me go twice.”

Frisk shrugged. “It’s only natural. Only a complete mons- I mean, only a demon would kill unnecessarily. Even now, you have a reason for attacking us, right?”

“Yes. I, alongside two other mercenaries were hired by a man calling himself Hopebringer. Not only did he promise us a vast sum of money for this, we were also made into Fragment Users. That was not the only reason for me, however. What that man said… about his dream, and the state of this world… I empathised with that dream.”

“What was that dream?” Gaster asked.

“A world where everyone can smile.”

Chara stomped forward. “And how the hell would murdering a bunch of teenagers help in bringing that about!?”

“Are you aware of what the Fragments are? And what would happen if they were all brought together?”

“Yes, we know what they are. My Fragment is what let me save everyone in the end. But what’s going to happen if they all unite?”

“The chain of misfortune inflicted on the universe will finally end.’ That’s what Hopebringer said.”

A deafening silence engulfed the area as the group considered Knight Knight’s words. Then, Papyrus spoke up. “Can you call your friends off? And if possible, can we get in touch with Hopebringer? I want to speak to him in person. I want to tell him what he’s doing is wrong! No matter the reason, people shouldn’t kill!”
“…and that’s the gist of what happened in there.” Frisk finished explaining to Sans and Undyne.

Papyrus grinned at Chara. “Thanks for blocking that attack back there, Chara! If it hit me in that position, my entire head would have probably been smashed in.”

“That isn’t something you need to thank me for.” Chara huffed. “There’s no way I wouldn’t help a friend!”

“Wowie, Chara! I didn’t know we were friends.”

Chara raised an eyebrow. “Are you saying that we’re not friends?”

“No, that’s not it. I always thought of you as a friend. I just didn’t think it was reciprocated, that’s all!”

The spirit blushed and tried to hide his face. Meanwhile, Undyne approached Sans with a stony expression. “Oh, hey, Undyne. What’s up?”

Before the skeleton knew it, he was on the ground, the sharp end of Undyne’s spear barely touching the end of his muzzle. What…? W-why…? Sans could see a dark flame burning in her eye.

“Undyne!?” The scene in front of Papyrus was like something out of a nightmare. His best friend was pointing a weapon at his older brother with a terrifying expression on her face. “What are you doing? Wait… it can’t be…”

“I’ve figured it out. Who Hopebringer really is. Sans… you’re the one behind all of this.”

“That’s insane! I wouldn’t try to get my own brother killed!”

“True, you wouldn’t. But, what about the demon who controlled your body all those years ago?”

Sans’ mouth felt dry. “ Demon…? W-why…? I-I… I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

“You should. You were the one who told me how you started to look like a demon when you nearly killed a guy.”

“That was metaphorical! I wasn’t actually possessed!”

“Then explain the bloodlust you felt! You said it yourself: the part of your mind that told you to kill felt completely alien. That’s because it wasn’t a part of your mind to begin with! You’ve been possessed by an evil spirit!”

Sans didn’t know why, but he felt a tightness in his chest. “Alright. Let’s say there is an evil spirit inside me. Where’s your proof?”

“Where were you on the night the Drakes met Hopebringer?”

“I was watching TV. Papyrus and Gaster had gone over to give Frisk the flower they found, so I had nothing else to do.”

“In other words, you were under no one’s supervision.”

“Well… t-that’s…”
“What about when Kid got that jacket? Where were you then?”

“I was selling hotdogs! I even have the money I made from customers.” Sans took out his wallet and flashed a wad of bills.

“Those notes don’t prove anything.”

A growl escaped the skeleton’s throat. “If I wanted you all dead, why would I not do it directly? If I really was the culprit, I would have taken down Papyrus or Frisk in a sneak attack by now! I’m in a position to do that! Besides, we already know Hopebringer’s real name! If that sounds like ‘Sans’ to you, you’ve gotta be deaf!”

“Because like I said, it isn’t you, but the spirit possessing you. Hopebringer, who lives inside you, can only control your body sometimes. He used your body to carry out his work, then gave you false memories.

“Yeah… that would explain why every time we tried to ask about Hopebringer with you, we always got attacked. That would also explain why he wore a cloak in front of the Drakes. And, most of all…!” Out of nowhere, Undyne revealed the jacket in her other hand. “This is proof you’re the culprit! See these holes along the spine and arms!? They’re made to fit your bone spikes. If it wasn’t made for a weird dog like you, then who would it be made for, huh!!?”

Sans opened and closed his mouth, trying to rebuke Undyne, but nothing more than a soft whine escaped. Was he really the one behind all of this…? Was he really responsible for the attempts on his friends’ lives…?

“Wait!” A large, armoured hand grabbed the spear.

Undyne swiftly grabbed the giant’s wrist. “I thought you were on our side because we defeated you. Are you trying to protect your employer?”

Knight Knight shook her head. “I am still your ally. That young man really isn’t Hopebringer. Hopebringer is an independent physical being. I met him and spoke to him in person, and he does not look like your friend over there. He is much bigger.” She escaped from the fishlady’s grip and inspected the jacket. “Indeed… this is the kind of clothing he would wear.” The mercenary took the jacket and offered it to Sans. “Put this on.”

The skeleton, still shaky, put the jacket on. It was almost comically too big for the short-statured young man. Undyne huffed and withdrew her spear. “Guess I was wrong.”

Knight Knight addressed the whole group. “As I stated before, I can get you in contact with Hopebringer. However, whether he wants to talk to you is a different story. I will give you two options: I will be honest about what happened with the warehouse and ask for a diplomatic negotiation, or I could lie about having obtained the Fragment to set up the opportunity for an ambush. Either way, you will finally be able to meet the mastermind in person.”

TO BE CONTINUED

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Knight Knight

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: A
Speed: B
Range: C
Durability: A
Precision: D
Developmental Potential: E

**Abilities/Powers**

**Good Morningstar:** As a Fragment User, Knight Knight’s Good Morningstar has been imbued with the ability to control the amount of light passing through an area. She can create shadow where there logically shouldn’t be, and can create concentrated spheres of shadow through which no light can pass.
The Calm Before the Storm

Monday afternoon

Despite knowing that they should be preparing themselves for their confrontation with Hopebringer, the group was in a pretty upbeat mood. The students and gardener had gathered in the usual place they had settled on to eat their lunch and discuss what they would do once they had cornered the culprit and recovered Gaster’s memories.

As usual, Papyrus was glowing with enthusiasm. “I can’t wait for everything to get back to normal! I’ll finally be able to get back to perfecting the ultimate spaghetti dish! Maybe I could even open a restaurant!”

Frisk felt bile rise in his throat. “Uh… that’s… nice…”

“How about you and Chara?”

The boy glanced at the golden flower in the pot he had brought to school. “We were planning on seeing if we could get Flowey back to normal. I’ve brought him along today to have Asgore check whether I’m taking care of him properly, but I can’t leave him like this forever. After Hopebringer is caught, I was thinking about having Alphys examine him.”

Gaster stared hard at the flower. He was the reason it came back to the Surface in the first place, but aside from a vague feeling that it was important, the amnesiac had no idea about its connection to his memories. He reached out to it and started stroking it, trying to somehow absorb information from the delicate feel of the petals and leaves.

“It’s not a dog, you know…” Papyrus muttered.

Frisk cleared his throat. “But we really shouldn’t get too comfortable. We don’t even know if Hopebringer is linked to Gaster’s amnesia, and we don’t know how easy it will be to talk him down. Let’s deal with the current problem before thinking about what we’ll do afterwards.”

“True…”

Chara popped out and landed on the table. “I’ve got an idea. Why don’t we try to deduce what Hopebringer’s like from the information we already have?”

“Good thinking, Chara! Undyne and my brother already found out his name, but it sounds… kind of strange. Like a pseudonym.”

“Yeah…” The spirit nodded. “It is a pretty dumb name.”

Gaster rapidly blinked. “Huh? It sounds legitimate to me…”

“Well, I guess if you have kids, you might want to have someone else name them. At the rate you’re going, you’ll kill them from embarrassment.”

Gaster went red while Papyrus gently patted him on the back. “Chara, that was mean…”

“I mean, it’s true… Moving on, we know that Knight Knight said she would take some time to get into contact with, as well as organise a meeting with Hopebringer. What does that mean? Gaster, now’s your chance to redeem yourself.”
“That he’s… busy?”

“Exactly! He has a busy, important job in this very city. From our encounter with the mercenaries he hired, we can also assume it’s high-paying. He’s either intelligent or talented enough to have such a profession, which brings us to our next problem.”

“Why he hasn’t attacked us directly?” Frisk offered.

“Yeah. That’s something I can’t figure out. Reasoning about it from his point of view leads us to a contradiction – if he wants the Fragments so badly, why doesn’t he just look for them directly instead of being so roundabout? Mercenaries, volunteers, and brainwashed people have no trouble coming after us, so why won’t he?”

“Maybe he can’t.” Papyrus suggested. “He could be paranoid, or something’s stopping him from physically attacking us.”

Gaster expanded on his friend’s idea. “A possibility could be that he’s hiding behind manipulation and money, but he’s actually too weak to fight himself.”

Chara promptly shot said idea down. “But that makes no sense. He has a Fragment. According to what Alvin said, that should already make him really strong! And once the Fragments unite, he would have already achieved his goal. That means if he took it in a sneak attack, us knowing his identity for a short time wouldn’t matter.”

“This is very confusing… What is his motive?” Hopebringer desperately wanted to end the chain of misfortune on the universe (whatever that meant), to the point where he would kill someone to do so. But he wasn’t putting all his effort into it? No matter how much Papyrus racked his brains, he couldn’t find a logical explanation. Suddenly, Gaster gasped and jumped out of his seat.

“Did you figure something out?” Chara asked.

The amnesiac shook his head. “No, I just remembered something. Can you wait here for a moment?” Gaster sprinted off. After a few minutes, he returned carrying a lavishly decorated box, which he handed to Papyrus. “This is for you.”

“Thank you!” The skeleton opened the box, revealing rows of delicious-looking chocolates.

Chara stared at the sweets with wide eyes. “No way… but that chocolate is…”

Frisk tilted his head. “Is something wrong with them?”

“No, it’s luxury chocolate. It’s imported from overseas. That brand’s well-known to be extremely delicious, but it’s also extremely expensive.”

“Yes,” Gaster confirmed, “I had to spend most of the money I earned working here on buying it. I hope you enjoy them, Papyrus.”

Papyrus picked up one of the chocolates and took a bite out of it. It really was delicious, but… “Why spend all that money? What’s the occasion?”

“It’s to express my gratitude. You saved my life and took care of me for the past month. I can’t thank you enough.”

“You’re speaking like this is the last time we’ll ever see each other. Even once you get your memories back, you’re welcome to come over anytime!”
“Yes. Thank you.”

“Howdy! How are you all?” Asgore arrived on the scene.

“Hey, Asgore! We’re good.”

“I heard there was a flower you wanted me to check?”

Frisk moved Flowey’s pot towards him. “Yeah, here it is.”

Another set of footsteps approached the table the friends were seated at. “Good afternoon, everyone. What are you all?” At the sight of Asgore, Toriel instantly did a 180° turn and left.

The gardener’s smile quickly faded. He inspected the flower in silence before mumbling that everything was fine. The former king then walked off without another word.

Chara, who floating in the air unnoticed by either of the Dreemurrs, clenched his fists and grit his teeth. Fire in his chest burned more and more intensely, until he couldn’t take it anymore!

“AARGH!” The spirit yelled, jumped off the table, and punched a nearby wall. Frisk winced as pain exploded in his own hand.

“What the hell, Chara!?”

“I hate seeing Mum and Dad like this! I just can’t stand watching them avoid each other all the time!”

He raised his other arm to punch the wall, but Gaster grabbed it before it made contact. “I know it’s painful, but it can’t be helped! It was the king’s choice to declare war.”

“You don’t understand!” Chara protested, tears welling up in his eyes. “It’s my fault they separated! You and Papyrus don’t know this, but I’m the reason this whole mess started! I got Asriel killed!”

“You what?!”

“The story to the public went that Asriel was killed by humans in an accident. But the truth was that I got him into that situation! When he absorbed my SOUL, I could control him. I hated those bastards from my village. I tried to murder them, but Asriel resisted and we were both killed in the confusion. Because of my own selfishness, my best friend… no, my own brother died!”

An odd sensation welled up in Gaster. The reason the prince died wasn’t because of humans attacking him in a misunderstanding, but because his adoptive brother pressured him into a situation he cracked under? The amnesiac felt inexplicably dizzy.

Papyrus, in a sharp contrast to Gaster’s reaction, rushed up to the spirit and hugged him.

“You really can be an idiot… Are you seriously comforting someone who’s responsible for murder?”

“But you didn’t personally kill the prince. It was still an accident. And you regret your actions now, don’t you? I’m sure if Asriel were here and he heard your true feelings, he would forgive you. In fact…” Papyrus beamed. “How about we fix the king and queen’s relationship now?”

“Now? How?”

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_Tuesday evening_
Papyrus’ joints were starting to feel sore from waiting. Standing around in the same position for hours on end was more of Sans’ thing. Finally, he could hear a door opening. At once, the skeleton ran around the corner and faked surprise. “Oh, good evening, Toriel! I didn’t think we would bump into each other here!”

The goat lady slowly blinked. “Yes… I did not expect you would still be at the school after dark.”

“I had a lot of work to do! I bet you had a lot of work too! You must have really worked up an appetite!”

“I had a big lunch, and my work was mostly paperwork, so I am not quite-”

“There’s a great French restaurant I know that’s nearby! Here, have its address! I hear there’s a discount for the dishes with snails tonight.” Papyrus practically thrust the brochure at Toriel before running out of her field of vision.

From his hiding spot in the bushes, he could see Toriel look at the menu, shrug, then get in her car and drive off. He looked at his cell phone to see where Toriel was going through the tracking device implanted in the brochure. Yes! She was heading to the restaurant! He brought up the messenger app and sent a message to Frisk that she was coming.

Toriel couldn’t help but gasp in awe as she entered the restaurant. Several colourful flowers were placed on the tables around the room, making it look like something out of a fairy-tale. Her mouth watered as a pleasant aroma entered her nostrils. The food that was the source of the aroma was spread out on the table at the room’s centre. True to what the student had told her, there were snail dishes of all kinds. Plain, pie, casserole… And, sitting at the other end of the table…

The teacher’s mood was immediately killed. Of course, he was there. Just the sight of Asgore’s face made her blood boil. She stormed out, knocking a few pots off the tables as she left.

“Damn it! What went wrong?” Frisk emerged from underneath one of the flower-covered tables.

Gaster sighed as he crawled out from his own hiding spot. “This is such a waste… I spent ages moving the flowers from the school to here.”

“Cheer up, friends!” Papyrus dropped from the ceiling, landing on the floor with a dull thud. “We may not have succeeded with this attempt, but this doesn’t mean we’ve failed!”

“Papyrus, this really isn’t necessary… I’m fine with the way everything is now.” Asgore sighed, a faraway look in his eyes.

“Don’t worry, Asgore! We’ll keep trying.”

“There’s no need for you to waste your time and resources on an old man like me. You don’t have that much money – how much did reserving this restaurant and hiring those chefs cost again?”

“Relax~! It isn’t a matter of money, it’s what makes you happy! But admittedly… it did cost quite a lot to prepare this meal. Asgore, can you finish this all by yourself?”

“I’m not very hungry anymore.” The former king got out of his seat and trod off. Papyrus looked at his friends and the meal.

“Well… How about we all discuss more strategies while enjoying this nice dinner?”
Wednesday

In contrast to the forecast and the previous trend of good weather, the temperature was freezing. It was all blue sky and sun until the freak blizzard came out of nowhere. Even though it was Spring at that time, it may as well have been the middle of Winter.

Of course, this was all part of Papyrus’ plan. Early that morning, he met with Gyftrot and asked him to use his ability to conjure up a snowstorm covering all of Ebott City. During lunchtime, when everyone was stuck indoors, Frisk and Gaster set the plan in motion.

Frisk, who was in the library at the time, tried to leave without his jacket or jumper while in Toriel’s field of vision. Naturally, she stopped him and asked him what he needed. He told her that he had left the books he needs to study at the other end of the school, and she set off in search of them.

Meanwhile, Gaster, who was in the teachers’ lounge with Asgore and some other staff members, stuffed the snack supply into his goo-like body while the others weren’t looking. He then announced that they were out of food, and Asgore volunteered to get some more from the school cafeteria.

From the routes Toriel and Asgore were taking, their paths crossed at the school shed! At that point…! Once they saw each other, the storm intensified! They had no choice but to take shelter in the school shed. And, to top it all off, the snow storm sealed the door, trapping them inside together.

Papyrus cackled as he strolled towards the shed. Being a Fragment User’s ability, they wouldn’t be able to break through the snow with their magic and they wouldn’t be able to escape. Just like in the anime his friends made him watch sometimes, if the two ex-lovers were trapped in a shed together, they had no choice other than to have some precious bonding time. Maybe they even huddled together for warmth!

It had been a few hours, so he had Gyftrot stop the storm. Papyrus climbed up the shed wall and peered in through the window to see how Asgore and Toriel were doing. When he saw what was inside, he couldn’t help but let out a groan.

The gardener and the teacher were sitting cross-legged on opposite ends of the shed, facing away from each other. Toriel was staring into space with her arms folded and Asgore was watching anime on his smartphone. Papyrus couldn’t believe they had been doing that the entire time!

Thursday

This time, it was Chara’s turn. He called over Snowdrake to help him with his strategy. The spirit had been observing the habits of his friends and family, and he had discovered something he could use to his advantage: even though Toriel was doing her best to avoid Asgore, their normal routines meant that she walked down the path between the middle school and high school at the same time Gaster and Asgore tended to the plants along it. With both goats present in the same location, it would be the perfect time to strike!

Chara looked down from the corridor in the middle school building. Toriel was passing through right now. It was time. He opened the window, then nodded to the bird-like monster next to him.

Snowdrake shot his needles at an overhanging tree branch, causing it to fall. Chara knew for a fact that Asgore had good reflexes, so he was in the best position to catch it and protect Toriel. That was what he initially thought. Both boys flinched when they heard the teacher say a word they would never have expected her to say in a million years.
The spirit floated out the window, butterflies forming in his stomach. Toriel had reacted before either of the gardeners, but with a fireball! The fallen tree branch was on fire, and the blaze was quickly spreading to the grass and plants.

Gaster started hyperventilating, glancing at Asgore for guidance. The gardener turned up the pressure on the hose he was holding and turned it towards the flames, Gaster swiftly following suit. The flames were doused, but Toriel was sprayed in the process. “Toriel, are you alright!” Asgore got slapped for his troubles.

**Friday**

Gaster’s plan was something simple, but tried and true. With the promise of Temmie Flakes, he hired the Temmie who attacked Papyrus earlier. He would have Asgore wait at the bottom of the stairs in the middle school building, which was another route Toriel passed through every day.

When Toriel was about to descend, Temmie would trip her up! Asgore was supposed to catch her, but naturally, it wasn’t that simple in the end.

Asgore tapped his foot. He didn’t know why Gaster had called him down here or what he had to wait for, but he felt guilty that it took him away from the plants. The only reason Toriel let him work at her school was that he was unparalleled in gardening. Even the most high-maintenance of plants flourished under his care. Without that talent, he was certain he meant nothing to her.

The gardener shook his head, trying to clear away the dark thoughts that began to invade his mind. A buzz coming from his pocket assisted him. He took out his smartphone. Alphys had messaged him. “Ooh, a new episode!” He began to type up a response that he would come over and see it as soon as possible, but he was interrupted by a high-pitched shriek and a large weight falling on him. His head hit the floor, and everything went black.

When Asgore came to, he was in Golden Flower Academy’s sick bay. The gardener felt like he had been hit by a truck. Sitting in the room were Frisk, Gaster, and Papyrus. They all looked rather uncomfortable, their gazes darting just about everywhere but him. In the bed to his left was Toriel.

For a while, there was an awkward atmosphere in the room. Then, Frisk spoke up. “Asgore… Toriel… I’m really sorry about all of this.”

Asgore tilted his head. Why was Frisk apologising?

The boy didn’t make eye contact with him or Toriel. “I couldn’t stand to see you two like that, so I roped everyone into making fake accidents for you to save Toriel from.” Papyrus and Gaster both opened their mouths to protest, but Frisk squeezed their hands to stop them. “But I understand. It isn’t my place to force your relationship to mend like that. I’m truly sorry for everything.” The young men left the room, leaving Asgore and Toriel alone.

Toriel sighed as she rested in the bed, her body still aching from her fall down the stairs. She suspected the adolescents were doing something, taking into account how many accidents had occurred in a single week, but she wasn’t mad at them. The teacher wondered what they saw in Asgore, with the lengths they went to in order for them to reconcile. And whether those three realised they were wasting their time.

She hated the former king’s guts. His feelings were irrelevant; he murdered six innocent children!
That was what Toriel believed for all those years she spent in exile in the Ruins. Not only did he choose to kill, he only waited until the last possible minute to do so. The monster sat and did nothing, waiting for a child to come by to force his hand rather than seek out humans himself.

But wasn’t that what she did too? The realisation struck her like lightning. She didn’t directly murder anyone, but she let those children walk to their deaths. When the kingdom was at its lowest point after her son’s death, she chose to turn away and ignore everything around her. Asgore gave the people hope, while she shut herself in a bubble. If she stayed, she would surely have been able to make a difference. But she didn’t.

The former queen believed that Asgore was the only one at fault – the villain in the story she made up. But the truth was they were both responsible for what happened. Toriel turned to the bed next to her. “Asgore… I am sorry.”

“Asgore?”

“I have treated you far too coldly this past year. During the time I spent in the Ruins, I was projecting my inability to protect those children onto you. The image of you as a murderer overwrote the previous memories we had together, and eventually, that was all you meant to me.

“I still do not approve of what you did or how you carried out your plan, but… I, too, made many mistakes. Frisk and the others trying their best to get us back together was also carried out rather poorly, but I can see their intention, as well as how much Frisk cares for you. For both Frisk’s sake and my own, I will no longer hold onto my grudge.”

The gardener sprung up, but winced when the pain got to him and lay back down. “Does this mean…?”

“Yes. We can still be friends.”

Frisk shambled into his room and slumped on the bed with a heavy sigh and a throbbing headache. All the plans his friends made to get the Dreemurrs back together had miserably failed. So much for taking care of Asriel’s parents for him… At least he still had the prince-turned-flower.

He closed his eyes, but the sound of someone coughing from nearby prevented him from dozing off. God, did the neighbours really have to be so loud? It sounded like it was coming from inside his own room… Wait a minute, someone really was coughing in his room! Frisk jolted up, wide awake.

The flower on his table had regained its lively appearance. It was trembling and coughing. Instantly, Chara manifested and grabbed the pot. “Asriel!?”

“Chara…? Is that you?”

The spirit embraced his brother, afraid he would disappear again if let go.

When Frisk told Papyrus that Asriel – no, Flowey (Frisk remembered that Asriel told him not to think of the flower as the prince anymore) – was awake, the skeleton raced over to his house at an almost unnatural speed. Mere minutes after the phone call, the student heard rapid knocking at his door.

When he opened the door, he saw that the older student had brought over blankets, baby bottles, and a flask that Frisk was pretty sure what the contents were. “Can I see Flowey? Is he okay?”
“He’s still woozy, but he’s recovered rather quickly. I’m not sure whether I should move him yet, so I think you should come to him.”

Frisk led Papyrus into his room. When Flowey saw the skeleton, he let out an unearthly shriek. He tried to retreat into the soil, but he forgot he was anchored to the pot, so the flower only succeeded in tumbling off the desk.

“Flowey! What’s wrong?”

The flower didn’t even acknowledge Papyrus’ words. He continued his futile escape attempt, dragging his body using vines while blabbering nonsense. “NOOOOO! Go away! Go away! Go away! Anyone but you! Anyone but you! Just… just…” He raised a leaf, summoning multiple white-hot beads. “Stay away from meelee!”

“!?"

The magical bullets soared at the skeleton. Papyrus quickly summoned Bonetrousle and swatted them away. One of the deflected attacks hit Flowey square in the face. The flower screwed his eyes shut and shook his head before looking back up at the two students and spirit. “Urgh… Is that you, Papyrus?”

“Who else but the great Papyrus?”

“Mm… yeah…” Flowey paused and swallowed the lump in his ‘throat’ before assuming his cheery façade. “G-golly! You sure startled me with that new look of yours! You look incredibly spooky!”

The skeletal high schooler raised an eye-ridge. “Spooky? Everyone else says I look cool.”

“Yeah, cool… I-I’m probably just seeing things!” The flower had a hard time making eye contact with his friend. In fact, he had difficulty looking at Papyrus at all without feeling the cold grip of terror. “People see strange things when they’re hungry. In fact, I’m starving!”

“Oh, really? I have a flask of vintage spaghetti right here!”

Chara wanted to spare Flowey from that fate. “Uh, Papyrus… I heard from Asgore that flowers thrive better when they have fresh food.”

“In that case, time to start cooking! May I use your kitchen, Frisk?”

The student glanced at Flowey. Toriel would kill Frisk if Papyrus worked his ‘magic’ on the kitchen, but the flower was clearly uncomfortable around the skeleton and needed some space. “Sure. Take your time; Toriel won’t be back for a while.”

“Yippee!”

“W-wait!” Papyrus was about to make his way to the kitchen, but Flowey stopped him. He managed to calm down, but he was looking at the floor rather than his friend as he spoke. “If I remember, M- I mean, Toriel has a recipe book. Use her spaghetti bolognaise recipe, and follow it to the letter. P- please.”

“You like bolognaise? Wowie, I’m already learning so much more about you!”

Once Papyrus left the room to start cooking, the mysterious, tense atmosphere disappeared. Instantly, Flowey faced Frisk. The flower was drenched in sweat. “How did Papyrus end up like that!?”
“Well… his magic went out of control and he mutated. Nothing other than his appearance has changed.”

Flowey shuddered. “Yeah, right…! Everyone would be so much better off if he wasn’t like that!”

“You were always a crybaby, but I didn’t think you were that scared of sharp things.”

“What he looks like isn’t the problem! The last time I saw horns like that… I-I… I…”

“Flowey!”

“Waaaaaaahhhhh!” For the second time, Flowey’s pot tipped over and spilled soil all over the floor. Papyrus’ eyes bugged out at the mess he caused. “I’m so sorry for startling you! I was going to ask if you wanted cheese with your spaghetti.”

“Y-yes! Please!”

“Okay.” The skeleton disappeared into the kitchen once more.

Flowey was hyperventilating again. “Do you need a paper bag?” Chara asked.

“I-I’m good…”

Frisk gathered the soil back together to the best of his ability, then moved Flowey back into the pot. The flower looked troubled. “Frisk, Chara, I have a confession to make… Remember how I used to have the power to Save and Reset?”

“Yeah?”

“I abused that power. With the power of Determination, I had the power to freely change fate. Everyone else’s behaviour, their routines, their entire lives… they were set. They were puppets moving in response to the invisible strings called destiny.

“I told you this already, but as a flower, I couldn’t– well, I still can’t feel any empathy. I wanted to experience love and kindness, so I was willing to do anything. Anything. When helping people with their problems wasn’t enough, I started to hurt them instead.

“I lost sight of my original goal and I just wanted to see how people would react to what I did. Rather than their own individuals, I just saw everyone as toys for my own amusement. Then… that happened.”

“That?”

“I found that Papyrus was exceedingly easy to control if I pushed the right buttons, but when I got careless with him, h-he… Aah…” Flowey couldn’t finish his sentence, shuddering and curling in on himself. Frisk wondered what horrible memory he was recalling.

“But that doesn’t add up. Papyrus told me himself: he’s technically weaker in this state. He can’t even summon a single bone anymore.”

“Really…? That’s a relief.”

Papyrus’ voice echoed from the kitchen. “Everyone! Dinner’s ready!”

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Frisk felt nauseous looking at the four plates of spaghetti laid on the dinner table. Oh, no, not again! “I didn’t expect you to make this much. I thought you were only cooking for Flowey?”

“Well, I wouldn’t want to leave you and Chara out!”

Chara looked at his serving as if it was poison. “You know, I’m still just a spirit attached to Frisk. If I ate, it would be the equivalent of Frisk eating two plates of spaghetti.”

“Wowie, Frisk! Lucky you! You get double the fun! You ate super-fast last time, so I’m sure you’ll get to enjoy it much more tonight!”

Chara sighed and took a bite. When the meal entered his mouth, he couldn’t believe his tastebuds. He blinked several times, and took another bite. Then another. And yet another. He pinched himself to check whether he was dreaming.

“Is everything alright? You look surprised!”

“No, I’m fine. It’s just, the spaghetti, it actually tastes—” Frisk and Flowey shot glares at him. “even better than expected!”

“Wonderful! I must be improving!”

Flowey leaned towards Chara, bringing his voice down to a whisper. “The thing with Papyrus isn’t that he’s a bad cook, it’s that he tries to do too much. And Undyne taught him. If he follows the recipe exactly, he can actually produce food edible to normal people.”

“What are you two whispering about?”

“I’m telling Chara how cool you are!”

“Aww, thanks, Flowey!”

Frisk furrowed his eyebrows. “Hey, come to think of it, how come you can see Chara?”

Flowey’s smile disappeared. His eyes wandered around the room. “I don’t know… I’m surprised Chara was with you the whole time. I guess his spirit being with you back then somehow made you look like him to me.” As he processed this new information, the flower suddenly started trembling. “Wait, if you were with him this whole time, then—”

The spirit’s eyes narrowed. “Yeah. What was the whole ‘me not being the greatest person’ spiel about again?”

Flowey’s face went red. He stuttered, trying to come up with a response. Chara got out of his seat and approached him, raising a hand. The flower braced himself, expecting to be hit, but Chara gently pat him on the head.

“It’s fine, you were right. I’ve been a big douche. I’m sorry for getting you mixed up in my problems back then.”

Papyrus observed the interaction. “Flowey, are you and Chara friends?”

“Y-yeah,” the flower uneasily answered, still having a hard time looking at the mutated skeleton. “What about it?”

“I didn’t know you knew such an important person!”
“I’ve… been around for a long time.”

“In that case, does the name Hopebringer mean anything to you?”

“No, it doesn’t ring a bell.”

“I see… How about the name Gaster?”

The flower shook his head.

“That’s weird… Gaster was the one who decided to take you to the surface. I’ll introduce you to him later.”

Chara scratched his head. “Speaking of which, when Papyrus and Gaster found you, you were completely unconscious. What the hell happened down there?”

Flowey screwed his eyes shut. “Actually… I can’t remember anything at all. Shortly after seeing you and Frisk off, everything’s one big blank. I must have been out the entire time. But just before I lost consciousness, there is one thing I can remember.”

“And what is that?”

“A skeletal hand.”

TO BE CONTINUED
Saturday

Papyrus was awoken by the sound of his phone ringing. Still a little groggy, the skeleton rolled out of bed and answered.

“Hello?”

“Hopebringer’s ready to meet you.”

“He agreed? Wowie, how convenient!”

The choice Papyrus made was to just outright talk to Hopebringer with everyone. He didn’t want to try to ambush him like Knight Knight suggested, because unnecessary violence would only lead to distrust and hatred. He would fight if necessary, but he wanted to avoid it as much as possible.

Knight Knight continued, “He also has a message for you. It is as follows: ‘I understand how you feel. Bring everyone involved to the restaurant The Grand Chef tonight. There, I, Wingdings, will hear you out in person.’”

“‘Wingdings’… Is that his real name? Why would he want to reveal it to us now?”

“I suppose his reasons are irrelevant. Your goal is to stop the Fragment User attacks, correct?”

“Yes, you’re right! I’ll pass the message on to everyone else. Thank you so much for your assistance.”

Wingdings was having an unpleasant experience, to say the least. His car was being serviced, so he was taking public transport back from his job. It wasn’t the train itself that was the problem, but the fact that the train passed by a neighbourhood of unruly humans.

Two particularly loud students – a hulking man who was dressed like a teenager, yet looked far too old to be in high school, and a slender lady who looked like a supermodel had walked straight off a magazine cover – had entered and were causing a ruckus. The man was exploiting his superior strength, storming around the train carriage and demanding the other commuters for their money. The haughty woman clung to her boyfriend’s arm, laughing and insulting those they tormented.

The troublemakers were getting closer to his seat. Wingdings heard the interaction between the man and another passenger behind him. “$50. Cough it up, nerd.”

Wingdings heard a soft, high-pitched voice – the kind belonging to a young boy – behind him whimpering. A vein popped in the ruffian’s head, and his eyes went bloodshot as he screamed. “Are you deaf, you little shit!? $50! Now!”

“But… I don’t have that much money…”

The commotion was enough to make several onlookers (Wingdings included) turn their heads. The heavily-muscled teenager, uncaring of the attention he was attracting, grabbed the small boy and started digging through his pockets. His arms pulled back out, revealing a wallet, which he then shoved in his own pocket. “I’ll settle for this now. But you better come back with the rest next time, or else you’ll be sorry!”
“Yeah! Don’t mess with Chad!” The girl clinging to him stuck her tongue out.

Wingdings winced at all of this. He wanted to help, but he didn’t want to attract attention as he was now, so he couldn’t do anything.

The now irate student pocketed the money and stormed towards Wingdings’ seat. Wingdings sighed and reached for his wallet, but the train reached his stop, allowing him to make a dash for the exit. Just as he stepped outside the train, he was shoved from behind! His face hit the ground and his bag went skidding across the floor.

“Don’t try to run away, freak! We get off at this stop too!” Chad stomped over to the bag and opened it, then snatched up one of his papers. “What’s all this nerdy shit?”

He passed it to the girl, who burst into laughter. “‘Fragment Users’? ‘Ultimate weapon’? Like, how totally lame! What are you, like, five years old?”

The couple had a loud, long laugh, before Chad kicked the bag. The papers within scattered across the ground. Wingdings silently crawled on the ground and tried to gather them back together. The girl spat on him and walked off with her boyfriend cackling. “What a total weakling! He didn’t even try to defend himself!”

The couple arrived at Chad’s house, still guffawing at how easily they got the passengers to give up their cash. “I, like, still can’t believe how weak and nerdy those losers on the train were!”

“Yeah! Soon, we’ll have enough cash to buy you that heart necklace you always wanted.”

“Oh, Chad, you’re, like, so romantic~! I’m always cheering for you in your games.”

“ Anything for my cute Jennifer.” The jock took his girlfriend in his arms and leaned in for a kiss, but a loud bang interrupted them. When the couple looked up, they saw that freak from the train station. He had rudely smashed the door down. “You followed us back!? Fuck off!”

The monster silently advanced on Chad. With one swift motion, the jock’s head was smashed in.

His girlfriend screamed and shut her eyes. When she remembered she was also in danger, she reopened her eyes and looked up at her assailant, expecting the ghastly sight of the entire room splattered in blood. To her confusion, the room was spotless. Her boyfriend was gone. The only people in the room were her and the strange man. Was I, like, just seeing things…? Before she could think any more, the man began to speak.

“Good evening. My name is Wingdings. May I ask yours?”

“W-who are you? W-where did my boyfriend go…”

Wingdings’ eyes blazed with rage and a purplish-black smoke spewed from his maw. “Don’t answer a question with a question! Didn’t they teach you to answer questions properly in school!?"

“J-Jennifer! My name is Jennifer!”

“Jennifer, hmm? Not a bad name. Now, Jennifer… I’d like to ask a favour of you.” The monster opened his briefcase. “Look at how messy and disorganised my notes have become. This is all because you and your boyfriend shoved me over at the station. Take responsibility and clean them up.” He arched a brow when he saw the cheerleader’s expression. “Have you… never organised notes before? There’s a first time for everything. It’s very easy – they’re colour-coded, see?”
Jennifer’s arms wouldn’t stop shaking. Tears poured from her eyes as she sorted the notes. “P-please… please don’t hurt me… please, bring my boyfriend back…”

“You want me to bring him back? How could I? I’m nothing more than a weakling, am I not? I couldn’t possibly bring him back. But I do have something of his to give you. You wanted a heart necklace, correct?” The man revealed…

“Ah! A-ah… N-no…!” Jennifer dry-heaved over and over as Wingdings gently wrapped Chad’s guts and heart around her neck.

“This is a lesson in empathy, Jennifer. Those people you and your boyfriend threatened… do you even know how they felt? The fear and powerlessness they experienced? It’s not very pleasant being on the receiving end, is it?” The cheerleader tried to scream for help, but the guts hanging around her neck tightened. “This is karmic justice. All the pain you two inflicted. It’s all coming back at once.”

Finally, Jennifer went limp. Wingdings picked the body up by the hair and looked directly at its eyes. “Rest assured, once I’ve finished everything, I’ll return all the money you stole.”

He let the corpse drop to the ground. “What a pain…” What a mess he had made. But it didn’t really matter. With the abilities granted to him from the Fragments he gathered, he could easily dispose of all evidence.

The mastermind behind the Fragment Users of Ebott City broke into a jog as he left the house, making his way towards The Grand Chef. It was already night-time. It would be impolite to keep the others waiting.

All the Fragment Users – people who could fight if necessary – headed towards the restaurant Wingdings arranged for them to meet at. Alphys, who gave Undyne a good luck kiss and Sans a good luck high-five, stayed behind with Flowey, claiming that she wouldn’t be able to contribute because she wasn’t a Fragment User.

On the bus ride to the restaurant, Papyrus noticed Gaster seemed a lot more nervous than usual. He was sweating, fidgeting, looking around… Something was clearly wrong. “Is everything okay, Gaster?”

“Don’t you feel it?”

“Feel what?”

Gaster hugged his shoulders. “The atmosphere feels… wrong. It’s like there’s a suffocating presence all around us.”

Papyrus tuned his sixth sense to the atmosphere around him, but didn’t feel anything like what his friend described. Maybe Gaster was just nervous…? He smiled at Gaster. “Don’t worry! Even if something goes wrong – which it won’t – everyone’s here. We’ll be safe.”

Knight Knight pressed the stop button. “We’re getting off here.”

The group disembarked the bus and walked towards the restaurant. Papyrus could tell from the size and the decoration of the building’s exterior that it was a fine dining restaurant. The mercenary opened the door and talked to the Final Froggit at the reception. After a few minutes, she beckoned for the group to follow her.

Papyrus felt a sense of déjà vu when he entered The Grand Chef. Apart from the group, the entire
restaurant was empty. An arrangement of delicious-looking food was laid out on a large table in the centre of the room. Chara’s theory was correct – Wingdings was rich.

Sans and Undyne approached the table and pulled out the chairs, checking for any hidden traps or switches. After they were certain that nothing nasty was hidden, they hesitantly sat down. They turned to the others and nodded.

Papyrus, Frisk, Gaster, and Knight Knight took their seats at the table. The smell of the food made everyone’s collective stomachs (even those who didn’t have stomachs!) grumble, but they didn’t dare touch it. A huge feast just lying there, organised by the person who had been trying to kill them, had to be poisoned, or worse.

Papyrus heard the sound of a door opening from behind Gaster. The amnesiac also looked at the source of the noise, but when he did, his entire body seized up! The little colour in his face faded and he collapsed onto the table. Undyne, who was sitting opposite the two skeletons, jumped over the table and dashed towards whatever Gaster saw. Sans, Frisk, and Knight Knight also made their way towards the presumed danger.

A shadowy figure was standing outside the back entrance of the restaurant. Even though the light from the restaurant should have illuminated their features, no one could see anything other than a dark aura swirling around a vaguely humanoid shape. The shape motioned, and another figure appeared.

Knight Knight gasped. “Whimsalot!??” Her fellow mercenary was standing beside her employer. But there was something strange about him – his mask was gone, revealing the almost zombie-like expression he was wearing. His eyes were glazed over, and his body language was stiff, like a stereotypical robot’s. Wingdings pointed at the group, and Whimsalot exploded into butterflies!

“Look out!” Knight Knight shoved Papyrus and Gaster out of the way of the swarm. She was quickly engulfed by the storm of insects. Papyrus watched in horror as blood poured out from beneath the mercenary’s armour.

How…? Why…!? Everything slowed down for the skeleton. In this period of distorted time, Papyrus could see. Those were no ordinary butterflies! Not only were they bigger than regular butterflies, their bodies and wings were coated in several small mouths filled with razor-sharp teeth! One was enough to do a great deal of harm, and a whole swarm of them would be a nightmare!

The shadowy figure turned and began to retreat as the butterflies began to approach the group. “No, you don’t!” Papyrus had Bonetrousle grab Frisk and Sans, then threw them out the door past the butterflies. The two young men landed on their feet safely outside the restaurant. “You two go after Wingdings! We’ll catch up to you after dealing with this guy!” They nodded and disappeared from his field of vision.

The damage to Knight Knight’s body couldn’t be seen, but it had to be severe. Papyrus ran to help the mercenary, but he ran into a wall he could have sworn wasn’t there a moment ago. Wasn’t there a door on the wall he was facing? And why was he in mid-air? The skeleton yelped as he slid down to the floor.

He barely had enough time to react before hazards came down on him from above! The table, chairs, and the plates of food all hurtled towards him! “NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

Bonetrousle smashed them away easily, but he had to halt his barrage when two bodies joined the rain.

Papyrus caught Gaster and Knight Knight, then set them down on the ground before looking around.
What happened to the room? He didn’t remember it ever being this… vertical. The room had been rotated 90°, like the entire restaurant was a box a giant had picked up and turned. No, that wasn’t it… the gravity of the room itself had changed!

Was this the work of another enemy Fragment User!? Papyrus looked up, and as if answering his question, he saw the Final Froggit from reception attached to what was now the ceiling. He had the same glazed-over look in his eyes that Whimsalot had.

The back door of the restaurant was now where the ceiling was. The cloud of butterflies surged towards the opening. They were going after Sans and Frisk! Papyrus scanned the area for anything he could use, but to no avail. A spear from his left flew up at the ceiling, shutting the door and preventing the butterflies from escaping. “Undyne!”

The fish lady rose to her feet, wrinkling her nose. “Tch… Figures that this whole thing was a trap. We should’ve ambushed him.” She looked up at the butterflies about to rain down on them. “Here they come.”

The cloud swarmed Papyrus and Undyne! “NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!” Bonetrousle lashed out with its furious attack, but Papyrus gasped when he realised not a single butterfly had been hit! The swarm dispersed into smaller groups and rushed directly at him!

“Papyrus!” Undyne readied her spear to help him, but she was quickly swarmed by a cluster of butterflies herself. She screeched as the nightmarish creatures sank their fangs into her. Enduring the pain, she aimed her weapon at herself. “Blasting Strike!” The insects simultaneously moved away as the technique activated. The only one who was damaged by the attack was Undyne!

The butterflies swarmed back to Undyne, but smashed into a barrier. “Diverging Slash!” She had blocked the creatures’ attack with her shield. Once the shield faded, she prepared another Blasting Strike, but she flinched and dropped her spear when gravity shifted again! This time, she and Papyrus were dragged towards what used to be the ceiling of the restaurant. The butterflies followed them, like moths around a flame!

Amidst the relentless assault of the butterflies, Papyrus saw Gaster’s unconscious body falling with the shift in gravity. “No! Gaster!” Bonetrousle rushed forward and grabbed onto Papyrus’ friend, shielding him as they hit the ground.

No sooner had Papyrus and Undyne come into contact with the new floor did the gravity change again! The adjacent wall became the new floor, and the two fell towards it. The very next moment, gravity shifted once more and they fell towards the next wall. If a stationary outsider were to look at the scene, they would see the two friends being hurled around the room in a clockwise motion, like a morbid amusement park ride!

Despite becoming more and more injured from both the butterflies eating at him and being tossed around, Papyrus had to admire the enemy mercenaries’ strategy. It was an amazingly cheap move, but it was effective in keeping them both completely unable to fight back – like stunlock in a videogame!

The skeleton glanced at the unconscious Knight Knight. From what he could see (the constant rotation of the room made it hard to look around) she was ignored by the butterflies, but being thrown around like a ragdoll made her even worse for wear – now, blood splatters coated the walls of the venue.

Papyrus grit his teeth. If he couldn’t finish this quickly, Knight Knight would…! “Bonetrousle!” The Blaster-headed guardian spirit tossed Gaster to its master, then tried to swing its fists at the creatures
surrounding it. Undyne followed suit and swung her spear around at the butterflies. However, the
swarm continued to dodge their attacks. Neither Papyrus nor Undyne hit a single target.

How could they even do that!? It was just like when Undyne fought Madjick – the butterflies
appeared to be moving precisely, as if manually controlled. But that couldn’t be correct at all!
Whimsalot physically turned into the swarm of insects, so he couldn’t control them like tools or
weapons.

At that point, Undyne summoned a spear and stabbed it into the wall. Papyrus’ eyes widened. Ah! Of
course! He wanted to kick himself for not realising it sooner. If they had something solid to hold
onto, no matter what Final Froggit did to change gravity, he wouldn’t be able to disorient them!
Papyrus had Bonetrousle draw back its fist, but before he could punch a hole in the wall, he tumbled
back down to the ground.

Final Froggit must have noticed their strategy, because the gravity within the restaurant quickly
returned to its original state. Everything was back to normal. Except for the fact that it looked like the
room had been hit by a hurricane. The butterflies began to coalesce in the centre of the room.

“They’re preparing one big attack to take us out, huh?” Undyne was still hanging from the spear she
stuck in the wall. She summoned another copy of her signature weapon and threw it at the swarm. It
split into five, each cluster flying in a different direction to avoid the attack.

Papyrus squinted, observing the enemy’s movement carefully. Then, it hit him! Within each of theive smaller swarms of insects, one of them trailed ahead of the others. Those had to be the squad
leaders! The look on Undyne’s face told him that she had figured out too. She threw a spear his way
and pointed at the butterflies, which were reforming into one big swarm. The skeleton nodded in
understanding.

Undyne climbed onto the spear stuck in the wall, balancing on it with both feet. She then leaped right
at the centre of the swarm! “Blasting Strike!” The clusters separated. Papyrus supposed that was his
cue. Bonetrousle hurled the spear at one of the leader butterflies. The weapon almost touched it
before abruptly changing direction to hit the wall. Papyrus, Undyne, and Gaster slid in the same
direction. Gravity had shifted again!

Papyrus grunted, rapidly shaking his head before looking up. Final Froggit had gripped onto what
used to be the ceiling (now it was the wall) like a fly or spider. If they didn’t get rid of him first, they
wouldn’t be able to touch Whimsalot! The skeleton gently placed Gaster down, then grasped
Undyne’s hand, turning both her SOUL and his own blue. “Undyne! We’re going for Final Froggit!
Are you ready?”

(Of course!)

With that, the two jumped. The butterflies poured down on them like a torrent of death, but in the
interest of self-preservation, they had to part. If they didn’t, they would have been crushed by
Bonetrousle’s fists or impaled on Undyne’s spear. They reached Final Froggit, who was clinging to
the wall. Undyne threw a spear, but before it could touch Final Froggit’s body, it curved away! The
fish lady and skeleton also tumbled in the new direction of gravity.

The duo hit the ground hard, their spirits crushed. The combination of the enemy’s abilities was just
too perfect – Whimsalot could easily overwhelm them with numbers, whereas Final Froggit kept
them stunned and couldn’t be hit himself. Together, it felt like the mercenaries were impossible to
defeat!

Papyrus stood back up, but noticed the floor beneath his paw-like feet felt different than usual – it
didn’t have the texture of the walls or carpet. He looked down, and realised he was standing on the restaurant’s front door. Looking through it, he could see that the gravity changes inside the room didn’t affect outside. If they got out, they could escape from the mercenaries and go after Wingdings! “Undyne! We can escape through here!”

He opened the door, but Whimsalot was quick to react. The butterflies clustered together and surged at Papyrus! The skeleton rolled out of the way and slammed the door shut using his tail. Even though only a few of the butterflies were stuck outside, many of the butterflies in the room simply stopped moving and fell to the ground.

Now the tables had turned! With most of the squad leaders taken down, there weren’t enough butterflies left to continue fighting. The final squad leader, the piece of Whimsalot’s consciousness inside it panicking, turned and fled towards the back exit of the restaurant. Final Froggit helped by changing the gravity towards the exit’s direction.

Unfortunately for them, that also sent Papyrus and Undyne in that direction. With the skeleton’s Blue Attack increasing their rate of descent, they ended up quite literally breathing down the mercenaries’ backs.

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

“NGAHHHHHHH!!”

Both Whimsalot’s remaining butterflies and Final Froggit were caught in the double barrage between the two friends! The mercenaries were instantly put out of commission, and gravity soon returned to normal.

Upon confirming the mercenaries had been defeated, Papyrus rushed towards his unconscious friends. Knight Knight had sustained the most damage. Her armour was dyed with blood, and her breathing had become shallow. The skeleton then heard a familiar groan. Gaster, shivering as if suffering from the cold, had regained consciousness. “Gaster! Are you alright? How many fingers am I holding up?”

The amnesiac swayed to and fro, leaning against the wall for support. There seemed to be a delay before Papyrus’ words registered, but once they did, his eyes regained their brightness. He lightly tapped the side of his head a few times before answering. “S-sixteen…?”

“Good enough. We’re going after Sans and Frisk. Who knows what perils they’re facing right now?”

The trio took off. Papyrus looked back at the citizens gathering around the prone forms of Knight Knight, Final Froggit, and the recently-reformed Whimsalot. He didn’t want to leave them there, but he trusted that the public would take care of them. He and his friends had an evil mastermind to confront!

TO BE CONTINUED

Final Froggit – Status: Every bone in his body broken by Papyrus’ and Undyne’s combined attack. Retired!

Whimsalot – Status: Butterflies separated and beaten. Upon the insects gathering back together, the damage taken by some of them transferred directly to Whimsalot. He passed out instantly. Retired!

Knight Knight – Status: Discovered heavily injured. Taken to hospital.
Final Froggit

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: None

Speed: C

Range: Any enclosed space

Durability: D

Precision: E

Developmental Potential: C

**Abilities/Powers**

**Gravity Shift:** Final Froggit can change the direction of gravity within any enclosed area. Even though it violates the laws of physics relating to gravity, this ability causes all objects within the area to ‘fall’ in a set direction.

Whimsalot

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: C

Speed: A

Range: A

Durability: E

Precision: C

Developmental Potential: C

**Abilities/Powers**

**Butterfly Dance:** Whimsalot can split himself into many butterflies. These butterflies are unlike any known type on the planet – they are larger than the average butterfly, and possess razor sharp teeth that can eat through even metal.

Because Whimsalot cannot split his singular consciousness into so many different bodies, he can designate up to five ‘squad leaders’ which house his actual consciousness while the other creatures in the swarm can only follow basic commands and cease functioning if their squad leader is defeated or separated.
Frisk and Sans pursued Wingdings through the city! By now, they had left Ebott City’s centre and were approaching the outskirts of the city. Wingdings was inhumanly fast and showed no signs of tiring, whereas fatigue had already begun to set in for the skeleton and human. If this were an ordinary situation, they would have long since stopped and gasped for breath. However, their determination to corner the mastermind gave them the boost to keep going!

The surroundings melted away, the two friends’ gazes focused on the shadowy figure they were pursuing. Finally, Wingdings halted. His back remained turned. “This place is far away from the city centre. One could scream at the top of their lungs, and few would hear.” True to his words, the place the mastermind had led them to was an empty field. Looking around, no one would have been able to tell that they were even remotely close to the city.

The shadowy aura around the figure vanished. The man carrying the title Hopebringer turned and faced the two, giving them a clear view of his face for the first time. Frisk and Sans were utterly shocked.

“What is this…? Why do you look like me!?”

Wingdings had a striking resemblance to the mutated features the skeleton brothers possessed. Deadly-looking horns, vicious claws, and a muzzle full of sharp teeth all added up to a chilling appearance. He was even more menacing than Sans' current form. He wasn’t as large as Knight Knight or Asgore, but he was tall enough to tower over Frisk and Sans. While Sans’ teeth and claws could be used as improvised weapons, Wingdings’ gave off the impression that they far outclassed melee weapons entirely.

Sans was especially taken aback. Something about Wingdings just seemed… wrong. Just from looking at the dragon skeleton, he had trouble breathing, and his mind froze over. Why did he feel so frightened? What was with this suffocating atmosphere…? “What the hell are you!?”

“You should already know, Sans.” Wingdings didn’t seem interested in Sans at all. His eyes remained focused on Frisk. Sensing the danger, the boy instinctively grabbed onto the Worn Dagger he brought along. “My name is Wingdings. Indeed, I am the one behind the Fragment Users you have been fighting up until this point. I intended for them to quietly retrieve the Fragment you possess in order for me to continue my work uninterrupted, but it seems I have no choice but to fight you myself.”

A dark aura flared up around him. As fast as a cheetah, he charged at Frisk! But before he reached the boy, a bone slammed into his side. Frisk rolled out of the way while Sans leaped into the air and struck from above. “Ripple Kick!”

He landed a direct hit on Wingdings’ head, but to the skeleton, it felt like he kicked a solid statue. The demonic dragon skeleton didn’t even flinch from the attack – if anything, Sans’ leg was what was damaged. Sans tried to jump away, but he was too late! Wingdings grabbed onto the shorter skeleton and flung him away.

Wingdings then ran at Frisk, brandishing his sword-like claws. Frisk chose that time to reveal his own weapon! “Take this!” Before the culprit could strike, the middle school student slashed at him. Wingdings staggered back in surprise, clutching his chest. With the intent behind the human’s attack, it would have inflicted at least some damage on a monster! Frisk pointed his weapon at the dragon skeleton. “I don’t want to fight you, but what you’re doing is hurting both me and my friends! Stop
Wingdings took his hand off his chest, revealing that aside from his shirt being torn, the bone beneath was completely undamaged. Frisk felt goosebumps as he remembered – Fragment Users were no longer ordinary monsters. On someone like Wingdings, the bearer of a Fragment, that attack was even less significant than a single hair being plucked out of a human’s head.

The mastermind leaped at Frisk, slashing at him with his blade-like claws. Frisk barely managed to dodge, his own shirt getting scraped by the attack. “Chara!” The spirit appeared. Wingdings paused, gazing at him with astonishment. “Are there any weak points on this guy!? Any places that I can hit to take him down easily?”

The dread that Frisk’s partner radiated already told him without words, but what he said further cemented the hopelessness. “I don’t believe it… There isn’t a single one!” Every person had at least one weak point that could be exploited, such as the throat or the eyes. But whether through training or another method, Wingdings had no such weakness!

Getting over the shock of seeing the deceased human appear, the dragon skeleton began to close the gap between himself and Frisk, but another bone came his way! When it hit him, he flinched. Not because of surprise, but because it genuinely did damage. Even if the damage done was still miniscule, could the Spin be key in defeating this monster?

Wingdings glared daggers at the smaller skeleton. “Sans! Stay out of this!” He practically flew at him, putting his entire body weight into a punch, but gasped when his arm turned around and hit him in the face. An audible crack sounded, and Wingdings stumbled back, reeling from the force of his own attack! Sans had taken out a bone infused with the Spin and held it up like a shield, which Wingdings hit.

A small trickle of blood leaked from Wingdings’ nasal hole. He produced a handkerchief from his pocket and held it over his muzzle. “How troublesome… I didn’t expect I would have to use my Special Attack… I suppose this leaves me no choice!” He sprinted towards Frisk, his free arm outstretched. Sans prepared a Spin-infused bone to block Wingdings, but before he could throw, the dragon skeleton threw his dirty handkerchief at him!

“Wha- gross!” The bloodstained handkerchief landed over Sans’ face and blocked his vision! With the few seconds he bought, Wingdings executed his Special Attack. The ghastly aura around him appeared to grow. With his claws, he slashed through the air, and the world itself seemed to tear like paper. And through the gap Wingdings tore, Frisk fell.

“No! Frisk!” Sans dashed towards Frisk and grabbed onto his hand. The boy was being tugged away by a powerful force into the void.

Wingdings stood by the portal, his arms folded. “Few can sense this, but very close to this plane of existence lies another dimension called the Darkness. That place could be considered to be the origin of the Fragments. My ability is to pierce the boundary between the two dimensions.

“Even though it is the source of the world’s salvation, the Darkness is uninhabitable. If regular people were to fall in…”

Sans’ strength paled in comparison to the pull. His upper body entered the rift, and instantly, his senses were assaulted! His body burned. Hellish screeches pierced his hearing, and an acrid smell invaded his nasal cavity.

The only thing even mildly bearable in that place was its appearance – aside from the hole Frisk and
Sans fell through, the entire world was an inky black, completely engulfed in darkness. From the source of light that their entrance granted, Sans could see Frisk’s features distorted by sheer agony. He was gradually being eroded by the void around him, like an effervescent tablet in water!

His friend’s expression of pain only gave Sans more determination to pull him out. But no matter how hard he pulled, or how much he had the Ripple enhance himself, Frisk just wouldn’t budge! A growl escaped Sans’ maw. Was the belief he used to have for all those years – that doing nothing was the best option, because nothing would change – being proven right? What a load of crap! He refused to let his friend be killed by this monster! The power he kept locked up… he needed it now, more than ever!

A terrifying roar, loud enough to drown out even the unearthly screeches of the Darkness, echoed out. By just a bit, the badge affixed to Sans’ SOUL cracked! That was all he needed. He felt the power coursing through his bones as he ripped Frisk out of the Darkness and back into their own reality, the tear disappearing as the two emerged. The triumph swelling in Sans’ chest was cut short by Wingdings picking him up by the back of his collar and smashing him into the ground with a sickening crunch.

“What a surprise…” Wingdings’ eyes bored into Frisk. “The Darkness should have instantly consumed you once your entire body fell in, but you’re only slightly eroded. That must be because of your Fragment.”

Frisk looked at Sans with concern. He wasn’t moving. “The mercenaries I brainwashed are taking care of your other allies as we speak. The last thing standing in between me and my dream… is you.”

The dragon skeleton resumed his attack on the boy. His hand-to-hand fighting style was slightly crude and unprofessional, but the sheer brute strength, speed, and durability he possessed made him a dangerous foe. A direct hit – whether from a slash or a punch – would mean the end.

Chara had manifested and analysed Wingdings’ movements, quickly feeding Frisk information on his cell phone to dodge the dragon skeleton’s attacks. The information on the screen had reduced to single words – which direction to dodge in. That was all Frisk needed, because Wingdings attacked the millisecond after! Frisk was just barely avoiding the attacks, and it was exhausting to do so. The enemy, on the other hand, showed no signs of tiring.

“What are you doing this!? Why is uniting the Fragments so important to you?”

“You wouldn’t understand.”

“I could try! How else did the Underground go empty?”

The mastermind sighed. “You wouldn’t understand precisely because of that. A human, especially someone like you, could never understand how I feel. Frisk, saviour of the Underground. Frisk, the boy loved by all monsters.” He lunged forward, his hands going for Frisk’s head.

“Ah!” Having been distracted by talking, he didn’t see the attack coming until it was too late to dodge. However, the boy still had another trick up his sleeve! Wingdings growled when his claws smashed into the forcefield formed by Frisk’s Hope.

Frisk swiftly jumped away, but when his legs touched the ground, they buckled. He gasped in surprise as he fell onto his backside, dropping his weapon in the process. He was completely out of energy! Frisk used up so much energy chasing and fighting Wingdings, and utilising a Determination-based ability increased the drain on his stamina. Now, he didn’t even have the
Looking up, he saw the cold face of death approach him. Frisk tried to back away by dragging his body with his arms, but his body felt ten times heavier than it should. He couldn’t move. With a fluid movement of his arm, Wingdings punched through Frisk. The boy didn’t even feel the pain.

TO BE CONTINUED
The Man Who Speaks in Hands (3)

Frisk was completely motionless. Blood poured from the wound Wingdings punched in his chest. The battle was over. Wingdings brought Frisk’s SOUL out. The Fragment he sought had to be there. With his claws, he clenched the object and focused. A pitch-black crystal emerged from the heart. “I’ve found it. Now, this universe will finally be-”

FWOOSH!

“Gah!” The Fragment exploded with energy! A red aura enveloped the Fragment, the SOUL, and Frisk himself. Even Frisk’s blood began to glow! The sheer force pushed Wingdings back! He had to squint to see what was happening to the human. “The Fragment… It’s going wild!!?”

Frisk had risen to his feet. An invisible wind swept through his hair, spiking it up. He opened his eyes, revealing a sight that terrified even Wingdings. His iris was glowing a bright red, and his pupil had become slitted, like a reptile’s.

As though he instantaneously warped, Frisk appeared directly in front of Wingdings! With an inhuman roar that could hardly be believed to have come from a thirteen-year-old, the boy threw a flurry of punches! “OOOORAAAAA!!!”

Wingdings was launched like a cannonball and soared through the air! “How could this happen…? How could this boy’s Fragment possibly be so powerful…!” He stabbed his tail into the ground to halt himself, then steadied his body and faced Frisk.

The dagger Frisk dropped floated up and returned to his hand. It glowed and extended, transforming into an energy sword. The boy’s eyes were filled with determination. The determination to defeat the enemy before him.

Faster than the naked eye could see, Frisk closed the distance between himself and Wingdings and attacked him with his new weapon. Wingdings countered with his claws. Now, their strengths were evenly matched. An ordinary human would only be able to see a vague blur of action in the field. None of the fighters’ attacks were actually hitting each other – in the intense close combat between the two, Frisk’s sword slashes and Wingdings’ strikes perfectly matched! Would the battle’s outcome be a stalemate?

Frisk growled and jumped back. Wingdings didn’t know why the boy just did that, because it left him wide open to attack! The dragon skeleton swiped at the boy, but a dark shape caught his arm in a firm grip. “Ngh… you!?”

Chara had transformed, too. Black liquid dripped from his eyes and mouth, and claws sprouted from the tips of his fingers. The spirit was hunched over and growling at Wingdings like an animal about to attack. Nothing about him looked human anymore.

The spirit- no, the demon pulled Wingdings closer and slashed at his shoulder with his free hand! He roared in pain, blood spurting out from the gash. He kicked at Chara’s chest, his clawed toes causing the boy to wince and release his grip.

Wingdings jumped back and sized up his enemies. The two were now circling around him, Frisk’s weapon drawn and Chara’s claws outstretched. He was trapped. What could he do now…? “What happened to talking everything out peacefully? Did you people not claim that you wanted to resolve this situation without violence?”
He only received animalistic snarls in response. *What on Earth...? Are they not...?* Wingdings gasped in realisation. Frisk and Chara were no longer thinking properly – with their powers out of control, their minds became similarly disrupted. If they were incapable of rational thought, then he had a chance of victory after all.

The dragon skeleton took a deep breath, then charged at Frisk! The boy swung his sword in anticipation of an attack, but he only slashed at thin air. Instead of attacking, Wingdings leapt over Frisk and fled.

Determined not to lose the enemy, the berserk human and demon gave pursuit. Mere seconds later, he was practically within arm’s reach of the duo. One leap, and either of them would have him in his grasp. Wingdings smirked. That was exactly what he wanted! Looking over his shoulder, he saw the knees of the boys begin to bend in the beginning of a jump. There it was! That was the sign!

As quick as a flash, he spun around on the spot and tore open a hole to the Darkness in front of him. At the exact same time, the two humans’ feet left the ground. With the momentum they were travelling at, they couldn’t stop! They would both fall into the Darkness and be consumed! No one would save them, and the Fragment, undamaged by the environment, would be all his!

While Frisk was still in mid-air, a bone smashed into his side. Rotational force from the weapon travelled through the boy’s body and he was flung in the opposite direction. Due to their link, Chara also fell back. Both human and dragon gasped in shock. Sans was still alive!

Wingdings believed Sans’ entire face to have been smashed in, but the skeleton wasn’t anywhere near as heavily injured. He was wounded – blood was dripping from several cracks in his skull – but for someone who had received a direct blow from the dragon skeleton, and a powerful one at that, the damage done was almost laughably below Wingdings’ expectation. “How...?”

“The Spin really is something else... Even though I could only use it at last minute, a single bone could toughen my body enough to take the worst of that attack.” Sans moved towards the still-paralysed Frisk and crouched down to retrieve his weapon.

“Sorry ‘bout hitting you- Ah!!” Before he could get any closer, Frisk swiped at him. He looked into the human’s eyes. They were glowing an ominous red and displayed no sign of recognition or even thought. Blind determination. Sans swallowed and smiled as reassuringly as his intimidating features would let him. “C’mon, kid... Snap out of it. Can’t you recognise your pal?”

Frisk only hissed and struggled against the bone pinning him in place. Chara did the same. Wingdings snapped his fingers, causing the hole he tore to close, and began to slowly approach the three. Sans pressed further, his voice starting to tremble. “Guys, calm down. This isn’t helping at all. We’re all gonna die if you don’t get your act together! If Wingdings gets your Fragment, the world is screwed! Think about Asgore and Toriel! My bro and Undyne!”

Upon hearing those names, the children flinched, as if waking up from a dream. Their eyes had returned to their normal colours. Sans yanked his weapon off Frisk, allowing him and Chara to stand back up. Wingdings leaped back, now wary of the threat Sans and the children posed.

The trio all glared at the dragon, their weapons drawn. The tension was unimaginably high, as if electricity was coursing through the very air itself. Wingdings exhaled, smoke pouring from his muzzle. “It was indeed surprising that you three could hold your own against me. However, I insist that you stand down. Sans, your badge may have cracked, but it’s still intact. Without your full power at your disposal, you won’t last against the Darkness.” He turned to Frisk. “We all saw what happened when you two tried to use the full potential of your Fragment. You’ll only go berserk again. The Fragment is too dangerous to be in your hands. I will give you one last chance to
surrender.”

Frisk narrowed his eyes. He kept his sword pointed at the dragon. “I never wanted this Fragment, but Alvin already told us what’s going to happen once the Fragments are united! If I hand it over to you, that makes you one step closer to controlling this world! After what you’ve done, I’m not going to just give it up!”

Wingdings’ eyes widened. “Alvin!? He’s still alive!?” He shook his head and wiped his face with his sleeve before looking back up and scowling. “He must have filled your head with his lies. Just like what he did back then… In that case, using words to reason with you is useless. My only route to victory is through force!”

The dragon closed the space between him and the trio, ready to tear open the dimension and throw them into the Darkness, but three lightning-fast blurs smashed into his face before he could even lift an arm! He didn’t even have time to gasp or scream before dozens—no, hundreds—of blows followed! Wingdings had run directly into a three-on-one beatdown, caught between Frisk’s sword, Sans’ bone, and Chara’s fists! He was sucked into a vortex of pure pain! Anything else that was caught in the flurry of destruction would have surely been obliterated. Impossible…!! Those kids learned to properly control their Fragment so quickly!?! Just what are they?!

“ORAAAAHHHHH!!” With one final combined blow, the three friends punched Wingdings down into the ground, tearing open a massive crater in their wake. The dragon skeleton was out cold, face-down in the middle of the deep crater. Frisk and Sans soon followed in collapsing, and Chara vanished into thin air. The rush that kept them going in spite of their wounds and exhaustion had finally petered out.

“What is this…!? What happened here!? Frisk! Sans!” A scene of devastation lay before Papyrus’ eyes. Frisk, Sans, and a man who could be none other than Wingdings lay sprawled out in the centre of a smoking crater.

Frisk and Sans must have caught up to Wingdings and fought him, but the outcome of the battle was a draw. Papyrus couldn’t imagine what had gone down in that field to leave so much damage. The skeleton slid down the side of the crater, dashing towards his brother while Undyne and Gaster rushed to Frisk.

“Sans…!” Please don’t be dead… Please don’t be dead…! Papyrus crouched down and checked Sans for any sign of life. He heard a low rumble emanating from his brother’s muzzle. He leaned in to hear it better, then let out a half-sigh, half-groan. He felt both relieved and frustrated. Sans was snoring. He looked at Gaster and Undyne. “Sans is okay. How’s Frisk?”

“It looks like he’s okay… He’s covered in dried blood, but I don’t see any wound.”

“Alright… And how about Hopebringer?” The three got back up and approached the unconscious man. As Papyrus got closer to the Fragment holder, and saw him up close, he felt an odd sensation. What to call it…? Déjà vu? Nostalgia? Somehow, the skeleton had the feeling he knew the man calling himself Wingdings, and not just because he resembled a Blaster.

Before he could get any closer, the demonic dragon’s eyes shot open. At first, they were clouded over, but when he saw the trio, they instantly filled with terror. “NOOOOOOOOOO!” Wingdings shrieked, getting up and throwing his arms in front of himself. “Why you!? Why here!? Please, don’t kill me! I’ll do anything! I beg of you, have mercy!”

Papyrus stared at the hulking figure, who was curled into a foetal position and hyperventilating. He
looked delirious. “Believe me, I’m a hundred percent sincere when I say we can solve this without doing a violence. If you don’t want to fight, I promise we won’t hurt you.” The dragon skeleton didn’t respond, continuing to tremble and whimper with his head in between his knees.

“Be careful, Papyrus.” Undyne warned. “Remember this is the bastard who tried to make all those people kill us. This just reeks of being a trick.”

The skeleton approached the dragon. He seemed to have slightly regained his composure – his breathing was still rapid, but he had stopped trembling and whimpering. Papyrus took this as a good sign. “I, the great Papyrus, would never hurt or kill anyone! Therefore, I would very much appreciate it if you also- ARGH!” Something snaked between his legs, cutting him off and sweeping him off his feet.

“God damn it! I knew it!” Undyne cursed.

The dragon skeleton leaped up and darted to the unconscious Frisk! Undyne threw a spear, but Wingdings knocked it away with a flick of his tail. Papyrus scrambled back to his feet, but it was already too late. He yanked Frisk’s SOUL out. “I’ve already found what I need. Your friend’s attack here made it painfully clear.” Wingdings didn’t waste any more time. He squeezed the SOUL and forcefully ejected the Fragment.

However, that wasn’t the only thing that was ripped out of Frisk’s being. Papyrus and the others saw Chara’s translucent form emerge alongside the crystal, tethered to it. The brief startled expression on Wingdings’ face indicated he didn’t expect that to happen, but he grabbed the Fragment anyway. The spirit of the first fallen human was sucked into the crystal as the dragon’s claw closed around it.

Frisk regained consciousness as both the source of his power and his friend were ripped away from him. He threw some punches at Wingdings, but they were once again powerless.

Wingdings released his grasp on Frisk and backed away from the group. Sans had awoken and now stood alongside them. Papyrus could see that the dragon skeleton was putting on a stoic and resolute front, but there were small cracks in this façade – the slight tremble of his body, his breathing still being ragged – that some sort of uncertainty leaked through. Could he still be reasoned with?

Papyrus decided it was worth a shot. However, the moment opened his mouth, Wingdings crouched down and punched the ground, then jumped out of the crater! Cracks travelled across the ground before the earth beneath the group gave way! Papyrus looked up at the retreating Wingdings. “You think falling into a hole is going to stop us!?”

“No, Papyrus!” Sans yelled. “Wingdings just tore open a rip in the fabric of space-time beneath us! If we fall in, we’ll disintegrate!”

Papyrus’ eyes bugged out. “What!?” He flailed wildly, trying to grab onto something solid, but only dirt passed through his claws.

“Papyrus! Here!” A black rope flew in his direction and wrapped around him. Gaster had done the same with the others.

Undyne pointed her spear downwards. “Here I go! Blasting Striiiiikkkee!”

G-forces tore through the five’s bodies as they were launched out of the Darkness. They all crashed into the ground beside the new tear, in pain, but alive.

Papyrus forced his body up and looked around. Wingdings was nowhere to be seen. “No… we lost him!” The sound of quiet whimpering reached Papyrus. “Frisk…?”
The boy’s body quaked as he sobbed. “Dammit… he got Chara… And the Fragment, too!” Frisk tried to stand, but his strength failed him and his legs gave out.

The older student made his way towards Frisk and helped him stand. “Please, cheer up! We’ll get them back. I promise.” Those were the words he said aloud, but inside, he was just as crushed. They had a big opportunity to capture Wingdings, and it had failed. On top of that, he had stolen Frisk’s Fragment and now knew everyone’s identities. What would happen now? What could they possibly do…?

TO BE CONTINUED

Wingdings

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: ?

Speed: ?

Range: ?

Durability: ?

Precision: ?

Developmental Potential: ?

Abilities/Powers

Overwhelming Strength: Wingdings possesses immense physical strength and durability. From the information Papyrus and the others have, it seems that nothing except his own attacks or the power of an actual Fragment can pierce his defence.

Dark, Darker, Yet Darker: The ability to tear open holes in the fabric of space-time leading to a dimension known as the Darkness, in which nothing can survive.
“Are you sure you should stay here? You can go home now and I’ll fill you in later.”

“Thank you, Frisk, but I should be fine.” Gaster attempted to smile. “It’s just a little headache.”

Everyone had gathered in an empty classroom in Golden Flower Academy. In addition to the Fragment Users, Flowey, Alphys, and the two Boss Monsters most responsible for taking care of the school were present. A heavy atmosphere hung in the room like smog.

Frisk’s heart thumped in his chest, and butterflies fluttered in his stomach. It was time to finally tell them the truth. “Asgore… Toriel… There’s something you need to know. I’ll come clean about what’s been happening this past month. And also… what really happened to your two children. This’ll sound hard to believe, but please, listen.”

“Wait!”

“Flowey?”

The flower shifted in his pot. “About what happened to m- I mean, what happened to Asriel and Chara… It’s best that they hear it from my own mouth.”

Frisk nodded. “Alright. I’ll tell them about the Fragment Users, then you can tell them about what happened to Chara and Asriel when you feel ready.”

As Frisk explained, the expressions of the goat-like monsters shifted from bewildered, to shocked, to grim, then finally, to resolute.

“And just like that, my Fragment had been taken.” Frisk concluded.

Toriel grabbed Frisk by the shoulders. “Frisk… why did you not tell us sooner!? If I knew you were being targeted, I would have taken care of everything! I would have made sure they would not be able to lay a finger on you.”

“No!” Frisk protested. “That wouldn’t have worked. I just told you, Fragment Users are stronger than even humans! If a Boss Monster could be defeated by an ordinary human, they wouldn’t stand a chance against a powered-up monster.”

The goat lady clicked her tongue. “True…” She looked at Flowey. “And what of this flower? How is he related to my children?”

The flower in question looked like he was about to melt underneath the pressure of all the eyes on him. “I… I…” He gulped. “I am Asriel.” It was Flowey’s turn to explain. Who he really was, what happened to him, what he did as a result, and what happened that fateful day in the Underground. He didn’t go into depth about the pre-Frisk timelines, but what he did say was still shocking news to everyone present. “If you want to hate me, feel free. You all have every right to despise me for the rest of your lives.”

Everyone looked uneasy at this revelation. Sans was the first to speak. “In other words… You were the space-time Anomaly?”

“Anomaly? What do you mean, Sans?”
“Put simply, someone like Frisk who could manipulate the flow of time. In its wake, timelines stopped and started, jumped left and right, then everything would end. Ever since I was a kid, I knew about it.” Sans blinked and stopped, then looked down, placing a hand on his bifurcated jaw. “Wait a sec… since I was a kid…?” He repeatedly muttered to himself, his eyes narrowing. “Since I was a kid… since I was a kid…” He abruptly sprang out of his seat. “Sorry, guys. I’ve really gotta go!” Sans ran towards the window and leaped out.

“Guess it runs in the family…” Undyne muttered.

“Asriel.” Asgore gently cupped a large hand around the flower. “What you did was awful. But you were just a child! Your ability to feel positive emotions was gone, and you could do whatever you wanted without consequence. Faced with that situation, many would have done the same. Besides, you and Chara are responsible for breaking the Barrier. You both did good in the end.”

“Dad…”

Toriel nodded. “Yes, indeed. In honesty, if I were the me of last year, I would have condemned you as an abomination. However, that would have been a grave mistake. A lot of terrible things happened because of you and Chara, but a lot of good things happened, too. Neither solely define you.”

“Mum…”

The family shared a hug. Flowey sniffled, tears streaming down his face. “I’m sorry… Even like this, I still can’t feel anything…”

The goats slowly pulled away, then faced the others. The flames of resolve had been lit in their eyes. The air they exuded reminded everyone of their former royal status. “We have decided. We may not be able to fight, but shall do everything in our power to assist you. The city council will be informed of Wingdings. From now on, he will never be able to show his face in Ebott City again.”

“Aha! I get what you’re doing!” Alphys spoke up. “You can’t fight Fragment Users directly, but you’re limiting the moves Wingdings can take! Because he blended in as a normal civilian earlier, he could sneak around conducting his evil schemes, but if there are people searching for him, he has to be much more cautious!”

“Yes, that is correct. What do you think, Papyrus? Shall I contact them now?”

The skeleton didn’t respond. He had kept silent the entire time, staring out the window blankly.

“Papyrus?”

“I don’t know… I’m not sure if I can make decisions anymore.”

“What’s wrong?” Frisk asked.

“We’re like this now because of what I chose – because I wanted to see the best in a person. Because I believed that everyone could be good if they wanted, I fell right into Wingdings’ trap. Frisk’s Fragment was stolen, Chara was kidnapped, and we all nearly died.”

Papyrus stared at his claws. “I wanted to be a kind person… But was being kind the right thing to do? If being kind means that I’ll be taken advantage of like a toy or puppet, then…”

“Papyrus…”
A friendliness pellet smacked into Papyrus’ cheekbone. “Ouch! Flowey!?”

“Enough. You’re being a big numbskull right now, you know that? I can’t believe I think you’re scary.”

“‘Numbskull’!? Augh! Not you, too!”

“Listen to me. Being completely submissive and turning yourself into the world’s doormat doesn’t make you a great person at all. That just makes you an idiot! What irritates me is that if you weren’t so stupid, you could be a great hero!”

Flowey continued, his voice becoming less harsh. “I used to feel like you as well. I ended up like this because I tried to be kind. But taking a violent approach didn’t exactly work out for me, either. Choosing to kill only made life worse. Both for me, and you guys.

“Frisk was the one who taught me. Having the strength to stand up to the dark, while still keeping tenderness in your heart. Don’t kill, and don’t be killed. That’s the true path to the light.”

With those words, Papyrus’ doubts melted away. The true path to the light… He grinned and nodded, then hugged the flower. “Flowey… No, Asriel. Thank you. To think that I, the great Papyrus, needed to learn something so obvious… How silly!”

Flowey huffed and turned away. “Please don’t call me Asriel. I still don’t feel like the prince anymore.”

“Alright, Flowey.”

“Alright, you guys!” Undyne’s piercing shout caused the school itself to tremor. “Chara may not have been the best guy, but he’s our friend! That’s why we won’t stop until he’s back!”

“Yeah!”

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Monday morning

“Asgore and Toriel told the Ebott City council about Wingdings. They received information about his age, his occupation, and most importantly, his residence. We’re planning on going there after school.”

“Okay.”

Sans continued to sip his morning coffee while reading the paper, deliberately ignoring his brother’s stare.

“So… you’re not going to explain to me why you ran off yesterday?”

“Nah.”

“You looked rather concerned. Are you sure you don’t want to say anything? With Wingdings around, good communication is extremely important.” Papyrus took out Bonetrousle. “We only have my Fragment left. If what’s on your mind is relevant to the Fragments, please, let me know.”

Sans sighed. “Well… I’d really prefer not to… Not for me, but for you. I don’t want to scare you. When I found out, I was really rattled.”

“It involves me?”
Sans’ gaze grew serious. “I did some investigating yesterday. Remember how every year, the people at Snowdin made us sit down for class photos?”

“Yes. They still do it at Golden Flower Academy up here.”

The young man dashed up to his room and came back down with a laptop. “I’ve been looking through them… These are ones from last year, when I was just finishing up Year 12 and you were in Year 10.” Sans opened up two photos of the significantly less beastly-looking brothers standing alongside their respective classmates.

“This,” he continued, pressing a button and revealing two older class photos, “is from when I was in Year 11 and you were in Year 9.” He changed the photos until the screen displayed Sans’ Year 7 class photo and Papyrus’ Year 5 class photo. Sans pressed the button again. The class photo changed, but in these ones, the skeleton brothers were nowhere to be seen.

“What does that mean? We went to a different school beforehand, didn’t we?”

“And what school was that?”

“Well…” Papyrus squeezed his eyes shut, trying to recall. Huh…?

“Let’s put it this way: can you remember anything at all about your life before Snowdin? Anything before six or so years ago?”

Papyrus felt cold. He had a sinking feeling that he was experiencing exactly what Sans had. “No way… This is insane… We have amnesia too? Just like Gaster?”

“It’s strange, isn’t it? The scary part is, we both accepted it as normal until now. Something’s up, and it definitely isn’t the ceiling.” Sans looked around. “Speaking of Gaster, where’s he? He should be up by now.”

“Strange…” Papyrus finished his oatmeal, then walked into the living room. After the first few nights of staying at the skeleton brothers’ house, Gaster had insisted that Papyrus have his room back while he would sleep on the couch. Papyrus could see the shape of Gaster’s body underneath the blankets on the couch, but it was trembling. The skeleton could hear whimpering from beneath the covers.

“Gaster!? What’s wrong?”

Gaster slowly took the covers off. Papyrus flinched at what he saw. Horns just like his had emerged from Gaster’s skull, and his teeth had sharpened. Just like what happened to him.

Kid seemed excited as he ate lunch with Papyrus. “Did you see the announcement on the news? The former king and queen made it themselves!”

“Yes! You can count on me! I, the great Papyrus, will defend Ebott City until my last breath!”

“Ow!”

“Sorry!”
Papyrus helped the student up, then sat back down, feeling contemplative. What was the true nature of his changed appearance? Because it wasn’t particularly detrimental to him, he quickly got used to it and accepted it as normal. However, now that Gaster had displayed abnormal signs, was continuing to ignore it really a good idea? He assumed earlier that it was just a side-effect of becoming a Fragment User, but among his friends, no one other than him and Sans had mutated.

He assumed Gaster was a Fragment User from the beginning, but he only changed after meeting Wingdings. It couldn’t have been that Wingdings’ Fragment caused Gaster to mutate, because otherwise, his own Fragment would have caused the amnesiac to transform.

Everything started with that Blaster in the forest. That Blaster was presumably a Fragment, which made him and Sans change. But why did Gaster only start mutating now? The information Papyrus had was like trying to piece a jigsaw puzzle together, only to find that the pieces of the puzzle had been mixed with pieces from another.

A grip on his arm dragged Papyrus out of his thoughts. “Sorry, Kid! I need to borrow Papyrus for a bit.”

“Oh, okay. See ya, dude.”

“Frisk!? Where are we going?” The middle school student dragged his friend inside the school shed. Frisk took off his blazer, then unbuttoned his collar. “What are you doing? Do you… have a secret to show me?”

“Howdy.” A familiar face popped up from inside Frisk’s shirt.

“He insisted.” Frisk explained.

“Flowey!”

“Frisk doesn’t have a Fragment or a guardian spirit anymore, so I’ll help out in Chara’s stead. Frisk and Chara did their best to save the Underground. Now it’s my turn to fight.”

“Even though I lost my Fragment, I’m still a Fragment User. I still have some of my powers.” Frisk raised an arm. “Flowey! Friendliness pellets!”

“Got it!” Three white beads shot out from Frisk’s palm and hovered in the air. Frisk closed his eyes and focused, then the beads turned gold.

“These are what I call DT Drones. Flowey and I can control them, and they give me the same information that Chara did. I can also do this!” Frisk grabbed a small shovel. As he did this, it glowed and changed shape into a laser blade. “Pretty cool, right?”

“You two are amazing! Wingdings will have trouble for sure!” Papyrus scratched his head as he scrutinised the weapon. Interesting… it looked just like the laser of a Blaster.

Wingdings’ house was scarily close to Papyrus’. It was only a few blocks away from his house – everyone could walk there from the school on foot. Alphys decided to join them in case there was anything that needed scientific knowledge.

It was even scarier that it perfectly blended in with the others. Papyrus’ mental image of the residence of a demonic dragon skeleton like Wingdings was something like a twisted medieval castle or a lair filled with treasure deep within a cave. But in reality, the most boring option was often the correct one. It was just a regular house. On the outside, anyway.
“DT Drones!” The large golden beads flew from Frisk’s hand into the house. He had them scout the area, looking at his phone for the information feed. “Looks like the house is empty. I’m picking up any signs of life.”

“Alright! Here we go!” Undyne smashed her foot into the door dramatically, causing it to topple. The group rushed in. They ran from room to room, tearing through them for anything that could be important. The house was a typical modern residence: food, kitchen utensils, laundry equipment, and entertainment lay in the places a person would usually expect to find them.

By the time everyone had finished searching the house, it was a mess. “Well, that went nowhere.” The fish lady remarked. “I expected there to be something like a button leading to a secret laboratory.”

“It would have been pretty metal if there was something like a giant robot being developed in a secret underground basement here.” Sans admitted.

Papyrus rolled his eyes. “You’ve both been watching way too many of Alphys’ cartoons.” He walked into Wingdings’ study. There was clear evidence the table was used frequently, but no notes were present on it. The skeleton let his eyes wander to the wall.

The study wall was covered by a collection of drawings and cards from children. According to Asgore and Toriel, Wingdings worked as a children’s dentist. If he was so good at making children smile (both physically and emotionally), why did he want to involve himself with the Fragments? What motive could he possibly have to seek such power?

He carefully took one of the cards down and read it. When he looked back up at the wall, he blinked and rubbed his eyes. The wall behind the papers was a different shade to the wall outside. “Hey! Everyone, come over here!” Papyrus quickly took down the other papers as the others gathered in the room. The ‘wall’ on the inside was merely a similarly-coloured piece of cardboard disguising a hole.

Papyrus pushed it in, revealing a small box hidden in the space inside the wall. He opened it, revealing a dusty photo alongside a leather-bound journal. “This must be… Wingdings’ secret writings.” The truth behind his motives and the Fragments had to be hidden in there! The skeleton looked back at the now-horned amnesiac. Maybe he could find out Gaster’s true identity as well.

As he reached towards the book, Frisk’s DT Drones seemed to shiver. Frisk checked his phone and gasped. “Papyrus!”

The skeleton’s senses heightened. A knife coming from the left! “NYEH~!” Bonetrousle punched it away. Papyrus jumped back and took a battle stance.

“Finally, finally, finally!” A familiar-looking dummy, formerly hidden by darkness and dust, came to life and floated in front of the group, several knives hovering around him. “It’s time for me to see some action after so long! I’ve been sick of waiting all this time! As the guardian of the top-secret notes, I refuse to let you people get any closer!”

TO BE CONTINUED
Destructive Power: B
Speed: A
Range: A
Durability: B
Precision: A – E
Developmental Potential: C

**Abilities/Powers**

**Determination – Hopes and Dreams:** Frisk lost his Fragment, but he retains his Determination. He can still utilise forcefields and healing.

**Laser Sword:** Frisk can conjure up a powerful sword that appears to be made out of light. It has absurd cutting power, but he can’t create it from nothing – he needs to be holding a solid inanimate object.

**DT Drones:** Frisk and Flowey worked this out as substitute for Chara’s Guardian Spirit and Analysis ability. Frisk can link to up to three of Flowey’s friendliness pellets and remotely control their movements. They can feed Frisk and Flowey information about the surroundings.

If attacked with sufficient force by a Fragment User, they shatter. However, when they are destroyed, they also deal damage to whoever shattered them.
The Big Investigation (2)

Dozens of knives flew at the group! The skeleton was quick to react, punching them away with Bonetrouble. “NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH-!” Not a single one of the weapons hit the friends. The knives fell, dissolving into nothingness soon after they hit the ground.

“Take this!” A Spin-infused bone smashed into the Mad Dummy. Force rippled through the monster’s body, forcing him to the floor. Sans raced in front of Papyrus, then jumped onto the dummy and pinned him down. He grasped the monster’s head. “You have one chance to stand down! A single move, and I’ll gouge your eyes out!”

The dummy only smirked. Sans yelped as he was blasted upwards! The draconic skeleton’s head hit the ceiling, and his eyesockets went dark. His body tumbled back down to the ground.

“How!?” Gaster stammered. The Mad Dummy didn’t move at all, but Sans went flying!?

“Stupid mutt! You honestly believe that weak bone was enough to deal with the likes of ME!?” The Mad Dummy’s gaze shifted to the others.

“Papyrus! Everyone! Get back!” Gaster pushed Papyrus back towards the entrance of the study. Frisk, Undyne, and Alphys followed suit. Blowing Sans away without moving even an inch… He has to be using telekinesis of some sort! The others have to stay out of his range.

The amnesiac aimed a hand at the dummy. “Black Blade!” The projectile soared at the Mad Dummy, but several knives clashed with it in mid-air and overwhelmed it. Gaster’s Black Blades may have been powerful, but he could only create one at a time. The sheer number of the Mad Dummy’s knives were too much for a single blade! It was knocked down, a tiny sandcastle being eaten up by a wave of steel.

The knives continued towards Gaster. There was no time to avoid the attack. The skeleton tried to liquefy himself, but a sickening crack sounded and a wave of dizziness hit him! “Ack…” The knives stabbed into him, sending him to the ground.

Papyrus was shocked. Both Sans and Gaster taken down so quickly!? Just how important were those notes to have such a powerful guardian?

The Mad Dummy began to float towards them, cackling. Alphys whimpered. “W-what do we do…?”

Frisk took a deep breath, steadying himself. “Don’t worry, Alphys. This guy’s dangerous. He’s pretty strong, both at close range, and at a distance. But! Not all hope is lost. There’s a special secret technique we can use at a time like this.”

Undyne groaned. “Frisk… You’re seriously going to use that?”

Papyrus tilted his head. “What do you mean? A special secret technique?”

“Yeah. It’s gotten me out of a lot of sticky situations.”

“Well, if it’s something that helped you, I believe in it! We’ll use that, whatever it may be.” Bonetrouble tensed in anticipation.

“Alright, on the count of three. One… two… THREE!” Frisk, his aura blazing around him,
charged… away from the Mad Dummy. “RUN FOR IIIIIT!”

“Frisk, why!?” Papyrus swiftly spun around and joined the others in escaping. “At least give me some warning first!”

“I did!”

Outside the study, the pathway split. “We should split up! He can’t split himself in two!” The boys went right, whereas Undyne and Alphys headed left. The Mad Dummy chose to chase after Papyrus’ group.

They turned the corner and entered the kitchen. Once the Mad Dummy entered the room, he realised he had lost sight of them. “Trying to hide?” They only had a few seconds. They couldn’t have done much in that time.

The monster paced around the room. “Hmm… I do wonder where they could be hiding…” Behind the kitchen bench, an easily-spottable shadow stuck out. Hmph. Too easy. The Mad Dummy conjured up knives and flung them with so much force, they pierced through the bench. “DIE!”

There was the satisfying thunk of a target being hit. The Mad Dummy, a victorious smirk on his face, raced around the bench to see who he killed. “…WHAT!? Since when could you do that!?” The knives were stuck in a translucent barrier around Frisk.

Several more thunks rang out, but the Mad Dummy hadn’t thrown anything. In fact, those sounds came from directly behind him! Several forks now protruded from the back of his head. “YOU!” The monster whirled around. Papyrus had been hiding in the pantry!

The even madder dummy growled. “I’m a ghost, you braindead morons! You can’t damage me with regular objects!” The forks detached from the dummy and flew straight back at Papyrus, who deflected them with Bonetrousle. The dummy tried to throw more knives at Frisk, but with surprising agility, he jumped over him and ran back to Papyrus’ side.

“Really?” Papyrus grinned. “Thank you very much for letting us know! Flowey! Can you toss me a friendliness pellet?”

The flower tossed a bead to Papyrus, who caught it with his guardian spirit. NYEH~! Bonetrousle flicked the pellet at the Mad Dummy with the speed of a rifle’s bullet.

Unfortunately, the Mad Dummy was just as fast. He countered with another flurry of knives, easily destroying the projectile and continuing towards the boys! Papyrus and Frisk knocked them down with their fists and sword respectively. Once again, the knives disintegrated as they hit the floor.

“Damn! How many knives does this guy have!?”

One of the DT Drones hovered to the last of the dissolving knives. “Infinity.” Flowey answered. “These things are made of magic, so you can’t just wait for him to run out of knives. Think of something!”

More weapons surged at the three. Its arms a blur, Bonetrousle grabbed the knives out of mid-air and threw them back!

The dummy only smirked. The blades turned around a second time and flew back at an even faster speed! Papyrus and Frisk would have turned into hedgehogs if it weren’t for Frisk creating another forcefield. The Mad Dummy waggled a single knife like a finger. “Tsk, tsk, tsk… Using the same strategy of throwing things over and over is beyond idiotic. You fools just don’t learn anything.”
“Yeah.” Frisk smirked. “Neither do you.”

The monster’s eyes bulged out. “WHAT!?” Only now had he noticed something casting a shadow from above him. He threw a knife at it reflexively. The DT Drone shattered, the shards digging into the dummy’s body. “YEEEEOOWWW!” The Mad Dummy fell to the floor, writhing in pain.

“You still haven’t learned to watch out for falling objects.”

Papyrus sprinted to the monster, Bonetrousle hovering by his side. With a kick, he used his Blue Attack on the dummy and pinned him to the ground. “Sorry, but you need to take a nap!” Bonetrousle let loose with a barrage! “NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

Alphys’ body quaked. Why did she have to come? She had never been in an actual battle before! What possessed her to think that tagging along here was a good idea!? She would have punched herself if she wasn’t so frightened. “Hah… h-hah… W-what do we do, Undyne? I’m so scared…”

“Don’t worry, Alphys. We can deal with this. Remember what they said in Mew Mew Kissy Cutie? ‘With the power of love and friendship, the sky’s the limit!’”

“R-right…” The former royal scientist restrained herself from pointing out that was from the awful, awful sequel.

Undyne looked around the bathroom they were hiding in. “But seriously… Wingdings is wimpier than I thought he was. What kind of demonic dragon uses flower-scented shower gel!?”

Alphys opened a bottle and inhaled. “I-it does smell really nice…” She shook her head. “Wait, we can’t get distracted! Shouldn’t we do something to help the guys?”

“Papyrus and Frisk are Fragment Users, so they can handle themselves. You, on the other hand, can’t. You should wait here until the fighting’s over. If the Mad Dummy comes here, I’ll protect you.”

The lizard monster hung her head. She didn’t want to be a liability. “B-but…” The idea popped up in her mind, like a flame being lit and giving light to a dark room. “The notes!”

“What about the notes?”

“I-if Wingdings went to the trouble of having a Fragment User this strong guard the notes, they’ve got to hold something important to him! M-maybe even something that we can use against him! We can get them now, while the Mad Dummy’s still distracted!”

Undyne hummed as she stroked her chin. “Hmm… It’s risky, but it’s worth it! Let’s go!”

The two young women snuck out of the bathroom, swiftly moving back towards the study while trying to make as little noise as possible. However, a tremendous bang and a person-sized object shooting past them at Mach 1 killed their attempt at stealth.

“Im…possible…” Papyrus had been blown back with such force, he made a hole in the house. He lost consciousness without another word.

Frisk ran up to the girls. “Undyne! Alphys! I’ve figured out the Mad Dummy’s ability! It’s force redirection! It’s dangerous to directly attack.”

“Oh, shut up!” The monster headbutted Frisk, knocking him out cold.
“Frisk!” Flowey tried to shake the boy awake, but to no avail.

Alphys trembled at the sight of the monster floating before her. No…! I screwed up again! If I had just stayed put in the bathroom, Undyne wouldn’t be in danger now!

“Alphys.” Undyne summoned a spear. “Take the notes and run. I’ll fight this bastard.”

“B-but… I-I…” Alphys swallowed and nodded. “Okay. Sorry, Undyne…!”

The Mad Dummy roared. “I won’t let you! No one can see those notes! No one, no one, NO ONE!” He charged towards the retreating Alphys, but a spear blocked his path. “Tch…!”

“Alphys! Hurry!”

“R-right!” The lizard sprinted into the study, moving back towards the secret space in the wall. She took the box and made a beeline for the window, but as she was about to jump out, she hesitated. What about Undyne and the others? She turned and ran back towards where the battle was.

Undyne was struggling against the dummy. She knew she couldn’t use Blasting Strike or directly strike, so she was trying to hold out with the forcefield of Diverging Slash. The fish lady was trying to hold the line, pushing against the monster, but his ability meant her strength only added to his. Undyne skidded back, exposing Alphys! The Mad Dummy didn’t waste this opportunity. He threw a knife at the lizard.

“NO!” Undyne screamed and hurled herself in front of the lizard. The blade hit her square in the chest. She fell back, Alphys barely managing to catch her. Blood seeped out, staining both her and Alphys’ clothes red.

“UNDYNE!” Alphys was drowning in despair! No… nonononononoNONONO!! Why!? Why, why, WHY!? All because of my stupid plan, Undyne’s…!

“You’re next, girl.”

Through her tear-distorted vision, Alphys could see something golden flit behind Mad Dummy. A DT Drone…? Had Frisk regained consciousness already? If he reached Undyne, he would be able to heal her! Like Moses and the Red Sea, the ocean of despair parted, revealing the path back to the land of hope.

She had to get to Frisk somehow! But that would mean going through the Mad Dummy. Alphys glanced at the box she dropped when she caught Undyne. The option to run away with the notes and expose Wingdings’ secrets was still there. But that would mean leaving all her friends to die! She couldn’t keep running away and avoiding her problems! Frisk taught her that she had to face them!

“Die! Die! DIE!” The Mad Dummy materialised dozens of knives, ready to finish off the lizard! But before they could even move, they all dissolved! A shock running through the dummy’s body had broken his focus! “Gyaaaaa! What is this!”

“I may not be a Fragment User, but if you think I’m completely defenceless, you’re in for a shock…” Alphys took a moment to facepalm. “Ugh, I’m spending too much time around Sans.”

“L-lightning magic!?! Damn it!” Direct attacks from physical objects, such as knives or spears, the Mad Dummy could deflect and counter. But against something like lightning magic, he was a sitting duck!

“Hiyaah! Take this!” The lizard thrust her palm out, shooting another lightning strike. However, this
time, the Mad Dummy was prepared. He sidestepped, the lightning instead breaking another wall. “Ngh…!” Alphys turned and shot another bolt. Once again, it only hit where the dummy used to be.

The Mad Dummy continued to circle around the study, dodging every single one of Alphys’ attacks. Without the element of surprise, the lizard was at a huge disadvantage! She didn’t have the physical fitness to keep up with the dummy at all! She couldn’t hit, and more importantly, she couldn’t dodge!

After dodging another bolt, the Mad Dummy flew up to her and stabbed her. But she didn’t falter. With a bright glow, her SOUL appeared, changing shape into the SOUL of a Fragment User! A surge of heat and light made the Mad Dummy gasp and leap back. The knife had melted! If he had been any closer, he would have met a similar fate.

Alphys calmly faced him. Her body was glowing with heat and light. This time, he was the one who would have to run!

The lizard charged at the Mad Dummy! She threw a punch, but she retained her initial speed – the dummy was still faster than her. He kept his distance, dashing to the opposite end of the room and throwing a handful of knives to counter. The knife melted before it could even touch her.

She dashed at him again, but he could still easily keep a safe distance. “Looks like your ability is only close-range, girl. I may no longer be able to hurt you, but you’re still too slow to lay even a finger on me! We’ll both be stuck here FOREVER! Hahahaha-”

A golden blur speeding at him cut him off. The Mad Dummy reversed the force and sent it back, but a searing pain nevertheless coursed through his body. He howled as he collapsed, the fire making it unbearable to even stand. She infused the heat into an object!? But I didn’t see her grab anything!

Alphys sidestepped the deflected DT Drone. “I should thank Frisk later. But for now…” The lizard leaped at the Mad Dummy, her fists blazing.

“ASHIA SHIASHIA SHIASHIA SHIASHIA SHIASHIA SHIASHIA SHIASHIA~! ASHITA NO TAME NI (FOR THE SAKE OF TOMORROW)!”

Undyne opened her eyes to the sight of Frisk having finished healing her. “You’re awake. Good.”

Almost immediately, she was slammed back into the floor by a golden blur! “Undyne! You’re okay! Thank god, I was so scared!”

“A-Alphys… You’re going to crush me like this…”


“Let me go, damn it!” The fish lady spotted an irate ghost tied up by Gaster’s black rope in the centre of the room. Surrounding him were the skeletons and Frisk. The melted remains of the dummy he possessed lay tossed aside. “I’ll kill you all! No one can see those notes and live! Those were that dragon’s orders!”

Sans pointed a bone at the ghost. “Chill out, pal. If you keep this up, we’ll just leave you here.”

Gaster focused and placed a (now clawed) hand on the poltergeist’s head. A white glow enveloped him and he passed out.

“At any rate, now we know for a fact that Wingdings’ journal is extremely important.” Frisk got up and walked towards the hole in the wall. He picked up the book and opened it, but as his eyes scanned through the pages, his brow began to furrow. He flicked through the pages faster and faster.
Once he reached the end, he sighed and closed it.

“What’s wrong?” Papyrus asked.

“I can’t read it. It’s written in some weird handwriting.”

The skeleton took the book from Frisk’s hands and opened it to the inside of the front cover. He squinted at the strange symbols. “P…r…o…”

Everyone else crowded around him. “You can read it!?"

Papyrus nodded. “Yes. I don’t know how, but, somehow… I can.” He looked at Sans. “If I recall correctly, I’ve also seen it in your blueprints I got from the Underground last month. What actually were they?”

“They were… well…” The dragon-like skeleton fidgeted and looked down. “Honestly… I don’t know. Just like what happened before six years ago, I don’t know a thing about them. But, when I looked at them, I felt that I had to fix the machine, no matter what. I lost sleep over it! But… I don’t actually know what they are.”

“Maybe the journal will hold the answer.” Gaster mused.

“Let’s hope! Alright, I’ll keep reading. ‘Property of…’ Ah!” He wiped his eyesockets with his sleeve and read it again, sneaking a glance at Gaster as he did so. A smile was slowly starting to form on his face. “Could it be…? Have we finally found it?”

Undyne tapped her foot. “Well, Papyrus? Don’t keep us waiting!”

“Geez, don’t rush me! I was just double-checking so I won’t accidentally give him false hope. Gaster, good news! We’ve finally found what you’ve been searching for all this time!”

“Eh? We have?”

“That’s right!” Papyrus held up the journal as he grinned. “See? ‘Property of W.D. Gaster’!”

TO BE CONTINUED

Alphys

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: A

Speed: D

Range: D

Durability: C

Precision: D

Developmental Potential: C

Abilities/Powers
A Light in the Dark: An incandescence-based power. Can increase the heat and light emitted by her body to extreme levels.

Guardian Field: Can emit a field of heat and light in a circle around her. If it hits an object, it flows in, but if it doesn’t hit an object, it goes back into her body and hurts her.

Mad Dummy

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: B
Speed: B
Range: B (knives), E (force redirection)
Durability: C
Precision: B
Developmental Potential: D

Abilities/Powers

Force Redirection: Can redirect the force of attacks on his body into anything in physical contact with it.

Rain of Steel: Can summon as many knives as his concentration allows. Because these knives are made of magic, they dissolve once he loses focus.
The Big Investigation (3)

Everyone stared in horror at the page Papyrus had opened the journal to. The skeleton, oblivious of the implications behind Gaster's name being in the book, began to turn the page and begin reading, but a firm grip on his arm stopped him.

“Gaster? What’s wro- Gah!!” Papyrus cringed when he saw his friend’s distorted face. Gaster had mutated even more – his face was starting to push out into a muzzle, and his horns had lengthened. What was going on? Papyrus instinctively checked whether anything had changed on his own body.

“P… please… Papyrus… Don’t open it! I’m begging you…!” Gaste was practically rattling with fear. His breaths were shallow and rapid, and his skull glistened with sweat.

“What’s in there can’t be seen by your eyes!”

Gaster shook his head. “B-but… I’m getting a really awful feeling from that journal! If you open it… I’m certain something terrible will happen!”

Papyrus’ expression grew serious. He looked at Gaster directly in the eyes. “Can you elaborate? Is this another one of Wingdings’ traps?”

Papyrus put his free hand on Gaster’s shoulder. “Gaster. I promise, no matter what’s in there, I won’t hate you. Right now, a lot is at stake, so I have to know what’s inside this journal.”

Gaster hesitated, looking at the distrusting faces of his friends, before turning back to Papyrus. “No… It isn’t a trap. But… I’m scared. What’s in there can’t be seen by your eyes!”

Was this written by Wingdings or Gaster? Why is his subconscious telling him not to let me read any more? Papyrus put his free hand on Gaster’s shoulder. “Gaster. I promise, no matter what’s in there, I won’t hate you. Right now, a lot is at stake, so I have to know what’s inside this journal.”

Gaster hesitated again, before slowly looking back up at his friend and nodding. “I… I understand. I believe in you.”

Papyrus turned the page, and started reading…

Entry Number One

It is the first day at my new job in Happy Town. Alvin informed me that it is a good idea to record anything important, so I bought this journal to write down any major accomplishments that may take place here.

This is the place where world betterment will occur! With our all-star team of researchers, we shall set out to do great things! Already, with our very first invention, the CORE, electricity has been provided to the Underground. Now that the present has been brightened, it should be time for us to work on heading towards a bright future.

However… there is a matter we must deal with first. To make sure that ‘our world’ will not be destroyed. Monsterkind, as it is currently, is utterly powerless. Humans are beings with powerful SOULs and physical matter, whereas monsters are nothing more than walking clumps of dust barely held together by a weak SOUL.

Even the greatest warrior among monsters is pathetically weak in comparison to a human child. Is this truly just? No! As the situation currently stands, monsters are completely at the mercy of humans. Even if we somehow found our way past the Barrier, we could all be massacred by a toddler with a
stick. And Determination, humanity’s source of strength, monsters are too pathetic to even handle.

However, there is a way. A way for ‘our world’ to persevere. A parallel dimension called the Darkness exists on a higher plane to this world. The pure magical energy of this dimension is unfathomable. With its power, we can far surpass humans.

However, as it only exists on a separate plane to ours, we cannot directly utilise it. Therefore, we must instead do all we can to replicate its power here. To safeguard the future of monsters, and to make sure no monster will have to experience the pain I did.

Entry Number Two

This is not going well…

Although replicating the utilities of the surface in the Underground has proven to be a success, replication of the Darkness’ energy in our dimension is far too difficult. Monsters have the power to freely manipulate their magic as they please, but successfully utilising magic on the same level as the Darkness appears to be impossible for even the most powerful of monsters.

If monsters cannot use it themselves, what hope do we have? But I will not give up. I will not submit to the cruel destiny forced upon me.

“He keeps mentioning ‘pain’ and ‘cruel destiny’…” Frisk mused. “He must have a big justification for doing all of this.”

“Whatever it is, it’s no excuse for several murder attempts! Like hell whatever he went through made him that way, he was evil from birth!”

“U-Undyne, calm down…”

“Sorry, Alphys.”

Entry Number Three

Finally, a solution has appeared. In hindsight, it was so obvious. Although monsters cannot utilise the power of the Darkness, it does not mean they cannot use it altogether. I have created the very first anti-human weapon, an emulation of the Darkness’ power.

Little Schala called it a ‘Gasterblaster’. I think it sounds cute.

When Papyrus read the last line, he dropped the book. “Schala!?”

Frisk raced over to the box and brushed the dust off the photo. “Papyrus! Gaster! You’ve got to see this!”

He held up the photo to the skeletons. The photo was of a group of formal-looking adults alongside three children who looked absurdly out of place. A skeleton monster who bared a striking resemblance to Gaster was standing among the adults, whereas the children at the front looked like a younger version of the skeleton brothers and the girl they met in Happy Town.

Papyrus squinted at the photo. He felt like an idiot for not noticing it earlier – those people were also in the pictures Sans had!
“What could this mean? Were we involved in all of this from the moment we were born?”

Frisk gazed at the book. “The only way to find out is to keep reading.”

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Entry Number Four

It feels like once again, life holds happiness in front of me, only to snatch it away. Gasterblasters are powerful – strong enough to dust a monster in a single strike, but they are still not enough against the strength of humans. They are not even close to a sliver of the Darkness’ strength.

However, I did not come this far by giving up. I must stay determined and continue my experiments in search of the ultimate weapon.

---

Entry Number Five

It has been a long time – years – since I last wrote in here. Finally, I have created a working version of the first effective anti-human weapon. Once its development finishes, it will be a grand and unstoppable force. I have planted the seeds of hope for the future. I will persevere. We will persevere.

---

Entry Number Six

I take back what I said initially. The first successful Gasterblaster is undeniably powerful against humans, but it cannot stand alone – from the predicted attributes of the fully-developed weapon, it will not be powerful enough to keep up with human armies. Against large swarms of enemies, it will eventually fall.

I must perfect the design. We are so close…! Just a little more, and a new world will open for us all.

---

Entry Number Seven

Sans is growing up quite well. I should really be around him more, but I am far too busy leading development on the ultimate weapon. The other scientists – the ones who weren’t assigned to the weapon’s development – are doing a wonderful job of raising him, anyway.

Schala and Sans have become quite fond of each other. It only makes sense, as they are the closest in age here. His first words were apparently “Big Sis!”

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Everyone whirled around to face Sans. The short skeleton shrugged.

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Entry Number Eight

It took two years of intense trial and error, but at last, I have perfected everything. The ultimate weapon is complete. The Apocalypse Cannon, the weapon capable of razing armies and entire continents to the ground, is a massive success. Nothing will be able to stand against it. No army, no weapon will be able to even scratch it. If I wanted to, I could obliterate the planet in an instant.

I have gone through hundreds of live specimens in order to reach this level. Creating and destroying them, through tests of durability and destructive power… But now. I have reached perfection. This is even more reliable than human SOUL absorption – a completely independent force. I will present this plan to the King at once. This is an amazing breakthrough!
When Papyrus turned the page and saw the next entry, he flinched.

“What does it say?” Frisk asked.

“Something very sinister is going on here…” Papyrus turned the book to the group. The entire page was filled with harsh, jagged scribbles and curses.

The skeleton turned the book back to face him and squinted at it. Running his hand along the page, he could feel the pressure with which the pen had been pushed down. If he looked carefully, he could make out the words “DAMN YOU” and “HYPOCRITE” repeating in uneven patterns. Expecting the worst, he pressed on…

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Entry Number Ten

I have changed my mind. Even though the King rejected the Apocalypse Cannon, I can still use the Darkness. Ordinary monsters cannot use magic on the same level as it, and I cannot use the Apocalypse Cannon. However… What if I brought the Darkness into this dimension?

Using a special machine, I have brought a piece of the Darkness into this dimension in the form of a crystal. Just from holding it, I can feel the raw power emanating from it. I have decided to call this crystal a ‘Fragment’.

---

Entry Number Eleven

There has not been much time to write in here. Once again, I completely forgot about this book for years. Schala is maturing to be a fine young lady, and those brothers are showing a lot of promise.

Papyrus’ birthday was fun. This was the first time I could actually attend. Even after Papyrus’ birth, I still have no time to take care of those two. However, the other researchers are still doing a fine job. Schala especially. Those three are inseparable.

---

Entry Number Twelve

Sans is old enough to start helping around the labs. He’s doing remarkably well for a boy his age. I’ve managed to use the Fragment I extracted to create the world’s first ‘Fragment User’ – a monster whose abilities surpass all others with the help of the Darkness. Schala volunteered, and she has a lot of potential. She is already demonstrating amazing power over water.

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Entry Number Thirteen

There has been a huge disaster. Just after Schala was made a Fragment User, a terrible Anomaly in the time-space continuum has been detected.

Earlier, other researchers produced an experimental machine to work with Determination before it was deemed too dangerous to use with monsters. Determination – DT for short – had theoretical time-travelling properties. In theory, it would have been able to grant its host the ability to travel back in time, like saving or loading in a videogame. However, we found that the machine simply did not work. No matter how much DT we extracted from the SOULs, the machine simply would not start up.
By mere coincidence, when I passed by it with a Fragment, the machine started up. It did not give me the power of time travel, but instead, it projected an overview of the future timelines.

I found something horrifying. The Fragments give monsters the power to surpass humans, and with it, the ability to handle the Determination to surpass fate. A massive Anomaly has appeared, causing a destabilisation in the world.

I do not know whether it is a rogue Fragment User of the future, or a natural result of the Darkness being drawn into this world. By drawing the Fragments into this world, the future has been destabilised. With the future destabilised, everything will end. The Darkness will consume all.

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Entry Number Fourteen

I no longer know what to do. I have not told anyone else. How could I? They would blame me for it, and then...

I will research more into the Darkness. I must find a way to prevent this catastrophe!

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Entry Number Fifteen

Nothing I do is working. I have been spending all my time – sacrificing family, friendship, and even sleep – to stop the Anomaly.

I took the Fragment and returned it to the Darkness in secret. I took a crowbar and destroyed the DT samples. So why!? Why isn’t anything I do helping!? The prediction hasn’t changed. The Darkness will still kill everyone.

Papyrus, Sans, and Schala are in my face even more now – can’t they tell I’m trying to work!? Those kids are so damn annoying!

---

Entry Number Sixteen

I cannot believe this! I have been stripped of my status as the royal scientist by Asgore. That traitor Alvin told him about how I have been ‘acting dangerously’!

I only have one day to gather all my things before I leave. I cannot leave the Darkness. Not with how everything is now. We could perish at any moment. Tomorrow, or in ten years. I may even die of natural causes before the Darkness appears, but what about my children? How did everything end like this?

No… I will take responsibility. I am going to finish everything. It will be risky, but I have no other choice.

If my plan fails, I write this to whoever may find this book. You, whoever you are… Please. I beg of you. Do the right thing. Stop the Darkness. Save this world. That is all I ask.

---

Papyrus put the book down, a heavy feeling in his chest. “I don’t know… what to think about Wingdings anymore.”

“He must have changed his mind about wanting someone else to help.” Sans pointed out. “That entry was dated back to seven years ago.”
“A-are there any more entries?”

Following Alphys’ suggestion, Papyrus turned the page. “Dark, darker yet darker. The Darkness keeps growing. The shadows cutting deeper. Photon readings negative. This next experiment seems very very interesting… What do you two think?”

“…What.”

“The handwriting’s quite shaky. He must have been in an unstable mental state at the time.”

“Well!? Don’t leave us hanging! Is there anything else?”

Papyrus flipped to the final written entry. “Hey, this one was written just two months ago!”

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Entry Number Eighteen

My worst fears have been confirmed. I have seen it firsthand. This world is doomed if I do not do something.

Somehow, I managed to come back to reality, with my own body having become a Fragment. The Fragments have been scattered in this world, and to fully control the Darkness, I must reclaim them, no matter the cost.

I also sense the Apocalypse Cannon somewhere within this town, too. I fear the worst – I must avoid it while collecting the Fragments, or else not only I, but the entire planet will be in immediate danger. I cannot use my powers on it without activating it, but if I could somehow have my Fragment Users seek out and destroy it, that would be for the best.

I must protect this world, no matter what. I will no longer be pathetic or powerless!!

_The Apocalypse Cannon, the superweapon to destroy humanity… is in this very town…_ Papyrus snuck a glance at Gaster uneasily. Everything was starting to make sense, but not in a way Papyrus wanted. Why Gaster felt so familiar. How Papyrus and Sans used to live in Happy Town. Wingdings’ full name. And, how the amnesiac started to look like a ‘Gasterblaster’… It couldn’t be. Papyrus slammed the book shut and faced his friends.

“We’re finding Schala and Alvin! They’ll know what’s going on!”

The group dashed out of Wingdings’ house, towards the entry to the phantom town. Papyrus prayed that his fears wouldn’t be confirmed.

TO BE CONTINUED
By walking through Ebott City with the intent to find it in their hearts, the group managed to enter the phantom town once more. Happy Town looked a lot nicer than Papyrus remembered. The buildings were still abandoned and decaying, but the dreary weather had cleared up. Rays of sunshine were now shining through the clouds that blanketed the sky.

“If I recall correctly… Schala and Alvin’s apartment was in this direction.” Papyrus guided his friends through the desolate town back to the small abode. He politely knocked on the door, and the greyscale girl answered.

“Hey, you’re back. Did you find my-” The girl’s jaw dropped, the mug she was holding with her magic hitting the ground and shattering.

“Schala!?” Alvin joined her at the door, only for his eyes to go wide at the sight of Papyrus and the others.

The girl started trembling, her eyes going watery. “P-P…” Without warning, she threw herself on the skeleton, tears pouring from her eyes. She sobbed uncontrollably, pressing her head into his chest. “Papyrus…! You survived…! You survived…!” Papyrus was at a complete loss for words. He hesitated before gently hugging her. Being the shoulder to cry on for a girl he barely knew was awkward, to say the least. But if what he read in the diary was true, she definitely needed it.

The mood in the mall was tense. The apartment was too small to house everyone comfortably, so the group moved to the abandoned mall for the two Happy Town residents to explain everything. Alvin and Schala stood before the group, as if they were about to give a speech to a crowd.

Alvin hummed, looking carefully at the faces of the friends. “We can clearly see you now. The Darkness must be drawing closer to your world. Be careful.”

Schala looked at Papyrus directly in the eye. “You didn’t recognise me when you first came here. How much do you remember?”

Papyrus scrunched his eyes shut and put a hand on his forehead, then opened them back up and shook his head. “It’s no good. I can’t remember a thing before the past six years. Although… there was a dream I had a while ago…”

“What about?”

“A young me and Sans making it to Snowdin. Sans nearly gave up, but I said that the two of us had to live. For your sake, I presume. However, I can’t recall anything at all about what my life was like in Happy Town.”

Alvin stroked his chin. “I see… Being erased from your plane of existence must have erased us from everyone’s memories. Like one big form of perception blindness – everyone subconsciously accepted the ‘holes’ in their memories as normal.”

“In that case, would the Darkness drawing closer to our world cause everyone’s memories to return?” Frisk asked.

Schala shrugged. “I don’t know. It’s never happened before, so we can’t tell.” She looked back at Papyrus. “If you don’t remember, then it’s my duty to jog your memory. Although…” She winced at
the recollection of a distant memory. “Some things are better off forgotten. Do you really want to know?”

Papyrus nodded, conviction blazing in his eyes. “Yes, I do. I need to know the truth behind what happened here. Not just for my sake, but for my brother’s and friend’s, too.”

“Alright.” The girl took a deep breath, then began. “We actually grew up together. Your full names are Papyrus and Sans Gaster. Dr Wingdings Gaster, the man who caused all of this… is your father.”

Those words stabbed directly into Papyrus’ chest. “What!? That… can’t be…”

“What about me?” Gaster asked.

“What about you?”

“Gas- I mean, this man has amnesia.” Papyrus explained. “The name ‘Gaster’ was all he could remember, and that’s what we’ve been calling him. Do you know if there was a third sibling?”

“If there was, I never met him.”

“Oh.”

“However…” Schala scrutinised the amnesiac’s features. “You do bear a striking resemblance to him, sans the horns. Maybe there was a third son I never met. With how involved he was with his research, I wouldn’t be surprised if he completely forgot about you.”

“I still can’t believe he did that in the end…” Alvin muttered. “He was always so kind… Even though he was the designer of such powerful anti-human weapons, you would have never been able to tell from the kind of person he was. He wouldn’t have hurt a soul. He couldn’t have hurt a soul – he was much too frail to, both emotionally and physically.”

“In hindsight, it wasn’t unexpected. When I look back on how he acted before he carried it out, he was quite troubled. Even before his first plan – the Apocalypse Cannon – was rejected, he always had a sad look in his eyes.”

Papyrus felt a lump form in his throat. “Carried it out? You don’t mean…”

“Yes. He massacred this town.”

That fateful day…

“It sure is a shame you guys have to move out…” Schala leaned against a tree, soaking up the last of light from the artificial sun installed in the town.

Papyrus grimaced. “I’m sorry Dad acted that way in front of you…”

“Don’t worry, the three of us did our best. Trying to throw a surprise party for him was the best we could do. No one could’ve expected him to snap at us like that.”

“Yeah.” Sans nodded. “It’s for the best that we told Alvin about the way Dad’s been acting. If everything kept going the way it did, he would’ve worked himself to death.”

“You’re right. I just wish we could spend more time together.”

“But the time we did spend together was awesome!”
Schala smiled at Papyrus.

“In fact…” Sans reached into his jacket and pulled out a drawing. “I drew this for you. It’s so we’ll never forget each other.”

“Ah! Thank you.” Schala took the picture, grasping it using telekinesis.

“Well, that’s all. Take care.” The two skeleton brothers began to walk away.

“Wait!”

“?”

“You guys have already packed, right? How about we have one last sleepover together? We can play games, watch movies… It’ll be fun!”

Sans hesitated, but Papyrus ran back towards Schala with a huge grin on his face. “Of course! That sounds great!”

Papyrus barely restrained himself from smashing down his controller, grinding his teeth. How was his older brother so impossibly good at *Pink Dark Boy: All-Star Tourney*!?

Schala whistled. “Damn, Sans, you’re good at this!”

“Big Sis! That’s a dirty word!”

“Haha, sorry, Papyrus!”

“Heh, I’m nothing special. I bet it’s just ‘cause of my lucky charm.” Sans proudly held up a golden badge. “Besides, I have this friend online who’s way more into these kinds of things.”

“I hope you’ll be able to meet her in person one day. It’d be wonderful if you two managed to make friends wherever you’re headed.”

“Sis, I overheard, don’t you have a younger cousin?”

“Yeah, his name’s Kid. He lives with his parents and sister in Snowdin. It’s a pretty great place. If you two went there, you could be like his big brothers!”

“Me? Nah. One younger brother’s enough to deal with.”

“If Sans won’t, then I will!” Papyrus boasted. “I’m going to be the best big brother ever!”

“Good luck – with how energetic he gets, you’ll definitely need it!”

The trio shared a laugh, before screams pierced the air. Schala’s father burst into the room, trembling and pale. “Dad!? What happened!”

“Schala! Get out of here! Dr Gaster’s… Dr Gaster’s-” A high-pitched whine sounded from somewhere behind him. The researcher screamed and tackled Schala away! The girl hit the skeleton brothers, pushing them against the wall. A beam of searing white light tore through the air, blowing the man’s head off. He turned to dust instantly.

“D-Dad…” Schala trembled at the sight of the pile of dust that used to be her father. She had no time to react before an aura of utter dread was cast over the area. The three could feel it. A choking,
eldritch miasma… Something that did not belong in this world. Something that should not belong in this world.

Schala leapt to her feet and faced the source of the beam. The man standing before her barely resembled the kind doctor who entrusted her with his children. The kind, hardworking skeleton she knew since was a little girl… no longer existed. The monster was hunched over, a dark aura encircling him. A maniacal smile distorted his features into a hellish mockery of what they used to be.

The madman shambled down the corridor towards them. Schala narrowed her eyes. She launched a water blast at the window, shattering it. “Papyrus! Sans! Get out of here! It doesn’t matter where, just get away from this place!”

“B-but… what about you?”

“I’ll be fine! I’ll catch up with you guys later. Just go!”

The two children hesitated, then nodded and climbed out the window. Schala turned towards Wingdings and charged! Water danced around her before forming blades. She shot the attack directly at the doctor’s neck, going for a killing blow!

However, despite the water blades being powerful enough to cut through even stone and steel, Wingdings hadn’t even been scratched by them! He only cackled a dry, rattling laugh.

The demon in monster form raised his arms, the dark aura gathering around them. Two swords as black as night materialised in his hands. Wingdings swung them at Schala. The reptilian girl was quick enough on her feet to avoid it, but the doctor’s swing kept going and sliced through the wall. One touch was enough to obliterate the entire section of the building. Without the support to hold the ceiling up, the house caved in!

Schala used her water manipulation to form a barrier, protecting herself from the rubble, and escaped the building unharmed. She turned back to the wreckage her house used to be. Wingdings was standing amidst the destruction, completely uninjured.

A burning feeling surged in girl’s chest. The house she grew up in was no more. The people she loved were dead. Papyrus and Sans’ lives were ruined. All because of him…! “Why!? Why are you doing this!? You had great friends and a wonderful family, so why the hell would you throw it all away over some research!?”

The doctor only cackled in response.

Schala growled. In that case… She sent a surge of water at Wingdings’ head, coalescing into a ball. She would make him drown!

But it didn’t work. Although a normal person would have long-since died, the mad doctor didn’t even notice the fact that Schala was trying to drown him. He continued his slow advance towards her. Was there nothing she could do!? When she looked more closely at the aura around Wingdings, she could see there was a thin strand of it leading away from him. Was that where he was getting all that strength from?

The girl dashed in that direction. Wingdings lumbered away, seemingly uninterested in pursuit. However, the moment she brushed against the tether, the doctor whipped his head her way. With a sudden surge of speed, he sprinted towards her, brandishing his swords. Schala leaped forward into a roll, narrowly avoiding her head being sliced off. His attack sliced through a nearby building,
causing the foundation to crumble.

Schala used a high-pressure blast of water to knock the rubble away and kept running. The doctor’s actions proved it: that was his weak point! With renewed vigour, the girl ran faster. But Wingdings wouldn’t allow it.

As Schala passed through a narrow alleyway, another whine of a laser charge sounded from behind her. *A Gasterblaster…?! Damn it!* The exit was too far away to escape the beam, and the beam would cover the entire area within the alley. “Then the only way to go is up!” The girl crouched down, then jumped. As she did, a water spout from underneath her pushed her into the sky! The beam completely missed her.

From high in the sky, the girl could see where the tether was leading. The dark energy was emanating from within the research labs. With the help of her water magic, she blasted herself towards the building like a monster-shaped missile.

With another spout of water to soften her landing, she made her way into the building. The choking atmosphere grew even thicker. Schala started to find it hard to breathe.

Regardless, she persevered and continued to follow the line of dark energy. She passed through several nondescript rooms before arriving at an ominously-glowing machine. *Is this where Dr Gaster’s getting all his power from…? If I break it, will that stop him?*

An explosion startled Schala out of her thoughts. How did Wingdings catch up to her so quickly!? The doctor hadn’t even bothered to open the doors. He charged straight through the walls and everything!

*Shit! There’s no time! If I don’t do this, the Underground is doomed!* Schala gathered her water into a sphere the size of a beach ball, then launched it at the machine with all her might.

Sparks flew. Wingdings roared in pain. Then… the world was ripped apart. Happy Town was no more.

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**Snowdin**

Even though the inside of the inn was perfectly warm, the two brothers were still trembling. “Here! This is for you.” The innkeeper returned, carrying a plate with two mugs of hot chocolate. Neither of them took it. “Where are you kids from? Can you tell me where your mum and dad are?”

“I-I…” Papyrus trembled. He blinked and shook his head a few times, before looking back up. “I… don’t know.”

*CRASH!*

Sans sprung up and ran out of the inn. “Wait!” The innkeeper tried to hold him back, but he was too quick. She was forced to follow the boy outside into the blizzard.

The lady followed the boy to where a smoking wreckage lay. An unknown machine had fallen from above, like a shooting star. But that couldn’t have been correct. Because the Underground had no sky. Where had that machine come from?

The lady also noticed papers had fallen as well. The young skeleton was trying to gather them back up, muttering to himself. “…Important… These are… important…”
“That about sums it up.” Schala sighed. “Dr Gaster plugged himself into his machine in the middle of the night, and went on a rampage. Destroying the machine caused an implosion that sucked Happy Town into the Darkness, but if it weren’t for me doing that, everyone in the Underground may have lost their lives.”

The realisation slowly dawned on Papyrus. Then… the dust in the mall they saw when they first visited was…

“Aah… aaaah…” Gaster weakly moaned and fell to his knees, clutching his head.

“Gaster?” Papyrus reached out to him, but before he could touch him, the amnesiac stumbled to his feet and took off. “Wait!”

“Gaster! Come back!” Papyrus chased his friend through the desolate town. His friend didn’t slow down. He made his way to the cliff that marked the portal back into their world, and threw himself off. Papyrus followed suit, falling back to a park in Ebott City.

“Ugh… Gaster!!” Papyrus struggled back up and looked around. It was night-time now, but he could see Gaster’s form slowly limping away, leaning against the trees for support. The young man was heavily breathing, his free hand clutching at his chest and trembling. His legs finally gave out, and he sank to the ground. With Gaster no longer able to move, Papyrus easily caught up to him.

“Gaster-”

Gaster screwed his eyes shut. “No! No! I… I’m not… I’m not…!” He shoved Papyrus back with unexpected strength. “Stay away!”

Papyrus fell on his rear end, dumbfounded. Something horrible was happening to Gaster. Grotesque snaps and crunches echoed throughout the park as the amnesiac writhed on the ground in agony.

His hands warped, the already sharp claws extending while his thumbs became small and useless. Gaster cried out in pain as a tail exploded out of the base of his spine, ripping the previously irremovable material that his ‘clothes’ comprised of. Spikes erupted on his back, causing even more tears in the black material covering his body. The material that formed his shoes was reduced to scraps by his new claws.

Papyrus’ mind froze over at the ghastly sight before him. He didn’t know what was happening to Gaster or why. He could only watch, paralysed by fear, as his friend continued to violently mutate.

Gaster’s bones creaked as his body grew. His ‘clothes’ were finally torn to shreds by his expanding frame. The small horns on his head stretched out further, becoming long and vicious, and his short muzzle extended into a sharp-toothed maw. A massive crack as his lower jaw split in half marked the completion of the transformation.

The beast’s jaws swung open, revealing rapidly-intensifying glow. Papyrus recovered his wits in time to dodge. The laser narrowly missed, hitting the ground instead. A huge crater was blown open as the attack tore through the earth. Papyrus shuddered at the thought of what the laser would have done to him. What power…! Is this what the Gasterblasters were made for!?

Gaster… if the creature before him could even be called that anymore, shut its jaw, turned tail, then ran. No! He’s heading for the inner city! Channelling his energy into his legs with Bonetrousle’s help, the skeleton leaped high into the sky in pursuit of the fleeing dragon.

He jumped from tree to tree, then when the park ended, from building to building. The beast charged
through the city, citizens screaming and running away. Papyrus noticed the route Gaster was taking looked familiar. He was heading for the area where Frisk and Sans fought Wingdings! But that area was…!! “No!” Papyrus shouted in vain. “Please! Stop!”

The dragon kept running, unheeding of his words. Papyrus jumped down, directly in front of him, and pushed him back with Bonetrousle. Even with his Blue Attack, holding the beast back was insanely difficult. His arms felt like they were burning as he tried to halt the monster’s advance. “I… said… STOP!”

The creature growled, a purplish-black smoke pouring from its nasal cavity. Papyrus yelped in surprise when something pinned him against a building. “Gah…!” He shot one of his blades… from his tail!? And with such accuracy, too! The weapon had struck through the space between his ribcage and his pelvis, pinning him against the building and only harming his school uniform.

The blade was much larger and more jagged than the regular version. No matter how hard he pulled, he couldn’t get it out. He looked back at the rapidly dwindling figure of the skeletal dragon. Ugh… whatever!

Shrrrrrip! Papyrus tore himself away from the blade, leaving half of his shirt stuck to the building and his midriff exposed. He could always mend his clothes later.

The field where Frisk and Sans confronted the culprit behind the Fragment User attacks had been sealed off by the city council. The tear in reality from Wingdings’ final attack remained, drawing in and destroying anyone foolish enough to enter.

Papyrus made it in time to see the beast standing in front of it. It backed away a few paces, then charged straight at it!

“DON’T DO IT!” Bonetrousle grabbed onto the dragon’s tail and yanked it back.

The behemoth roared, turning and splitting its jaw to prepare a laser, but Papyrus clamped it shut before it could fire.

He leaped onto the back of the hellbeast and used his Blue Attack on himself to pin it down. On the dragon’s back, he could feel the immense force coming from it as it struggled to stand back up! It wanted to fall into the Darkness, no matter what! Slowly but surely, it was crawling towards the rift!

Papyrus growled. “Gasteeerrrrr!” He released his Blue Attack, jumped in front of the beast, and slapped it as hard as he could!

At the sound of its… no, his name, the dragon whined and backed away from the tear in reality. It slumped to the ground and curled up.

Papyrus’ exhaustion finally caught up with him. He walked over to Gaster’s giant mutated body and sat next to it. Gaster… what are you? If you’re not Wingdings Gaster, then what does that make you…?

TO BE CONTINUED
With a noise that would make anyone cringe, Sans skidded to the ground, the bone he summoned clattering down next to him. “Damn it…” The young man pushed himself back up and limped over to his motorbike. “Not yet… I-I can still…”

“So that’s where you were!”

Sans spun around, surprised. “Al!? What are you doing all the way out here?”

“What are you doing all the way out here? I’ve been looking everywhere for you! Papyrus called me, worried that you’ve been kidnapped or killed! Do you know what time it is?”

“Yeah, so I got up early. Nothin’ wrong with that.”

Alphys lifted up Sans’ arm, inspecting the dirt that was caked to his clothes. “What on earth have you been doing to yourself?”

Sans scratched the back of his head. “Well… for once in my life, I was training. Y’see, I couldn’t do a thing to Wingdings without the Fragment-powered kids backing me up. He’s definitely going to attack again, and with the power he wields… We need to find something on our side to counter it.

“My time magic, as useful as it was back in the Underground, isn’t an option. Even with my badge cracked, I still can’t access it. I was thinking of trying to remove the badge completely, but…” Sans shuddered. “I don’t want to end up like those kids. They completely lost themselves to the Fragment’s power. I need to work with what I have now.”

“How does riding your bike around an empty field help with that?”

“There’s a theory I wanted to try out. Actually, it’s more like a guess.” The beastly skeleton produced a spinning bone. “The power of infinity: the Super Spin. With the right force and the correct momentum, it would be possible to produce a fantastic power, enough to rival even Wingdings’ terrifying abilities. But I can’t do it on my own. My powers as a Fragment User allow me to harness the forces I’ve called the Ripple and the Spin, but to use the Super Spin, I need something more. Something that adds to the Spin’s energy.”

“Have you found it?”

“Nope. I thought if I rode my bike at a high enough speed, I could use it, but it still doesn’t produce anything more than a regular attack.” Sans huffed as he sat down, resting against his collapsed motorbike. A bottle entered his field of vision. “Thanks, Al. You always know how to make me feel better.” He took the ketchup and chugged it down in a few gulps.

“Still… I can’t believe what happened in your past.”

“I can’t either. I never thought I’d be related to Wingdings, of all people. I’m just glad I didn’t forget you. Maybe we can thank anime for that?”

Alphys’ phone buzzed. “Ah, excuse me.” The lizard monster took out her phone. When she read the message she received, she did a double take. “WHAT!? Why now?”

“What’s wrong?”
“Mettaton’s coming to town!”

When Papyrus answered the door, there were small bags under his eyesockets. “Good afternoon, Frisk.”

“Everything okay with Gaster?”

“Yes. He’s still quite shaken, but he’s faring better. I took the day off school to keep him comfortable.”

“Can we see him?” Flowey asked, popping up from beneath Frisk’s collar.

“Of course. He’s resting in the garage.”

The group moved into the garage, where the beast was resting. Papyrus had moved his car out and set up a makeshift bedroom. Two mattresses were pushed together to fit Gaster’s large frame, and blankets were draped over it. For the warming weather, a portable fan was installed next to the bed.

Frisk cautiously approached the dragon. “Gaster?”

“Hello, Frisk…” Gaster’s voice was barely recognisable. It had deepened and distorted into something as demonic as his new appearance. Regardless, the amnesiac’s anxiety was still as clear as day.

“I know a lot’s happened recently, and you must be feeling really scared. Soooo…” Frisk reached into his blazer and pulled out a ticket.

“What’s that?”

“They’ve finished filming *Pink Dark Boy: The Movie*. The cast are coming to Ebott City for an exclusive premier screening! This is a ticket for it. Undyne, Alphys, and Asgore are going, too.”

Papyrus groaned. “ Seriously, Frisk!? A movie!? Is now *really* the time? There’s a doomsday weapon capable of wiping out Earth in this very city, and you want Gaster to see a movie about overly-flamboyant men posing at each other!?”

“His tail’s wagging.” Frisk pointed out.

Papyrus’ eyes bugged out at the sight of his friend’s tail moving at lightning speed, making an increasingly large hole in the floor. “Oh, fine. You can go.”

“Thank you!”

A loud, awkward rumble suddenly penetrated the air. Frisk laughed nervously, rubbing the back of his head. “Ahaha… Sorry, guys! I guess I haven’t had enough lunch!”

“I have some snacks for you in the kitchen! Feel free to take some.”

Papyrus led the younger student back through the house into the kitchen. He opened the pantry and brought out a box of biscuits, which he then poured into a bowl. “Now, don’t spoil your appetite for dinner. You may be hungry now, but these snacks don’t have the proper nutrition that normal meals provide.”

When he offered the bowl to Frisk, the boy didn’t take any. He took off his blazer, revealing Flowey’s vines wrapped around his phone. “Thanks for playing that noise for me, Flowey. Papyrus,
I’m grateful for your offer, but I’m not actually hungry. There’s something important I wanted to talk to you about. Something that Gaster shouldn’t hear.”

Papyrus tilted his head to the side. “What is that?”

Flowey looked at Papyrus in the eyes. His expression was dead serious. “Frisk and I think he’s Apocalypse Cannon Wingdings wrote about.”

The skeleton gulped, making his way to the table and taking a seat to steady himself. “I see… Honestly, that’s what I’ve been beginning to suspect too. His past is a mystery to even himself, yet I always had this strange feeling around him. Almost like… nostalgia? He also confessed to me earlier today that he felt the same way.

“If I really am part of the Gaster family, it would make sense that the weapon my father built recognises me on some level.” Papyrus reflected on the day he first met Gaster. That would also explain why he’s the only one who doesn’t get carsick from my driving… He looked back up and continued. “On top of that, he’s a Gasterblaster Beast now. Wingdings wrote that the Gasterblasters were prototypes for his ultimate weapon. Although…”

“Although?”

“Wingdings also wrote that whoever controlled the Apocalypse Cannon could devastate the planet if they wished. Gaster is much more powerful as he is now, but I don’t see how he could destroy Earth.”

Flowey grimaced. “I wonder about that…”

That night, at Starlight Cinemas…

“You’re planning to guard Mettaton’s group?”

“Yeah.” Undyne confirmed.

Alphys looked away from Gaster and Asgore, fidgeting. “It was too late for us to cancel them coming here… Mettaton refused because he couldn’t let down his fans. The least we can do is stop anything with Wingdings or his Fragment Users from affecting him while he’s in town.”

“Good luck, you two.” Asgore pat both Alphys’ and Undyne’s shoulders reassuringly. “Even though you don’t need it. I believe you two will do a wonderful job!”

The lizard monster blushed. “R-really? T-thank you so much! We’ll put a hundred and ten percent into this!”

Undyne gave a thumbs-up. “With us around, keeping Mettaton safe should be a cinch!”

With a click, the large doors at the front of the building opened. “It looks like it’s time. Should we head in?”

The cinema lobby had been redecorated for the movie’s premiere. Lots of merchandise was on sale, which Undyne and Alphys happily bought. Mettaton and the other key actors were also there to greet the audience, offering autographs.

The area quickly filled up with fans, both from the surface and the Underground. The lobby quickly
became cramped, so Asgore and Gaster moved towards the cinema while the girls stuck to the actors to make sure nothing weird happened.

Looking down at the foreleg Papyrus helpfully stuck his ticket to, Gaster saw that his seat was in one of the front rows. Even though his new body structure should have been completely alien, the beast somehow possessed an instinctual knowledge of how to move around on all fours. He easily and fluidly manoeuvred his larger frame through the smaller doorways, turning parts of his body into goo and squeezing it through the openings when he wouldn’t fit in solid.

The behemoth managed to make his way to his seat with Asgore, but jumped at least a metre in the air with a yelp when he bumped straight into figure resembling a bedsheets ghost.

“Oh, no… I’m so sorry… I didn’t mean to frighten you… I was just going to get some snacks…”

“N-no, it’s fine.” Gaster stepped aside to let him through.

As he passed by Asgore, he looked closer at the ghost. “Ah…! Are you Napstablook? From Blook Acres?”

“Yes… That’s me…” Napstablook turned to face him. “Oh… it’s you. What was your name, again…?”

A big grin appeared on the goat monster’s face. “Long time no see! I’ve listened to some of your albums. I’m glad you’re doing better financially.”

“Thank you… I’m happy my music’s appreciated.” Napstablook smiled back slightly, before continuing up the isle towards the lobby.

Gaster gazed at his seat. It was enough for an adult human or monster, but for someone of his stature? “How am I going to fit in here…?”

“You could sit in the isle.” Asgore suggested. “You’re at the front anyway, so the other cinemagoers shouldn’t be too bothered.”

“Ah, thank you.”

A crash and an enraged shout suddenly echoed out. The dragon and goat turned their heads to see an angry round monster yelling at the ghost. “What the hell, man!? You made me spill my snacks!”

“I’m sorry… I didn’t mean to…”

The round monster growled. “‘Sorry’ won’t clean up this mess! Cinema food’s damn expensive, and I bought extra-large serves just for this occasion! What’re you going to do about that!?”

Napstablook brought out his wallet. “I’m very sorry… I’ll pay for your snacks. How much were they?”

“1200G.”

Gaster rose up and bounded towards the two. “H-hey! You can’t do that!”

“It’s fine…” Napstablook sighed. “I can just go without snacks this time.”

“WAIT!”

“Wha-Gah!”
Undyne and Alphys stood before the monster with their arms folded. “Care to explain what you’re doing, punk?”

The round monster scowled, but withdrew to his seat. The scaly couple took their seats in the row next to Asgore just as the lights began to dim.

“Man~! That movie was kickass!” Undyne stretched as she walked out of the cinema.

“Indeed… it was wonderful.”

“I composed the movie’s soundtrack… Did you like it?”

“Yeah, it was awesome! It really captured the passion of the characters!” The fish lady looked at her girlfriend. “Your thoughts, Alphys?”

“U-uh, well… the soundtrack was fine, but… I don’t think it transferred well from animation into live action.”

Gaster nodded in agreement. “It was a little disappointing… Mettaton exhibited passion, but it felt like he was more concentrated on showing himself off than focusing on the actual film.” A dark look appeared on his features. “I… don’t like people like that.”

Undyne raised an eyebrow at the skeletal dragon’s statement. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Tears started to well up in Napstablook’s eyes. “Don’t you like my cousin…?”

Gaster felt his face burn. “A-ah, well, I mean… It ruins it for the other actors! N-no! I mean… it’s inconsiderate! No, wait-”

Undyne slapped him hard on his side. “Geez, calm down, you’re starting to sound like Alphys!”

“Sorry…”

Asgore checked his wristwatch. “It’s about time I head home now. See you around.” The goat man headed to the carpark, joining the bustling mass exodus of vehicles.

“Later, Asgore!” Undyne faced Gaster and Napstablook. “Alphys and I should head back, too.”

“Enjoy the rest of your evening…” Napstablook waved as the couple left. Now it was just the ghost and the dragon among the noisy crowd.

“I should go home; Papyrus might get worried if I’m out any longer. It was nice to meet you, Napstablook.” Gaster turned to leave, but the ghost followed him.

“My hotel is this way too… Can I come with you…?”

“Okay. It’s safer if we’re in a group.”

As Gaster and Napstablook moved away from the cinema, the overpowering chatter of the crowd quickly faded. Between the two introverts, there was a comfortable silence, the only noise being the skeletal beast’s footfalls on the footpath.

However, that silence was quickly broken by the roar of an engine! A car swerved from around the corner, coming directly at the two! “Napstablook! Look out!” Gaster tackled the ghost out of the way. The tires screeched against the road as the driver attempted to avoid the monsters. The car
rotated like a spinning top, completely out of control. A figure leaped out from the vehicle just before it crashed into a building.

The smell of burning rubber permeated the area. Gaster looked down at the ghost pinned beneath his forelegs. “Napstablook! Are you alright!”

“Yes… I’m fine… But what about the driver…?”

The dragon rushed over to the man crouched on the ground. Much to his surprise, he was completely uninjured. “Wait a minute… You’re that monster from the cinema!”

The grumpy round man rose to his feet. “Yeah. And you two owe me a new car.”

“What-? Why!? We didn’t even touch it!”

“My car crashed ‘cause of you two idiots! If you weren’t in the way, I wouldn’t have had to swerve like that!”

“We were on the footpath! You were the one driving so wildly!” Gaster noticed a strange rumble coming from his chest. He was growling. Normally, he would have just bowed his head submissively and apologised, but not tonight! The dragon felt compelled to stand his ground.

“Wait… please, stop…” Napstablook wiggled in between the two and pushed them apart. “I’ll pay for the car. I have enough money.”

“Napstablook, there’s no need to…”

“Really. This causes the least trouble.”

“Good!” The monster huffed. “The car cost me a fortune. Gimme your phone number so we can meet tomorrow afternoon. Don’t chicken out.”

Napstablook told the round man his phone number, which he then wrote down on a notepad. “Okay… I’ll see you tomorrow, uh…”

“Astigmatism.”

The next day, after school…

“So… How did gardening go?”

“Fine, thank you. Not having thumbs anymore is an issue, but my tail’s quite useful. It’s more dextrous than it looks.”

Despite everything that happened, Gaster still insisted on going back to Golden Flower Academy to help Asgore with gardening. Even when stuck as a Gasterblaster Beast, he still felt that he had to earn his keep in return for Papyrus sheltering him. The skeleton thought that he had good work ethic, but further questions were raised. Was that part of Gaster’s gratitude, or was that aspect of his personality something he was engineered with? Loyal to his ‘master’, no matter what…

The skeleton decided to change the subject to get his mind off it. “Are we going to see Napstablook now?”

“Yes, please. Thank you again for agreeing to come with me.”
After Gaster returned home, he immediately told Papyrus about Napstablook’s run-in with Astigmatism. He begged Papyrus to follow Napstablook to negotiate – if the ghost went to Astigmatism alone, he would definitely be ripped off.

The two headed for hotel Napstablook was staying. The ghost emerged from the building just as the skeletons approached. Before Napstablook could see them, Papyrus quickly ushered Gaster away, hiding from the ghost. “Let’s stay out of his sight for now. We should make sure he actually needs our help first.”

The two skeleton monsters tailed the ghost into the inner city, drawing as little attention to themselves as possible. Napstablook stayed focused on the road in front of him, so despite Gaster’s large frame, as long as they stayed a certain distance away, they wouldn’t be spotted.

Eventually, Napstablook entered the central park – the same one that Sans always sold hotdogs at, and where Gaster mutated into what he currently was. Papyrus and Gaster were so focused on tailing the ghost, they didn’t notice the soccer ball heading in their direction until it was too late.

*BONK!* The ball whacked Gaster straight on the muzzle. The beast growled and turned in the direction it had come from. He lowered his body into a stance reminiscent of a dog about to attack. Three human primary school kids – no older than ten – were trembling in fear of the giant monster they accidentally provoked.

“Gaster…?” Papyrus put a hand on Gaster’s side.

The dragon flinched at the contact. “Sorry… I didn’t know what I was doing for a moment there.” He corrected his stance, smiled at the kids and nudged the ball back with his muzzle.

One of the kids picked the ball back up. They all slowly backed away from Gaster… before sprinting away as fast as they could.

“Well, that was strange… Anyway! Back to following Napstablook!” But when Papyrus looked back, Napstablook was nowhere to be seen. “Oh, darn it. Gaster, can you-” The skeleton felt a chill run down his spine. Gaster was growling again, staring into the distance while snuffling occasionally. “Gaster-” Before Papyrus could say anything else, the beast roared and lunged at him.

TO BE CONTINUED
“LOOK OOOOUUUUT!”

The beast’s full weight smashed into the skeleton, knocking him away like a person-shaped cannonball. Thanks to Papyrus’ trained reflexes (and an experience of being knocked around), he punched into the ground with Bonetrousle and stopped himself before flew too far.

The skeleton could hear Gaster’s bones cracking. He was struggling to stand, his paws even starting to sink into the ground. His bones rattled intensely as he strained against some kind of invisible force. He was being crushed!

Papyrus sprinted towards the dragon. Another Fragment User attack!? But where was it even coming from? At a loss for what to do, but wanting to do at least something, the skeleton launched a flurry of punches at the air above Gaster.

His fists made contact with something soft and distinctly organic before giving way to air. “Wha…?” Papyrus could have sworn he felt flesh. The attack wasn’t telekinetic in nature, but an actual creature was attacking?

Gaster stood back up. The strange force had vanished, for now. Papyrus and the dragon stood back-to-back, frantically scanning the area for any sign of an enemy.

Amongst the trees and grass, nothing could be seen. The park was completely empty and still. That didn’t stop a giant tree from uprooting itself and flying at the two. “Shadow Sword!” At lightning speed, Gaster’s tail whipped around and launched a blade at it, splitting the tree in half.

However, that wasn’t the end of the attack! A rush of wind blew in his face. Papyrus felt like electricity was coursing through his bones – the same thing a person would feel when knowing danger was coming, and instinctively jumped away, Gaster quickly following.

The ground, like brittle tissue paper, cracked and shattered. A giant, fist-shaped indent was firmly implanted into where they were but a second ago!

That was definitely a close-range attack! Some kind of poltergeist was being conjured up to attack them! “In that case, we’ll just have to find the Fragment User behind this and defeat them! This isn’t like when I first found Bonetrousle in the forest! This is a coordinated attack by someone!”

As if in acknowledgement of this, the invisible enemy’s attacks intensified. Papyrus felt the same rush of wind from its movement and spark of killing intent aimed at him, only twice as intense!

“Papyrus! Get on!” A black rope wrapped around the skeleton and yanked him into the air! He yelped when he landed on one of Gaster’s spikes. As soon as Papyrus landed, the dragon took off!

Papyrus could hear the smashing of earth and feel the impact of the attacks against the ground vibrating through his bones. Looking back, he saw a whole trail of newly-opened holes behind him, increasing in size as they got closer. Their attacker was right behind them…! “Gaster!”

“I know!”

Gaster kept galloping away from the invisible assailant. Papyrus could feel his body heaving, strong puffs of air coming out of his mouth. He wouldn’t be able to run forever.
“Gah!” Papyrus cried out when a sudden pain exploded in his spine. The enemy had swiped at him, taking off one of his spikes. “Damn it…!”

PEW! Gaster’s tail aimed at the space behind him and fired. The blade appeared to lodge into thin air. With a piercing screech of pain, the phantom behind them stopped for a few seconds… before resuming its charge, enraged.

A growl escaped Gaster’s muzzle. “This is ridiculous! Can anything stop that monster!?” He lifted up his tail and fired more Shadow Swords. They moved faster than a bullet, but despite their power and speed, now the invisible apparition wouldn’t even slow down.

Papyrus looked at the wickedly sharp appendage. That’s it! “Gaster! Send me up!”

“Send you up?”

Papyrus shakily steadied himself, trying not to fall off from Gaster’s movements. He grabbed the dragon’s tail and wrapped his arms around it, casting his Blue Attack on himself to decrease his weight. “Point it in the air and fire!”

Gaster almost tried to protest, but quickly realised what his friend was trying to do. “Alright, hold on tight!” Grunting with exertion, he pointed his tail upwards and fired! The blade soared into the sky, taking Papyrus with it!

The horned skeleton looked down at the park beneath him. Hiding amongst the trees was a familiar white figure. Napstablook looked up at him, eyes wide. They made eye contact. Damn… I knew it!

Papyrus released his Blue Attack. Using Bonetrousle like a swimmer kicking off from the pool wall, he dived towards Napstablook. He didn’t even give the ghost time to gasp in shock before knocking him out with a swift chop to the head.

A puddle of goop slithered towards Papyrus and reformed into the dragon. He stared at Napstablook’s prone form. His eyesockets were dark. “Napstablook was the Fragment User…?”

“It looks like it.”

Gaster slammed the ground with a paw. “But how!? Wingdings had to go into hiding! Napstablook is Mettaton’s cousin! He shouldn’t have been able to even get near him!”

“I don’t know! How should I-” Papyrus was abruptly cut off when his body and Gaster’s collided.

“Gah! What the fu-”

“Gaster! Don’t use such dirty lang- Aargh!” The duo was being crushed from both sides, as if they were stuck in a giant trash compactor! With Bonetrousle’s arms, Papyrus pushed back against the invisible hand. “Damn it…! Gaster, can you use your laser?”

The hellbeast’s jaws parted, and blue light streamed out… before a force clamped his mouth shut. “Mmph…! Gmmph…!” Papyrus would have facepalmed if his hands weren’t so full.

“Never mind! Blue Attack, go!” Papyrus increased his weight as much as he could, and put his entire weight into his push. The phantom let out a grunt. Even it had a hard time against the Blue Attack, it seemed. The force crushing the skeletons gave way.

The two wasted no time in taking cover. They sprinted away from the enemy, putting as much distance between themselves and the phantom as they could, and jumped behind a large, study tree.
Papyrus pressed his back to the tree, while Gaster scrunched his body up, trying to make himself as small as possible. Surely, the enemy wouldn’t be able to uproot that…?

The ground tremored. It felt like the entire planet was shaking. “Oh, come on!” With a groan, the tree uprooted. Papyrus and Gaster slowly backed away. Torrents of dirt and small rocks rained down. Then, like a giant sledgehammer, the massive plant… began to fall.

Gaster’s bottom jaw split open with a click. “Not on my watch!” A blinding white laser shot out from his maw. Even after being familiar with it through the special attack he used to have, Papyrus’ chest still tightened at the destructive power the laser possessed. The immense force of the attack blasted most of the tree apart! The parts that the laser didn’t directly hit fell in dozens of small chunks. Bonetrousle took care of the rest, the barrage of fists tearing through the wood like tissue paper.

All that was left was a cloud of dirt that settled… coating two large disembodied hands that appeared to hover in mid-air. Number of fingers aside, they almost resembled enemies from a videogame Papyrus played as a kid. The three-fingered hands rushed at the two!

Papyrus and Gaster leaped out of their path, the attack sweeping through the dirt on the ground and knocking it into the air again. The dirt settled over the invisible force, revealing the enemy’s whole body.

The true form of Papyrus’ opponent would strike fear into a person’s very core. It was a massive, monstrous round giant. No… giant didn’t even begin to describe it. It completely blotted out the sun, casting a shadow over the entire park. It made Knight Knight look like a declawed kitten in comparison. Papyrus wondered how he survived even a single swipe.

But despite this, Papyrus didn’t feel scared. Against the towering foe, the only thing that was going through his mind was strategizing how to take that thing down, now that he could see it. Was it the knowledge of what would happen if he lost? Was it his own determination to save Chara? Or could it be that he had grown?

“Gaster! Get back now! Only attack when I say!”

“Understood!”

Filled with willpower, the skeleton charged forward. He remembered how his direct punches were completely ineffectual against Knight Knight. He doubted it would go any differently with the giant. But he had a new weapon on his side he could put to good use.

As he approached the titanic monster, it lifted a massive limb. It looked even more ginormous up close. Papyrus wondered why it even bothered to use trees as weapons when its own limbs were enough to smash him into paste.

The arm came down, the fist alone covering up his entire field of vision! Papyrus smirked. Just as I thought! Even though it was so huge, super strength and size was all it had! It didn’t have any other special abilities! Right before the arm hit him, he leaped back. It hit nothing but the ground. Papyrus took this chance to leap on top of the hand and ran up the giant’s arm.

The monster tried to swipe him off with its other hand, but a slash from Papyrus’ claws stopped that from happening. He reached the sphere that served as the giant’s head and torso. Summoning Bonetrousle, he unleashed his Blue Attack on the solid mass. “NYEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

The creature wasn’t injured by the barrage, but its body began to sag to the ground from the massive
weight that had been placed on it. Papyrus jumped off as its legs gave way. The creature smashed into the ground face-first.

“Now, Gaster! It’s stunned! Knock ‘em out!” Papyrus commanded, dramatically pointing at the struggling giant. With the beast’s physical strength, knocking it out should be a piece of cake.

The dragon’s eyes blazed with magic. Gaster roared, an awesome sound that stirred something deep within Papyrus’ heart, and bounded at the enemy, fangs bared. With his massive claws, he slashed at the enemy. Papyrus didn’t see any blood drawn, but a metallic odour began to permeate the air.

As abruptly as a record scratch, the horned skeleton’s willpower dropped. “What- no! Gaster! This wasn’t part of the plan!”

Gaster’s expression couldn’t be seen. The dragon licked his claws, his magic-formed tongue lapping up the invisible blood, before tearing at the giant with frightening vigour. The giant howled in pain as chunks of its flesh were torn off by the frenzied beast. Papyrus flinched when something wet splashed on his face.

“What are you thinking!? Stop!” He sprinted towards the dragon and cast his Blue Attack.

“Why not!? You ordered me to attack! Besides, that thing’s our enemy!” Gaster struggled against the increased gravity on his body.

“We’re not fighting lethally! Don’t do a violence!” Papyrus put a hand on Gaster’s shoulder. “Come on.” Up close, he could see the wild and deranged grin on the beast’s face. He was still focused on trying to attack the giant. Seriously, what on earth was wrong with Gaster? Papyrus and Sans had mutated, and they never acted like that. The horned skeleton blinked. Wait… did they? What was this weird sense of déjà vu?

The dragon stopped struggling. He huffed and sat on his haunches. “Fiiine, you’re the boss.”

“URRRGGHHH… YOU DICKHEADS…”

The giant rose back up to its full height. Papyrus had a sinking feeling in his chest. He lost focus on the Blue Attack keeping the giant down!

Papyrus could hear the droplets of blood pattering down onto the ground and the giant growling at them. The dirt that coated the creature didn’t let him see its precise facial expression, but it had to be furious.

The two skeletons slowly backed away. The glowering creature advanced on them, appearing to grow in size. No, wait! It actually was growing!

It leaped in the air – only a short way up because of its proportionally short legs – then came down with a crash! It was almost comical how it belly-flopped into the ground, but it put Papyrus and Gaster in mortal danger!

The giant’s immense size and weight was enough to crush the both of them. The humanoid skeleton had to act swiftly! He cast his Blue Attack to lighten himself and his companion, then hopped onto the dragon again. “Laser! At the ground!”

The recoil from the massive blast was enough to send them flying back like a rocket, escaping the grisly end of being crushed. However, the force of the giant’s massive body smashing into the ground sent a shockwave of debris out in every direction!
Papyrus and Gaster couldn’t escape being hit! Chunks of solid rock battered and stung the friends’ bodies, sending them hurling even further back.

The skeleton expected the round giant to take this moment of vulnerability to finish them off… but it didn’t. Rather than advance on them while they couldn’t control their movement and were stunned by debris, the giant retreated back and blocked debris headed behind it.

“Wait a minute…” Papyrus realised something vital. The giant only ever attacked them from that specific direction. It had coordinated its movements to constantly force him and Gaster away from it, and kept pursuing. And when they retreated, it grew. By that logic…

Papyrus brushed the rocks off with Bonetrousle’s arms, took a deep breath, then stood up. He had to congratulate the enemy. They almost had him there. Barely visible, hiding behind a tree at the other end of the field… was the round figure of a monster.

Gaster lowered himself to allow Papyrus up once more. “Let’s go!”

The duo started to advance on the giant. A blade launched from Gaster’s tail. The monster swiped it away with ease. At this size, all the attack did was provoke it.

“TRYING TO TAKE ME ON IN STRENGTH, HUH!?” The monster charged at them, its size increasing as it advanced.

With a fearsome roar, Papyrus and Gaster charged back. Papyrus grit his teeth. If our paths cross where I predict they will, then…!

“WHAAAAT!? YOU SLIPPERY LITTLE-”

Gaster had run directly in between the giant’s legs! The giant had been careless and left an opening. The speed it was running at made it difficult to turn around, its legs scrabbling for purchase and its arms flailing gracelessly as it skidded on the ground.

The giant tried to pursue, but with each step it took, the distance it covered began to shrink. Its body was getting smaller and smaller. If it didn’t do something soon, those people would reach its real body! It looked around for anything to throw as a projectile – trees, rocks, anything – but it couldn’t find anything. It had used up all its resources at the start of the battle!

“And this is… checkmaaaaaate!” Papyrus leaped off Gaster and tackled the round monster to the ground.

“Bwargh-!”

Papyrus narrowed his eyes. “Astigmatism. Of course the enemy would turn out to be you.”

The short fat monster looked utterly pathetic. Tears streamed from his eyes, and a liquid with an unpleasant stench leaked out of the lower part of his body. “P-please…” Astigmatism squeaked in a high-pitched voice. “D-don’t hurt me… I wasn’t r-really trying to kill you guys!”

Papyrus folded his arms. Gaster growled.

“I-I was just trying to intimidate! Y’know, I really was going to give Napstablook a fair price- I mean, I wasn’t going to rip him off at all! C’mon… you guys… aren’t really going to commit murder, are you? T-that’s morally wrong!” It took being up close to realise how terrifying the two could really become, but the atmosphere of wrongness that those skeletons gave off made Astigmatism feel like returning all the money he conned out of people, running to his mother, and
crying.

“I don’t know, Astigmatism… I’d say conning people out of their hard-earned money for a year straight is also rather morally unacceptable… What do you think, Gaster?”

“Yes… Especially if it’s from the weak and vulnerable.”

“Uwaaaa…!”

“But you’re right, Astigmatism. I’m no killer. Someone like you just isn’t worth it.” Papyrus put his hands in his pockets and walked away, Gaster obediently following.

The round monster breathed a sigh of relief. *Hahaha… idiots.* He could still summon his phantom at any time. He aimed his arm at the back of the horned skeleton’s head. Even just a few metres away, his phantom’s strength increased. Unguarded, he would go down in a single blow!

Astigmatism swung his phantom’s arm with all his might… Which was then caught by a skeletal hand in a firm grip. “You’re not worth it… worth leaving unharmed, that is!”

**“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!””**

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_That evening…_

Papyrus entered the garage carrying three dishes of spaghetti.

“Are you and Sans really okay with eating here? I’m fine if I eat on my own…”

Papyrus smiled as he placed two plates on the table, then one in front of the dragon. “It’s fine, Gaster.”

The beastly skeleton didn’t meet his gaze. “…I’m sorry about going overboard earlier.”

“Wait, what’s this?” Sans raised a brow.

“Well…”

Papyrus could have sworn Sans tensed up as he explained what had happened that afternoon. His posture went rigid, and his breathing quickened. “…But there isn’t anything to be afraid of!” Papyrus quickly added. “Gaster’s on our side!”

The Blaster-headed skeleton swallowed thickly. “Y… Y-Yeah, you’re right…” He wiped away some sweat from his forehead. “So new enemy Fragment Users are still showing up, huh? With Wingdings forced into hiding, I wonder how he’s doing it.” He stroked his chin. “By the way… what happened to Napstablook?”

“OH, NOOOOOO!”

_TO BE CONTINUED_

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Astigmatism – Status: Beaten to a pulp, and has to work off his hospital bill with clean money.

Retired!
Napstablook – Status: Woke up in the park in the middle of the night. Wandered around lost for a while before eventually finding his way back to his hotel.

**Astigmatism**

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: C – A (Distance-dependent)

Speed: C

Range: A

Durability: C – A (Distance-dependent)

Precision: E

Developmental Potential: D

**Abilities/Powers**

**Perception Poltergeist:** Astigmatism’s power allows him to create an invisible phantom. Its size and power increase the farther away it gets from his body. However, it has to emerge directly from his body. It can only move in a straight line, and his actual body can’t move while using the ability.
An unknown location…

A fire burned in Wingdings’ chest. This was so humiliating… How dare those fools turn the whole city against him!? He would have smashed something in frustration by now, if it weren’t for the fact that nothing in the place he was hiding in belonged to him. He wouldn’t be rude to his associate, even if said associate was actually brainwashed.

He poured himself a cup of… something. It looked safe to drink… He sipped, frowning at the odd taste. Now, what could he do from here? He had nearly all the Fragments gathered. Only one more remained.

Wingdings had a good estimate of its location, but it was so heavily-guarded, it would be literally impossible to retrieve it himself. Especially with that accursed Apocalypse Cannon in the way. How could his finest creation turn against him like this!? Why did nothing in his life ever go right!? He was one step away from victory, but also just barely escaping the jaws of defeat.

Without all the Fragments in his hands, the world was still doomed to a dead end. He desperately needed that final piece for his plan. Time and space had already been destabilised. The distortion from the use of time manipulation around Mt. Ebott meant that the Darkness was drawing closer, and if the Anomaly regained its powers…

An idea sprouted in Wingdings’ mind. With his goal, was the weakening space between dimensions really a bad thing? Under normal circumstances, he would need all the Fragments collected in order to make his dream a reality. But if he put his plan into action at Mt. Ebott, there was a chance that he wouldn’t need as much power.

He finished his cup of… liquid, then stood up. Retrieving the final Fragment may be impossible, but with his available resources, he could retrieve something else he desperately needed… Giving up some of the resources he had on hand to accomplish it would be risky, but so very worth it.

Grillby’s

Sans finished his burger, his tail wagging briskly as the meal disappeared into his maw. “Mmm… nothing like a good ol’ double bacon burger!”

Papyrus huffed as he munched on a mouthful of meat. “Honestly, I don’t see the appeal of greasy fast food. Steak is really where it’s at!”

Grillby chuckled. “I’m happy I’m still keeping up to standards. These always were your favourite dishes here since you two first arrived at Snowdin.”

“Since we arrived at Snowdin, huh…?” Papyrus looked wistful. “That takes me back. Now I’ve finally realised why I ended up there in the first place, and just who I have to thank for allowing me and Sans to survive.”

“You remember?”

“Yes.”

And then, Papyrus told Grillby everything. What he found in Wingdings’ diary. The story with his
sister. The fateful Happy Town incident. The bartender patiently listened, just as he always did throughout the years. Once Papyrus finished, Grillby’s face remained neutral. As far as Papyrus could tell, anyway. That’s what Grillby always looked like.

“I see… Now that you know this, what will you do?”

“I’m still having trouble processing everything, actually… I’m still shocked that my entire hometown was slaughtered, and Big Sis- I mean, my older sister sacrificed herself to let me and Sans get away. This whole time, I’ve been living my life unaware of this… But now that I do know, there’s one thing I’ll do for sure.”

Papyrus’ eyes shined with determination. “I won’t lose anything important again. I won’t let anyone else lose anything important again. Too many tragedies have already occurred in history. It doesn't matter whether they were remembered or not. The fact remains that they happened, and their effects continue to today. If nothing is done, this world will be bound by a never-ending chain of misfortune. This world – the people in this world – deserve much better. I’ll break that chain, with my own hands!”

“I’m glad for you. You’ve really grown. Both you, and Sans.”


“I can tell. For lack of a better word, you seem a lot more engaged. The ‘impression’ you give off is more… how do I say… hopeful? Brighter?”

The dragon-like skeleton gave a sharp-toothed grin. “Guess Pap’s finally starting to rub off on me!”

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**Papyrus and Sans’ house**

Gaster heard the sound of a door opening and two sets of footsteps entering the house. *Looks like Papyrus and Sans are back… Huh?* The Gasterblaster beast’s keen hearing detected another set of footsteps at the front of the house. They sounded a lot lighter, as if that person was trying to avoid detection… or maybe they just weighed less.

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*Knock, knock!*

“Coming!” Papyrus raced to answer the door.

Grillby was at the entrance. “Good evening, Papyrus.”

“Grillby! What brings you here?”

The flame elemental held out a wallet. “Sans dropped this.”

“Did he? He must be more careful! Thank you very much for bringing it back!”

“Well, then…” Grillby started to leave, but Papyrus stopped him.

“Wait! Stay for dessert! Sans made something nice.”

Sans had baked a butterscotch-cinnamon pie. Grillby sat down and picked up a whole slice. The brothers flinched when his mouth opened to reveal a jagged maw. The slice of incredibly rich pie – something that even the most gluttonous would have trouble eating – disappeared in a single gulp. “This is really good! I should hire you as a chef one day.”
“Heh, thanks. It’s a friend’s recipe, so if there’s anyone you want to hire, it should be her.”

Grillby leaned back, his mouth still visible. Papyrus would have described him as smiling gently, but… Well, now he knew why he never saw Grillby open his mouth before. “I don’t usually repeat myself, but you two really have grown since we first met. Schala and Alvin… I wish I could meet those two one day. I would love to share stories with them about what you were like as kids.”

The flame monster suddenly clutched his stomach. “Ugh… Could I ask a question? Was that pie monster food?”

“No, it’s all physical. Budget reasons, y’see…”

“Sorry… I still haven’t quite gotten used to food in the human world. Could you please tell me where the toilet is?”

“Sure, it’s just through the hallway.”

Grillby stood up, but Papyrus moved to block his way. “Yes…?”

“NYEH~!” The punch from Bonetrousle decked the flame monster. His SOUL turned blue instantly.

“Papyrus!”

“…I told you almost everything I found out about my past. But there’s one thing I didn’t tell you. Not once did I ever say their names!”

Grillby got up, wiping his face with his sleeve. Papyrus was befuddled. How was he standing with his weight increased that much!? “Damn it… You’re too sharp when it counts. I wish it didn’t have to come to this.”

Before Papyrus knew it, he and Sans had been pinned to the floor! He didn’t even know what hit him. And because his concentration had lapsed, the Blue Attack on Grillby’s SOUL had been broken. The skeleton tried to rise, but like two magnets stuck together, he was unable to separate his body from the floor.

“Now, you two be good boys and wait here. You don’t have a choice, anyway.”

The flame monster disappeared into another room. True to Grillby’s words, Papyrus couldn’t raise himself even a millimetre. Something on the left side of his torso was sending a force through his body that kept him stuck. Something… spinning? The skeleton strained his neck to look at it. It was difficult to turn his head while being stuck to the ground, but he managed to catch a glimpse of it. …!

No way!

Grillby bolted into Sans’ room. He ripped the drawers and cupboards open, digging through all the skeleton’s belongings and tossing them out. After sifting through heaps of old clothes, bags of junk food, and for some reason, a small annoying-looking dog, he finally found what he was looking for.

Dr Gaster’s old blueprints that ended up with Sans in Snowdin. With the information contained in them, the doctor would be able to finally start his plans. Grillby took out his phone and snapped photos of them, sending them to Wingdings’ associate. Then, he crushed the device beneath his foot, making sure it was thoroughly destroyed. It was disposable, anyway. It would be a problem for people to track the associate if they found it intact.
Grillby shoved his hands in his pockets and looked out the open window. His job was done here. But there was the Apocalypse Cannon here too… He supposed eliminating it would be an efficient option.

Just as he thought that, a blade flew through the window and stuck his chest! He was yanked outside by the rope attached to the blade, and crashed to the ground in front of the house. Before him was the demonic figure of a skeletal beast.

Gaster felt rude for eavesdropping on everything, but in the end, he was glad he was alert. Without it, all three skeletons would have been taken off-guard by the brainwashed flame monster.

Grillby severed Gaster’s rope, then ripped the blade out. He peered at it closely, examining the design, before opening his maw wide and devouring it in several crunches. The Gasterblaster beast stepped back without thinking. *What the hell…* A purple glow emanated from the bartender’s head, and Gaster could see the silhouette of a shard lodged inside it. *A Fragment!*

Why was one of the power-granting objects in the bartender’s forehead!? Gaster remembered what Alvin said about the Fragments – contact with one grants powers, possession of one amplifies them even more. Did that mean Grillby was as much of a threat as Wingdings himself!?

The flame monster finished eating the blade and turned his sights to Gaster, fangs exposed in a terrifying smirk. Gaster grit his teeth. Grillby himself was innocent, just controlled. Using something as devastating as his laser wasn’t an option here. The beastly skeleton lowered his body into a crouch. In that case, he would just knock him out!

Grillby yelled in surprise as Gaster pounced. He barely managed to avoid being hit! Gaster smashed into the pavement, leaving cracks beneath his claws. The dragon couldn’t help but smirk a little. He had to have been surprised by his speed! The scrape he got on the bartender proved it.

The flame monster leaped away, putting distance between himself and the beast. At a close range, Gaster would have the advantage. Long range battle was where Grillby excelled! He produced a fireball the size of a baseball and hurled it at the beast!

When Gaster saw the fireball, his eyes widened in recognition. *That’s… just like Sans’ ability!? He’s using the Spin!?* The ball of flame was rotating so fast, it warped the air around it. If that touched him, it would be bad news! In an agile manoeuvre, the dragon threw his body to the side, rolling as he landed.

However, he gravely underestimated Grillby’s abilities. The fireball wasn’t just a weapon to conduct the Spin through. When it hit the ground, the fireball exploded! Like a deadly firework, the air filled with several smaller fireballs, floating through the air around Gaster in intricate patterns.

Before he could even process what it meant, a sharp pain exploded in the dragon’s head. Gaster heard something clunk to the ground. Looking down, next to his right paw… was his horn. Black liquid from the wound oozed down his head.

*Wha… but how…* As the pain dulled, the skeleton became aware of a different kind of pain close to his head. A burning one.

Grillby heard something clunk to the ground. Looking down, next to his right paw… was his horn. Black liquid from the wound oozed down his head. A wire made of pure flame connected two of the smaller fireballs. It didn’t take a genius to deduce that Grillby could do that with the others, too. Exploding fireballs, and razor wire… the entire street had become a death trap!

Gaster turned and ran in an attempt to escape the fireballs’ range. He looked at his tail. Maybe he
could get Grillby with his blades from afar? He most likely had longer range than the flame monster.

The dragon turned back towards his opponent and shot a blade. “Shadow Sword!” The pitch-black weapon came at Grillby as fast as a speeding bullet, but with a flash, wires formed between the fireballs in the air between him and the blade. The only thing remaining of the blade was black goop that dropped to the ground.

Gaster grimaced. How could he get past that barrier!? His mind went blank again when pain seared through his right foreleg. His right paw had been blown off by another fireball, an oozing stump where it used to be. Physical attacks may have been ineffective against Gaster’s liquid form, but in his solid form, he was as vulnerable as anyone else.

The Gasterblaster beast’s vision started to blur. His body trembled, and he felt something twisting inside his sternum. Was this an ability of Grillby’s, or was the shock of his limb blown off really that bad…? Growling, he shook his head. Damn it! Now wasn’t the time for that! This may have been his first time fighting solo, but he was stronger now! As long as he had his tail, he could still fight!

He continued to circle around Grillby as quickly as he could. With each time he put weight on his stump, fire raced up his foreleg, but he had to endure the pain! He fired his swords one after the other at where he thought were weak points, but none of them could penetrate Grillby’s defence. The net obscured the fact that another fireball was coming. Gaster’s vision blurred again as his severed left hind leg spun through the air. He skidded onto his side.

“…That’s enough.” Grillby pointed a clawed finger at the dragon, and the razor net formed from the fireballs in the air raced towards him. Now, what were the choices in this situation? A normal person’s choices would be as follows. A: Crawl away as fast as possible. At least try to get away. B: Plead for mercy. C: Call for help. D: Completely give up, and accept death.

However, either as a result of the mindset that came with his hellish new form, or the bravery that he gained from staying with Papyrus and the others, Gaster did none of these! Channelling his dwindling strength into his remaining two limbs, Gaster leaped into the air, going over the net! He aimed his tail down, and…! BANG! The blade struck home!

Grillby gasped, staggering back from the sword digging into his shoulder. “So you got me… But still… It’s over for you.”

The dragon’s body hit the asphalt with a crunch. Even though he was perpendicular to the net, with his position, the wires sliced his tail right off. There would be no more fighting back for him.

Gaster looked up at the flame monster approaching him. He raised a hand, and in response, the flame net spread out to encircle the dragon. It slowly started to close on him, and…

Now! Black ropes covered Grillby!

“W-what the fu-” The bartender looked around. Where did those come from!? He looked to the ropes’ source. The severed limbs!?

“That’s right… I surrounded you with my own body. It was painful, but now…” The hellbeast showed off his teeth in a terrifying grin. “I get to pay you back in full!” Gaster let his ‘main’ body turn into black goo, then produced a black lasso and tightened it around Grillby’s body. Like a vicious boa constrictor, the rope squeezed the life out of the flame monster. Even though Grillby didn’t require blood circulation, it was nevertheless extremely painful.

“Guh… ack…”

“W...”
“Now hold still! I need to get that thing out of your head!”

“N-no! Get off me!” Grillby’s body flared up, and with it, his heat!

The temperature was too hot for Gaster to handle! He had to let go! The ropes released, reforming into a solid shape. The moment he regained his normal shape, Gaster was blown away. It felt like a truck had crashed into him! Grillby had got him with a direct punch.

He was sent flying all the way back to his house. The dragon’s body smashed through the garage door and collided with the wall, before dropping to the ground. He had all four limbs again, but the physical damage Grillby dealt had taken its toll. His body hurt all over. The fiery face of death hovered over him.

“I win. Too bad you couldn’t protect the Apocalypse Cannon, but this is for the better.”

Wait… what?

Before Gaster could ponder the meaning of Grillby’s words, the bartender drew back his fist. His flames intensifying, he threw everything he had into the punch.

“Wrong, I’ve won.” Right as Grillby punched, Gaster rolled sideways!

Grillby felt his fist pierce through some sort of container with a metallic clang. He looked down. The object his fist lodged in was red, cylindrical… Oh, no.

**FFFFSSSSSSHHH!** The fire extinguisher exploded, blasting both Grillby and Gaster with its contents. For Gaster, it hurt. For Grillby, it was excruciating. The pain of his flames being extinguished was so intense, it knocked him out cold.

Gaster seized the opening. He grabbed Grillby’s Fragment in his jaws and ripped it right out, then used his power to heal Grillby’s brainwashing. Thank goodness that his mutation hadn’t changed that ability.

He shuffled over to his (thankfully still intact!) mattress and collapsed on it. Right now, he just wanted to rest. His thoughts idly drifted to what he heard inside. Wingdings made Grillby take photos of something in Sans’ room. The only thing Gaster imagined it could be was the blueprints Sans retrieved from the Underground. The blueprints for that accursed machine used to establish contact with the Darkness seven years ago…

But how did he get Grillby with a Fragment? He wasn’t brainwashed before. Now, with Ebott City on alert, it would be too dangerous for Wingdings to walk the streets. Unless… he had a helper…

Gaster sprung up, realisation striking him like lightning. The Fragment was gone.

TO BE CONTINUED

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**Gaster (Gasterblaster Beast Form)**

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: A

Speed: A

Range: A
Durability: A

Precision: D (with own body), B (when shooting swords only)

Developmental Potential: A

**Abilities/Powers**

**Self-liquefication, Limb Detachment, Black Rope:** Gaster retains his abilities from his previous form.

**The Strength of a Beast:** Although not on Wingdings’ level, Gaster’s physical strength has increased significantly.

**Shadow Sword:** In proportion to his new form, the blades Gaster fires have changed from dagger-like to outright swords. Their firing range and destructive ability have been boosted.

**Surging Fang:** A laser of immense destructive power fired from Gaster’s jaws.

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**Grillby**

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: A

Speed: A

Range: A

Durability: C

Precision: C

Developmental Potential: C

**Abilities/Powers**

**Telekinetic Spin:** Just like Sans’ ability, Grillby can create fireballs charged with a mysterious rotational energy for a variety of applications, such as immobilising opponents or increasing the force of his throw.

**Hellfire Prison:** Grillby’s fireballs can explode and disperse several smaller fireballs in the air. Grillby can link these fireballs together into a razor wire-like net and control its movement.
Undyne didn’t like Aaron one bit. He smelled funny, stinking up the gym she went to. He always got up close and personal, making everyone he talked to uncomfortable. And worst of all, he was always sweating! Disgusting. But, if there was one thing he was good at ever since monsterkind left the Underground, it was detective work. Specifically, paranormal detective work.

The cases Aaron investigated usually had mundane causes, such as the mysterious case of books and stationary disappearing from Golden Flower Academy turning out to be Jerry pickpocketing other students, and not miniature holes to other dimensions like Aaron thought. But with the creation of Fragment Users, Undyne thought hiring him would be a good idea.

Because of this, she tried not to gag when she sat next to him on park bench as he fed the non-existent ducks. It was easy to find him, seeing as nobody but his sister and Woshua would stay within 50 metres of him.

“Thanks for arriving on time, sugar~” Aaron winked at the gym teacher. Another creepy habit of his.

“I thought I told you to stop calling me that,” Undyne groaned. “So? Have you found anything about where Wingdings might be now?”

The equine shook his head. “I haven’t. But I do have some information that may interest you.”

“What is it?”

“People who live closer to the outskirts of town have reported missing goods. Not just one or two people, I’d estimate at least 80% of residents have had something taken from them. Weird, huh?”

“Their stuff disappeared into thin air?”

“Well… not exactly… They also reported strange tracks disappearing into Spring Forest Trail. They haven’t followed it, and I haven’t gone in either because, uh…”

Undyne sprung to her feet and grabbed him. “What do you mean, you haven’t gone in either!? What do you think I’m paying you for!?”

“Hey, I’m sorry! I might be an investigator, but there are some places even I don’t want to approach. After what happened to that place, anyone with common sense wouldn’t want to go in either!”

The fish lady let Aaron go and sat back down. “Whatever. My friends and I will go there ourselves later.”

“I’d say ‘your funeral’, but this is you we’re talking about, so I’ll just say good luck. You won’t need it.” Aaron winked again with a smile. “By the way… I don’t think it could help you find where that Wingdings guy is now, but I found this old document with his name on it.”

Undyne’s heart skipped a beat. “Where!? And how could it not help in locating him!?”

“You won’t believe me, but, uh… it fell from the sky.”

“…”

“No, seriously~”
“…It’s fine, I believe you.” Happy Town was drawing closer to reality. What Aaron found was probably just one of Dr Gaster’s old documents from several years ago.

“Here, take it.”

“Uh… thanks. I’ll share it with the others later.” And disinfect my hands, too. Undyne mentally added as she gingerly accepted the sweat-soaked paper from the detective.

_Spring Forest Trail_

Gaster continued sniffing along the ground before raising his head and turning back to his two companions. “Hmm… I smell _something_, but I’m finding it very hard to describe. It’s beyond words.”

“Well, that sounds like it suits Wingdings’ general theme. Can you pinpoint the source?”

The bone beast shook his head. “I’m sorry, Papyrus… I can’t. It’s hanging around the entire area.”

The tracks leading into the forest inexplicably vanished after they went off the main trail. Papyrus thought Gaster could track whatever made them with his enhanced senses, but unfortunately, it wasn’t working so far.

“Well, that _does_ explain why everything here looks so much more… sinister.” He had Bonetrouble clear away another spiked branch with a spear he borrowed from Undyne. It was like he was an explorer, hacking his way through the jungle… a really, really nightmarish jungle.

The entirety of Spring Forest Trail had been distorted into something out of a horror movie. The plant life had grown twisted and wicked, impeding progress, and the wildlife present before was now completely absent. At any moment, Papyrus half-expected a serial killer with a chainsaw to ambush him from behind.

“That’s why I only brought you two along,” Undyne explained. “Frisk, Flowey, and Sans aren’t powerful close-range fighters, so if they were attacked in a place with little room to move like this, they would be in a lot of trouble.”

Gaster tilted his head. “What about Alphys? She’s really tough.”

Undyne blushed and looked away. “W-well… you know…”

“…Eh?”

“It’s fine, we know, you don’t want anything to happen to your girlfriend,” Papyrus chuckled. “I understand. Sans said he would come over to your place to keep her company. With enemy Fragment Users still appearing, it’s best to stick in groups. Although with my brother and Alphys alone together, you never know what might happen~”

Undyne faked vomiting. “God, Papyrus, that’s disgusting! How could you even _imply_ that?”

“Nyeh heh heh, I’m just joking! Sans already told me he sees her just a friend. Kissing her would be like kissing his own brother!”

“Better be,” Undyne growled. She blinked, as the statement fully registered. “Wait, don’t you mean kissing his own sis-”

A sharp, sudden rattle pierced the air. Gaster had lowered his body into a combat stance, ready to
Pounce. “...Do you feel that as well?”

Papyrus and Undyne instantly realised what he was talking about. All three Fragment Users had been suddenly, uncontrollably gripped by uneasiness – as if their paranoia was a dial that somebody turned up all the way. The oppressive, choking atmosphere Frisk and Sans described earlier... it matched this feeling exactly! “Wingdings is nearby!”

Fighting through the pressure, Undyne was the first to act. “Split up and search the area! If anything happens, yell!”

The trio ran in different directions, slicing through the scenery as fast as they could. As Papyrus continued, the air grew heavier and heavier. With one more swing of his spear, he reached another path. Someone else was making their way through here? Could it be…?

He stepped onto the path and glanced in both directions. Surely enough, there was a figure on his right. “Wingdings! Prepare yourself!” Screaming his ribcage out, the skeleton charged at the dragon with his spear!

Naturally, that made the element of surprise go straight down the drain. Because of the distance between them, Wingdings had more than ample time to react and parry. “Shit... you again!?”

“I’m downright sick of your people coming after us! You need to stop!”

Wingdings pushed Papyrus’ spear away, lashing out with his sharp tail. “How do you think I feel!? Your very existence causes trouble for me! Because of you, I cannot even sleep well at night!”

“Maybe you could sleep if you gave Chara back and stopped trying to kill us!” Papyrus and Bonetrousle slid underneath the attack, feeling a rush of air as Wingdings’ tail just narrowly passed over Papyrus’ head. The guardian entity jabbed its spear at Wingdings’ chest, but an immense force stopped it. The doctor had blocked it by grabbing the end of the spear directly!

“Never! You will not stop me from bringing justice into the world!” The already great pressure intensified even further. Papyrus felt weak at the knees from the aura Wingdings was exerting alone. But he wasn’t going to just submit to the greater power. Imagining Wingdings’ aura as hands gripping onto him in his mind’s eye, he ‘grabbed’ them and pushed back!

The auras of Wingdings and Papyrus pushed against each other. It was like they were mentally grappling. With a sudden jolt, Wingdings’ mental energy gave way.

The demon dragon stumbled back. “Damn it! I knew this would happen!” He turned to retreat, but Papyrus grabbed his tail with Bonetrousle and activated his Blue Attack. Even though it was like clutching a double-edged serrated knife, the high school student couldn’t let Wingdings escape now. If he did, who knew when he would see him again?

“I’m not letting you get away, Wingdings.” For good measure, Papyrus used his Blue Attack on himself and pinned the dragon to the ground.

“You fool... you don’t understand...! The Fragments are-!” Another strange pulse of energy tore through the forest. Papyrus heard something akin to fabric tearing, and the ground gave way! He and Wingdings free-fell into the dark void together.

After what felt like an eternity of falling, the two monsters hit solid ground. Papyrus was the first to get up. “W-wowie... What a fall.” He saw the demon dragon lying on the ground, moaning. The more human-like skeleton crouched down. “Are you alright?” Papyrus offered Wingdings his arm
out of habit.

“I am fine, thank you…” Wingdings grabbed Papyrus’ hand and got to his feet… before remembering what situation they were in. He instantly jerked his arm away from the skeleton, as if his touch burned him. He quickly backed away and assumed a fighting stance. Papyrus, in turn, summoned Bonetrousle and raised its fists.

The two stared each other down. Wingdings’ gaze was intense and piercing, but he didn’t try to exert that strange aura he had. Papyrus supposed it would just end up as a repeat of what happened earlier. But if he was going for a physical battle, then that meant he would use that weird Darkness attack he used on Frisk and Chara… Not good.

Wingdings sized up Papyrus, appearing to perform his own analysis, then sighed and relaxed his stance. “I cannot harm you. My finest creation surely would not allow it to happen. If I attempted to take your life, the Apocalypse Cannon would activate.”

“…You don’t want to fight?”

“Correct.”

Hesitantly, Papyrus dismissed Bonetrousle. He was still suspicious of Wingdings luring him into a trap, but… perhaps he could be a good person after all?

“Why are you here?” Wingdings didn’t answer, instead approaching him… “Whoa! I want to get along with you, but not like that!” He was way too close! Wasn’t this an invasion of personal space!?

“Hmm…” Wingdings felt around Papyrus, running his hands around his horns and poking his sharpened teeth. “I see… you are in Stage 1… If I recall, Sans was in Stage 2… There is still time.” He withdrew back to a comfortable distance. “To answer your question, I felt an intense disturbance in this area. The barrier between dimensions is weakening even more. I believed something I was looking for could be in this place.”

“Speaking of this place… Where are we right now?” Papyrus examined his surroundings, curious of what could be underneath the trail he frequented for jogging. When he looked up, he was confused – the hole he expected to be there… wasn’t. There was only a dull grey ceiling. He surveyed the rest of the area, revealing a featureless bare room, the same drab colour as the ceiling. It felt… just like Happy Town?

“Damn… we had to end up here, of all places… Fate truly has conspired against me.”

“You know what this place is?”

“Yes. This is the old true lab of Happy Town. The secondary lab of Hotland was modelled after this – there was a surface lab to show the general public… and there was the secret true lab, where more dangerous work was carried out.”

“If we’re in Happy Town now, then I know a way out! We just need to get out of this building.” The horned skeleton ran to one of the walls and threw a punch with Bonetrousle’s arm, but yelped when his fist collided with a mysterious glass panel.

The doctor gasped. “It’s just as I feared… This place is completely separate from the plane where the others are.” He grabbed Papyrus’ arm and examined his hand. “You’ll be fine. Nothing’s broken.” He looked at the opposite wall.
He opened up a hidden panel in the wall, revealing a scanner, and pressed his hand on it. “…As I expected. I no longer look like ’myself’, so the system does not recognise me.” The dragon backed a few steps away from the wall before charging forward and smashing through it with a punch. “I could not verify myself, so we need to be watch out for the security mechanisms – even after all this time, they are likely still active. This was a top-secret weapons development area, after all.”

“‘Weapons development area’… you mean, this lab is…”

“Yes. This place is where the ultimate weapon was developed… this is the birthplace of the Apocalypse Cannon.” Not turning back, Wingdings continued walking into the labs. “Let’s look for an alternate way out. For now, we’ll form a truce.”

True to Wingdings’ words, the lab was well-maintained, even without anyone having taken care of it for years. Unlike the dark, drab room that served as the secret entrance, the lab was bright and futuristic – it looked like it was taken directly out of one of the Sci-Fi shows Sans watched.

The walls were a light aqua, with a faint design of computer circuits imprinted on them. The floor was smooth and cool. Strips of green lights ran through the walls, floor, and ceiling. Truly, everything about the décor just screamed hi-tech.

“Do not be distracted by the scenery,” Wingdings warned. “The defence mechanisms I installed should activate right about…” The green strips turned red. “…NOW!”

The two skeletons lurched forward as the corridor’s floor tilted downwards. Underneath the corridor were rows of jagged spikes! Papyrus loved giant spikes, but not when he was the victim of them! As he started to fall towards his doom, he remembered that he had claws and a tail. He shoved his sharp parts into the rotating floor, clinging onto it for dear life alongside Wingdings. The floor kept rotating until it had done a 180 degree turn, clicking into place with Papyrus and Wingdings now stuck on the ceiling of the room with the deadly spikes.

Papyrus crawled forwards to where the rotating part of the floor ended, then punched through it and climbed out. Wingdings soon emerged after him. “That wasn’t a bad puzzle! Did you design it?”

Wingdings nodded. “I had to. The weapons manufactured here would cause untold destruction if they fell into the wrong hands.”

The duo proceeded through the corridor. The green door at the end slid open automatically, revealing another slightly wider, but otherwise identical corridor.

Unlike the last hallway, this corridor’s defence mechanism was visible – a massive wall of criss-crossing lasers blocked the way. Papyrus stroked his chin. How was he going to get around this? He took a coin, and experimentally tossed it into the laser wall. It vaporised instantly. That wasn’t good. He scanned the wall, checking to see if there was an opening… Ah! Looks like it didn’t last that long on its own after all… maybe Wingdings should get a refund on those materials. A few of the lasers towards the top of the corridor were defective – there was enough space for even Wingdings to fit through. It was a long way up, but with his Blue Attack…

“Well… here goes!” Papyrus jumped, the lines of red in front of him becoming a blur before he reached the gap. Yes! He could make it through! Bonetrousle gave him a light push from behind (it was all the force he needed when lightened this way) and he gracefully glided back to the ground. He looked back at Wingdings. “Can’t you just walk through? You’re tough enough to.”

The doctor looked embarrassed - an odd expression on his demonic countenance. “These lasers…
they’re the same type as the Gasterblasters and the Apocalypse Cannon. I could walk through, but I would come out the other end in pieces.”

If I wanted to, I could just leave him here… No one would have to deal with him ever again. Papyrus turned and started to walk away… before shaking his head and running back. He jumped back through the gap in the lasers and cast his Blue Attack on Wingdings. “Grab onto me. Let’s go through together.”

“Thank you.”

Papyrus huffed and puffed, trying to catch his breath. Was that… was that what his puzzles were like? At first, they were fun – because of the laws on the surface, puzzles were prohibited almost everywhere, so the horned skeleton enjoyed stretching his creative muscles down in Wingdings’ lab alongside the dragon. But… there were just so many! After the sixth warp panel puzzle and the seventeenth rotating tile puzzle, Papyrus began to wonder if there would ever be an end to this marathon.

“Believe me, this is as frustrating for me as it is for you,” Wingdings growled. “I never imagined I would be on the receiving end of my own creation not once, but twice.”

“Do you at least know if we’re near the end…?”

“Hmm… If I recall correctly, I believe we are nearly past the security mechanisms. My lab is just on the other side of that door.” Wingdings pointed a sharp finger towards a plain metal door. Unlike the earlier ones, it appeared this door opened manually.

“Great! I can’t wait to see what your actual lab is like!” Papyrus approached the door.

As Papyrus got closer to the door, recollection hit Wingdings like a bus. “Wait-” Too late! His hand was already on the knob! “LOOK OUUUUT!”

The next thing the skeleton knew, he was on the floor. Wingdings was on top of him, and heavily panting. First, Papyrus noticed a magically-manifested tongue lolling out of his mouth. Huh… just like Sans. The second thing he noticed was that numerous metal spikes were sticking out of the dragon’s side. “Wingdings…?”

“You okay, Papyrus?” The formal and humourless voice he put on had evaporated, like ice on a hot summer day. He actually sounded like a normal person, rather than some imposing movie villain.

“That should be my line! You didn’t have to take the hit for me! Why did you…?”

“Honestly, I…” Wingdings’ eyes widened. He cleared his throat, before resuming in his deeper voice. “Truth to be told, I do not know myself.” Why didn’t I…? If I let Papyrus get hit by those spikes, my job would have been much easier.

Papyrus slid out from under Wingdings. “Is there a safe area nearby? I can treat those wounds if we can sit down somewhere.”

Wingdings nodded. “It’s fine, as I am now, these are just minor. But they are admittedly a hindrance… The real entrance is hidden just to the left of the fake door. There should be a hidden button.”

Papyrus felt around the wall, before finding a small, barely-visible cube that stuck out. He pushed it, causing a whole door-sized section of the wall to slide up.
The room on the other end was a typical break room. There was a fridge, a sink, and a table with a single chair next to it. Papyrus sat Wingdings down in the chair, then pulled out a flask from the inside pocket of his blazer. He opened it and checked inside. *Thank goodness…* He was glad the spaghetti survived after the intense conditions he took it through.

“This is magic food, so it should be enough to heal you. Go on, have some.” Papyrus offered the flask to the dragon.

Wingdings raised it up to his muzzle and sniffed it. His eyes widened, as if recalling a distant memory. With a sound not unlike a vacuum, he instantly slurped the entire contents of the flask down. The dragon skeleton’s eye sockets appeared to glisten for a moment, but he quickly wiped his eyes with his sleeve. “Thank you. That was the best thing I ever tasted.”

“What did you expect? This the great Papyrus’ cooking!”

The healing magic quickly took its effect. The damaged bone healed quickly, causing the spikes that penetrated Wingdings’ side to fall out. Wingdings got back up. “Well, then-”

“WAIT!”

“…?”

This was the perfect opportunity for Papyrus to get more information out of Wingdings! Maybe he could even talk him down! First, he had to think of a non-awkward way to start the conversation. “Are you… really a dentist? Do you actually work on children’s teeth?”

“Yes. After what I went through to build the Gasterblaster series and the Apocalypse Cannon, learning anything else was comparatively easy.”

Okay! Conversation started!! Now for the hard part… “I’m sorry for snooping, but I read your diary and talked to Schala. Are you really my f…” Papyrus voice fizzled out. This was an extremely uncomfortable question to ask under any circumstance, let alone to someone who by technicality was an enemy. But he had to know! “Are you really my father?”

Wingdings’ expression was unreadable. Actually, that was just because he turned away from Papyrus after hearing his question. The uncomfortable silence felt like an eternity. The skeleton was beginning to wonder whether he had pushed too far already, before he received an answer. “…Yes.”

“Then, why are trying to attack your own sons!? You nearly killed Sans! In case you haven’t noticed, that isn’t a very fatherly way to act!”

Wingdings turned back to Papyrus. “…Papyrus. Do you believe in gravity?”

“Nyet? Well… of course I do. It keeps us on the ground.” *Well… with the exception of when I use my Blue Attack.*

“No matter where you go in the world, no matter what you do, you cannot escape it. Now… do you believe in fate?”

“Fate?”

“The concrete script where events will happen a certain way, no matter what. Your hopes. Your aspirations. Your loved ones. They are as ephemeral or long-lived as fate decrees. Before destiny, neither your free will nor your actions matter. And none of us can escape from it… That is the cursed ‘gravity’ that drags all of us down.”
“That’s… horrible…”

“Now, imagine a single person can twist that script – that gravity, to their own ends, at the cost of everyone else… Do you not believe that is unjust?”

“It depends on what they are using it for, of course! If they use it for good, I would be very happy!”

“And yet, the fact remains that the entirety of existence is determined by their whims. All it would take is simple curiosity – a stone unturned, a possibility they want to examine… even murder. And to them, you may as well just be a character in a scripted story. You would be entirely powerless to stop it.”

Papyrus wiped his forehead, and realised it was damp. He had broken into a cold sweat. Why… why was he trembling? Why did he feel like some horrible experience was going to surface?

“Yes… at first, when I re-emerged in the real world, my memories were muddled – I did not know who the new Anomaly was, so all I could do was send my agents out to search the city. But now that I have reclaimed the Fragment that boy possessed, I remember everything.

Wingdings trembled with rage. Papyrus could feel the hate leaking out of him. “When Happy Town exploded, I was forced out of the material world and could only watch what happened. What that disgusting flower did…” The aura intensified. The skeleton felt intense, overpowering waves of rage, but beneath it… sorrow?

“You don’t even remember… how many times you died…!”

Papyrus’ chest seized up. A horrible throbbing pain pulsed in his skull, like something inside his mind had been ripped open. He moaned, clutching his head, and sunk to his knees.

Wingdings didn’t notice this, still caught up in his speech. “It wasn’t from the power of Determination, but I have suffered as well. You see, when I was young, all I had were my parents. I was too sickly to play with the other children. Mother – that is, your grandmother – was the Royal Scientist before me, who was researching into other dimensions. From her inventions such as the Dimensional Box, we had enough money to live comfortably.

“But one day, the sixth human fell… It was a little girl who liked to dance. For her young age, she was a beautiful and graceful figure, one overflowing with talent. She was also rotten to the core.

“She was an utter sadist, and once she realised how weak monsters were, she wasted no time in mutilating everyone she came across. My parents were the first to die. The Underground’s finest warriors were sortied to stop her… and they all fell. We lost the Underground’s strongest, toughest, most noble heroes… to some brat with ballet shoes.

“I was in complete denial. At first, I drowned myself in the stories my parents and I used to read together. It felt like they would show up at the door at any moment, but the dust spread over our collection of Pink Dark Boy and family photos said otherwise. The stories where love, justice, and spirit prevailed, even when the very fabric of existence was torn apart… Why couldn’t the real world be like it!?"

Papyrus only groaned, the throbbing in his skull growing worse. This didn’t feel like the aura of terror Wingdings could exert. What was going on?

“That is why I created the Apocalypse Cannon and retrieved the Fragments! To bring justice into the world, and free everyone from the curse of Determination! Even with the Barrier gone, with the power gap between monsters and humans, and with users of Determination even higher above…
nothing will change. Nothing."

Wingdings stood up, an invisible wind rustling his clothes. If he was at a podium, speaking to a crowd, and not in a break room speaking to a high school student, it would have been a grand sight. “ATK, DEF, EXP, LV, HP… these ‘stats’ were made to measure the capabilities of monsters. In the grand scheme of things, our worth amounts to mere numbers. With the power I will gain, I will eliminate this system!”

“And just how…” The pain in Papyrus’ skull was starting to fade. He got back to his feet. “And just how do you intend to do that?”

“With the power of the Darkness. You witnessed it first-hand. Fragments can empower single entities. With the entire Darkness at my command, I will be able to empower all of monsterkind. None of us will suffer again.”

“But that’s just creating a reversal! If monsterkind grows that strong, then humans will be the ones oppressed! Who knows what might happen if they realise their power could be usurped? And don’t forget that humans can absorb monster SOULs if they persist! You’re just going to cause history to repeat!”

Venom crept into the dragon’s voice. “Am I, now? Tell me, Papyrus, did you ever feel oppressed by that coarse captain of the Royal Guard?”

“Undyne…? What about her?”

“Undyne couldn’t always suplex boulders. The true source of her strength is my successor.”

“Alphys?”

Wingdings nodded. “My point of view from outside the world allowed me to see what she did. Dr Alphys slipped small amounts of Determination into Undyne’s meals over time. Normally, it would completely melt a monster, but the woman’s system slowly adjusted, receiving the potential to become more powerful than even a Boss Monster.

“Thanks to Alphys strengthening her because she loved her, Undyne was hailed as the champion of the Underground. She would be nowhere near as strong naturally. All I am doing is what Alphys is doing, but on a larger scale. I see no problem with that. Undyne is still beloved by many.”

Papyrus was dumbstruck. Undyne was so strong and cool… because she had Determination? And she even tells kids ‘Winners don’t do drugs’… That couldn’t be. Wingdings had to be lying.

“However… the one beloved as the hero of monsterkind could have – no, should have been you. You trained just as much as, if not more than Undyne, and you have nothing to show for it. I can make your dreams come true now, if we work together.” A disturbing grin spread across Wingdings’ face, as he extended his arm. Papyrus supposed he was trying to be reassuring, but with that muzzle and teeth… “I guarantee no one will be able to stand in our way. Being weak… being alone… I know those feelings all too well. We can never feel like that again… son.”

“…Wingdings.”

“Yes?”

Papyrus grabbed the dragon’s wrist in a vice-like grip. “How stupid do you think I am?”

“…” The look of pure shock on the doctor’s face indicated that was the last thing he expected
Papyrus to say. Even Papyrus himself was surprised at how cold he could sound.

“I know exactly what you’re trying to do. Playing on my insecurities to coerce me to your side? You’re not being a very good person right now. This whole thing just *reeks* of a deal with the devil. And I’m not accepting.”

Wingdings pulled his wrist away. “Even so, I cannot stop now,” he growled. “If nothing is done, this world will still end.”

“Yes, I read that in your diary.”

“Then you should know that if this timeline continues to be abused, we are all doomed! The world will collapse in on itself and be eroded by Darkness!”

“And why can’t you believe in Frisk?”

“What do you think will happen when Frisk passes away? That flower will be back in control, and we’ll be back to square one. That is, if the boy even chooses to let himself pass away. Without my powers cancelling his out, there is nothing stopping him from controlling this world like that flower did. If he so wished, everyone would be forced back into the Underground, their memories erased, and none-the-wiser. All the progress made this past year would vanish like smoke.”

“Then why didn’t you just ask?” Papyrus exerted some of his aura for emphasis. Wingdings flinched. For a brief moment, fear flashed in his eyes, as if he was looking at some horrible beast. But only momentarily, quickly regaining his composure.

“Have you seen what happened to the flower and that spirit boy without the Fragments? Even if I politely explained, I sincerely doubt that anyone would have allowed me. A few comparatively-insignificant lives for the good of the universe is a small price to pay.”

“But that’s twisted! Why should we have to choose between saving one person and saving billions? There has to be a better way – a way to save everyone!”

“Are you forgetting, Papyrus? That’s exactly how the Underground went empty and monsterkind was freed. Chara. Asriel. The six humans who fell after their deaths. Mother. Father. Everyone’s lives, over and over…!” Once again, the deeper voice Wingdings put on was starting to slip. “If it means securing a future for everyone, and ending the bloodshed caused by Determination… I would *gladly* sink to the depths of depravity. After all, I need to take responsibility for my involvement in this."

*His methods may be extreme, but his goal is just...* Papyrus gazed at Wingdings. He didn’t look like he was lying about this part... Then he would offer him a chance. He wouldn’t need to resort to those measures anymore if he achieved his goal. He summoned Bonetrousle.

“…What are you doing?”

“Take it. You can link to Gasterblasters too, right? If you really, really want to save everyone, then you can have this.”

Wingdings looked confused. “I appreciate the offer, but I am looking for the final Fragment. One of my old Gasterblasters is not useful to me as of now.”

...*Wait... WHAT*?! Papyrus felt like an electric shock had coursed through his bones. *Bonetrousle isn’t a Fragment? Then, where IS the final Fragment?* Damn it! He thought that was his trump card! The skeleton didn’t mean to, but an animalistic whine escaped his throat.
“Is something wrong? Do you feel unwell?”

“Uh… No, I’m fine.”

“Understood. Shall we resume our search?”

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Meanwhile…

Sans and Alphys left the shopping centre, carrying bags filled with various groceries.

“Thanks for helping me with shopping, Al! I always appreciate an extra pair of hands.”

“Odd, considering you never help your brother out…”

“Aw, c’mon, I’m helping him now! Give me a break.”

“I know, I’m just messing with you! It’s nice of you to cook dinner tonight.”

Sans chuckled nervously. “I kind of have to, considering **Grillby’s** has closed down temporarily.”

As they turned the corner, they noticed an odd purple tent. It was around three or four times the size of a phone booth, and the outside was rather plain, with no decorations present on it at all. Above the entrance was a sign.

“Fortune Telling, 100G…”

“Are you two youngsters interested?”

Sans’ attention snapped back to in front of him. “Whoa!” *Since when was she…?* A wizened old lady clad in a mystical-looking robe had somehow managed to get in front of the two when they weren’t looking. The beast-like skeleton scratched the back of his head. “Uh, well… I’m kinda low on cash right now, so sorry… Every piece of gold counts.”

The old lady nodded, her expression solemn. “Ah, I see… you don’t have parents and your brother’s devoted to his studies, so you have to juggle multiple part-time jobs… I’m truly sorry. How about this? I’ll make this first reading free of charge.” She smiled warmly.

Sans flinched at her accurate assessment. But she seemed sincere and kind… almost like a caring grandmother. Maybe she would tell him something to brighten up his day? But first… “Sorry if this is too much to ask, but could you please show me your SOUL?”

The fortune teller chuckled. “Ah, I’m so flattered you want to see the heart of an old lady like me! Very well.” Her SOUL emerged from her body.

Green, huh… *So she isn’t a Fragment User.* “Alright, thanks. Can you do it out here, or are we gonna have to go inside?”

“Well, if you prefer, we can do it out here. It will save time, which is quite important when you have groceries!”

“Thanks. So how are you going to tell my fortune? If you’re a palm reader, I’m afraid I can’t give you a hand there.” Sans raised a skeletal hand with a wink.

“Oh, no. I’m an aura reader.”
“Ooh, interesting!” Alphys squealed. “How does it work?”

“I’m glad you’re interested, young lady. People in my family are born with a gift that allows them to perceive people’s thoughts, emotions, and state of being as an ‘aura’ around them, but for a completely accurate assessment, they need to voluntarily open themselves up to me first.”

“Sounds neat, let’s get started.”

“Of course! Now, could you please take my hand?”

Sans took the lady’s outstretched hand, careful not to accidentally dig into her with his claws. She closed her eyes, and assumed a slow, steady breathing rhythm.

“Ah… I see… so you’re searching for someone… but you don’t seem to be having much success. That person took something away from you. How unfortunate…” She screwed up her eyes in concentration. “That man… took many other things away from you? Your friends… your sister…” The fortune teller’s lip started trembling. “Oh, dear… this is all too sad… You poor thing. Let’s see if I can find anything nice for you. If I can find anything you can do to make a bit of good fortune… Perhaps if I can help you avoid being left behind by public transport, or tell you how to win your next match in a videogame…”

Sans’ face felt hot, and it wasn’t just because of the Spring weather. *This is getting kinda dangerous… this aura reading stuff is way too accurate! She’s not an enemy, but what if she’s bribed by Wingdings?*

Before Sans could even begin to withdraw his hand, the fortune teller shouted. “Wait, wait! Please, Sans. I don’t want you to leave now. My conscience wouldn’t let me. I promise, if I’m asked, this meeting never happened.”

“…Alright.”

“Now, let’s continue our reading… What’s this? Part of your aura is… suppressed? I’ve never seen anything like this before… But there’s a crack in the barricade blocking it. If I just peered through the crack… AH!” Her entire body went rigid.

“!?*

Sans could feel it through her hand. She was vibrating even more violently than a Temmie! Was this a normal old lady thing!? Her eyes had opened, but they were rolling back into her head. Blood was streaming down her nose. She was even starting to froth at the mouth! Sans tried to pull away, but it felt like she was superglued to him – the old lady just wouldn’t let go! If he pulled any harder, he would rip her arm straight off!

She let out a banshee-like screech. Her empty white eyes stared directly into Sans’, foam dribbling from her mouth as she choked. “So… mch… drk…nss… so… much dstrct…tioon… Evry…thng… evry…onnnee…”

Alphys’ eyes darted around the surroundings. “What the hell is going on!? Is she under attack!? I don’t see an enemy Fragment User anywhere!”

“Hey, what’s wrong!? Hang in there…!”

“Uuu… W-what… a-are… youuuuu…” The fortune teller vomited, spraying her gastric contents in Sans’ face with the force of a high-pressure hose. Her body then went limp, like a puppet with its strings cut. Her grip loosened, and she fell to the ground.
“Shit…! Al, call an ambulance! I’ll try to keep the old lady alive!”

“On it!”

The bestial skeleton made sure her airways were clear, then summoned a spinning bone and held it to her chest. With the power of the Spin affecting the relevant muscles, her heart rate and breathing should remain within normal levels. Damn it… What on earth did she see…?

Papyrus stared in disbelief at the giant pile of stolen goods before him. It almost touched the ceiling of the vast room they were in. This is where all those items went? He glanced at the equally-bewildered Wingdings next to him. He wasn’t involved after all… The skeleton spotted something familiar at the top. Could it be? No… no way. He waded up through the hoard, and his eyes bugged out at very familiar face taking a nap. “You!”

“Borf!” The small white dog woke up and took off further into the lab.

“Get back here! I’ll put an end to your misdeeds!” Papyrus sprinted after the agile canine.

Wingdings chased after him. But this path leads to… “Wait! Papyrus! Stop!”

His words fell on deaf ears. Papyrus kept chasing after the blur of white, into the darkened inner section of the lab. “Gotcha!” He had the Annoying Dog cornered! He threw his body forward to tackle it to the ground. However, just as he was about to make contact, it jumped! “Oh, noooo!” The horned skeleton kept going and crashed!

Stars danced in his vision. He could have sworn that multiple copies of that bird from Waterfall were running in circles around his head. He heard the sound of deep, heavy breathing, too. Had he really banged his head that hard? And on what? A giant statue?

Wingdings quickly arrived at the entrance to the huge chamber. “Papyrus! We must not stay here! We have to leave n-” He was cut off by a huge spotlight shining down on them both.

Papyrus quickly got back up, rubbing his head. As he stood up, a second circular spotlight, coming from several metres to the left of the first one, shone down on them. Wingdings trembled. “No… it’s awake.”

As if responding to Wingdings, the room lit up. Papyrus instinctively stood back as the creature before him was revealed in its full glory. Those… those weren’t spotlights. An enormous, monstrous skeletal dragon towered over the two of them.

TO BE CONTINUED
“BONETROUSLE!!” Instantly, Papyrus lashed out with a chop from his guardian spirit and activated his Blue Attack. But despite the immense force pushing it down, the dragon didn’t so much as stagger. A gust of air blew at the skeleton, and a gash opened on his sleeve. “What!? Gragh…!”

Papyrus stumbled back, blood pouring out from his arm. The dragon managed to nick him with its tail without him even noticing! And that wasn’t all…! “W-what… Why…?” The skeleton’s grip on the floor was starting to slip. He was… leaning towards the dragon? No… this tugging feeling was dreadfully familiar! When he looked down, he flinched. His exposed SOUL was blue! At the moment of this realisation, a force like a magnet yanked Papyrus towards the abomination!

Shit…!

This wasn’t like his normal Blue Attack, either – it had to be at least ten times as strong! He completely lost his grip, tumbled headfirst into the dragon’s opened maw, and met his fate as a snack for the beast. …At least, that’s what would have happened to him if Wingdings hadn’t grabbed him by the tail. A rough whack to his chest, and the enemy’s Blue Attack shattered.

However, the dragon wouldn’t let them escape so easily. Several wicked and sharp bone spikes flew at Papyrus! “NYEHEHEHEHEH~!” He knocked them away with Bonetrousle’s punches, but he yelped when his fists were sliced into. They were so sharp, his fists bled from a single touch! Even though they were both made of bone, it was like a hot knife through butter!

“It’s no good! We have to retreat for now!” In a move that surprised both of them, Wingdings scooped up Papyrus in a piggyback and sprinted away.

The hellish beast pursued them, a terrible unearthly roar echoing throughout the halls. Wingdings darted through the maze-like labs, his mind racing to find the safest pathway, whereas the dragon just headed straight for them, the sturdy walls crumbling before it. The exposed wires and the shards of metal digging into it did nothing to harm the creature at all. Now that it had noticed them, there was no way it would let them get away… that was the kind of creature it was.

Wingdings cursed under his breath. By taking the safest route away from his horrific creation, he ended up back at the entrance. Leaving the inner labs would mean having to face the puzzles and traps again – the dragon would easily survive, but they certainly wouldn’t. This was as good as a dead end!

Tch… then I have no choice! The doctor closed his eyes… inhaled… then punched through the floor. The resultant hole appeared to be pitch black – the light from the floor they were on wasn’t enough to penetrate it. Saying Wingdings really, really didn’t want to go there would be an understatement. But he said it himself earlier – if he wanted a bright future, he had to be willing to do anything.

“Papyrus! Hold on tight!”

“R-right!”

Wingdings jumped down the hole, falling to an even deeper, darker section of the lab. This was the real innermost section – the one he wanted to hide even from himself. The doctor could feel the dust
that he kicked up with his landing. Not even the maintenance system could touch this place.

The room was pitch-black. Papyrus couldn’t make out a thing – the miniscule light source the small hole provided was not helpful at all. But from the echo Wingdings produced when he hit the floor, it was a fairly large area. The room smelled a lot like dust, and... bones? *Just what is this place...?* Papyrus got down from Wingdings’ back. Never mind that, there were more pressing questions. “What on earth was that creature?” Bone magic (although demonic and twisted), his Blue Attack... it was like a mirror match against his past self. Taking into account the style of magic his family used, and the fact that Dr Gaster created it... “Was that... the Apocalypse Cannon?”

Wingdings inhaled sharply. Even though it was too dark to see, Papyrus could feel the doctor tense up. “…No. But in this situation, it may as well be. It’s one of the weapons I forgot to destroy – one of the failed prototypes for the Apocalypse Cannon. You could say it’s like the Apocalypse Cannon’s unsuccessful older brother.”

Papyrus’ chest tightened. “That thing’s only a prototype!?” That vicious, towering hellbeast... Was that only a shadow of Wingdings’ true doomsday weapon!? The horned skeleton realised that unhelpful line of thinking. *Calm down, Papyrus... If our theories are true, the Apocalypse Cannon is on our side. Gaster’s our trump card.* And of course, the creature they were facing now looked scary, and freaked Wingdings out... But it was a failed prototype for a reason. “Can you use that Darkness attack to get rid of it?”

“No, I can’t – not in this place between dimensions. It’s not the true demon – it’s still defeatable, but with our current firepower…” The ceiling began to rumble, the very air vibrating. “Here it comes. Get ready.”

The ceiling opened up, and with it, light poured in. Papyrus and Wingdings shielded their eyes, temporarily blinded. The dragon jumped through the hole it smashed open and landed with a tremor that quaked the earth. Hundreds of sharp bone attacks materialised, hovering in the air around it.

“HIDE!” The two skeletons ran from the centre of the room and hid behind a rough-looking mound of... something. It was uneven, comprised of multiple vague lumps, but that was all Papyrus could tell.

Bones blasted at the duo like rain. Papyrus huddled behind the pillar. He was struggling to stop himself from hyperventilating. Ghastly screeches and scrapes tore through the air as the only thing standing between Papyrus and a very painful death was battered.

He could feel the force of the attacks through the pillar. From a bird’s eye view, it would look like Papyrus and Wingdings were standing on a small island surrounded by a sea of death. With each violent vibration, he expected the pillar to give way. But after what felt like hours, the bone assault stopped. Whatever material the pillar was made of, it was strong enough for the twisted bones not to destroy it.

Papyrus and Wingdings didn’t dare move from behind the pillar. They couldn’t see the dragon now, but trying to take a look at it meant being exposed to those horrific attacks. Instead, Papyrus trained his hearing on what it could be doing. There was the sound of... animalistic snuffling? Then, a click, like a hinge opening. From just that small noise, Wingdings jolted, as if someone stuck an icicle up his rear end! “Another Surging Fang!” The two instantly abandoned their hiding place, jumping out just as it was obliterated!

Immense heat burned Papyrus’ neck. *That attack...! This whole time, I had a Special Attack like that!?* He turned his landing into a roll and dashed behind another odd mound. Turning back, he saw that Wingdings had managed to escape unscathed himself, also hiding behind one of the lumpy
pillars. The laser continued in an arc around the room, briefly scraping some of the other structures before thinning and vanishing.

Papyrus glanced at one of the mounds the laser touched. It had partially melted it, the solid blue colour turning into a molten orange at the points of contact. *Wait, blue…?* He rubbed his eyes and blinked. Yep. The pillars the laser had touched were blue. Weren’t they grey before? And not vibrating as much as a Temmie?

With a violent shudder, the blue pillars had erupted from the ground! They ricocheted around the room in erratic patterns, bouncing off the walls like giant pinballs! Papyrus could barely follow them with his eyes. Before he knew it, one had bowled him over, knocking him out of his hiding space. The sound of another impact against bone and a cry of pain indicated that Wingdings had been hit too. The Blue Attack transferred to them, dragging the skeletons towards the dragon’s gaping maw again!

Wingdings clicked his tongue and slashed his exposed SOUL with his claws. The damage to his body intensified, cracks appearing on his bones, but he was free from the dragon’s pull. Papyrus shattered the Blue Attack on his own SOUL with a chop. He cringed as pain shot through his entire body, but the skeleton forced himself to follow Wingdings behind yet another undamaged mound. This one was at the edge of the room, as far away from the demonic dragon as possible… but how much time would that buy them?

Papyrus panted, struggling to regain his breath. The cuts on his fists stung like hell, his arms felt like rocks were tied to them, and his legs felt like jelly. He leaned on the pillar for support. “We… huff… We can’t keep this up forever. There aren’t an infinite number of pillars, and that creature’s attacks are far too powerful!”

“I agree… One more hit, and we’re finished. Do you have any healing items left?”

Papyrus grit his teeth. “The spaghetti was the last one I had.”

“Curses.” Wingdings’ eyes were drawn to a laser scrapping the remaining pillars in the vicinity. “It’s attacking again!”

Papyrus shakily let go of the pillar and faced the blue ‘pinballs’. His limbs felt like they were moving far too slowly. But he had to get this right! His SOUL, all seven colours, appeared to glow brighter. His own eyes couldn’t follow the pinballs, but if he used Bonetrouble’s…!

It looked like the guardian spirit could track movement much better than him. Now that they weren’t an indistinct blur to him, Papyrus could observe that the pinballs truly were moving in random directions. However, with the speed at which they were travelling and their number, it would take minutes at the most before one of them found its target.

True to that thought, one of the uprooted pillars approached his and Wingdings’ direction. Papyrus readied his guardian spirit’s arms. Right before the ‘pinball’ was about to hit him, he smashed his fists into it. His entire body shook. Papyrus dug his clawed feet into the ground to keep himself from being overwhelmed by the immense force as Blue Attack clashed with Blue Attack!

Wingdings watched on in wonder. *So that’s what he’s trying to do… Impressive.* He allowed himself a small smile.

“UOOOORRRGHHHH!” With a beastly roar, Papyrus overrode the dragon’s Blue Attack! No… not just overrode… He redirected the dragon’s initial, already immense force and added his own! With so much kinetic energy behind it, the cluster heading straight for the dragon now had the force
of a meteor! With a satisfying crunch, it smashed into the dragon’s skull. Blood splattered the chamber.

Papyrus’ chest swelled in triumph… But the wind was promptly knocked out of it. The skeleton tasted blood on his tongue. Damnit… From behind!? One of the uprooted pillars had escaped his attention! Sparks danced in his vision again when he landed in front of a very pissed-off hellbeast. The right side of its face was a mess, blood dripping from the cracks, but all that did was make it angrier! Its jaw unhinged, a blue glow slowly gathering. Papyrus tried to get up, but he was weighed down by the dragon’s Blue Attack. Oh… fuck.

Wingdings dashed in front of the skeleton, getting between him and the dragon. Papyrus’ ribcage tightened. “What the hell are you doing!? I appreciate the thought, but now we’re both going to die!”

The demonic dragonoid ignored him. He had taken on a stance not unlike a martial artist and was steadying his breathing, his eyes closed. When he opened them, they were blazing blue. “Surging Dragon Fang!” A massive laser, easily twice the size of the enemy’s, emerged from Wingdings’ gaping maw.

Papyrus’ eyes bugged out. Since when could he do that!? The laser clashed with the dragon’s. It wasn’t even a contest – Surging Dragon Fang easily overpowered the dragon’s laser. The sheer force wrenched the dragon’s head away, smashing it against the wall side-on and causing dust to rain down. Papyrus realised his body felt light again: the Blue Attack over him had been broken!

Wingdings’ lower jaw snapped shut, and he collapsed to his knees. “Wingdings!?” Papyrus rushed to the doctor’s side, offering him support.

“Curse my feeble body… I still lack the strength to handle that technique…”

A sound like the shifting of gravel caught the duo’s attention. The dragon was getting back up, albeit sluggishly. The two skeletons had really done a number on it. Papyrus had ruined the right side of its skull, while Wingdings’ technique had caved in the left side outright. Its remaining eye burned with a feral fury that made its previous rage look insignificant.

In spite of his own exhaustion, Papyrus stood tall, Wingdings leaning on him. He was prepared for a bone or laser attack, but the dragon didn’t do anything. It just stood there menacingly, its single eye glowing blue. Something whizzed past Papyrus’ head. “Wha-” Another one! He whirled around.

The mounds the dragon had turned blue before were gathering together, with the dragon at the centre. They attached to various places on its body – the shoulders, the knees, even the forehead… It was like armour. Finally, the dust and dirt came off the mounds, revealing their true forms. Papyrus could feel the cold sweat running down his back. It… couldn’t be. “Gasterblasters!?” They were malformed – some too long, some with screwed-up horns, and some missing nasal cavities. But they were definitely recognisable as the dragon skulls he and his brother could wield. All at once, their jaws opened, and with it, dozens of beams of light poured out!

The lasers fired in all directions, tracing their way around the room, leaving no spot uncovered. But… they were moving slowly. Extremely slowly. Can-be-dodged-by-walking slowly. Carefully, only making very small movements while supporting Wingdings, Papyrus weaved his way between the lasers. Slow and steady won the race, after all…

Intense heat radiated from the laser beams. All of the skeleton’s senses were on edge – he could swear that the spikes along his spine were standing on end like hairs. It had to only have been a couple of minutes, but it felt like hours had passed while he was trying to avoid the attack. It wasn’t
physically exhausting (if it was, neither of them would have survived), but one wrong move leading to vaporisation was extremely mentally taxing.

Finally, the laser beams stopped. It looked like the dragon had run out of energy. Papyrus and Wingdings both let go of the breaths they were holding. “That… was awful…”

Papyrus felt a breeze from behind him. Had the lasers opened a hole somewhere? He turned around. The chamber wall behind him was still in place. Then where was it coming from? The skeleton noticed that the dust on the ground was sweeping over the floor like a wave, blowing past him and towards the dragon.

Papyrus’ eyes followed the dust wave. “…!? The pattern of dirt on the ground resembled a painting of a vortex, with the dragon at the centre. The dots connected in the student’s head. *Then that means… those lasers were…!!*

*FWOOSH!* With a tremendous gust, everything remaining in the chamber was pulled towards the dragon. The vortex on the ground was no longer merely two-dimensional! It was like a giant vacuum cleaner – the Blue Attack being incorporated into those lasers meant that even the air was sucked in!

Papyrus cast his own Blue Attack on himself and Wingdings, increasing their weights to keep them grounded. He glanced uncertainly at the black-garbed doctor. He looked like he was starting to regain his energy from that attack, but still not enough to stand on his own.

The skeleton felt the floor beneath his paws starting to tremble. “Gyah!” He swiftly altered his Blue Attack, decreasing his weight and jumping just as a massive, thick layer of the floor peeled off like carpet. It broke into pieces and entered the dragon’s maw, vanishing from existence. “It’s like a bottomless pit…” A fluffy white blur soared over Papyrus’ shoulder. With Bonetrousle’s reflexes, his arm snapped up and caught it before it left his reach. “You!”

The small white dog whined. That had to have been the first time Papyrus ever saw the creature without that disgustingly smug expression on its face.

“Look out!” Before his mind could process it, Papyrus was splattered with blood. It wasn’t his own. Wingdings had moved his entire body around to shield the young man from several bone splinters. “Blurgh…!” The dentist coughed, splattering more blood on the student.

The three fell to the cold, hard floor with a heavy clatter that echoed throughout the chamber. Papyrus’ legs gave out from under him, and he collapsed onto his backside. More bone attacks rapidfired at Papyrus like Gatling gun bullets, but Wingdings continued to shield his son from the onslaught with his own body.

“Wingdings!”

“I-it’s-” The less-humanoid skeleton coughed up more blood. “It’s alright… I can take this better than you could. You need to keep renewing your Blue Attack so we both don’t get dragged in.”

Papyrus’ eyes widened when he saw the blue coating over Wingdings’ SOUL starting to wear away. “R-right!” A new layer of blue appeared over the doctor’s SOUL.

With each bone attack hitting him, Wingdings’ body spasmed and he let out a gasp of pain. But nevertheless, he could keep talking. “This horrible abomination… it isn’t attacking us because it’s personal. Its purpose is only to cause as much destruction as possible – it’s a killing machine designed to indiscriminately eliminate everything but its master. Therefore… if there was a closer target, it would prioritise attacking that.”
His eyes shifted to the small white dog huddled against Papyrus. For a brief moment – so brief, Papyrus questioned whether he was hallucinating – a hideous expression of contempt flashed on his muzzle. “There has to be a decoy.”

“What!? No!” Papyrus huddled the dog to his chest. “We’re going to use this guy as bait? I don’t like him, but…”

“If you haven’t already noticed, I’m being impaled by bones as we speak! Can you think of any other options?” Before the skeleton could respond, Wingdings roughly snatched it out of his hands. This is what you deserve, you disgusting mutt… After all, you’re the reason he couldn’t defend himself back then… Because he couldn’t fully ‘mature’, and you stole his Special Attack, that flower…! I will eliminate all those who oppose justice!

Wingdings whirled around, putting his weight into the throw. The dog soared towards the dragon in a perfect arc and hit its damaged head. Almost comically, it bounced with a sound straight out of a cartoon, then landed on the floor with a yelp.

“…!!!” True to Wingdings’ words, the hellbeast stopped its Blue Attack. The small dog tried to scamper away, but the gargantuan Gasterblaster monster effortlessly caught up to it in a few brisk strides. The dragon sunk its fangs into the dog, then picked it up and threw it against the wall with a sickening crunch.

Papyrus should have hated what he saw. But his breathing intensifying, his bones shaking, a strange feeling running through his very being… He wasn’t disgusted or afraid. He was… excited?

“Don’t get caught up in it!” Wingdings squeezed his shoulder, snapping the skeleton out of the strange exhilaration he had been pulled into. “There’s our opening!”

Its jaw had swung open, and light was gathering inside it. Papyrus sprinted to the beast, the aches and pains from the battle overridden by adrenaline! The moment before it was about to fire – just a split second – Papyrus summoned Bonetrousle and slammed its jaw shut with a single swing! “NYEEEEEEH!”

*KABOOM!* With nowhere for the laser’s force to go, the effect on the dragon’s head was not pretty. Its head violently exploded, sending bone shrapnel in every direction and stirring up the dust in the room. Papyrus guarded himself with Bonetrousle, the stinging being minor in comparison to the bone attacks from before. He couldn’t see Wingdings, but he was sure he could take it.

When the dust settled again, Papyrus lowered Bonetrousle’s arms. “No way…” The dragon’s determination, as misdirected as it was, was really something else. Even beheaded, its SOUL (a multicoloured one!) was still intact. It was rattling, struggling to stand, but still slowly advancing on the high school student.

“Nyare nyare daze, as my cartoon-obsessed friends say… You really are dangerous. If what Wingdings said is true, then your entire existence is dedicated to making the lives of others worse. You’re not even sentient, are you? You’re just a giant rabid dog. And rabid dogs…” Papyrus dashed towards the demon, his aura flaring to life! “…should be put down!”

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH!” With a final, thorough beatdown, Papyrus put the failed experiment out of its misery. Once he was sure it had been destroyed – only a large pile of bone shards remained – he fell to his knees, panting for breath.

Wingdings slowly limped towards the remains, his body still burning all over from the battle. “This is
for the best… just die, WD-100. You should have never been born to begin with…”

A long silence followed… then a small whine caught Papyrus’ attention. *Ah! The dog!* He got back up and sprinted towards the small white dog. It looked awful – more like a mess of fur, blood, and bones jutting out than anything close to a dog. But it was still alive. Using Bonetrousle’s arms, so as to not harm it further from the claws on Papyrus’ actual hands, he gently scooped it up. “Why… why did you do this to the poor dog!? Did you really have to use him as bait?”

“Oh of course,” Wingdings replied without a hint of hesitation. “It was necessary to ensure our survival. I already told you: for a bright future, I am willing to do anything. No one should have to feel the way I did.”

Papyrus clenched his fists and grit his teeth. “I learned from my friends… that people should always strive to do the right thing, regardless of the circumstances. No matter how bad things get, don’t kill, and don’t be killed. No one has to be a sacrifice! You’re a hypocrite! You don’t want anyone to feel the way you did, but trampling over others in your path will cause just that!”

Wingdings chuckled dryly, as if told a joke that only he could understand. “Foolish boy… Only those with Determination, the power to play god, have the luxury to actually do that. And if I’m a hypocrite, so are you. Do you really believe ‘don’t kill, and don’t be killed’ is a realistic option after putting down that ‘giant rabid dog’ with your own hands? After knowing what those with Determination can do if unchecked? Until this world changes, us regular people have no hope.”

“Ngh…” Those words struck Papyrus like blades. He kept moving his mouth erratically, trying to form words, but nothing came out. The skeleton’s previously unshakeable beliefs were slowly starting to wear away, like a cliff battered by the waves of the ocean.

A large red ball rolled along the floor. The tension that had choked the room completely dissipated as Wingdings sped towards it on all fours and seized it in his grasp. “Finally… I found it.”

“What’s that?”

Wingdings got back up. “Its true name is unknown – people have called it the Legendary Artefact. This treasure is the origin of everything that happened up until now.”

“Really? This small red ball was the cause of everything?”

“With the Fragments, yes. It is a priceless object. It has been around since before recorded history, passed down through generations, through civilisations… Undyne was the last to possess it, having been entrusted it by Asgore. But that dog snuck in and stole it when that Determined boy solved the puzzle she left it at. When the dragon attacked it, the shock must have caused its ejection.”

“…So what does it actually do?”

“It has the ability to pierce dimensions. The Dimensional Box your grandmother made, and the machine I made to harness the powers of the Darkness were based off its properties. With it, we can escape from this rift!” Wingdings lifted it high in the air, and red pulses of energy exuded from it, forcing Papyrus to squint from the sheer brightness. The scenery around the group started to blur, becoming out of focus before finally fading.

When the skeleton opened his eyes, they were back in Spring Forest Trail. Wingdings turned and slowly limped away. “I would advise you to think carefully about my words. Do you really want to go back to being a plaything in the game of the Determined? This decision affects not only you, but the whole universe.”
“Wait-” Papyrus wanted to reach out to the slowly disappearing figure. He wanted to grab him, to stop him, or even slug him in the back of the head to knock him out… But for some reason, he didn’t. The skeleton put a hand to his chest. Seeing Wingdings’ ‘heart’… Knowing that he did it all because he cared… Papyrus’ own resolve wavered. Was Wingdings correct after all? Was the doctor’s path really the best… the only possible path?

“Papyrusssss!”

“Undyne! Gaster!”

The fish lady and the sentient Gasterblaster beast panted for breath as they approached. “We’ve been looking for you for ages! We searched the whole forest, but you had disappeared without a trace.” Undyne’s gaze shifted to the mess of fur and blood in Bonetrousle’s arms, as well as the injuries Papyrus himself had sustained. “Wait, you’re hurt… and isn’t that dog… Hey, what happened?”

Undyne nodded, her expression neutral as she carefully accepted the canine. “Got it. I’ll get the dog medical attention ASAP.” She rushed off.

Papyrus had told her everything. The fish lady’s lack of reaction to his admission that he let Wingdings get away was scarier than outright anger. Was she disappointed in him for being ‘weak’…? Was it wrong to sympathise with the doctor’s point of view? The skeleton slapped his forehead a couple of times and shook his head, groaning. Whatever. That was just how Undyne saw things. With how both she and Wingdings stubbornly desired justice, their attitudes actually weren’t that different.

“Papyrus…”

“Yes, Gaster?”

“The giant pile you described… were there any mechanical objects?”

“Now that you mention it… no, there weren’t.”

The skeleton brothers’ house, the next day

Sans didn’t want to risk causing another panic attack in the poor fortune teller, so after letting the ambulance take her away, he and Alphys headed straight back home. He could only hope that her condition would be stable. Darkness… destruction… was the sealed-off part of his SOUL really that hideous? Or was the fortune teller predicting something horrible happening in his future?

Undyne got the dog the medical attention it needed, and it was currently recovering under her grandmother’s care. Papyrus filled Frisk and Flowey in on the details through a phone call before practically collapsing on his bed from exhaustion.

Now that it was the weekend, the whole team had time to meet up. Together, they looked over the blueprints from seven years ago laid out on the table Papyrus set up in the garage. This was the Darkness-extracting machine Dr Gaster created, so no wonder Wingdings had Grillby send them to him. Alphys traced a finger over the shape of the various components. “The parts used in the machine… aren’t they kinda like some of the things that people are losing?”

Gaster nodded. “I figured out there were two different thieves: the dog was hoarding junk, whereas
Wingdings was looking for mechanical items to use in his machine.”

Sans snapped his fingers. “That means he’s gotta be taking them through the same way he snuck in that Fragment to take over Grillby!” He sprang to his feet. “And once it’s complete… it’s his victory! He doesn’t need to find the Fragments if the entire Darkness comes to him!”

Flowey cocked his head to the side. “How are we supposed to know when it’s complete?”

Papyrus had spaced out, still mentally going over what Wingdings had said yesterday, but the mention of the machine caught his attention. He abruptly rose up, his face solemn. “It’s… probably finished now.”

With perfect timing, the room went pitch-black.

“Eek!”

“A blackout!”?

“No, it couldn’t be this dark on a Spring afternoon!”

Alphys using her magic to light the way, the seven friends made their way outside. At the sight of what was before the group, a fire ignited in Papyrus’ heart. “Wingdings…!”

The sky had been completely blotted out by dark clouds, and a ghastly purple vortex was swirling above Mt. Ebott.

TO BE CONTINUED

WD-100, the failed prototype of the Apocalypse Cannon

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: S

Speed: S

Range: S

Durability: S

Precision: S (E in practice due to its mental capacity)

Developmental Potential: S

Abilities/Powers

Surging Fang: A powerful laser fired from its mouth. It is capable of wiping anything off the face of the Earth, but it consumes a lot of energy.

Death’s Rain: The bone attacks skeleton monsters can usually use, but amped up to 11. It can form twisted and wickedly-sharp blades capable of cutting through the hardest of diamonds like butter. The only thing that the attacks can’t easily cut or pierce are structures utilising material based on or identical to the Darkness.

Blue Attack: Possesses the same ability as Papyrus and Sans to control gravity on anything it can
touch – including via its laser.

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**Aaron’s Recovered Document**

**Expected progression of development of WD-000 and WD-666**

By Dr W.D. Gaster

Among the entire Gasterblaster Series, these two are the only ones fit for their proper use as weapons of mass destruction and bringing ruin to my enemies. Between them, WD-666 is far more powerful, but WD-000 still has potential.

Temporary manifestation of earlier stages can be brought on by extreme emotion and suppressed with the use of a power limiter, but to permanently awaken to their true forms, they must resonate with the Darkness.

**Stage 1: The Horned Demon**

Appearance: The subject will grow horns, and its teeth will sharpen. It will additionally receive claws on its phalanges and spikes along its spine for means of physical combat. A tail will grow, and the subject’s feet should reconfigure into a digitigrade stance as preparation for later shifts in structure.

Abilities: The subject’s physical capabilities and senses should be enhanced. Additionally, its true otherworldly nature should begin to become apparent – for those unprepared, it should be able to inspire terror from its mere presence.

**Stage 2: The Dragonoid**

Appearance: The subject’s head will fully transform to become similar to a Gasterblaster. The spikes from Stage 1 will grow and become sharper.

Abilities: The subject’s senses and physical capabilities will be augmented even further. Its spikes and teeth should be sharp enough to cause significant damage by this point. However, despite its head completely resembling a Gasterblaster, the subject will not yet be able to fire lasers.

**Stage 3: The Hellbeast**

Appearance: The subject’s major skeletal structure will fully reform – it will become much larger in size and quadrupedal in stance. Its spikes and teeth will grow sharper, and its features will grow ever more vicious. As a giant, hellish demon, it will be unrecognisable as its unmatured self.

Abilities: The subject will grow even more powerful – Stage 3 is exponentially stronger than either of the previous two stages. Not enough to combat entire armies, but enough to raze a whole city singlehandedly if need be. The loss of its thumbs will significantly impact its dexterity, but that is irrelevant to a weapon. The ability to fire lasers is much more valuable.

**St--e 4: The Br--g-- -f --- -nd**

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(The rest of the document is illegible. …It’s covered in horse monster sweat.)
Appropriate music for the last scene: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htDB8SuLrng
Also, the next arc’s the final one! Look forward to it!
A Song of Roaring Dreams (1)

Waterfall, several years ago

“URRRYYYYY!” The child let out an inhuman screech as she cleaved a man in two with her legs. Dr Gaster and her husband sprinted away, praying for their lives. Of course, praying didn’t stop an abomination like that from falling into their home, so what good would it do now?

“Of all times, why did it have to be on our trip to Waterfall…!”

“What about Wingdings!?”

“The kid’s here!” A small, scrawny skeleton was roughly shoved out of the shop. Gerson’s eyes were filled with regret. “I’m sorry, but the magic seal on my shop can only hold one person! You guys are on your own!” With that, the monster slammed the door shut.

“Run! Hurry!” Wingdings tried to run in response to his parents’ urges, but his legs could only carry him a few steps before they abruptly gave out from under him.

“Ah…!”

Both his mother’s and father’s face twisted in horror when they saw their son, collapsed, with the personification of everything that was wrong with the world hovering over him. The twisted child giggled as she raised her leg. “Kiihihihi! Too slow~”

She swung it down mercilessly, without a hint of hesitation. And equally lacking in hesitation… was the resolve of a mother’s love. In a flash, Dr Gaster shoved her son out of the way! The target the ballerina hit wasn’t her intended one, but the blow was equally devastating.

“M-mum…!” There was nothing but a cloud of dust hovering in the air where Wingdings’ mother used to be. It was as if someone had blown up a bag of flour.

“You little bitch!” For Wingdings’ father, fear had been overridden by rage! He launched several bone attacks, sharpened by the intent to kill. But against one who had accumulated LOVE, those attacks meant even less than insect bites.

The girl simply walked through the storm of bones, giggling like it tickled. Wingdings’ father realised his mistake too late. Before he knew it, he had been impaled by a stockinged leg. His body burned as it started to disintegrate. He turned to his son, croaking out a final message. “Wingdings… run… live…!” With the last of his life extinguished, he swiftly joined his wife as dust.

The demonic little girl blew the dust off her shoe, a gunner blowing the smoke off her weapon. “Too easy.” She then advanced on Wingdings, licking her lips.

“No… No…!” The boy stumbled back, his clumsy and awkward steps being a stark contrast to the graceful dance of the murderer.

For all intents and purposes, Wingdings was doomed. But when it seemed all hope for the boy was lost, a small, tiny miracle occurred! In any other situation, this small miracle wouldn’t have meant anything. But for Wingdings, it was literally the difference between life and death! Some of the dust that had been scattered – his parents’ dust – happened to flow up the girl’s nose. She paused, her nostrils twitching once, then twice. Then… she sneezed!
This small, three second pause… it was enough for Wingdings to gracelessly stumble back and slip off the bridge. The girl simply shrugged and kept walking through Waterfall, in search of new prey.

As young Wingdings surfaced in the small pool at the bottom of the bridge, he couldn’t help but wonder… why? Why did things have to be like this? The single source of happiness in his life, robbed from him in an instant. Surely, life didn’t have to be so awful! The legends he had heard and now witnessed of people being slaughtered like animals… There had to be a way to fight back! To save the innocents and punish the evildoers! If not, there would be no point in living!

The not-too-distant past…

The doctor huddled in a foetal position, hovering in the void as windows floated around him of the outside world. His head throbbed, and tears streamed down from his eyes. Bile rose in his throat as the massacre of the Underground unfolded before him in excruciating detail. The seemingly-innocent flower given life by a combination of a Fragment and injected Determination was actually a soulless abomination that could control time and play with the lives of monsterkind as much as it wished.

Froggits were hacked up and eaten alive. The annoying yet endearing Temmies had their throats slit and were left to bleed out on the roadside. Even the Royal Guard and professional mercenaries didn’t stand a chance against this… thing. When the captain channelled the power of her Determination and defeated the flower, it took but a single moment for time to rewind and it to come back.

Being able to see everything contained by the Barrier, but unable to do anything to change it… It was torture. All he could do was despair. After the flower’s grotesque handiwork was done, the windows around the man all faded to white. Time had rewound, for it all to happen again.

A flash of red and white in one of the windows caught Dr Gaster’s eye. No… not him… Not again!

Papyrus stood resolute before the creature. “Flowey. I don’t understand why you’re doing this. But please, you have to stop! None of this slaughter will lead to anything!” The teen put a hand to his chest. “It’s my personal philosophy… that every action, good or evil, has a reason behind it. Despite everything, we can’t forget that. If we just talked… if I could just understand you… we could surely find a better way!”

The flower paused for a moment, before it pouted and tears started to well up in its eyes. “You’re right, Papyrus… I’m so sorry…” He lifted his leaves. “Forgiveness hug?”

Dr Gaster’s breath caught in his throat. He pressed his hands against the glass of the window, screaming at the top of his voice. “NO! STOP! HE’S TRICKING YOU! PLEASE, I’M BEGGING YOU, DON’T COME NEAR HIM! PAPYRUSSSSSS!” His pleas fell on deaf ears – his voice couldn’t reach the outside of the Darkness.

The skeleton embraced the flower… then thorny vines dug into his back. “Aah…” His body instantly collapsed into worthless dust. His head remained, but soon, that too would…

“HAHAHAHAHAHA! You’re so consistently stupid, I can’t believe you! You really think that’s how this world works!”

“I… do… Even now… I still believe in you, Flowey…”
“Huh~? Even though I just killed you?” The flower doubled over in laughter. “That’s hilarious! I can do whatever I want, and you won’t do a thing! What should I do next, hmm~? Make some nice sushi out of Undyne and force-feed it to Alphys? Rip Sans apart, one bone at a time? Will you still feel the same way, then? Oh, wait! You won’t remember any of this anyway!”

Dr Gaster collapsed against the window, wailing in pain. The sound of Papyrus’ skull finally dissolving into dust and the grotesque cackles of the flower would be etched into his memory forever.

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Mt Ebott, present day

A cold wind blew through the peak, ruffling Wingdings’ clothes. The breathtaking view of the world beneath him gave him time to reflect on everything leading up to this. The actions of humans… the flower’s actions… He was more than justified. He was the only one who understood that he was the hero this world needed. Weeping and praying wouldn’t do anything. Therefore… for the sake of monsterekind… for the sake of the universe…

“How curious…” A voice rudely interrupted his thoughts.

“Chara? You’re still awake?” All the Fragments Wingdings had gathered, including the one containing Chara, were inside the new machine he built. With the parts his associate brought him, and the blueprints he had Grillby send to him, making a functioning, powered-up Darkness-extracting machine was a breeze.

Because it was drawing from the energy of the Fragment, the spirit should have lost consciousness by now. Chara’s form was starting to fade, but he was determined to fight until the end.

He had assumed a stance and expression that looked downright unnatural on him – rather than the hunched-over ugly anger one would expect, he was completely relaxed with a serene smile on his face. It was a far cry from the somewhat grumpy and coarse boy who accompanied Frisk on his adventure. Was he trying to put on a show? Like what the prince did as the so-called God of Hyperdeath…

“You seem to believe that you’re a hero, valiantly fighting against the forces of evil. You think that you’re the only one in the right, and that no one else understands you… How pathetic. You’re utterly blind to your own actions.” He tilted his head to the side, humming. “Or, perhaps you have some self-awareness after all? You’re just calling those you oppose ‘evil’ because you can’t stomach the consequences of what you’ve done.”

If the spirit was going to make assumptions and try to pick the demon dragon’s psyche apart, he wasn’t having any of it. Wingdings calmly approached the opening of the machine and took Chara’s Fragment out, the spirit boy coming with it. With a swift, fluid motion, he grabbed Chara by the hair and smashed his head into the ground. In an instant, the boy’s cold calculating façade shattered.

“Don’t put words in my mouth, you little brat.”

The boy raised his head and spat on Wingdings’ face. “You’ll never get away with this, you bastard.”

The former dentist wiped his face with his sleeve. “I don’t need to. Once I have corrected the world, I will have completed my life’s purpose. Anything that happens afterwards, I can accept. This is the only path to happiness.” The glow of the demon dragon’s eyes intensified. “However! I absolutely must finish my duty. The Apocalypse Cannon and its allies will soon arrive. With the power I currently have, my chance of victory is less than a snowflake’s in hell.”
The bone monstrosity’s gaze bored into the spirit. “But you! The being that you are now… it is very similar in nature to my son. If you combined your power with mine…” He thrust his hand towards the spirit. In an instant, Chara’s entire body burned. Spots danced in his vision, and a harsh ring started to drown out his hearing. “…none could oppose me!”

The last thing Chara saw before his world went black was the demon dragon’s horrifying grin.

“ARE YOU SURE THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO TRAVEL, UNDYNE!?” Frisk yelled, barely audible over the howl of the wind.

“NO, BUT IT’S THE FASTEST! SPEED TENDS TO BE IMPORTANT WHEN AN EVIL MASTERMIND IS PUTTING HIS PLAN INTO MOTION!”

The group had been awkwardly tangled up into a shape vaguely resembling a ball, held together by Gaster’s black rope and Flowey’s vines. Undyne was propelling them using her Blasting Strike, whereas Papyrus had lightened everyone with his Blue Attack to ensure faster speeds and longer time in the air.

Whenever they were about to hit the ground, Undyne sent them up again – it really did look like a giant ball bouncing across the city and towards the mountain. Luckily for them, the citizens of Ebott City were too busy staring at the giant dark vortex that appeared over said mountain to notice this.

Soon, the group approached the peak. At the highest point of the mountain was a machine. Even from this distance, it distinctly resembled the one Papyrus saw in Sans’ workshop – the one to bring the Darkness under Wingdings’ command. The person next to it had to be the doctor himself.

Wingdings…!

The fire within Papyrus burned even brighter! The figure was still too small to make out any details, but the skeleton’s chest seized up when he saw a familiar blue glint approach. “NO! UNDYNE, SEND US DOWN!”

Undyne knew better than to question why. An upwards Blasting Strike in combination with Papyrus’ Blue Attack resulted in the world’s fastest and most dangerous landing. Just in time, too – a massive laser beam obliterated the space where the group was a mere millisecond ago. Even at the base of Mt Ebott, where they landed, the strong scent of ozone lingered.

Papyrus got up, his body aching, but otherwise unharmed. Because he was on the top of the ball, he was injured the least. He wasn’t too sure about everyone else, though… “Is everyone okay?” One by one, his friends got off the ground and shook themselves down. Everyone was a little dirtier, but miraculously, no one was even bleeding!

Gaster was the last to get up, slowly reforming from black goo into his dragon-like shape. He was stumbling around in random patterns, small stars circling around his head.

Frisk ran up to the Gasterblaster beast. The soft glow emanating from the human’s hands allowed the dragon to snap out of it. “Thank you, Frisk…”

“Thank you for breaking our fall!”

Gaster laughed nervously, before suddenly flinching and tensing up. “Someone’s here!” Everyone’s gazes followed the beast’s to a nearby tree. Frisk fired a DT Drone at it, drawing out the person hiding behind it.

“Tch, impressive! I would expect no less of a Gasterblaster.”

Undyne blinked (well, winked) rapidly and rubbed her eye, as if she couldn’t process who was
standing there. “…Woshua!?”

“That’s my name, don’t wear it out.”

She readied her spear. “If you’re here on Mt. Ebott at a time like this, that can only mean one thing!”

The washing machine-like monster sighed, the bird inside his tank shrugging for him due to his lack of arms. “You’re as sharp as usual. I guess at a time like this, trying to slow you down with talk isn’t going to work. Let’s get this over with.”

Undyne started to close the distance between them, but a scaly hand reached up and grabbed her shoulder. “U-Undyne, wait! Don’t you think something’s off with him just letting all of us attack at once? He was hiding earlier, but he wouldn’t get this close without a strategy to eliminate us all at once!”

In response to Alphys’ statement, Woshua’s features were distorted by a twisted grin. “Amazing. So you’ve noticed it by now?”

Papyrus’ breath caught in his throat. It…? Ah…! He whirled around. The group had been surrounded by mist! To be precise, ‘mist’ wouldn’t be an accurate word to describe it. Mist or fog is usually formed by differences in air temperature, upon which it envelops a large area. This mist covered just a few metres around them, and it was thicker – almost like a small cloud was brought down to Earth. The way it was contorting and shifting… it was like it was alive.

Something else was missing as well. It was subtle – someone unfamiliar with the area wouldn’t have been able to notice it at all. But for Papyrus, who regularly visited the greener areas around Ebott City, the difference was like night and day! The sound of wildlife was completely absent! Looking more closely, he could make out several small shapes on the ground. Dead birds!?

Frisk sent a DT Drone over to analyse them, but when it touched the mist, it shattered like glass. “The hell!?”

Woshua’s already impossibly-large smirk widened even more. “I’ve already won. Your lives end here.”

The swirling mist started to close in on the group. Frisk’s thoughts drifted back to the time Flowey had him cornered, incapacitating all his friends with vines and overriding his Determination. Back then, if it weren’t for his friends protecting him, he would have certainly died to the flower’s Friendliness Pellets. Even though they just played into Flowey’s plans, that didn’t change the fact that his friends were willing to sacrifice their lives for him. And, now… it was time for him to return the favour!

“Flowey? Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“How should I know? I’m not psychic. But I sure as hell am ready to go along with it.”

The boy picked up a pebble in one hand and summoned a DT Drone in another. He kept his voice low enough so that Woshua didn’t hear. “Guys. When I give the signal, run ahead. I know this sounds extremely cliché, but you need to focus on stopping Wingdings!”

Papyrus inhaled sharply. “We can’t leave you behind! I want to get through this with everyone alive! No one needs to become a sacrifice!” In this case, even if they did win, Wingdings’ philosophy would be proven right!

“Don’t get me wrong, I’m not going to die here. You know what I’m capable of. You know I can
handle this.”

The horned skeleton saw the spark in the boy’s eyes. His Determination, the power to control time, may have originated from a Fragment of Dr Gaster, but his resolve was his own. “Alright. I believe in you, Frisk. You too, Flowey.”

Frisk grinned, then turned to Woshua. The monster was standing in the mist without being harmed. It couldn’t be that he was simply immune to it – not something with the potential to kill living creatures and shatter solid objects. Therefore, it had to be something Woshua was consciously doing once an object touched the mist! And if he had to consciously do it…

As fast as he could, Frisk launched the drone at the monster! Woshua was completely unfazed. “Close, but no cigar.” It barely made it a metre into the mist before shattering.

It was the human’s turn to smirk. “That’s fine, I don’t care much for lung cancer anyway.”

Woshua registered a burning pain in his skull and lack of vision on his right side. “GYAAAAAAAAH!” An energy sword!? That kid’s projectile was a feint! He tied a blade to the drone with a vine, and that was his real attack. Woshua used his power on the drone to break it, but the blade was energy, so he couldn’t destroy it! And because of the mist, he couldn’t distinguish it from the drone before it was too late to dodge! Damn it… Even without the ability to control time, Frisk was an extremely dangerous enemy!

“NOW!” Frisk yelled.

“Frisk… Flowey… you have to survive!” Papyrus and the others prepared to blast off, Undyne readying her spear.

“YOU WON’T GET AWAY!” A hose extended from the tub on Woshua’s back and sprayed at the party.

“Water?” Alphys readied a glowing ball of light to protect the team.

“No! That’s…” True to Sans’ observation, the fluid transformed into small balls of energy – the same kind of deadly energy as Frisk’s sword.

“BLASTING STRIKE!” With a pulse of energy, the balls dispersed. Undyne’s spear was now pointed at Woshua. “Sorry guys, but you’ll have to climb Mt. Ebbott on foot. Frisk and Flowey need a hand!”

Frisk couldn’t stop himself from smiling. “Undyne… thank you.”

A glow appeared around Woshua – a sign that he was attempting to use his powers as a Fragment User – but Undyne smashed into him with her spear. “NGAAAAHHHHHHHHH!” She looked back over her shoulder. “Go! While there’s still time!”

Gaster tightened his rope around the skeletons and lizard, who were now sitting on his back. “Please hold on tight, everyone!” He ascended the hiking trail in leaps and bounds, rapidly disappearing up the mountain.

“Now…” The remaining three turned to Woshua, wearing their scariest faces imaginable. The mist had gathered around them, but at this point, they didn’t care. “How do you want us to kick your ass?”

The enemy growled at them. The energy blade sticking out of his eye… where did it go?
Undyne’s body shuddered and lurched forward, blood leaking from her mouth. “W-wha…?” The short sword was lodged in her chest!

Frisk started to run towards her, but his face exploded with pain! Blood poured from his nose and mouth like a small red waterfall as he writhed in agony on the ground. How…? The sensation was like a small bomb went off close to his face. But if the power was actually explosive in nature, the birds from earlier would have been blown to bits. What in the world was Woshua’s mist…?

Woshua casually strutted over to Undyne and kicked her. Her body convulsed as more gashes opened up on her body, spraying more blood. “Never count your hatches before they chicken.” The fish lady raised an eyebrow. His face went slightly red. “Whoops, I meant-”

**BLAM!** Undyne’s Blasting Strike bowled him over. She dashed towards Frisk, scooping him up and running away from the enemy Fragment User.

“Don’t run away, you hypocrite!”

Too late! Undyne had already used another Blasting Strike to propel herself and Frisk upwards and out of the range of Woshua’s powers.

The turtle-like creature clicked his tongue. The fish lady had a brain after all – if she decided to escape outright, he would be left free to pursue the Apocalypse Cannon and its allies. He strained his neck to gaze up at the mountain. Indeed, Undyne wasn’t stupid. She was blatantly attempting to lure him in that direction, then ambush him.

Even though no one was around to see them, both Woshua and his bird friend struck fabulous poses – ones that shouldn’t even be possible for monsters with their anatomy. If she was trying to make a fool of him, she wouldn’t get away with it! He was prepared for whatever she might throw at him!

Frisk’s hands glowed as they brushed against Undyne’s wounds. “I stopped the bleeding, but that’s the best I can do.”

“Don’t worry, I appreciate it.”

Thanks to Undyne buying enough time, the boy’s face had completely healed. Unfortunately, his ability still didn’t work as well on others as himself – the fish lady’s body still hurt all over.

Currently, Frisk and Undyne were hiding in one of the several caves around Mt. Ebott. By now, Papyrus and the others would have already made it farther up the mountain. That meant the job of Undyne’s group was to stop Woshua from catching up to them.

Undyne’s heartbeat intensified when she spotted him calmly walking along. The cave she was hiding in was off the main hiking trail, so he shouldn’t have noticed them. His power was based off consciously doing something to deal damage, so blitzing him before he even knew what was happening was the best strategy. Right now, he was passing through a narrow passage on a slope… right into her trap!

Several large blue circles formed in the ground both beneath and around Woshua’s feet. The turtle instantly recognised what they were. “Gyaahh!” With a frightened yelp, he dashed to and fro, his gait a mix of walking barefoot on hot coals and someone with diarrhoea scrambling for a toilet. Barely avoiding being skewered or tripping over himself, he managed to stumble his way towards a tree beneath a cliff and scramble up.

The former captain smirked. **Fool! You’re right where I want you!** She focused, sweat pouring out of
her brow, then forced out several more of her ‘ground spears’ at a spot on the cliff Woshua was standing under. With a thunder-like rumble, a huge boulder came tumbling down!

Undyne was going to squish Woshua like a bug – an eye for an eye, a giant rock for ripping Frisk’s face off. Fragment Users were more durable than regular people, so it probably would just hospitalise rather than kill him.

But rather than the crunch of rock against earth than Undyne expected to hear, there was a splash of liquid. The giant boulder… the moment it touched Woshua, it popped and exploded into liquid like a water balloon, before getting sucked into the tank in his body. Changing states of matter! That was his ability!

The turtle casually jumped down from the tree, his movements far more coordinated than a few moments ago. He looked directly in Undyne’s direction. “I’ll be honest… I saw through all of that.”

Strength instantly drained from her body. Her head pulsed, and her vision blurred in and out. “What is…?” How…? As if answering her question, a yellow shape came into her vision, flying past her. Woshua’s bird friend…? With that, Undyne immediately understood the turtle’s strategy! He made it so that by the time he revealed his hand by showing his powers, it was already too late! Woshua had him scout ahead before coming up. While she was focused on Woshua’s movements, he slowly moved the mist into the cavern in a thick, concentrated form - out of her field of vision as much as possible, so she wouldn't notice it. With the little ventilation in the cave, it was enough to suffocate them!

“How does it feel to be powerless again, Undyne?” Woshua taunted as he approached. “For the ‘hero’ of the Underground, this must be even more humiliating than the first time!” He paused as he was halfway down the passage. “You know, I used to be proud to live in the same neighbourhood as you. But after hearing about what you’re really like from Dr Gaster, I’m ashamed to know you.

“You beat up anyone who even looked at you funny, passing it off as justice. You kept your best friend in the dark, believing he was too vulnerable for the truth, while constantly beating him. Your adoring girlfriend who you love to dote on is the one who deserves it the least - a mad scientist who turned people into zombies and slipped dangerous drugs in your meals. Wingdings, the Hopebringer, is right. He makes a far better hero than you.”

Normally, Undyne wouldn’t have given Woshua’s words a second thought. But in her heart of hearts, she couldn’t deny it. Was it because of Wingdings’ influence becoming so strong, it affected the minds of even Fragment Users? Or was it because of her subconscious memories of previous timelines, ones where her actions came back to bite her? Even ignoring the other now-impossible futures, Undyne couldn’t overlook her inner demons.

The thrilling rush she got back in the Underground, when she bashed criminals’ heads in. It was really awesome when they turned out to be people who pissed her off anyway – she got to slug someone in the face and look good for it!

Papyrus, the teenage skeleton monster she was such good friends with now… She just tried to trick him into becoming what she wanted him to be, with no consideration for his own feelings.

She suspected Alphys might have had hidden baggage, but she swept it under the rug for ages because she couldn’t face it. Her food, which always made her feel stronger, and her company were too valuable.

As a hero, she was… she was… “A failure.”
“Undyne!?” Frisk was suffering from the poison gas, but he was more concerned about Undyne.

“I’m a failure.” Undyne’s heart was shattered by shame and despair. Her head slumped to the ground, her fire quenched.

Frisk’s blood boiled. How dare Wingdings make Woshua say such things…! Even though it was blatant that he was trying to break her, Undyne was still taking the bait hook, line, and sinker! He was on the verge of blacking out earlier, but the desire to prove the walking washing machine wrong brought him back from the brink. “SHUT THE HELL UP!”

“!” A barely-visible aura rushed out from the boy, stunning both Woshua and Undyne. How was he standing!? The gas was enough to kill animals five times his size!

Frisk’s eyes were glowing red again, his pupils narrowed to draconic slits. “Don’t pull out your pretentious preteen-tier psychoanalysis here! Even though she isn’t perfect, you can’t ignore the sincere and pure intentions she carries! Undyne genuinely cared about her friends! She was protecting Papyrus! The same goes for Alphys – she wanted Undyne to be admired! The people she experimented on were going to die anyway, so like this, she saved their lives! And it was Undyne who helped her deal with the hell she inflicted on herself. No matter how you twist it, you can’t erase these facts! Undyne’s heart is… Undyne’s heart is…!”

Like a blur, Frisk’s arm reached out and pulled something. “IT’S PURE GOLLLLLLDD!”

Woshua jolted when he saw what the boy was holding. A vine!? So that’s where the flower went! The monster’s eyes quickly followed where the appendage lead to. While he was preoccupied with Undyne’s assault, the flower had woven himself throughout the entire area! And if Frisk pulled it, that meant…

Instantly, the entire area caved in on Woshua! Rock and earth rushed at him from all directions! “Nooooo!” He couldn’t turn all the debris to liquid or gas at the same time – there was simply too much! He glared at Frisk, venom in his eyes. “Don’t think this means you’ve wooon!” He may have used up his gas trying to choke them, but he still had the weapons he had turned into fluid! The monster materialised them all at once, spraying wildly around himself with his hose! Many miscellaneous objects he had prepared earlier arose from the liquid – spikes, knives, sharpened rocks… With the ultra-high-pressure force he was firing them at, even one of them hitting would prove fatal. Like this, it would both push back the landslide and kill his enemies insta- CRUNCH! Woshua was too shocked to even speak when he realised what had happened. Why… why was the boulder back!?

Flowey fell to the ground, only his head and a thin, shredded stem remaining. Even so, he was smiling. “Your power may be strong, but you certainly aren’t. You were in such a panic to defend yourself, you brought everything out – including the boulder. You utter moron!”

Woshua tried to say something, but the only thing that came out of his mouth was blood. “Uurghh…” He tried to return his weapons to liquid form and recollect them, but the fluid collapsed to the ground in a puddle. The casing of his tank was cracked.

Frisk managed to drag himself and Undyne out of the cave, nullifying the effect of the poison gas. He made his way to the flower and gently scooped him up. “It’s okay, Flowey… I’ll heal you up. We don’t have to go anywhere anytime soon.”

You think I’m a moron for overlooking things!? You’ve got another thing coming! Woshua may have been outsmarted by them, but they were still going to die! A tiny helmet with a dagger on top,
barely the size of an eraser, formed in the spilled liquid on the ground. Go, Birdie!

The yellow blur swooped in from out of nowhere! In one swift motion, it snatched up the helmet and slashed up the two humanoids! Blood instantly spurted out of the newly-formed wounds in the duo’s bodies as they collapsed.

With a hiss, the boulder slowly melted. Woshua shakily stood up, injured, but no longer hindered in movement or speech. “I’ll make all three of you wish you were never born! Then I’ll go after your friends and do the same to them. Such is the punishment of those who obstruct justice.”

Frisk and Undyne tried to stand, but the bird had done too much damage to their legs. They were barely hanging on by a thread…! But there was one last thing they could do. One last thing to send their hopes to Papyrus and the others, to make sure they could fight for the future…

The boy reached out to Flowey and grabbed him. A single DT Drone appeared, which Frisk pressed other his hand against.


Frisk ignored him. Flowey’s magic wasn’t based off a SOUL, but Determination. If he could add his own to it, it would…! The drone started to shake, a wonderous golden aura springing to life around it.

The turtle realised this could be trouble. “No, stop- Gah!” He tried to tackle Frisk but slammed headfirst into a barrier.

Undyne dragged her body towards the drone and put her hand on it too, causing the glow to intensify and grow. “I may not be able to be a hero, but I can definitely be a badass!”

Flowey raised a worn-down leaf and pressed it against the Determination-powered construct. Now the golden glow was blinding! “I’m in, too. To make up for my sins… this is all I can do!”

Papyrus flinched as the sound of an explosion blasted through the air and the scenery before him was illuminated by a golden glow. He quickly spun around, but had to shield his eyes from the miniature sun that was the source of the light. A brilliant golden aura was shining at the lower end of the mountain. Somehow, seeing it filled him with hope, encouraging him and strengthening his resolve. It was as if the aura contained the hopes and dreams of his friends.

Sans, Alphys, and Gaster were equally awed by the sight. Even when it faded away, the warmth remained. They all had a sinking feeling about what happened down there, but the four knew Frisk and the others had decided to place their faith in them. Therefore, no matter what happened… they had to stay determined.

TO BE CONTINUED

Woshua

Combat Stats

Destructive Power: A
Speed: D
Range: A
Durability: E
Precision: C

Developmental Potential: A

**Abilities/Powers**

**Store and Spray:** Woshua has the ability to change the state of matter of the objects he comes into contact with.

He can change a solid into either a liquid, which flows into the tank in his body, or a gas, which hangs around him as a mist that he can control, as long as it remains within his range. Woshua can return these objects to their solid states at any time. They reform exactly the same as when they were liquefied/sublimated, regardless of resistance that may be in their surroundings.

Although in theory, changing liquids or gases into solids is possible, Woshua not being able to control the resultant object coupled with needing to keep it within his range to remain solid means that it has little use for someone with his physical features and fighting style.
A Song of Roaring Dreams (2)

Gaster continued to sprint up the mountain, unhindered by the three people on his back. Despite the dizzying speed at which they were travelling, for Sans, it was a mere afterthought – he was entirely focused on the widening gap in his power restraint.

The damage it sustained from the battle against Wingdings was getting worse, and it seemed as time went on, it would slowly but surely wear away.

While the long-term effects on his body were concerning, it might have become possible for him to access some of his old powers again. From the gap in the badge, he could feel the familiar pulse of his time magic… and beyond it, something else. Something raging and violent.

Of course, it would be unstable and risky. But in a situation like this, an unknown power… It might just give them the upper hand. Even if it ripped his body apart, it was the least he could do to make up for previous timelines. What kind of pathetic monster was he to have let the sadistic anomaly do as it wished? A decent person would have at least tried to stop it before it was too late. A growl escaped the dragon-like skeleton’s throat as he clenched his fists. That Sans… was dead. Never again would he allow himself or others to be treated like a mere plaything. He would fight until the very end.

A bright flash dazzled the group! Even when they squeezed their eyes shut out of shock, the blinding light pierced through. Gaster instantly halted, worried about crashing. The Fragment Users readied their powers, their other four senses on high alert for any attack that would come their way.

None did. The bright flash abruptly faded. When the afterimages cleared from their vision, they gasped.

The scenery had changed completely! The already chilly mountain air felt like a warm wind compared to the temperature down here. The snow-covered village that appeared around them was immediately recognisable.

“How are we here…? Did we end up going through a pitfall? Some kind of teleportation spell…?” Papyrus glanced at his brother. “Do you know anything about this, Sans?”

Sans looked around, tightening the grip on his chest. “I don’t know… I’m not actually familiar with teleportation magic. At any rate, we have to get back up.”

Gaster turned around and started to trot forward. “The Barrier’s down, so we can just go back to the Ruins and jump out.”

However, before the beast could progress, a grimy hand erupted from the ground! Gaster screeched and stumbled back, inadvertently throwing the three riders off. The creature finished clawing its way up, dragging with it a foul, rotten fish-like stench.

“Pa… py… russss… Why couldn’t… you… saaave… me…?”

“U-Undyne!”?

The fish lady’s formerly proud form was almost beyond recognition, melted flesh exposing bone beneath, and her single eye clouded. Blackened, broken armour hung off her. She shambled towards him blindly, her intact arm reaching out.
Papyrus backed away, but a skeletal arm grabbed him from behind. The horned skeleton whirled around to see the form of his older brother. He looked as he did when he was a human skeleton, but his eye sockets were pitch black, and several thorny vines were wrapped around his body. An endless stream of blood poured from a gash in his chest, staining the snow red.

“You could have tried to stop the flower… but you didn’t… Whyyyy? Why did abandon me…? Why did you abandon us for it …?” The apparition grabbed Papyrus’ arm and forced it into the gash on its chest. The thorns stung like barbed wire, but that was nothing in comparison to the hot blood pouring down his arm. “No matter how much you try and improve yourself now… you can’t run from the past.”

Like ripping a bandage off a painful wound, Papyrus’ subconscious memories of previous timelines erupted. Because of what I did… because I tried to see the best in Flowey… My friends all…

The real Sans was appalled at what his doppelganger was saying. “Don’t listen to that thing, Paps! I’m alive! I’m right here!” There was no response from his brother. He was caught in a trance.

From all around them, several more shapes began to emerge from the ground. The sight made Alphys’ throat close up. The warped, constantly shifting forms… they belonged to none other than the abominations she created. Several voices overlapped, all screaming in agony.

“It huurtss…!”

“So cold…”

“Help usss…!”

The lizard girl completely froze. The logical part of her brain told her that objectively, the Amalgamates were better off than they were before her treatment, and that they were at least with their families. But her heart was crying out in pain. Was it really okay to leave them like this? What if death was preferable compared to this state…?

They were immortal – completely unable to die, even if they wished. Being multiple bodies and minds melded together was bad enough, but when their families and friends inevitably passed on… With no one to take care of them and nothing to distract them from the pain, they would degenerate further into a pathetic existence. And it was all her fault…! She could only moan weakly and collapse to her knees.

Sans turned back and forth between his two companions, panic starting to bubble up in his chest. Dammit! They’re both completely out of it! He sprinted towards Papyrus and threw a punch at his doppelganger. “Ripple Overdrive!” Ripple Energy surged through the creature, but nothing happened.

“Shadow Sword!” Like a white blur, Gaster’s bladed tail sliced through the creature taking Sans’ form, but its bones instantly reformed the moment they were damaged. Neither of them even existed to it.

Sans growled. “Then, in that case, Spin…!” The rotational force from the bone he threw smashed into the ‘zombie’… but nothing happened. Sans’ jaw dropped so hard, it unhinged. Impossible! That’s literally, physically impossible! He shook his head, then threw the snowball he scraped up earlier with his tail as backup. The snowball hit Papyrus, the Spin coursing through him and sending his body flying onto Gaster’s back.

Sans spun around, passing another snowball into his left hand. “And for Al…!” With the
uncomfortable grind of bone against flesh, the rotation sent Alphys’ body flying back onto the
dragon.

Sans wasted no time in getting on the mount himself. “Gaster, we’re charging through!”

“Understood!” The skeletal dragon took off like a lightning bolt, but less than five seconds of
running later, grinded to a halt.

“What’s wrong!? What happened!?” The moment those words left Sans’ muzzle, he already knew
what was happening. He just didn’t want to admit it.

Gaster’s gaze was fixated on two sets of broken, frail arms clinging to both his forelegs. Despite their
flimsy appearances, they dug into him like bear traps. And the faces of the man and woman who
emerged… what was it about them that made him feel so cold? They didn’t say a word, but their
mere gaze made him feel like he had been petrified by Medusa.

Sans could see them over Gaster’s shoulder. Then, he did the unexpected. He groaned. All his
tension melted faster than nice cream left out in the sun, replaced by mild disappointment. Of course,
he never met those two – they died long before he was born. But even beneath the rot and decay, he
recognised common features between them and the old picture of Wingdings he found. Therefore, he
could make an educated guess about who they were. That cemented it – the enemy’s strategy was
ridiculously simple and unoriginal. “I can’t believe my eyes… How could we have fallen for such a
stupid trick?”

With the fabric of space-time distorting, he could believe a vengeful, invulnerable zombie Sans and
Undyne being drawn out by a Fragment ability. He could also accept the Amalgamates being
brainwashed by Wingdings. But his long-dead grandparents, who no longer existed in any of
Flowey’s or Frisk’s timelines, and who even Wingdings would have loved too much to defile? That
explained why his Ripple Energy and Gaster’s Shadow Sword had no effect: they weren’t even real
enemies! Sans steadied his breathing, purifying Ripple Energy flaring to life around him. From the
start, this whole thing was… “…just a shitty illusion!”

Like glass, the fake Snowdin and zombies shattered, revealing the backdrop of an enormous cave
with several massive spider webs strung up. An opening in the ceiling let light stream in, filtered
through the webs to create an intricate pattern of shadow on the floor. In the middle of the cave,
between the group and the other exit, sat a lone woman at a small table drinking tea.

She delicately put down the teacup, then slowly clapped. “Congratulations, dearies~. I’m impressed
you managed to escape my Web of Illusions technique. Master Wingdings is just up ahead, so the
last line of defence must be as strong as possible.”

“Muffet, huh…? Figures Wingdings would use you with your connections. I take it you and your
spiders were the ones responsible for making new Fragment Users after he went into hiding?”

Muffet giggled. “That’s right~! You’re such a smart boy~ I’m surprised Master Wingdings didn’t
want you. ‘The horned skeleton, the huge dragon, and the lizard. Break them down and convert
them to our cause. If they can’t be convinced, eliminate them. Do whatever you want with the
worthless failure.’ That’s what he told me. Aah~ what a shame… I was looking forward to having
my very own pet bone puppy~”

“I’m a dragon!” was the ‘bone puppy’s’ autopilot response. Sans scowled.

The spider girl’s eyes scanned across the battle-ready Fragment Users. “Now, now, don’t be in such
a hurry~. As Master Wingdings’ second-in-command, why would I reveal even a slight flaw to his plan? Why would run my mouth about him only being just out of your reach if I wasn’t absolutely sure you couldn’t affect the outcome?”

Confusion quickly gave way to terror when Alphys remembered Muffet’s abilities. “EVERYONE! GET DOWN.”

Muffet delicately waved her hand, signalling an invisible onlooker. “Execute them.”

The noise alone from the gunfire sent tremors surging through the very air. From every single corner of the cave, baked goods were fired at the team like bullets from several machine guns. Croissants, donuts, pies… Being magically-reinforced, even one would have been enough to blow a massive hole in a Fragment User, ensuring instant death. But Muffet loved overkill. The girl wanted to flaunt the sign of her absolute victory, and so she did. The thought of the expressions on their faces, the shock and horror milliseconds before being wiped off the face of the earth, made her sigh in contentment.

As expected, when the dust cleared, nothing was left. Muffet dusted off her hands, eager to turn around and report the success to her master… and was met with a Ripple-charged punch in the face.

“啊啊啊啊啊!?” The shocked string of gibberish that escaped her mouth was utterly incomprehensible. W-what the hell is this!? Why are they all…!? The Fragment User team stood before her, not a single one of them harmed by her attack. Sans exposed his fangs in a grin.

But my strategy was perfect! They shouldn’t have been able to escape! A quick glance around the room revealed all the hidden gunners she had positioned oh-so-carefully had been incapacitated. It shouldn’t have been possible to knock them out all at once! They were positioned too far apart! Unless… her gaze focused on the young man in the blue jacket.

Despite the appearance he was trying to project, a girl who was involved in business since childhood could easily read signs of exertion – his quickened breathing, his slightly dishevelled clothes… Muffet smirked. “You’ve regained your time magic, have you? Well, well. What a charming development~ Too bad it still won’t change a thing.”

Gaster flinched, his spines standing on end. “Something’s coming!” He leaped back just as massive jaws snapped shut where he used to be.

He wasted no time in scrambling towards the exit, but Muffet wasn’t going to have any of it. The jaws disappeared from the web that comprised the ground, and a giant shape came down from the ceiling with a quake, revealing the terrifying owner of those jaws. The towering monstrosity before them was a mix of a cupcake and a giant spider. “Master Wingdings enhanced my cute Cupcake for me~”

Papyrus narrowed his eyes. “Tch… figures. You and Wingdings really like to go big in the things you make us fight. Knight Knight, Astigmatism, that dragon, and now this? You’re both clearly compensating for something.”

Muffet giggled. “Of course, dearie~ Bigger is better. And I’ll have you know that both Wingdings and I don’t need to compensate for anything at all! If you surrender now, I might give you a little demonstration that size isn’t all that matters.”

“That sounds wonderful! Too bad I’m not into ironing boards who get excited by the suffering of
The entire right side of Muffet’s face twitched, several veins on her forehead bulging out. “…Die.”

Cupcake bellowed a war cry and charged!

A sweatdrop rolled down Papyrus’ skull. He should have known… Implying that they were compensating for their lack of conscience would have caused a reaction like this! After all, Wingdings was insistent that he was a hero. The people he either convinced or brainwashed would believe the same.

Gaster on the other hand, was impressed at the advantage Papyrus gave them – yes, if their opponents were angrier, they would be stronger (due to putting more force into their attacks), but it also made them predictable!

The monstrous spider thrust out two of its clawed legs in a barrage! Its claws were huge, wicked, and sharp enough to turn all four of them into a giant skewer. However, Gaster had the advantage in speed! With movements as fast and graceful as a cheetah, he sidestepped and angled his body to let his friends take advantage of the opening. “Attack now!”

“Ripple Overdrive!”

“ASHIA SHIA SHIA SHIA SHIA~!”

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

Fwoosh! None of the attacks hit their mark – the momentum from the monstrosity’s attack would have made it skid to the ground, but it vanished into thin air. Simultaneously, a giant shadow fell over the group.

Papyrus’ enhanced reflexes barely managed to save him! Faster than a bullet, Bonetrousle moved above the four to collide with all ten tonnes of Cupcake. “Rghh… Gah…!” His arms were screaming as he struggled to hold up the massive creature. He couldn’t evade or move out of the way – all his energy was going into preventing himself and his friends from being squashed like a pancake!

A Shadow Sword, a spinning bone, and a blast of blazing energy came at the creature, but they bounced off its hardened chitin like rubber. It was too heavy for the Spin to affect, and its armour was too strong for anything to pierce! But it was all the heroes could do! Papyrus used his Blue Attack with all his might to lighten the creature, while the others kept attacking, hoping that it would eventually break through the armour.

“Silly children… Don’t you know what the definition of insanity is?”

Since when did she…!? The moment Papyrus registered that Muffet was right behind him, she already had a dagger going for his throat!

CLING! Sans was one step ahead! A Spin-charged bone between the spider and skeleton forced Muffet’s arm away from Papyrus and pinned it to the ground. He produced a Ripple-charged whoopee cushion with his other hand and fired it at Muffet’s head, but a wall of chitin erupted from the ground and absorbed it. Cupcake had stuck one of its back legs into one of the webs on the wall and warped to the floor of the cave.

The spider girl emerged from behind the leg in an amazing leap, this time wielding several shuriken! The deadly throwing stars soared at Papyrus, who still had no means of defending himself from the
attack. Lacking his own weapon, Sans had to block it with the next best thing.

The Blaster-headed skeleton grimaced at the blood pouring from his hands. “O-ouch… I-I think I’m startin’ to see stars…” Charging his hands with Ripple Energy meant that the weapons didn’t dig in as deep as Muffet intended, but it still hurt like hell! Where was she even getting those weapons from?

The former merchant smirked and flung more!

Alphys leapt from her spot on Gaster’s back, her entire body blazing. “**GUARDIAN FIELD!**”

“Shadow Sword!”

The shuriken melted into harmless puddles of… something, whereas the blade coming at Muffet was blocked by Cupcake’s leg again. From where Muffet was standing, coupled with its positioning, it would always be able to warp one of its legs to its master and shield her. Was there anything they could do?

Papyrus’ arms were shaking… it felt like they would give out at any moment. Cupcake was getting impatient with just waiting for them to be crushed, so it started slamming its front legs into Bonetrouse’s arms. The skeleton could endure the pain, but for how long?

Suddenly, the sheer pressure of the dire situation triggered something in Sans. Like a ray of light cutting through the darkness, a plan bloomed in his head. It was desperate, last-ditch strategy, one that he wasn’t even sure would work… but it was all he had. “Bro… Gaster… Al. I’ve got an idea, but I need you to trust me. Can you do that?”

Papyrus gave a strained smile. “Why even ask? You know the answer will always be yes.”

Gaster nodded. “If Papyrus trusts you, I will too.”

For once, Alphys completely lacked hesitation in her reply. “Go for it.”

“Heh… thanks.” Sans gently pat Papyrus’ shoulder… before shoving him off Gaster!

“Nyeeeeh!” The jolt from Papyrus hitting the ground almost made Bonetrouse lose its grip!

“Run, Gaster! Do exactly as I say!” The dragon and its rider bolted away through the exit. Papyrus and Alphys were left alone with Cupcake and Muffet.

The spider girl clenched her sides as she doubled over laughing! “Ahuhuhuhu~! Worthless failure indeed! He abandoned his brother and his closest friend to save his own tail! How hilarious~! You should see the looks on your faces! I bet you’re in disbelief that he would actually do that, riiight~?” Muffet put two of her hands behind her back, producing daggers while licking her lips. “Too bad. Know that reality is cruel.” She dashed towards Papyrus with ungodly speed, but Alphys blocked the way! She had every idea what she was getting into, but nevertheless stood her ground.

A slash on her arm made the former Royal Scientist cry out! A thin slice of flesh and yellow scales fell to the ground.

The spider’s voice was uncharacteristically low. “Dealing with stingy and unreasonable customers taught me how to inflict as much pain as possible without the victim losing consciousness or dying. Out of the way.”

Alphys responded with a punch. Muffet effortlessly slid around it and made six more incisions on her
cheek and side. “Urgh…! Guardian Field!” The forcefield of energy rushed out in a circular pattern, but the spider backflipped out of its effective range. The attack flowed back into Alphys, eliciting a scream.

“Your ability is a close-range power type, no~? It may be powerful, but if it can’t actually hit, it’s as useful as expired cake batter the day before a bake sale~”

Alphys didn’t panic. She steadied her breathing and posture, subconsciously taking on one of Mettaton’s fabulous poses. She was preparing to use her trump card – her final attack as a Fragment User. Like this, she would at least be able to take down the enemy… And if Muffet went down, Cupcake would probably go down, too. That should count for something.

But her action was interrupted by a strange, approaching sound. The rhythm was similar to the sound of a horse galloping, but rather than hooves against the ground, it was the sound of… claws?

Sans and Gaster re-emerged, both looking more majestic than they ever had before! The amazing rhythm the steed was travelling at, combined with the aura of steely resolve the already fearsome-looking rider exuded… it truly was a sight to behold!

Even… no, especially Muffet and Cupcake were awestruck. Their assault on Papyrus and Alphys immediately ceased, their attention drawn to Sans – more specifically, what he was holding in his left hand.

From outward appearances, the spinning bone looked like any of his other bone attacks. But their subconscious was yelling, *screaming* that this specific one was dangerous. That they absolutely, positively couldn’t get hit by it. But at the speed the dragon was running, they realised this too late!

Sans felt bad for making the others think he abandoned them. But he needed space to build up the correct momentum for this! He finally figured out what he was doing wrong earlier – it wasn’t a vehicle he needed to ride, but a living thing! With the kinetic energy given to him by the dragon he was riding, he had the power to use the Super Spin!

Here and now, the mastery of rotational energy… the power of infinity was created. Instinctively, Sans knew its name! “**BALL BREAKER!**”

Energy crackled around Sans’ bone as it soared through the air. Muffet threw herself to the ground, cowering. Cupcake tried to move out of the attack’s path, but it was too heavy and slow to avoid being grazed! From the bone, a green, vaguely humanoid robotic figure emerged and threw a tremendous punch at the beast!

The chitin-like armour covering the monster shattered like glass, exposing its cake-like interior. The pieces of armour fell to the ground, shrinking rapidly as they spun until they disappeared outright.

A rare feeling of pride welled up in Sans’ chest. That was just from an indirect hit – imagine what a direct attack would do! He looked down at his brother, who was still recovering his stamina. *Now for phase 2!*

Papyrus felt an abrupt yank as he was thrown into the air, landing on Gaster’s back once again. Sans had used his special ability to save him! They continued to the other exit, emerging outside. The path to the peak of Mount Ebott was unobstructed! The only obstacle left for them was Wingdings!

“We did it, Sans! …Sans!!?”

When Papyrus turned around, he seized up. Both Sans and Alphys were gone.
New Information

**Ball Breaker:** Also known as the Super Spin. An ability formed when the Spin is used while receiving kinetic energy from riding a mount at a certain momentum. It is speculated that whatever is hit by the attack spins and disperses throughout space and time.
‘Stop Flow’. As an ordinary skeleton monster, that was Sans’ secret and most powerful technique. It was the ability to hold time still for as long as his stamina allowed. While time was frozen, he couldn’t damage objects, but he could move them around or set up attacks. But… in this state, where he struggled to properly control anything outside of the Spin or Ripple, he could only last a few moments…

Sans glanced at his friend. “Al… you shouldn’t have…” His Gasterblaster head was a lot scarier than his ‘human’ skull, but it also displayed his emotions much more effectively. The skeleton’s concern for her was written all over his face.

The lizard girl shook her head. “This is fine. I’m willing to stay behind to support a friend in need. You were always there for me as a friend, so I should return the favour. That’s what Undyne would have done, too…”

Muffet giggled. “Willing to sacrifice yourselves for your ideals of friendship, are you? How cute. Very well. Entertain me. I can’t wait to hear your screams of regret and agony~”

Her pet let out a tremendous roar in agreement. Cupcake’s armour has been shattered, but its flesh still looked quite durable. Without a mount, Sans wouldn’t be able to use the Super Spin again… and without a heavy hitter like Papyrus or Undyne on his side, the two were in for a bad time. The behemoth approached the Fragment Users, drool leaking from its maw, before vanishing into the floor.

Sans turned his head to the ceiling, bracing himself for death from above. But nothing was there. Despite that, the ground quaked. Those tremors… the source was right behind him! Alphys’ scream motivated him to spin around, facing the giant creature.

He prepared a spinning bone to push it back, but a katana coming his way forced him to use the attack as a shield. “Dammit, Muffet…!” The reptilian duo had been caught in the oldest trick in the book: a pincer attack!

They were completely sandwiched. Alphys was firing blazing energy into the beast as much as she could, filling the cave with the aroma of burnt cake, but it just kept getting back up. Sans and Muffet’s weapons were locked together, the strength of the skeleton’s two arms being no match for Muffet’s six. At this rate, they would slowly be crushed!

Alphys grit her teeth. Desperate times called for desperate measures! “Sans! Heads up! GUARDIAN FIELD!”

“Whoa!” The explosion of energy sent Sans and Muffet flying off the web that the floor was made of. They fell through a hole, the light from the ceiling’s opening fading as they descended into the depths.

The quickly disappearing form of the lizard girl yelled out a last-second message. “It’s easier for us to fight separately – I’ll take on Cupcake up here without worrying about the recoil from my powers affecting you! You deal with Muffet down below!” If either the user or extension goes down, the other will too, right…? That’s what Cupcake is, right…? Swallowing her anxiety, Alphys let out a
Both combatants hit the web with a thud. Despite having the outward appearance of a sturdy mountain, the inside was a network of multiple caves. Just like the higher level, Muffet had covered the entire place in thick spiderwebs.

Sans scrambled to his feet, eyes struggling to adjust to the lack of light. Muffet could rely on the vibrations running through her web to detect his movement, but the skeleton’s sense of touch wasn’t as sensitive. *Dammit... I’m at a disadvantage here!*

The clatter of a metallic material against the rocky wall indicated Muffet had discarded her katana. What was she going to make this time? Sans strained to see what was going on. A sound similar to beads rolling around filled the air. The skeleton saw blurry shapes moving around Muffet’s hands, before forming into the twin daggers from earlier. Humming a tune, the spider started to waltz towards him.

*That’s her ability, huh...?* It was kind of like Gaster’s – she could form weapons out of that weird black substance. Combined with her enhanced physical abilities, it was a truly formidable and versatile power... But without support from her pet or gunners, she should be easy to beat. Especially with his regained power on his side!

“**STOP FLOW! Time, be still!**”

*BRRRRRT...* Sans bit back a laugh. *I really wish I found a way to turn off the ‘dubstep fart’...* Normally, it was hilarious, but in a serious situation like this, it killed the mood.

He approached the shape he assumed was the frozen spider. In the world of stopped time, direct damage was impossible. However... if he just set up an attack to land when time resumed... Sans produced a bone and threw it at Muffet’s head, stopping just short of her temples. “There... that should do the trick.” Time was up – that was all his stamina could handle. “Time flows on...”

The next thing the Blaster-headed skeleton knew, there was a dagger stuck in his chest. “!?” He stumbled back, a sad deflating noise escaping his clothes. The damage was more psychological than physical... for now. *I had prepared for something like this, but...!*

He underestimated Muffet’s reflexes – the bone was only a centimetre away from her head! She shouldn’t have been able to dodge an attack that just suddenly appeared in front of her like that, let alone turn it into a counterattack! But nevertheless, she did. As effortlessly as a dancer, she slid underneath the Spin-charged attack and plunged her weapon into the skeleton’s chest. The Ripple-charged whoopee cushion he stuffed in his jacket beforehand took the blow for him this time, but next time, he wouldn’t be so lucky.

The sadistic spider followed up, swiping at his neck with her other dagger. Sans couldn’t use his time magic again. While it gave him an invaluable period of free movement, it had an even longer ‘cooldown period’ – he needed to regain his stamina before casting Stop Flow again. Ironically, he had to buy time!

Sans leaned back, putting his tail on the ground for balance, then lashed out with a kick! Muffet jumped over his leg, ready to plunge her dagger into his skull, but the skeleton had another surprise in store! He swung his tail at her like a whip, letting his body completely drop!

But if Sans thought two steps ahead, it appeared that Muffet thought three. She tilted her body around his tail, and to add insult to injury, sliced the tip off. An animalistic screech tore through the
air of the cave, causing the spider to giggle.

*How!? How is she so sharp!? The web shouldn’t have been able to pick up the tail attack!* Sans was making his attacks as unexpected as possible, but what made her so good at avoiding them!? He tried a leg sweep, but she backflipped before his legs could even touch her.

Sans rose up, snarling. There really was only one way to beat this woman… and it had just finished ‘recharging’! *STOP FLOW!* Time froze once again, Muffet pausing mid-charge.

Wasting no time, the skeleton ran up to the spider and yanked the dagger out of her grasp, gripping it as tightly as he could in his left hand. He grabbed the identical weapon stuck in his whoopee cushion with his right hand, then positioned both as close as he could to Muffet’s chest without actually touching her. When time resumed, she would run herself through with her own momentum. This… this definitely was the decisive move. Once the spider realised what Sans had done, he would have already won.

But again, the beast-like skeleton was proven wrong. For the millisecond time resumed, the daggers exploded in his hands! Wait- no, ‘exploded’ wasn’t the right term. A conventional explosion would have hurt Muffet too, but the only one who suffered here was Sans! *Something* raced up his arms, and blood streamed out from the cracks in his bones.

Sans’ whole body was blown back, falling through the cave and onto a lower web. For the first time, in ages, his eyes felt wet. *I’m crying…?* Muffet landed on top of him, pinning him down with her weight. She was so close, he could smell her. To a Gasterblaster’s sense of smell, the overwhelming, artificially sweet scent of perfume was nauseating. And the expression on her face could only be described as sick. “I’ll let you in on a little secret: I’m not going to kill you. I’ll torture you until your mind breaks, then I’ll transform you into the perfect pet. After that, I’ll use you to maul your precious friends to death – that is, if they’re even still alive! AHUHUHUHUHU~!” A disgusting, ichor-coated tongue emerged from the spider’s mouth, lapping up the young man’s tears.

“You… bitch…!” Sans tried to smash her face in with a headbutt, but she could still read him like a children’s book. Muffet backstepped, delicately floating down at the other end of the web.

The skeleton’s limbs were staring to feel heavy, and what felt like lines of molten lava running down his arms didn’t help. Sans had taken up his usual fighting stance, but he was starting to teeter a little.

Muffet giggled again at the dragondog’s attempt to look threatening. “Oh~? It seems you still have some feistiness left in you. All the more entertaining.”

“That’s your ability! The ‘black stuff’ you’re forming the weapons from isn’t your own power! They’re made of spiders that you’re controlling through your silk! And… you’re using it to read my mind right now, aren’t you!? *That’s* how you can read my moves so well, even when I stop time!”

Like a broken record, Muffet kept laughing. “So what~? Knowing I’m doing something won’t make me stop doing it. All you’ve achieved is removing your blindfold before going to the firing squad.” But the moment information on Sans’ next move reached her, the spider’s eyes went as wide as saucers and her lip started trembling. “Wait, don’t-!”

Sans tore off his jacket, threw it to the floor, then produced a Spin-powered bone and hurled it at the wall above it. Bone grinded against rock, causing a shower of sparks to fall onto the very flammable
material. The garment instantly ignited, and with it, the material beneath them. The fire spread across the web quickly, illuminating the chamber and giving the skeleton his first clear view of the area.

His hypothesis was correct – a thread of silk, thin to the point where he couldn’t even feel it, extended from his forehead to Muffet’s. Like a telepathic version of a cup and string telephone, it must have been transmitting the thoughts from his head into hers. His claws glinting in the flames, Sans swiped at it. But all it did was jostle the string.

“You silly boy~! Spider silk is as strong as steel! How strong do you think Fragment-empowered spider silk is?” Muffet wagged a finger from the other end of the web. The fire had gotten between Sans and the spider, but that string still remained connected to him. The scared behaviour from earlier was an act – she coaxed the skeleton into digging his own grave!

Sans tried to leap over the flames towards her, but Muffet flung throwing stars, forcing him back into his earlier position. Dammit… why won’t this thing break!? His panic peaking, Sans kept attacking the string. He slashed, pushed, pulled, and even tried to use the Spin… all to no avail. He started to feel lightheaded from all the hyperventilation, and the smoke wasn’t helping.

Muffet jumped onto a web higher up, escaping the blaze. She might not have been able to make Sans into a cute pet, but seeing him squirm sent her over the moon. Seeing people get their just desserts for opposing her made the spider squeal in delight. Master Wingdings helped her realise it – she always loved giving beatings to stingy customers back in the Underground. Now possessing the ability to do whatever she wanted with no consequence or risk when enacting her will… It was like she stepped into her personal heaven. “Now, time for the grand finale, dearie~!”

Delicately held within one of her six hands… was a vial of poison gas. With both the skeleton’s Ripple and Spin cut off, he would know true powerlessness before dying a pathetic death. She dropped the glass container onto the web beneath her, a noxious dark cloud swiftly engulfing the area around Sans.

Even before the gas had reached his nasal cavity, Sans felt faint. He had already fallen to his knees among the fire and gas, his head pounding… But then, like the sun shining through the clouds after a storm, the fear and panic vanished. Muffet had been manipulating him like marionette the whole time… and that really pissed him off.

It was time to cut his strings and make her pay. He would play his trump card… no, more like he would become a trump card in one final desperation move. Once a trump card was used, it would have to be discarded. However, Sans wasn’t carelessly throwing his life away. He knew full well the weight of this decision, and value of what he had chosen to sacrifice. “Those who are willing to lay it all on the line… those who are willing to take a stand for what they believe in, doing everything they can even when the odds are grim… They who are the ones whose wills can carry on to the future!”

He stood tall, manifesting his SOUL. With a final wish for Papyrus to be safe, he grabbed onto the power-limiting badge affixed to it. “GrrrrrraaaAaaaagggggHHHHH!” The pain was comparable to a human trying to tear their own skin and flesh off. But Sans persisted, enduring the agony. With a rip that sent ripples coursing through the entire mountain, the badge came off!

The effect was instantaneous. The process that had been suspended for a month was finally allowed to progress. Several violent spasms tore through the short skeleton’s body. With a crack that wrenched his head backwards, his muzzle extended. With another snap that this time forced his skull forwards, his horns reached their full length. His skull had completely reformed – Sans was starting to take on the appearance of a terrifying hellbeast, one that people believed had only existed in legends.
His shirt started to tighten against his growing and expanding torso. Every twist and pop brought with it a pulse of pain, but that was nothing compared to the high from the enormous strength welling up inside him. Sans’ tail reformed, a blade similar to Gaster’s growing at the end.

His spikes curved and sharpened, widening the holes in his clothes. As his claws sharpened to become the weapons they were always meant to be, the young man lowered himself onto all fours. He felt his thumbs start to recede, and his thoughts were vanishing into the fog of bloodlust… but that didn’t matter right now!

With the movements of a vicious predator, Sans charged! Before Muffet knew it, she was staring into his opened jaws! “Ah-!” He got through both the fire and the poison gas!? And his appearance… Muffet shared Wingdings’ knowledge about what the skeleton brothers really were. However, knowing something’s existence and seeing it in real life were two different things. She never expected Sans to actually have the guts to tap into his true powers!

She leaped back, swiping down with a katana, but Sans caught it in his teeth and bit down, snapping it in half. Blood from the now-dead spiders dripped from his maw. She produced daggers and slashed at him, six slashes converging into one, but Sans was quicker on the draw! Six hands, still holding the daggers, fell into the abyss beneath them.

This time, it was Muffet’s turn to wail. Sans was completely unreadable! The feral skeleton was running on pure instinct – not a single complex thought resided in his skull. He was at risk of losing himself, but in this scenario, it worked as a hard counter to her mind-reading ability! But… that wasn’t the only weapon she had at her disposal.

The beast barrelled into Muffet’s torso, his increasing weight smashing her like a truck. Blood spurted out of the sadistic spider’s mouth. Sans followed up with an uppercut, putting everything he had into the blow. The force was so powerful, they both rocketed back up to ground level.

Alphys, collapsed against the smoking form of Cupcake, looked up in terror as the two fighters emerged from below. She managed to defeat the giant abomination, but she had little strength left for whatever might be coming next!

Sans smashed Muffet into the ground, causing a splatter of blood to spread out from beneath them. His blade-like tail whipped around, ready to run her through, but Muffet had a counterattack planned. You might think you’re so powerful now… but your mind is unguarded! Before the blade could reach her chest, the spider’s shape changed!

Sans halted, his instincts wary of this turn of events. The person beneath his paws wasn’t Muffet, but Papyrus!

His brother coughed up blood. “Sa…ns…” But the beast didn’t hesitate for more than a second. Sans’ weapon, coated in blood, emerged from the back of the horned skeleton. The spider spewed even more blood as the useless illusion dissipated.

So… this is the power of someone who would give up everything to win…

It was no longer a fight… it was a slaughter. Sans kept tearing at her with his claws and teeth, painting the cavern red. Kill! Kill! KILL! The scent and taste of blood further fuelled his frenzy. Logic. Knowledge. Memories. All of it disappeared, consumed by the beast that had been set free. His shirt finally had enough of the strain and shredded apart completely, pieces of cloth falling from his monstrous body.

Alphys, already exhausted from fighting Cupcake, wanted to get between them, but she knew she would just be torn apart if she tried to hold him back. “Sans! Please, stop! You’re going too far!” He
was already huge, and still growing. He was looking more hellish by the second. Soon, he would be ‘dead’ – the nineteen-year-old young man named Sans Gaster would be replaced by a mindless, destructive beast.

In that form, words no longer held any meaning to Sans. All that registered in his mind was a babble of nonsense emerging from the yellow creature’s muzzle. He chose to ignore it for now – he could easily destroy it later, after he finished enjoying the blood and screams of his prey.

Alphys’ body trembled. She had an inkling of an idea about how to get him to stop… but there was only a possibility of it actually working, and that was provided she made it to him in the first place. But… she was fighting for her friend. *Yes... my best friend... the one who travelled all the way to Hotland from Snowdin to talk to me when I had an anxiety attack. The one who stayed up all night playing co-op with me to beat that tough boss in a videogame. The one who would never enjoy doing something like this! “Sans! I won’t let someone like you lose yourself!”*

Alphys sprinted towards the two, turning the momentum into a drop kick on Sans’ skull! She landed in between him and Muffet, fists raised.

The beast was more surprised at the sudden contact than any actual damage being dealt. So the creature was trying to interfere with its kill! It let out a tremendous roar, the entire cavern shaking as he did, before its claws came down on the yellow shape.

The lizard weaved around the attack from Sans’ forepaws, but let out a sharp gasp when a burning sensation coursed through her legs and she tasted web. She had been swept by the skeleton’s tail!

She looked up at the creature before her. No sign of recognition was in its predatory slitted eyelights. It leaned down, its maw opened wide… then Alphys smashed a Fragment-powered fist into its ribcage. The hellbeast froze. Every last bit of air in it was forced out of its muzzle. It didn’t need to breathe, but for some reason, it couldn’t move.

Alphys was hoping with all her heart that this would bring her friend back. Ripple energy was generated by a serene heart and a calm breathing rhythm. It saved them from Muffet’s illusion. So shouldn’t it be natural that it would calm the creature before her down, too?

She let her fist go, the creature still frozen. Seconds dragged into eternities, as she lay underneath it.

The beast started a familiar breathing rhythm, a golden aura appearing around it. Slowly and awkwardly, like a toddler standing for the first time, it rose to a bipedal stance. Words returned to its mind. *Ripple…? It- no, he looked down at- at… “A-A… Al…?”* He struggled to remember how to form words with his mouth. When the beast heard the guttural, distorted sound of his own voice, he flinched. *Not... person... sound... Wr...ong...*

Tears of relief and joy welled up in Alphys’ eyes. “Sans... thank God...” He was a lot bigger, now – a head taller than Papyrus, and even bulkier than Asgore. Her arms couldn’t fit around him at all in this hug.

For Sans right now, thinking was like hiking up a steep mountain using weighted training gear. His mind wasn’t designed to contain anything other than destructive instincts… but with the help of his Ripple, he could get the general gist of what was going on. His identity, his memories, his relationships… the Gasterblaster’s thoughts had regressed to a simpler, more primitive state, but his ‘heart’ had returned to him.

*“Pah... Pap... gotta... hellpp...”* He turned towards the direction of the peak and tried to run, but faceplanted, his muzzle almost comically getting caught in web. A few seconds of humiliation later,
the skeleton was forced to face a shocking realisation. His anatomy was stuck in a strange state between bipedal and quadrupedal – while he could still balance upright (and immensely grateful for it), anything faster than a powerwalk would send him tumbling down. His hands had warped into paws – useless in terms of dexterity – meaning the Spin, which he needed to hold a bone attack for, was no longer an option for him. *This... what I... sacri-sacriff... given up...?*

The sight of her friend, staring at his warped body with such distress, put a lump in Alphys’ throat. “I—it’s okay, Sans... you’ve done enough. I’ll go on ahead, you wait here for the battle to die down.” *If he’s like this, he’ll be a liability.* She felt horrible for the thought crossing her mind, but it was true.

“N... nooo! I... satis- satisff... I okayyy... Knewww... this would happen...” The dragon rubbed his head with one of his front paws. He was struggling to put his feelings into words, and his vocabulary being restricted didn’t help matters. *“Everything... to help... bro... Want to. De... terminated to!”* He his paw over his chest, where his heart would be if he was a human. Hopefully, that would get his message through.

The blaze of conviction in Sans’ eyes banished the doubt from Alphys’ heart. She nodded with a smile. “Alright. Let’s go! Papyrus and Gaster are waiting for us!” Sans balancing carefully this time, the two started to head towards the cave exit.

“No... so... fast...”

“?!?” The two friends whirled around, taking fighting stances. Muffet was still awake!? The flames of madness danced in her eyes. In contrast to her pathetic state, the expression on her blood-drenched face was one of smug satisfaction and triumph. One of her bloody stumps was pressed against the unconscious Cupcake.

“I... told you... you had no chance of affecting the outcome from the beginning...!” A pulse of blue energy raced into the behemoth. Its eyes snapped open, glowing red. Muffet collapsed back to the ground, cackling.

“What... youuu... do!?”

Muffet’s eyes stared up at the ceiling, starting to glaze over. “I unleashed Cupcake’s powers. My cute pet... isn’t just a mere Fragment User. Wingdings had it ‘enhanced’, with the limited resources he had. It’s no Apocalypse Cannon... but it’s enough. Enough to send you all to your graves!”

Violently, horns erupted from the spider. The ends of its legs swelled, before exploding! Coated in blood at the ends were skeletal claws. Its face pushed out into a muzzle, teeth somehow becoming even sharper than before! And the moment it finished forming, a giant laser rushed out!

“**STRRRP FLWWW!**” Sans tried to yell the name of his time freezing technique, but a growl came out in its place. Regardless of whether he could pronounce it correctly or not, the world stopped. He barely had the time to pick up Alphys in his jaws and leap out of the way before time resumed.

The heat and light of the Surging Fang was overwhelming. It was as if the air itself had exploded! The scent of ozone hung in the cave, blue steam rising from the rocks.

The horrible demon closed the distance between them, death drawing closer with each tremor. Sans and Alphys couldn’t run away. If they did, it would reach Papyrus! Sans couldn’t cast Stop Flow again: he would be long dead before the cooldown period ended.

Therefore... there was only one thing left to do. Sans dropping to all fours, and a golden aura roaring to life around Alphys, they both raced at the beast!
The two smashed their attacks into Cupcake’s new skull with all their might! The overwhelming heat from Alphys’ blows, combined with the Ripple-charged dance of blades from Sans, would have been enough to slay any foe. Perhaps even Wingdings himself. But to a powerful weapon, modelled after the Apocalypse Cannon, such attacks were laughably insignificant. Lashing out with the speed of a cheetah, its jaws closed around the both of them, putting an anticlimactic end to their battle.

It started to scale the mountain, the last command issued by its master to dispose of the remaining two. But suddenly, the creature’s innards started to heat up. It tried to hack up the duo, but it realised its mouth wouldn’t budge. In fact… its entire body was frozen!

The lizard girl’s hypothesis was right! It had Blaster-like features, but it was still soft and fleshy on the inside. The entire interior of its body was its Achilles’ heel! The spinning bone, powered by Sans and held in her hand, could hold it still for long enough for them to finish it off.

Sans gave a look to Alphys, a knowing grin on his nightmarish muzzle. “Al! Team… attack!”

“Right!” The already intense heat her body was giving off grew even more. “This quivering heart…”

The dragon skeleton stuck a paw into Alphys’ aura, the light spreading to him via his Ripple. “This… burning… heat…!”

“Cut through, beat of our blood!”

The duo readied themselves. On the signal, they would tear Cupcake apart from the inside! “DOUBLE…”

“RIPPLE…”

“OVERDRIIIIEEE!”

Papyrus and Gaster both gasped for breath. They had finally reached the peak.

A Shadow Sword tore into the Wingdings’ machine, dispersing the vortex above Mt. Ebott. However, dark clouds still hung in the sky. There was still a battle to be fought. The mastermind’s eyes remained fixated on Papyrus, his arms folded and expression unreadable.

“Wingdings. This is your last chance. The Apocalypse Cannon is right here. If you don’t stop now… I won’t think twice about using it.”

Silence. For a moment, Papyrus considered repeating himself, worried that his words were lost in the wind. But before he could, Wingdings started chuckling… then broke down into laughter! The howling of the crazed demon dragon seemed to drown out the whole world. Tears streamed down the madman’s face as he threw his torso back, clawing his upturned hands.

“I’m serious! I’ve grown, Wingdings. I’m not going to just surrender and let myself be toyed with.”

“Ha… you think that pathetic thing is the Apocalypse Cannon!? What a joke. The creature you so kindly dropped into my lap is the part of myself I left behind!”

Papyrus’ mount staggered back, shaking his head. “N-no… that can’t be true…”
“W-what are you saying…!? Gaster is… a part of you?” The horned skeleton, noticing his backwards movement, smacked the side of the Gasterblaster beast’s head. “Stay steady, Gaster!”

Wingdings smirked, the disgusting purple-black smoke wafting out from his jaws. “Not even that. It’s an imprint! A mere vestige of my personality and memories, projected onto a Fragment! It isn’t even its own person! How fitting that the final piece needed to complete my plans would be my own regrets!”

Papyrus’ head started to spin. Not only was he out of trump cards, he had played right into Wingdings’ hands! Mentally scrambling for anything left he could say, he blurted out a wild gamble. “When I said the Apocalypse Cannon was here, I meant my friends have it prepared at the base of the mountain right now! They’re ready to level Mt. Ebott, with you still on it!”

The mastermind shook his head. “A poor attempt at a bluff. Even if you knew where or what the Apocalypse Cannon was, either way, you are no longer a threat to me.

“Regardless, I am much more merciful than that flower ever was. I extend to you a final offer – one last chance to join me.” He extended a hand towards Papyrus. “This world should continue on, free from those who hurt them. Monsterkind deserves this future. You deserve this future.”

“I refuse.” The response left the skeleton’s mouth, almost by reflex. “I’ve finally understood your heart… and it’s completely wicked! Your goal might happen to involve taking responsibility for your past mistakes and saving the world… but you don’t actually care about those at all, do you!?”

Wingdings was silent.

“You’re just in this to satisfy your personal grudge against humanity and Flowey! Yes, it’s true that Grandma and Grandpa died to a psychopathic human… It’s true that Flowey has committed unspeakable crimes and treated our lives like cheap entertainment… And it’s true that the ‘Determined’ like Frisk can tear away our future at any given moment.

“But even so! People can change! Flowey’s the reason we’re all free now! Frisk resisted the temptation of Resetting, respecting everyone’s wishes! Not abusing absolute power may sound easy on paper, but in actuality, it requires serious strength of character. Frisk deserves praise for holding back, even if it was for just a year!

“You, on the other hand…” A blue flame started to grow around Papyrus. He didn’t notice it, but his eyes had changed. The simple black dots had transformed into blue reptilian eyelights, glowing with unmatched ferocity.

The black-garbed dragon processed this emotionlessly. His ‘true self’ is starting to manifest in reaction to me… but it’s too late. My new power far exceeds his.

“You could have done great things with your skills… but by building doomsday weapons to destroy humanity, you just wasted them! You could have made humans and monsters alike so much happier, but you just spent all your time and effort on revenge!

“You think you’re pure and righteous… but you’re just as evil as you think the Anomalies are! I’m ashamed to be a part of your bloodline!”

Papyrus jumped off Gaster, storming towards Wingdings and jabbing a claw into his chest. “I’ll say it once again: You don’t care about ‘justice’ at all – all you want is the people you hate to be as miserable as you!”

Demonic eyelights met demonic eyelights. “…Very well.”
Papyrus spat up blood, his vision filling with blue and green. “Blurgh…!” Wingdings had sidestepped around him and punched him from behind! His eyes returned to normal as he freefell through the air. *He punched me off the other side of Mt Ebott!*?

Back on the peak, Gaster leaped at Wingdings, blade at the ready, but the demon dragon knocked him down with a single arm! Wingdings jumped down after Papyrus, eager to finish him off while he couldn’t control his movements.

Papyrus turned back to see the evil mastermind coming his way, claws glinting. He summoned Bonetrouse, kicking off the solid object to rush at the ground on the side of Mt. Ebott. He flew under Wingdings’ attack, paws dragging up dirt as he impacted the mountain.

Wingdings smashed onto the ground behind him, running at the skeleton with his hand encased in a purple aura. Papyrus whirled around, preparing his own fist to meet it…
Muffet

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: B

Speed: A

Range: C

Durability: B

Precision: A

Developmental Potential: A

**Abilities/Powers**

**Web of Illusions:** If someone with an unguarded mind touches her web, they see what she wants them to see. Regardless of what Muffet knows herself, it reaches into the victim’s subconscious and pulls out whatever is the most effective for the desired result.

If she properly breaks the victim down, she can take control of their body completely, using it as if it’s her own. An effect like this has been demonstrated by the small spiders she commands.

In order for this ability to activate, both Muffet and the unguarded person must be touching the same web – in other words, it doesn’t work at far ranges, such as on the other side of town.

**Master Mind Reader:** Muffet can produce a single, barely detectable thread of silk. Regardless of how guarded the mind is, as long as it is touching an opponent’s head, she can read their mind and accurately predict what they’ll do next. However, it only works on complex thoughts – ones that follow human-like reasoning. For animalistic instincts or impulses, the ability will fail.

Cupcake

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: A

Speed: A

Range: E

Durability: A

Precision: E

Developmental Potential: A

**Abilities/Powers**

**Web Warp:** Cupcake can phase parts or all of its body through web produced by Muffet, warping to anywhere else with web.
**Herald of Destruction**: Wingdings enhanced it with a special ability for Muffet to activate as a last-ditch trump card. Muffet can forcibly mutate it into a Gasterblaster beast hybrid, a powerful weapon of destruction to tear apart all in its path. In this state, it can follow basic commands she delivers, but a lot of collateral damage should be expected.

Chapter End Notes

The amazing art for this chapter was made by @spacegate on Tumblr!
The final confrontation with the mastermind is at hand...! Whose resolve will triumph in the end?
SMASH! A massive shockwave coursed through the air, tearing leaves from the surrounding trees as the attacks collided! The two forces pushed against each other, the air around them rippling… then Wingdings flew back! “Ugh…!” Blood squirted out from his cracked fist. Papyrus raced to follow up his attack. He wouldn’t let the demon get away!

Wingdings barely managed to escape his head being pulverised by the horned skeleton’s punch. His tail swept Papyrus’ legs, and his claws went for the eyes as his son fell forward. But Papyrus’ reflexes were better! Bonetrousle sprung out, grabbed the dragon’s arm, and wrenched it to the side, allowing its user to collide with Wingdings at full force. He turned a fall into a headbutt!

Even before Papyrus had the opportunity to call out his guardian spirit… Somehow, with his own two fists… he could fight on equal ground with Wingdings. The demon dragon’s attacks were immensely powerful, but from deep within the skeleton, power was welling up.

Wingdings hit the ground, blood dripping from his muzzle. Through his son’s attack, he felt it. The roar of another demon dragon…! Papyrus had immense potential. Upon contact with pure energy from the Darkness, like Wingdings or a feral Gasterblaster, his true form would have been unleashed. Like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, the most terrifying hellbeast of all would have been born into the world.

But Papyrus didn’t let it change him at all – his control over his powers, coupled with his determination to reach a brighter future, gave birth to something else. The power that would have transformed him was turning into pure energy, waves practically leaking out of his body. Energy enough to overpower Wingdings!

“NYEEEEEH!” He cast his Blue Attack on himself, leaping sky high. Like a skeleton shooting star, he barrelled into the enemy with all his might. The ear-splitting grinding of rock tore through the air as he pushed Wingdings deeper and deeper into Mt. Ebott.

Layers of rocks and caves rushed past the two, before they finally came to a halt. Dust and rubble alike rained down around them.

Papyrus got up and looked around. Where were they? The dust settled, revealing a landscape the skeleton had previously only seen in papers and online. They had arrived in the Capital of the Underground. The city had been completely abandoned. The only signs of what once was remaining in the area were empty buildings. Untouched by time…

His gaze moved down to the demon dragon at his feet. He wasn’t moving. Was that really it…? Papyrus bent down, looking closer. Still no sign of movement. The skeleton decided to bite the bullet and achieve one of the goals he came after Wingdings for. Papyrus tried to remove Wingdings’ jacket, intending to search the man for the Fragment that contained his spirit friend.

But the moment the skeleton’s arm touched him, the ‘unconscious’ man’s eyes shot open! Wingdings grabbed Papyrus in a vice grip, and his dark violet aura roared to life around him! Upon closer inspection, he wasn’t damaged from the fall at all! Getting hit by Papyrus’ attacks roughed him up a little, but being smashed through all those layers of rock did absolutely zilch!

The demon dragon clawed his other ghastly hand. He was going to tear open a portal to the Darkness again!
“I won’t let you!”

A Shadow Sword struck Wingdings from above. He flinched, his aura dissipating. Papyrus took the opportunity to get out of his grip, jumping back.

A large shadow came down from above with a tremendous roar. The beast’s blade reformed and swiped directly at Wingdings’ head. *Like this… he’ll be sliced in two!*

However, Gaster’s attack didn’t hit its mark! Even a hellbeast like him felt sick at the sight of the creature blocking his blow. “C…Chara!?”

He looked just like how Sans described he did when his Fragment went berserk! His body pulsed with a dark red aura. Foul black liquid leaked from his eyes and mouth. And somehow… the boy’s bare hands were managing to stop his tail!

Papyrus felt bile rise in his throat. The sheer dread Chara exerted… he suspected just from having the spirit boy under his control, Wingdings became a far worse threat than he would have ever been alone. “Gaster! Get away from him!”

The beast tried to move his body away, but the boy’s grip was too strong. He wouldn’t budge…! With the same unchanging demented grin, Chara smashed him against the ground, creating a crater beneath him. Gaster howled in pain, coughing up blood. The demon proceeded to hurl him far away from the battle.

“Wonderful, is it not…?” Wingdings shared the same distorted smirk as Chara. “The fantastic power residing within this boy… or rather, this boy’s Fragment. Chara Dreemurr is just like you, Papyrus. He is a demon, whose sole purpose is to destroy and destroy and destroy.”

“That isn’t true! You’re forcing your distorted views on him, just like you did with the other people you made Fragment Users!”

“Incorrect. All I have done is rip away his inhibitions. The truth is, when it comes down to it, this is what Chara really is. A bloodthirsty abomination, just like others with Determination inside them. Nevertheless, fire must be fought with fire. It takes a demon to kill a demon.”

“I’m not a demon! And neither is my friend!”

Papyrus rushed at the boy. Bonetrousle grabbed his arms, holding them down. “Stop! Come back to us, Chara!”

But it was like talking to a wall. Chara kept deliriously laughing, ignorant of the skeleton’s words. “Hahaha… this high… I’ve never felt this amazing before! This rush… this *power*…!”

“Snap out of it!” Bonetrousle drew back an arm and backhanded his face, sending him on a collision course with one of the nearby abandoned buildings.

Like a zombie that just wouldn’t die, Chara rose up, streaks of blood running down his face. At first, Papyrus was hopeful that he managed to bring the boy back to his senses, or at least do some damage. But unfortunately, neither was correct – the blood wasn’t from the impact with the building.

Vicious horns had erupted from his skull, still coated in fresh blood from when they emerged. Serrated teeth parted to reveal a pointed tongue, slurping up the substance like sauce. His hair continued to grow down his back, forming a dishevelled and wild mane. Chara’s hands jolted as his fingertips ripped apart, blade-like claws unsheathing.
Wingdings watched the spectacle with a smirk. “Nothing can stop him now… not even me, if I wanted to.”

The boy doubled over, the back of his shirt writhing as if snakes were slithering beneath it. As Chara let out a steadily deepening roar, batlike wings as red as the blood they were coated in ripped out of him!

Fearing for his friend’s wellbeing, Papyrus swung a fist towards the demon dragon. But as fast as lightning, Chara’s arm intercepted the blow! Wingdings was directly controlling the spirit’s movements, just like his son could with Bonetrousle.

The horned skeleton took a deep breath. *If the only way to stop him is through force… Then I’ll do just that! Sorry, Chara! “NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”*

**“DIE, DIE, DIE, DIE, DIE, DIE, DIE, DIE, DIEEEEEEE!”**

The two storms of fists collided, the air between them violently distorting. Shockwaves ten times the strength of the ones from earlier rippled out from the clash. Chara’s powers were growing… but so were Papyrus’.

At this point, their physical abilities were about equal – the forces behind the punch rushes were exactly the same, so the battle was at a stalemate. But…!

*“NYEH~!”* As Papyrus’ eyes glowed, Chara’s SOUL turned blue. He slumped face-first to the ground, Wingdings going down with him. “Say goodnight!” He unclenched Bonetrousle’s fists and swiped down at Chara’s head, aiming to knock both the boy and Wingdings out with a powerful direct blow.

But the demon had a nasty surprise in store. Claws lashed out and tore through the air beneath Papyrus, opening up a rift to the accursed plane that started this all. The skeleton didn’t even have time to blink before falling into the Darkness.

The demon dragon got back up, purple smoke escaping his maw as he smirked. Both Bonetrousle and the Blue Attack keeping the demons down had vanished. Just like that, it was all over. He had won. He marched over to the tear and closed it, sealing Papyrus’ soon-to-be-eroded remains in the other dimension forever.

But no sooner had he sealed the rift than a fist erupted from thin air and slammed into his chest, sending him skidding back! “IMPOSSIBLE!” Pain burst in the demon dragon’s ribcage as cracks formed. Chara, blood dripping from the shared wound, retreated back into his body.

Another arm punched its way out of nowhere, then grabbed at the air and ripped the rift back open. Papyrus emerged, no more injured than he had been before falling into the tear.

A grim realisation dawned on Wingdings. “I see… of course… it’s because you’re…!” The type of creature his son was, it would take hours for the Darkness to kill him, and because Papyrus could just tear out of the dimension, Wingdings’ greatest ability was useless.

*“UOOOOOOOH!”* Cloaked in a passionate blazing blue aura, Papyrus rushed at Wingdings with his fists.

Then, it’s time to use the full extent of this boy’s power! Wingdings jumped high, soaring far above the skeleton. He summoned the demon once more, and slashed open a tear in the city’s sky!
Gunfire erupted from the rift in reality, pelting a shocked Papyrus with peril! The skeleton summoned Bonetrouble to protect himself, punching back the bullets with a rapid fist rush. The gunfire was intense, but it was nothing he couldn’t handle! Like rain, it kept coming down, Bonetrouble acting like an umbrella to protect its user from the impact.

However, that wasn’t all! **WRYYYYYYYY!** By the time Papyrus registered the incoming attack, his left arm had already been blown off!

“AAAAARGH!” A torrent of blood flooded out from the stump. *Damn it! Once again, I played right into Wingdings’ hands!* The gunfire was just a distraction! Papyrus needed his guardian spirit to deflect all the bullets. That both kept his main method of attack busy and obscured the view of the enemy, leaving him open to counterattack!

“AHAAAAHA! GYAHAAAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Blood! BLOOD! BLOOOOOOOD!” The demon lifted his arms again, shining claws ready to cleave the skeleton in two. He slashed down, eager to see more red, but his prey blinked out of existence before he even touched him!

“The hell!?" Wingdings turned to follow the rapidly disappearing shape of Papyrus. His eyes barely managed to catch the black rope attached to the boy’s legs. That beast was still alive!?

Papyrus impatiently waited for the world to stop spinning. From that bungee cord-like tug, it felt like his non-existent stomach had been wrenched into his skull. He leaned against the filthy grey wall with his remaining arm, struggling to hold down his lunch.

Gaster sat patiently on his haunches. His focus was mostly set on the matchstick-sized figures of Wingdings and Chara outside the window, but he kept giving his nauseated friend a few concerned glances. “I’m sorry I had to do that, Papyrus.”

“I-it’s… blargh… all good…” He shook his head, the whirling backdrop of the apartment finally coming to a halt. A growl escaped his throat upon seeing the stump where his left arm used to be. *Shit… I always wanted people to reach their full potential, but not like this… Chara’s disgustingly powerful. If I didn’t have this energy boost, I’m certain the attack would have killed me in one blow!*

“I retrieved your arm. Here, I’ll put it back on…”

Before Papyrus could protest or question whether Gaster knew how severed limbs worked, the dragon had extended a black goopy tendril and shoved the severed arm into the stump.

The horned skeleton stifled a yelp. He couldn’t give away his location to the demons just yet. “Gaster! What are you thinking-!?" Papyrus was about to scold the beast with a loud whisper, but as he shoved the rope away, he found the severed arm stayed in place. *But… how…?*

He clenched and unclenched his left hand. His dexterity was unimpaired, and there was no scar at the shoulder. It was as if his arm hadn’t been blown off in the first place! Even without healing magic, it worked just fine!

But there was no time to celebrate. A black rope wrapped around Papyrus once again and flung him onto Gaster’s back. “Whoa!”

The beast swiftly barrelled through the other end of the house, rubble coming down. Papyrus heard something big and fast roar through the air behind them. When the skeleton turned to check, panic spiked within him. He recognised the type of weapon from movies and documentaries, but never imagined he would see one in real life. Where on earth had Wingdings found a missile!? 
Gaster galloped and jumped to the side, attempting to escape its path, but the projectile simply turned to face them and continued its pursuit. “Damn! It’s locked onto us!” The dragon kept running across the city, jumping from building to building and turning whenever he could, trying to make his path as complicated as possible.

But it wasn’t working! They just couldn’t shake the missile off! And to make matters worse, the more they moved, the more likely it was that Wingdings or Chara would spot them. Wingdings had stolen Chara’s power, and their abilities had combined to create something strange and unknown. Who knew what the evil mastermind could do now?

Gaster cursed under his breath when the row of buildings before him stopped, only the cavern wall ahead of him. They had reached the end of the city! There was nowhere left to run! The beast turned, facing the missile. His jaws parted, energy gathering within. He had never used this advanced variation of the technique before... but based off what Papyrus had described to him, there was no reason he couldn’t do it, right? He had to at least try! “SURGING DRAGON FAAAAANG!”

What emerged from his maw was more than a mere magic blast. It was the culmination of all the years of Dr Gaster’s research - the most powerful attack the Gasterblaster Series could use! The blast rippled and formed the shape of a majestic serpentine dragon, which coiled around the missile and devoured it. It wasn’t a physical or magical attack - it was pure energy. As unscientific as it sounded, there was no other way to describe it. The missile was erased from existence outright, given no opportunity to explode!

But despite the threat being removed, Papyrus let out a cry of pain as Gaster’s back abruptly lightened up. “Papyrus!?”

The boy had been knocked off his mount, a giant tank shell shattering his ribcage. What was going on!? What was Wingdings doing!?

Gaster turned to face the source of the round. In his attempt to escape the missile, he had run right towards the demon dragon – he was merely a block away! This time, a massive tank stood next to him. Another round, carrying the power to penetrate stone and steel, was fired their way.

Time slowed down for the adrenaline-pumped dragon skeleton. Papyrus wouldn’t be able to withstand another hit from that – even rubble from the attack could be fatal!

Growling, Gaster let loose with another Surging Dragon Fang! Once again, the tip of the blast formed into the head of a mighty beast. Rather than let it stop with erasing the round, he kept extending the beam. The energy dragon head continued towards the tank!

With its powerful jaws, it grabbed onto the vehicle, lifted it up, then smashed it into Wingdings and Chara! An army tank for you! Jaws straining from the weight, Gaster lifted up again and smashed it down! He kept beating them down, air filling with the crunch of metal being crushed against the pavement. The dragon intended to squash the demons as flat as pancakes! After the twentieth smash, Gaster, exhausted, was forced to drop the tank to the ground with a thud.

“Weak! Weak and pathetic!” Wingdings punched out of the trap, completely unharmed, before the tank faded away. If Gaster had the opportunity to peer inside the tank, it would have looked like there was a demon dragon-shaped hole in it – tonnes of strong, reinforced metal had crumpled like paper before Wingdings’ bones. Nothing in the world could stand up against the full power of the demon dragon. Nothing except one thing.

“NYEH~!” A skeletal fist smashed into Wingdings’ skull. With an ear-splitting crack, one of his horns broke off. By smashing the tank into the mastermind, Gaster had bought time for Papyrus to
close the distance and land a direct blow!

Wingdings leaped back, escaping onto a building rooftop before the boy could hurt him more. Blood ran down his skull, bringing with it the realisation that Papyrus’ awakening capabilities were becoming more bothersome than he expected. The only thing in existence now that could pierce his defence were Papyrus’ – and by extension, Bonetrousel’s – fists.

However, the skeleton was not yet invulnerable. He could still be killed by conventional methods. However, with how he recovered from the tank round so easily… only complete obliteration would suffice.

“Chara!” The summoned demon soared high and sliced open another tear. This time, from within, another metallic weapon emerged. Smaller than a tank… but far more destructive.

The blood within Papyrus’ bones ran cold at the sight. “T-that’s…!”

Gaster’s claws clenched against the ground. “A nuke!?”

Was Wingdings insane!? The demon dragon and Chara would survive, but nothing else would! Nowhere was safe! Even the citizens of Ebott City would be…!

Gaster tried to obliterate it, but only blue sparks emerged from his muzzle. The last Surging Dragon Fang used up too much energy!

Papyrus climbed onto the beast and clung onto his tail, activating his Blue Attack on himself to decrease his weight. “Gaster! Launch me! Same as before!” The fired Shadow Sword sent him towards the bomb. Utilising another Blue Attack, this time to lighten the bomb, the skeleton kicked it back into the tear.

But he failed to account for the possibility of a direct attack! A crazed and ghastly grin on his muzzle, Wingdings tackled the skeleton into the rift. Papyrus was unable to stop his movement – there was already too much momentum behind it!

Within the rift, the surroundings suddenly shifted – it was no longer the horrible plane of the Darkness that it used to be. The backdrop of the Underground Capital had changed to a war zone, soldiers beneath them looking up in horror at their doom.

I get it now! That’s Wingdings’ new power! Of course! Due to being one of the Determined, Chara had the power to time travel, manipulating the past and future as he pleased. And Wingdings had the power to tear open rips to another dimension. Combined… it formed the ability to create ‘time rips’!

Given how the tank faded away, it was uncertain as to whether he was really drawing objects from the past out, or they were mere replicas formed by his power. But the fact remained that Wingdings could use both time and space against him! Any place… anything… the demon dragon’s claws had seized the entirety of time in their grasp!

Papyrus dived for the nuke and slammed it with a leg, casting his Blue Attack on the surface. “AAAARRRRGGHHH…!!!” The bomb violently shuddered, straining against Papyrus’ magic.

“Useless, useless, useless! Even you cannot hold an explosion this power back! Not as you are now!”

“NOOOOOOO!” Just as Papyrus’ Blue Attack gave out… both the bomb and war zone faded away. The Capital reappeared around them, Papyrus and Wingdings still falling through mid-air.
A grimace crossed the former dentist’s face. *So that’s my limit… A few seconds of manifestation… that’s all I can handle for now. But my powers and the demon’s are still both growing. I WILL conquer my fears! I WILL overcome my sorrowful past!*

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”

“Tch…!” Wingdings tried to weave around the deadly rush of fists Bonetrousle unleashed, but it seemed his son’s will had become stronger. A single blow connected with his shoulder! The monstrous skeleton shuddered as blood poured out from the hole formed. “Damn you! Kill him, Chara!”

The laughing demon cut loose with a storm of slashes. Even just one was powerful enough to tear Papyrus in half! But this time, the horned skeleton was ready. He still had the Shadow Sword that Gaster gave him! As if he had used a sword all his life, the blade masterfully blocked each and every one of the strikes!

“No hard feelings, Chara!” Papyrus raked at the demon’s torso with the spike on his knee (finally, they were good for something!), drawing blood from both the spirit and user. Chara screeched, finally feeling pain. The skeleton followed up with a Blue Attack, weighing down the boy’s SOUL, before kicking him down into a nearby clock tower. “Stay there for a bit, okay!?“

The mutated spirit struggled, slowly rising in spite of the massive weight on his chest! “No, you don’t!” A large shape pounced on the boy and pinned him down. Gaster wouldn’t let him move!

“Now, for the finisher!” The link Wingdings and Chara shared meant he was also paralysed, forced to the ground by the Blue Attack. Wind rushed past the horned skeleton as he plummeted towards the wicked monster, weapon primed to cleave him in two. Papyrus, putting everything he had into the blow, brought the sword down on Wingdings!

But as the sword was tantalisingly close to the demon dragon’s skull… he smirked. Malice whirling around him, he tore through the abandoned city and drowned the skeleton’s world in black.

Once again, Papyrus couldn’t stop his descent in time – his own Blue Attack was too powerful! He plunged into the void, falling into darkness… before he faceplanted onto something chalky white.

*Sniff, sniff…* Huh…? It smelled a lot like… himself? He leapt to his feet. The plains around him were barren and empty. The sky was dark. Did Wingdings take him… to a post-apocalyptic Earth? The healthy blue planet in the distance told him otherwise. Papyrus tried to punch through the dimensions and return to the Capital, but it didn’t work. Seemed that Wingdings’ powers were enough to keep him trapped here until the time rip ended.

*I’m on the Moon…!? Who would have known Wingdings could bring me here? I don’t know what he’s planned, but all I have to do is last a minute or so! But nothing could have prepared him for the demon dragon’s assault.*

Papyrus’ eyes darted around his surroundings, ready for an attack from any direction. Earth looked much larger from here than the moon did from Earth. The skeleton swore his eyes were playing tricks on him – it looked like it was slowly growing! He rubbed his eyes and blinked. No… it was getting closer! At an alarming rate!

**TO BE CONTINUED**
With a grunt, Wingdings shoved the Earth towards the Moon. The replicated inhabitants of the planet screamed and panicked as it approached the celestial body. At this point, if Papyrus tried to run away – even to the other side of the moon to avoid a direct impact – it was already too late. He would be dragged in by Earth’s gravitational field and crushed into paste.

The machine had already worked its ‘magic’, so to speak – the Darkness was called, and it was growing closer with every second. Wingdings suspected Papyrus would have been making his way to him, so when he heard sounds of battle approaching, he removed the Fragments from his machine and merged with them. Now he was the focal point at which the Darkness would be brought into the world! For the first time, he was the one in control!

It was thrilling how much stronger his powers were becoming with Chara fuelling them – how justice was finally on his side! At first, Wingdings’ ability combined with Chara’s Determination could create brief recreations of the Earth a few decades back or forward… but the more time he spent fused with the spirit, the stronger he became. The time periods he could access grew, as did the length of time the worlds remained manifested for. He could finally taste what the Determined had!

The replica Earth slammed into the replica Moon, shattering both. The celestial body and planet were obliterated from the universe. Wingdings stood tall, proud he managed to triumph over his creation… but, against all possible odds, a familiar shape rapidly grew in his field of vision. No. NO!

“Papyrus!? How the hell are you not dead!?” An entire planet had been thrown at him! He should have been crushed into oblivion! He was made to be the ultimate weapon, so it was natural that he could ravage the planet at full power. But even a creature like him shouldn’t have been able to withstand a hit from something of that mass and force. What was happening to the horned boy!?

Time was up. Papyrus and Wingdings clashed fists, just as space melted back into the real world. The horned boy no longer had his sword, but that did nothing to stop him!

A white blur passed over Papyrus’ head, demolishing an apartment block like a wrecking ball. Gaster!

“I’m sorry, Papyrus! I couldn’t hold him back!”

“WRYYYYYYYYAAAAA!” Chara rushed at Papyrus from behind, brandishing his claws!

Bonetrousle emerged to block, grappling with the horrific creature. Our arms are both busy, so…! A bony tail whipped around from behind the guardian spirit and tried to smash Chara’s torso, but the fifth limb met unexpected resistance. “!?” A bladed tail had emerged from behind the demon and clashed with Bonetrousle’s! Both spirits were stuck! But their users were still free to fight!

Papyrus continued to trade blows with his father. Blue and purple auras clashed as the two skeletons struggled against each other! “Wingdings, stop this insanity! Can’t you see the power to manipulate the world like this isn’t something people are meant to have!?” The skeleton almost said Bonetrousle’s battle cry out of habit when he swung his fists at the enemy. Wingdings guarded with his arms, but pain seared his bones as the hits connected! More cracks were starting to appear…

The demon dragon jumped back. Papyrus started to pursue, but halted when another tear appeared behind Wingdings.
“Who gets to decide what people are meant to have or not!? It’s better I have this power rather than some disgusting, immoral brat!” From within the rift, Wingdings produced a strange contraption. It resembled a rocket launcher in structure, but in terms of aesthetics, the metallic sheen and glowing lines made it look like something out of science fiction. The dragon aimed and fired a swift silver sphere at the skeleton!

“You’re the one who’s disgusting and immoral!” Papyrus punched the projectile back to its sender, Blue Attack delaying its explosion.

“Only because of what Flowey did!” The game of dead man’s volley continued, Wingdings’ tail whacking the weapon like a tennis racket smashing a ball.

The horned skeleton’s eyes glowed. “Now you’re just shifting blame!” With a Blue Attack-powered punch, Papyrus launched the ball! This time, he didn’t try to delay its explosion – his intention was for it to detonate right in Wingdings’ face! The sphere rocketed towards the demon dragon faster than a bullet.

A brilliant light, even more piercing than a flashbang, illuminated the city. The pulse of energy unleashed by the sphere was unlike anything Papyrus had ever seen. But when the aura subsided, Wingdings was left without even a scratch.

“Blame!? What blame!? I don’t care what anyone thinks – higher beings such as the Determined are unjustly exempt from the morals and laws of this world. That I have to cross a line or ten in order to deliver justice to this world… it’s perfectly natural!”

Another big time rip was ready! Wingdings closed the gap between himself and Papyrus, claws ready to send him to his grave!

“SURGING DRAGON FANG!” A dragon-headed laser beam rushed at Wingdings from behind him.

Without even flinching, the demon dragon rotated his head 180 degrees and countered with his own attack. The two blasts collided and cancelled each other out. Gaster leaped over Wingdings’ head, launching a blade from his tail. “Shadow Swooorrrd!”

“Useless!” He knocked it away with his own tail.

Papyrus tried to attack Wingdings again, but it was too late! He tore through the world again, engulfing everyone.

The scenery transformed, the stars before them becoming visible. This time, Wingdings had the power to send them farther out into the solar system – Jupiter lay just in front of them. At this point in time, Papyrus no longer required air, and neither did Gaster. However, dropped into the middle of outer space as they were, neither of them could move.

Smoke escaped from Wingdings’ maw as he unleashed all his energy. Even though they couldn’t hear him from where they were, he roared anyway. “Let’s see you two try and block this!” Now his replicated world could last for over a minute - more than enough time to destroy the enemies.

Normally, it would be impossible for a person to touch the gas giant. But Wingdings didn’t let the laws of physics obstruct his will. That’s right… any law preventing his desired future didn’t deserve to be followed. The horrifying purple aura around him flaring up, he slammed into the solar system’s largest planet with all his might. With an ominous rumble that trembled the very universe, it started to move.
Don’t think I’m done yet, boy! The stars appeared to blur together as he and Chara flew towards several of the orbiting moons of Jupiter and hurled them like dodgeballs, homing them in on the skeleton’s location!

To make absolutely, positively sure he went down, the demonic duo flew to Papyrus’ location on his side of the planet for a direct attack! But when Wingdings saw what the enemy was doing, he couldn’t help but let out a gasp of awe.

His previous assumption was incorrect – he didn’t block Earth being thrown at him, he evaded it! Through creative use of his Blue Attack – by manipulation of weight, and by extension, the gravity acting on his body, he achieved 3D movement. The horned skeleton had taken flight!

Both Papyrus’ and Gaster’s bodies were cloaked in a blue flame. The two roared across the sea of space, out of the path of Jupiter and its moons. The forming cosmic maelstrom from the clash of celestial bodies continued to grow, but the skeletons refused to be caught in it! They expertly navigated through the narrow twisting paths, not getting hit once as they dodged the massive makeshift projectiles.

Wingdings had never seen this use of the technique before. Even without Determination, he managed to overcome the law that bound him to unhappiness… He managed to overcome gravity…! But the warmth and pride in his chest quickly faded, only leaving emptiness and melancholy. If only… if only this could have happened earlier… then it would have actually amounted to something.

With a grunt of effort, the demon dragon tore off the blade on his tail. Pain exploded in the limb, but it was like a drop in the ocean compared to the suffering he endured in the past. The weapon flew straight at Papyrus’ chest! Bonetrousle burst into being and blocked, knocking the blade away, but that was a mere distraction!

Chara’s warped body slammed into the now-vulnerable skeleton, shattering the Blue Attack like glass! Now with nothing stopping them from withstanding Jupiter’s gravitational pull, Papyrus and Gaster were sucked in!

Wingdings and Chara rushed towards the two and tackled them both down, shoving them farther into the planet. The temperature of the core was searing hot – even more scorching than the surface of the sun!

A bloodcurdling screech pierced Wingdings’ skull. In the molten centre of the planet, it was too bright to see anything more than blurry shapes. But the sound of sizzling and melting was more than enough for the demon dragon to confirm Papyrus’ defeat. He felt not a single regret as his son howled in agony. Papyrus had been given a chance, but he threw it away.

The period of the time rip ended. The core of Jupiter disappeared, revealing a giant lump of black goo in Papyrus’ place. “What is this…?” Wingdings backed away, preparing Chara to attack.

Semi-solid slowly sloughed off, thick sludge-like consistency squelching against the ground. The skeleton encased within collapsed to his knees. “Gaster… Why did you have to…?”

The goo coalesced and reformed, revealing the heavily burned quadruped. He wasn’t moving.

So that’s what happened… Gaster had sacrificed himself. In his goo-like form, he wrapped around his friend and insulated him, choosing to take the heat in his place. A smile spread across Wingdings’ muzzle. “How wonderful… I can retrieve the final Fragment now. But first…” He strolled towards Papyrus.
The boy had risen to a crouch, but remained otherwise stationary. His downturned face was hidden. Wingdings imagined he looked like a broken doll, having lost everything in his futile quest to denounce and obstruct the demon dragon’s justice.

Crouching down to his son’s level, a light started to gather in Wingdings’ jaws. How fitting that the ultimate Gasterblaster would be finished off by its own signature attack! “Surging… Dragon…”

But Wingdings was wrong! The grip Papyrus had over his new Shadow Sword tightened. Losing his friends didn’t break him at all! No! If anything, his will became even stronger! The hopes and dreams of the people who laid down their lives for him…! With the wills he inherited from them, he would continue to fight for the future!

“…FA-” SMASH!

Papyrus had somersaulted over the beam and elbowed Wingdings into the ground! The man’s muzzle was slammed shut as his chin hit the pavement, forcing him to stop the attack, lest he blow his own face off. The parts of the energy beam that did escape from the Gasterblaster-like creature’s muzzle didn’t so much as graze the skeleton – all he felt was a ripple of heat the blast emanated.

Chara, screeching in both agony and anger, rushed at the skeleton, talons outstretched again. Papyrus jumped off Wingdings and countered again with his sword, the slashes moving at a speed unable to be followed by a human’s naked eye! “Haven’t learned from last time, have you?”

“!?” The demon looked down to see that his claws had been filed down to blunt nails. “Grrr… RAAAUUGH!” He charged at Papyrus in a headbutt, horns ready to run him through.

But the skeleton dropped to the ground, sliding under his attack and going for a kick like a professional soccer player! Papyrus’ paw slammed into Chara’s stomach, his claws causing the wound on the boy’s chest to widen.

Wingdings had just managed to recover and get back up, but the demon colliding with him was like an ocean’s worth of salt falling into a fresh wound! Chara dispersed, forced to retreat into his user as he was blown back from the force!

“I’m not done with you!” Papyrus sprinted towards the demon dragon, Bonetrousle’s fists on fire. “NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!” The barrage sent him soaring skyward, right back up through the hole they entered through!

Wingdings flew higher than Mt Ebott, higher than the skies, Papyrus following him. This time, they were in space for real! The horned skeleton got behind the dragon, so that he was facing the Earth. He glared down at his father, whose eyes were filled with fear. Indirect attacks won’t harm him, so…!

“THIS WILL END EVERYTHING!” Blue aura burning bright, he attacked the demon dragon with all his might! “NYEEEEEEEEHHH!” Wingdings was utterly crushed by an immense force! Papyrus had used his Blue Attack to make himself as heavy as the planets he had been attacked with, and with the help of the Earth’s pull, had reached terminal velocity.

The boy had managed to overcome gravity, but Wingdings was still trapped. His supernatural durability pierced by Papyrus, he felt his body start to break down as the two re-entered the atmosphere… Was this it!? Was this how he’d meet his end!?

The two hit Mt. Ebott peak. Papyrus halted his Blue Attack the moment Wingdings touched the mountain to avoid pulverising the nearby Ebott City.
His father had been reduced to a pathetic state. The dragon’s bones were cracked all over, blood pouring from the spiderweb-like patterns. Several of them were broken outright, shards spilling onto the ground. Papyrus had a fist pressed against Wingdings’ skull. It would take just a bit of pressure, and the mastermind would be no more.

“This is your last chance.” There was nothing more that needed to be said.

Wingdings was only hanging on by a thread of his life. But he was desperate. Desperate to obtain a happy future. He would fight to the bitter end. One final burst of energy erupted from him! *My pathetic body... hold out just a little longer!* “Papyrus! If you want the natural rules of the world to remain in place so badly, then face the consequences of it! Be crushed beneath the oppressive law of fate!”

Another time rip opened right underneath Wingdings! Papyrus jumped back, but an enormous invisible force pulled both him and the enemy in!

Within the time rip… was mankind’s greatest fear. An unavoidable fate. An inevitable demise. The end of all timelines… the end of the whole universe. Before Papyrus… was a massive black hole.

TO BE CONTINUED

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**Complete Wingdings**

**Combat Stats**

Destructive Power: Infinite

Speed: S

Range: C

Durability: S

Precision: C

Developmental Potential: S

**Abilities/Powers**

**The ‘Hero’ of Time and Space:** By taking Chara’s power, Wingdings now has the ability create pockets of time – by tearing open a rift between dimensions, rather than the Darkness, beyond it now lies a temporary replicated universe.

All of fate bows to his command – anything that happens in the past or future can be drawn out and used against his enemies. As his power grows, so does both the time the manifestations last for and how far back or forward he can reach.

However, Fragment Users and their actions, unaffected by fate, are not present in these replicas.

**An Unstoppable Will, An Immovable Object:** Invincible to all conventional forms of attack. As his is now, only Papyrus can pierce his defence.
Once again, the not-too-distant past...

Flowey decided to Reset after slaughtering Papyrus. This time, the soulless flower did exactly as he promised. He incapacitated everyone, gathered them up in the Capital... then the fun began.

Undyne was ripped into sashimi, chunk-by-chunk, and forced into her lover’s mouth. Nothing but a bloody mess remained where the fish lady used to be. But the fact that a physical body still remained was proof that she was alive – the flower wasn’t merciful enough to end her misery. Meanwhile, Alphys stared into nothing, eyes no longer reflecting any light. She had been pushed far beyond the breaking point – her will to live had completely vanished.

The king, alongside the lady Sans always talked to, had been crushed to death, squeezed against each other until they collapsed into blood, then dust. Flowey considered it the ultimate form of irony.

Mettaton, the entertainer, was dismantled and desecrated piece-by-piece on live TV, still conscious, before his SOUL was finally crushed. His fans and staff alike roared in anger, trying to break into the Capital, but it was to no avail – Flowey had cut off all transport in and out of the city.

Papyrus was tied up in the centre of it all, forced to watch everything from above. He kept struggling, screaming, pleading for his so-called flower friend to stop... but he didn’t. What did the words of a lower lifeform mean to one of the Determined? Absolutely nothing.

Now it was Sans’ turn to be played with. The thorny vine holding him captive slithered to bring him up to Papyrus’ level.

“B…r…o…”

“Now... what did I say last time, again~? Oh, now I remember!” The young man was briefly released. He instantly produced a bone attack to defend himself, but it was useless – Flowey had already realised his weakness.

Vines closed around all four of the short skeleton’s limbs, squeezing tight. Sans let out a cry, his pointless attempt at self-defence dissipating.

As sudden as the clap of thunder, the top-right vine gave a powerful tug. With a sickening snap, Sans’ left arm was ripped off! A bloodcurdling shriek escaped from the 18-year-old’s mouth as a red river flowed from the stump. He didn’t want to give the Anomaly the satisfaction of his pain, but it hurt so much...

“Calm down, trashbag! This is only the beginning! There are three more to go, you know~?”

SNAP! Another explosion of intense pain for both skeleton brothers – physical for Sans, emotional for Papyrus. This time, Sans’ right leg came off. He would never walk again. Not that it would matter.

Tears streamed down Papyrus’ face. “Flowey, no! I’m begging you! What reason could you possibly have for doing something this awful?”
SNAP! Now Sans was missing both legs. Flowey hummed a tune to himself, as if he was doing nothing more than gardening, ironically enough.

“I’ll do anything, so please…!”

“Silly Papyrus! This isn’t about something I want you to do! I’m doing this because it’s fun!” Sans’ remaining limb was torn away. As he fell, several vines rushed out and impaled his torso. His body fell apart, collapsing into dust as worthless as the infertile sand of the desert.

Flowey turned to the remaining skeleton with a grin. “Well, my cute little toy… do you still believe in me~? Do you still think anyone can be great if they try~?”

Papyrus hyperventilated, his breaths ragged, and vision blurred. He was unable to stop himself from shaking. Then… a massive snap pierced the air, and he went still.

The flower tilted his head to the side. Had he accidentally squeezed too hard? Was the toy broken already?

His limbs spasmed, the skeleton squirming in the vine’s grip. Papyrus screamed in agony, as more snaps and cracks filled the empty Capital.

As if pierced from within, something erupted from his skull! Flowey flinched at the unfamiliar sight. “Horns!”

“Grraaaghh…” The skeleton’s battle body started to shudder and rattle, straining to contain his growing bulk. With the help of the new spikes forming on his spine, the garment burst, raining down shards of the material on the vine-infested city.

The single vine that Flowey had bound him with began to ache – the skeleton was starting to put on quite a bit of weight! Saying his torso had swollen would be like saying the desert was slightly dry – it was almost comically oversized in proportion to the rest of his body. Stick-like limbs were connected to a strong, massive ribcage and spinal cord.

The flower’s vine couldn’t take the strain anymore and dropped him to the ground! Flowey backed off, wary of what was happening to his ‘friend’. Papyrus tried to land on his feet, but they buckled beneath his own weight.

Of course, the transformation quickly spread to them. His boots swelled and burst, clawed toes tasting air. His feet – rather, paws – left gashes in the concrete as his legs extended and strengthened, spikes bursting from the knees. A long, thick tail, ending in a sharp blade, extended from his growing pelvis, shredding his briefs.

The only articles of clothing remaining on Papyrus were his gloves, his arms still disproportionately small and unchanged, and his scarf, a tiny splash of red fabric resting on his broadened shoulders. He was more-or-less naked, but it didn’t bother him. Why would it, when there was a bigger problem to deal with?

The skeleton rose to his full height, towering over three metres. Controlling something so massive, hearing the ground tremble as he walked, and feeling the air rush through his expanded ribcage… normally, it would have made him giddy with excitement. But all he could feel now was righteous fury.

Flowey amassed all his power, sending wave after wave of vines and bullets at the changing skeleton. But they all fell, either to the wickedly sharp blade on Papyrus’ new tail, or the equally dangerous claws on his paws that sliced through everything.
Many of the Fragments weren’t in the world yet. The process couldn’t fully complete, but as Dr Gaster’s perfect creation, even a sliver of Papyrus’ true power was immense. Enough to overwhelm any monster… any human… anything.

The flower tried to retreat and burrow away, but the increasingly beastly skeleton refused to allow that. He reached down, and as he did, his arms and hands finally grew to match the proportion of the rest of his body. Massive claws pierced through his gloves, catching the creature in a grip stronger than any man or machine.

Papyrus brought Flowey up to his head, glowing blue reptilian eyes boring into the plant. The sight of his mutating face, twitching and shifting as if it had a mind of its own, sent waves of dread directly into the flower’s consciousness. *Those teeth…!* They were too big and too sharp for his mouth to contain, straining against the confines of his face.

With a crackle, his face bulged and stretched, pushing out into a vicious muzzle. The last word that left his maw before it fully formed… was his answer to Flowey’s question. “…No.”

The flower was smashed against the ground, spraying blood on the pavement. Flowey squealed like a pathetic pig. It was his turn to beg and plead for life, in rehearsed lines that he used to exploit so many others. But the beast didn’t acknowledge them. The beast didn’t care. It kept crushing the soulless abomination against the ground until it was just a mess of red fluid and plant matter.

The scene in the window Dr Gaster was observing this from quickly faded to white. Flowey had Reset. But… the prisoner of the Darkness was satisfied.

Through witnessing this carnage- no, this justice… For once… the doctor had a glimmer of hope. That someone could rise up and slay the evil tyrant. That there was the possibility of someone bringing back hope to the world.

**Present Day**

Wingdings glared from inside the black hole, silent fury burning in his eyes. Actually, calling it a ‘black hole’ wasn’t quite accurate. It was no mere natural phenomenon – it was the consequence of the Determined’s abuse of the timeline. Ironically, the abuse of Saving, Loading, and Resetting to change fate destabilised the world to the point where this outcome was fated. This was the day the universe died.

Papyrus flew away, struggling against the pull and avoiding the rubble soaring his way. There was so much being ripped apart…! Asteroids, stars, moons, planets… Everything was getting sucked in and destroyed!

The skeleton slipped through the gap between some of the debris and kicked off others as leverage. It felt like dodging cars while running down a highway, but far more dangerous and bigger in scale! Slowly but surely, he was able to make progress away from the black hole. That is, if it weren’t for a certain demon ambushing him from behind one of the asteroids.

Chara rushed at Papyrus, crimson energy leaking out of his body. The demonic spirit was twisted and distorted beyond recognition – he had become a towering bipedal dragon with scales the colour of blood. He looked almost like a scaly version of Wingdings!

“WRYYYYYYYY!”

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!”
Guardian spirit clashed against demon amidst the collapsing world! Fist barrage struggled against fist barrage, both Bonetrousle’s and Chara’s arms a blur of red and white. But this time, Papyrus and Bonetrousle were pushed back, overwhelmed by the force of the crimson dragon! Chara’s strength… it’s grown exponentially!

“SURRRRGGING DRAGON FAAAAANG!” An energy dragon head from Chara’s muzzle closed its jaws around Papyrus and locked him in place, shattering his Blue Attack and continuing towards the black hole’s event horizon. For the cherry on top of the ice cream sundae that was the horned skeleton’s demise, Chara grabbed the remaining planets of the solar system, crushed them into one ultra-dense cluster, and hurled it at him!

The force of the cosmos hit Papyrus full-on, pushing him past the point of no return! The skeleton felt despair grip him as his body started to join the rest of the doomed universe. Crushed beneath the weight of fate and gravity, was there anything left the skeleton could do? Was he destined for an unjust end, powerless to do anything but accept the inevitable? No! There was one last thing he could do…

One last strategy! One last Blue Attack! This was a special one – his ability allowed him to control weight, and indirectly affect gravity via that... so by that logic, if he inverted his weight...

From within his chest, a pure white light started to shine. An excruciating pain, worse than anything he had felt in his life, seared through Papyrus’ bones as gravity tore him in every direction. I... I can’t do it...! For the first (and possibly last) time in his life, those words went through his skull.

But a skeletal pair of arms wrapped themselves around him, the pain fading and being replaced by warmth. Papyrus’ eyes widened when he saw who was encouraging him. “Bonetrousle!?”

A will, faint but strong, was in the guardian spirit. Bonetrousle was a Gasterblaster, intended to be its own creature. So of course it would have its own thoughts and feelings, faint as they were. Perhaps... Papyrus’ will had finally awakened it. A soundless voice rang in the skeleton’s head. Brother... all... my... strength...!

Papyrus could feel hope and power rising within him. Everyone’s spirits were supporting him. Even his guardian entity’s! “Okay. Let’s do it...!”

An immense white light, as bright as the dawn after the darkest of nights, streamed forth from the boy! The black hole was cancelled out, its effects countered by the opposing force. Wingdings and Chara had no time to even think before they were engulfed. The entire universe Wingdings created was ripped apart by this brilliant energy, forcing the time rip to end! When the light faded, they were back on the peak of Mt. Ebott.

Being the closest one to the centre of Papyrus’ white hole, Chara had been completely overwhelmed. The connection between him and the mastermind had been severed, leaving the crimson dragon lying face-down and unconscious.

Wingdings knew at this stage he had lost. But he decided to go for one last clash with Papyrus, in a final stand! “RAAAAAAAAGGGGHH!”

“NYEHHHHHH!”

There was no contest. Wingdings’ arm shattered like glass, Bonetrousle breaking it easily. He crumpled to the ground, eyes staring lifelessly into the sky. “So... the weak will forever dance to the whims of the strong... Even after... I worked so hard... perfecting you... trying to rise above my pathetic nature and make a difference...” He thought he was past the point of crying, but evidently
not—a single tear dripped down from one of his eyes. “Finish me off. Do what you will.”

Papyrus made no move to attack. “I’m not going to kill you, Wingdings. Everyone, I mean everyone, can be a good person if they put their mind to it.”

Wingdings screwed his eyes shut and turned away, uninterested. “Are you really going to shove your idea of bonds and friendship down my throat now? Even at full power, you wouldn’t be able to do anything against the Anomaly, Papyrus. I already told you, boy. The only reason Frisk could afford to be a good person and actually accomplish anything was because of his absolute power. And in time, that power will corrupt him into an abomination, deserving of punishment, yet never receiving it.”

“But with this new situation we live under, anything could be possible! You’ve already nullified the effects of the Anomaly on the world, and you’ve started to empower monsters! Surely, after coming this far, the words ‘impossible’ and ‘meaningless’ shouldn’t apply!”

Now Wingdings was trembling. More tears were starting to well up in his eyes, tenderly rolling down onto the rocks. “Are you sure we can find a way…?”

“If we can’t find a way, we’ll make a way.” Papyrus walked over to the doctor and leaned down, offering his right hand. “Let’s go home… Dad.”

The broken man rose up to a sitting position, grasping on as tightly as he could. However… Despite the tantalising warmth his son offered, both Wingdings’ expression and heart were stone cold.

“Papyrus… something just like this has happened in a previous timeline. In terms of your abilities, you are my most perfect creation… But mentally, you’re too weak.”

Wingdings’ jaws swung open as he pulled down! Light began to gather in his muzzle. He was aiming directly at the boy’s head! *This isn’t your fault, Papyrus… you may have been too naïve, but I’ll make it so that this type of situation will never happen again.*

But in a twist of events that shocked the demon dragon’s very core, Papyrus revealed his left hand. He still had Gaster’s Shadow Sword! *You were prepared for a possible betrayal!?*

**SLASH!** Wingdings was now armless, but not harmless! His tail—now bladeless, but still powerful enough to create a hole in reinforced steel, smashed into his son’s side.

“Blurch…!” Papyrus spat up blood as he fell right into the path of the blast. The Surging Dragon Fang fired, point-blanc.

The horned skeleton could no longer avoid it… but he had his own last card to play! He cast his Blue Attack on his blade, thrusting it in front of him with both hands.

He had reversed gravity to become a white hole again. Everything, even light, was being repelled from it, giving the illusion that it was shining… no, the blade was shining! Shining with the light of hope! The light to seize a happy future, no matter what obstacles fate or anything else had in store! Against it, Wingdings’ anger and hatred meant nothing.

The Surging Dragon Fang parted before the blade, Papyrus lunging forward with all his might! The attack struck home, Blue Attack blowing a gaping hole in Wingdings’ chest!

Papyrus expected Wingdings to be furious, going down while screaming at this outcome. But in stark contrast, the expression the demon dragon chose to wear in his last moments was a warm, sincere smile. In his true voice—not the deep, intimidating façade he put on—he uttered his final words. “Well done. You’ve grown. You can survive… in this disgusting world…”
As his consciousness began to fade, so did the whirlpool of dark emotions that led him to villainy. The only thing left behind was a peaceful serenity. *I couldn’t create the world the next generation needed… but there’s still a chance that someone else can. I’m satisfied.*

With that, Wingdings collapsed. His body didn’t fade to dust. But the remaining hate and anger in his being had all disappeared, leaving nothing. He was definitely, absolutely dead.

Papyrus carefully approached the deceased man, still on guard in case of anything else he might have had up his sleeve. But after confirming that there were no longer any signs of life, the skeleton could finally let his own tears flow.

“Dad…” True, he may have been a bad person, maybe even the scum of the Earth. But he didn’t start out that way. Seeing everyone he cared about die over and over, powerless to change anything, all hope crushed beneath a remorseless heel… It twisted him into a bitter, vengeful monster.

What gave birth to Wingdings the Demon Dragon was a chain of misfortune – one that he failed to break. Beneath it all, he was a sad, scared child – Gaster was living proof of that.

Papyrus crouched down and closed his father’s eyes. The body looked like a weary man, who after nights of sleeplessness, had finally managed to achieve a peaceful rest. “I say this not to the evil scientist who created doomsday weapons and was consumed by revenge, but to the innocent, lonely man I couldn’t reach in time: Goodbye, Dad.”

Almost as if in response to the skeleton’s words, Wingdings started to rise up.

“What!?” Papyrus backed away, summoning Bonetrousle. *Playing dead AGAIN!? No, wait…* Wingdings truly was dead. The phenomenon now… it was more like his limp body being dragged upwards by something inside him.

True to that prediction, Fragments emerged from the corpse with a flash. Wingdings fell back down like a ragdoll.

Papyrus reached out and tried to catch them, but they flew over his shoulder, hitting something behind him. The sky started to crack like glass. Part of it caved in outright, opening a hole and exposing something beneath. Within the shadows, was that… a solar eclipse…? No, it was a massive eye!

Slow, unsteady footsteps approached the skeleton from behind. “I’m sorry, Papyrus… But it’s too late.”

TO BE CONCLUDED

Chapter End Notes

It’s not over yet. There’s still one final foe to be fought.
When Sans came to, his body was sore all over. Feeling like how Undyne described he should feel after a workout, he rose to a sitting position.

“Sans! You are awake!” The skeleton saw several familiar shapes around him. Frisk, Undyne, Flowey, Alphys… and looking down on him with a hand outstretched was Toriel.

He was about to accept the offer, but it quickly dawned, even in his slightly jumbled mind, that he might be too heavy to lift. That, and he no longer had thumbs. “No… thanks… fine.”

The beast got to his feet. He tried to stand up straight, but gravity pulled him back down to a hunched position. It seemed he was at his most stable when tilted forward, like a raptor of some sort. Sans could straighten up, but the lack of balance felt like he was on a stationary bicycle, or stilts – he couldn’t stay like that for more than a few seconds. However, even hunched like this, he was still taller than Toriel.

“When I saw the dark vortex over the mountain, I could not resist the urge to assist. Asgore agreed to search for help while I ascended Mt. Ebott as quickly as I could. I found and healed everyone injured.

“The turtle-like creature and Muffet… I was uncertain what to do with them. I did not want them to perish, so I treated their wounds, but I restrained them. My ‘Red Bind’ should be effective, even against Fragment Users. The ropes are perfectly harmless on their own, but if they detect malicious intent, those two will instantly burn to a crisp.”

“Good… can deal with later…” He took three wobbly steps towards the two tied-up Fragment Users. Moving like this was slow and awkward – it felt like just one mis-step would send him toppling forward. He dropped to all fours, and suddenly, his movements became much more fluid and natural – as if this was the way he should be walking. Even though this was degrading, for now, it would work.

The dragon-like skeleton took this opportunity to examine his shifted anatomy. He still had trouble with complex thoughts, but he now had time to fully appreciate what lay beyond his self-imposed limits.

Compared to his stunted two earlier forms, he was massive! Not just in height, either. His bones felt like they were reinforced with titanium… no, something leagues stronger, granting a massive increase in both physical strength and durability.

Deadly (no longer just sharp) spikes extended from his spine and joints. The reflected blue glow on
the cave walls indicated that his eyes were now permanently fierce and draconic. And while what used to be his hands were now useless for grasping something like a sword, the blades at the end of each digit rendered such a need redundant. Everything about this new body exuded power, commanding respect through fear.

What would the end result of completely losing himself have been…? An unsettling, ominous feeling crept into his mind… At any rate, now wasn’t the time to be asking such questions.

A breeze crept through cave, bringing another issue to the freshly mutated skeleton’s attention. An unexpectedly high-pitched yelp escaped his maw as he tried to cover up! All he was wearing were shorts, and even those were way too small and tight for him now! But… again… there were currently more important things to focus on.

Sans circled around the unconscious duo, like a master sculptor inspecting his work for the most minor of mistakes. They couldn’t afford to let an enemy loose at this time! After the seventh go-around, the skeleton looked at the rest of the group and nodded.

With that, they turned their attention back to what was going on outside – were Papyrus and Gaster defeated!? They needed help!

The rift above Mount Ebott continued to expand, the sky breaking open like glass! Something enormous lay beyond…

Gaster looked pained and regretful. The dragon had become even bigger, but he was trying to make himself look as small as he could. Huge wings had sprouted from his back, filled in with purple magic membrane, yet he had them pressed down, like a sheet over his body.

Papyrus felt like knives were digging into his heart, as the shock from his friend’s statement started to set in. "But… why!? Wingdings is dead!"

"PAPYRUSSSS!" A bone-white blur bounded towards him on all fours. Gaster stumbled out of its collision course. It skidded to a halt right in front of him, claws scraping up a cloud of dust. "What… happening…?"

He blinked a few times, uncertain of what he was looking at. “…Sans!?”

The creature nodded, and stepped aside, revealing the others approaching. Undyne, Frisk, Flowey, Alphys, even Toriel… “Everyone’s here! Everyone’s okay…!”

“But we won’t be if this keeps up! What the hell is going on!?" The fish lady studied the sky. This was the very first time Papyrus saw a hint of despair in her eye.

Gaster stepped forward. “With the help of Wingdings’ memories, I’ve finally figured it out. The timeline destabilisation Dr Gaster saw that day wasn’t Flowey – he hadn’t taken those actions yet. It was the past, and fate didn’t apply to him, after all.

“I- I mean, Wingdings was the cause. Not from his actions now, but from the moment the first Fragment was formed, the Darkness was called to the world.” The only cause behind the Darkness coming… the only one to blame is…! He fought back his tears, emotions from second-hand memories welling up inside him.

He couldn’t meet the others’ gazes. “Now that the demon dragon is dead, it’s completely lost control. At this rate… it won’t just be Ebott City that will be destroyed. Not just the planet or universe, either. All of reality, everything that has been or will be, even parallel worlds that may exist… Everything is
going to vanish. Not even Determination can save us now… because there will never have been a past to return to.”

Before he sunk too deep, a light bonk on the head snapped him back to reality. “Don’t just angst about it! What can we do to stop it?!”

The beast grunted, wiping his tears away with a paw. *That’s right. Throwing a pity party won’t help now.* “Destroying it outright is impossible. However, as part of the Darkness myself, and now the one who possesses all the Fragments, if I can get into the core… I might be able to shut it down from inside.”

Gaster crouched down, spreading his wings and building up power in his legs. “I may not be Wingdings, but I was born from him. I’m fully prepared to take responsibility for ‘my’ actions…!”

Just before take-off, the dragon’s tail was caught in a firm grip. Papyrus’ eyes blazed with resolve. “We’re going together – you can’t face that thing all alone!”

The others echoed Papyrus’ sentiment.

“We’ve come too far to give up now!”

“I-I’m willing to stay in this until the very end!”

“Sa…me…”

“Time to kick some Darkness ass!”

“I refuse to allow this abomination to destroy our world!”

“It’s my responsibility, too! Everyone else faced the consequences of my actions, so it’s about time I did.”

The team gathered on the dragon’s back… but he abruptly collapsed to the ground. “So… heavy…”

“I-I guess even Gaster can’t support the weight of six people and a flower…”

Papyrus jumped off and tapped everyone, turning their SOULs blue. “In that case, we can fly on our own!”

Gaster nodded. A pulse of white light emanated from his body. “I’ve used the Fragments to make this ability permanent. That way, a single scratch won’t send you plummeting to your doom.”

In one powerful, simultaneous leap… the heroes travelled into the rift. Each of them knew they might not return. But they all desired to protect the future that everyone had worked so hard for. To overcome an unfair and unsatisfactory outcome, even if the rules of the world were set against them. Everyone was filled with determination.

Within the other dimension, the heroes could see the beast that the Darkness had become in its full glory. The behemoth Papyrus fought, and the hellbeast Gaster had become… this made both look like declawed kittens.

Six writhing heads branched out from a gigantic dense bone cage. Depth perception was difficult in this place – whenever the group thought they reached the creature, it turned out it was still far away. Its shape grew and grew…
This was no mere Apocalypse Cannon... it was more than that. It was the true Bringer of the End, the most powerful being in existence. Planets were nothing before it – the six-headed monstrosity had one sole purpose: to drown the universe.

The feelings created from Wingdings Gaster’s grief and powerlessness... his bitterness and hatred fed into the Darkness, creating this abomination. Would Fragment abilities even be able to scratch it?

As the allied Fragment Users neared, one of the heads swung their way. Its jaws opened wide. Instantly, everyone knew what it signified. “SCATTERRRR!”

Papyrus, Gaster, Frisk, and Flowey were separated from the others by a wall of blue and white. They avoided a direct hit, but simply being near a laser felt like they had been scorched by the hottest of desert airs!

Mercifully, the attack stopped, but emerging from within was a creature that had crawled out of the skeleton’s worst nightmares. It looked... vaguely like a Gasterblaster. The dragon was massive – the horned skeleton was barely the size of its face!

Vicious claws, able to slice through anything in the world. Wicked horns, ready to pierce through its prey. Blade-like teeth, and the insanely powerful laser that no doubt lay behind them. The hulking monstrosity brought only one thing to mind... “The Apocalypse Cannon...!? Is this where it was all along!?”

Gaster was trembling so much, he was audibly rattling. “That’s not Dr Gaster’s creation! That thing... it’s a demon! A true demon!”

It let loose a roar, and with it, a Surging Fang laser emerged. Before Papyrus and Frisk could be engulfed, a black lasso whisked them away. Gaster was barely quicker on the draw.

The dragon hurled the two onto his back and tried to fly away, creating distance between them... but collided with something solid and pointy. His eyes bugged out at the sight of the very head he was running away from! What!? But that doesn’t make any sense! He whirled around and flew back in a knee-jerk reflex, but the demon was still there. How!?

“Look out!” Papyrus pulled Gaster out of space where the two Surging Fangs met, the tip of the dragon’s snout singed. Just like Sans’ Gasterblasters, a floating head identical to the demon’s darted around freely. Its laser was just as powerful as the main body’s.

Flowey bit his lip. “No fair... We only get one laser, but that overgrown lizard gets two!??”

Gaster twitched and dived under the attack from behind. “Three,” he panted.

“Frisk, what are you waiting for!?” The flower snapped. “We need your DT Drones!”

“Right!” The three constructs hovered around Gaster, while Flowey affixed Frisk’s phone over the dragon’s left eye with a vine. While half his vision being covered might have seemed counterproductive for dodging, the information picked up by the drones more than made up for it.

Papyrus and Frisk had to hold on tight as their mount navigated the maze of lasers. Sudden starts and stops, twisting and contorting his body in unnatural ways... even briefly splitting himself in half! If they ever played Twister at their age, Gaster would have been the winner every single time. But they were no closer to slaying the demon.

The party could successfully evade the attacks, but they were unable to either get close or fire Gaster’s Surging Dragon Fang. Every time they approached the demon, a laser rushed through the
space between them, forcing them back. And because they were moving around so much, Gaster couldn’t properly aim.

To prevent this battle of attrition from wearing them down, Frisk decided to take a gamble. “Flowey! Take control of the drones!” Their erratic movements through the air made standing difficult, but Frisk widened his stance to keep his balance. He drew his sword and pointed it towards the demon. *This angle… should be just right!*

The instant Frisk finished that thought, a laser struck him from behind! Both human and flower tumbled towards the abomination.

“FRISK! FLOWEY!” Papyrus cried out, but he was quick to realise – they wouldn’t be falling towards the demon if they had been hit by the laser. They would have been vaporised instantly. In other words… Frisk had planned this all along!

Confirming this, the brown-haired boy grinned. A translucent barrier shone between his body and the laser. He used the demon’s Surging Fang as momentum to close the distance! Like a brave knight from a medieval fantasy, he landed on the demon’s skull and shoved his sword into its eyes. It screeched in agony, concentrated DT blinding it. Frisk spun to face his friends. “Do it, Gaster! Papyrus!”

“NYEH~!” The hero and his loyal steed rushed forward, but several blue spheres filled the air, forcing them to swerve out of the way. “What!?” The two Gasterblasters were wildly rapid-firing, their movements panicked and erratic. Rather than the clean, solid beams from earlier, they were now Gatling guns discharging giant bullets. At least before, they had a pattern, but now…!

Papyrus squinted. *Wait… but now that their pattern’s broken…* He grabbed his mount’s tail, casting the same Blue Attack-based technique from earlier – ‘Limitless Light’ was a nice name – on it. “Gaster! You know what to do!”

The glowing blade swung in a near-revolution around them, slashing through both the deadly spheres and the enemy Gasterblasters. But that wasn’t all Gaster had in store! “SURGING DRAGON FANG!” The energy head closed tight around the demon’s body, holding it in place.

“Time for the coup-de-grace!” The horned skeleton leaped off the mount, guardian spirit roaring with him. “NYEH~!” Even to Bonetrouble’s powerful punches, it felt like trying to break down a big, dense block of stone. The creature’s body struggled against its prison, Gaster’s grip starting to slip. Its head swung back and forth, trying to shake Frisk and Flowey off.

But Papyrus persisted. And little-by-little, cracks started to form! “NYEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEHEH~!” With a final punch, cracks exploded all over its body. For an instant – just a single instant – it stood still, like a worn-down stone statue… then it collapsed into a pile of bone shards.

Everyone gasped for breath. Somehow… just barely… they had managed to take it down. They knew it was no time to rest yet, but that gruelling battle had sapped everyone’s stamina.

Now that the adrenaline wore off, Papyrus had time to think. With that, an icy chill ran down his spine. What about Sans and the others…? What had happened to them?

“Tori! Get… back…!” Sans shoved the goat woman away from the conflict, the enemy’s launched
bone blades barely grazing her. At the same time Papyrus and the others were dealing with the being of the Darkness, Sans’ group was struggling against another giant beast.

More of the wicked blades homed in on each of the allies. Even though they all tried to spread out, it was like each blade could be controlled on its own. “Damn it…” Sans swung his tail around, knocking away the projectiles. He could defend himself, but the girls weren’t so fortunate.

“DIVERGING SLASH!” Undyne rotated her spear, conjuring up a barrier. The technique should have been enough to protect her from anything… but these creatures were in a league of their own. It wasn’t that the blades pierced through – it was more that the shield didn’t exist at all! The fish lady shrieked as the bone blades dug into her.

It looked like the demon went for easy prey – as if drawn by the noise, the other blades redirected towards Undyne! “BLASTING STRIIIKE!” Even that wouldn’t work. The blades didn’t deviate from their course, even by a millimetre.

Alphys rushed towards Undyne and tackled her out of the way. “GUARDIAN FIELD!” Burning golden light burst from her body. It dazzled everyone in a 500m radius, even the demon… but it didn’t do anything to the knives. Instead of finishing the former captain off, the blades tore through her lover.

When the afterimage faded from the monstrous creature’s vision, it rushed at its victim, claws poised to slash her to ribbons. But rather than the frail form of the lizard girl, it ran into the shape of a creature similar to itself. It looked much smaller… but far more ferocious.

“SUNLIGHT YELLOW OVERDRIVE!” Sans’ claws left glowing trails in the air. Sparks flew as his Ripple-charged assault tore into the demon, ripping it apart! …That was what he wanted to happen, but even the deadly weapons his phalanges were tipped with barely scratched the beast.

Pain exploded all over Sans’ body – it had only bat him with a paw as retaliation, but even that was powerful enough to launch the skeleton into the air! Bone blades soared towards him like homing missiles.

It seemed all was lost for the group… but hope found a way. Sans hurled a Spin-infused bone at the homing projectiles with his tail. His lack of dexterity prevented him from using the rotational technique’s full power… but it was still enough to redirect the force of the attack. The bone blade started to spin like a propeller. Sparks coursed through the air, forming a vortex that drew away the other blades. Rather than overpowering the demon outright, Sans used its own power to his advantage!

The beast growled and focused its attacks on the two girls. Undyne and Alphys quickly adapted to the new situation and hid behind Sans, but he still only had one bone and one tail. The demon had at least a dozen homing bone attacks.

Having himself and two others to defend was too much! He dashed to and fro, trying to stop all the attacks from getting through, but it was just too much for one person to handle. In the end, Sans had to use his own body as a shield, blades tearing through it.

“Grrr… not… yet! Not… over… yet!” The Spin was ready again. Sans hurled his weapon, this time going directly for the demon in an offensive manoeuvre, but its homing projectiles took the hit for it and prevented the attack from landing.

In terms of coming up with strategies, Undyne’s brain suddenly struck mental gold. She gasped in delight as she dodged another blade. “That’s it! We can use that golden spin thingy Alphys said you
“How… up here!? Don’t… have mount. Or hands. Or ground…”

Instantly, her smile turned upside down. “Damn it…”

A big grin slowly crept across Alphys’ face. “No… we have all three!” The lizard girl jumped onto the skeleton’s back. He was smaller than Gaster – only one person could fit on him. “Sans is our mount…” She extended a hand in front of her friend’s muzzle. He picked up her intent and tossed her a bone. “I’ll be our hands…” She turned to her lover. “Undyne! You’ll be our ground!”

The fish lady understood what Alphys wanted her to do. “Right!” Side-turned spears extended from beneath the trio, forming a bridge towards the demon.

Sans began to gallop, building up momentum. His rider took aim, undaunted by the bone blades coming at her.

Just like before with Muffet and Cupcake, something hardwired into the demon’s very being drove its fear into overdrive! Its aim being thrown off – partly by panic, and partly because it was trying to retreat while firing – meant the attacks merely grazed Alphys.

“Now, take this! The power to surpass all limits, manifested here and now! BALL BREAKERRRR!”

The same robotic humanoid from Sans’ attack manifested and rushed towards the enemy, but something was different. It was enveloped in a wonderous golden aura and encased in stylish armour. This was the combined will, the combined light of the trio! Its fists multiplied in its assault on the evil abomination. “ASHIAASHIAASHIAASHIAASHIAASHIAASHIAASHIASHIASHIASHIASHI~!”

Three voices became one, shouting in unison! “ASHITA NO TAME NI…!”

The attack was the definition of overkill – it didn’t just disperse across dimensions, it exploded! The tiny pieces remaining rotated like spinning tops and quickly vanished from the world.

Toriel, who had been watching from a safe distance, flew towards the three and healed them. Soothing healing magic washed away their injuries. “That was amazing. I am proud of you all.”

Undyne puffed her chest out, beaming. “Those things are no match for our combined power!”

“My thoughts exactly!” Papyrus clapped his friend on the shoulder, his three companions trailing behind. “You fought a demon too, I take it?”

“Yeah. Guess that thing made them to protect itself. But together, we can overcome any foe!” She turned to face the malevolent living planet. “Now let’s get a move on. The true final battle’s only just begun!”

Reunited, the party continued towards the Darkness. Several stars sparkled in the black space, a breathtaking sight as Papyrus lead the charge to the final enemy… but there were no stars in here.

Abruptly, the lights exponentially grew… revealing their true forms. And with that, the fire of hope in the group was completely smothered out.

“No…” That was all that could leave Papyrus’ mouth. Dozens… hundreds of those towering demons blocked the way. A massive field of spikes and bone formed between the heroes and the Darkness.
In union, their jaws parted, energy gathering within them. The black of the scenery lit up in hues of blue. It was over.

But as the lasers fired, another barrage of lasers emerged from behind the group, countering the blasts. Several blades of water launched at the cluster of demons, scattering their formation. The horned skeleton’s eyes widened. Reinforcements…? He turned, coming face-to-face with two very familiar people. “Schala!? Alvin, too!”

The reptilian girl, scales now shimmering a brilliant gold, grinned. Like a masterful dancer, shifting shapes of water emerged from her body and forced the demons farther apart.

“Go, Blasters!” Mechanical dragon skulls, their appearance not unlike Bonetrouble’s, spread out and fired. The silver-furred feline man commanding them rushed to Papyrus’ side, aided by his jetpack, and clasped a hand on the skeleton’s shoulder. “The rest of us will open a path. It’s up to your group to take down the Darkness!”

“Rest of us…?” And then, Papyrus saw. His comrades were equally surprised and moved. Everyone was there. Everyone. The Fragment Users they struggled against ever since Gaster appeared in the forest… none of them wanted the universe to end like this. Their hearts and wills were united as one. Together, they would stand tall, and eliminate the evil that threatened to engulf their world!

Asgore, clad in his royal battle armour (and wearing the same jetpack the others were, giving him a somewhat anachronistic appearance) pointed a spear at the otherworldly creatures. “GOOOOOOOO!” With a mighty battle cry, the Fragment User army charged!

Papyrus’ party raced towards the towering hydra. The demons were going for them, and only them – the Darkness recognised the skeletons as its greatest threat. The allied Fragment Users wouldn’t allow the abominations to touch them. They guarded the heroes as they pressed on, shielding them from the demon army’s onslaught!

Temmie stretched far and wide, winding and forming a giant cage around a cluster of the skeletal monstrosities. They gave an unearthly screech, spikes drawing blood from the fluffy creature as they struggled against their bonds. Temmie’s limbs ached, but she still smirked. She was too weak to hold them in place for much longer, but she had already achieved her goal.

The moment she let go, a chilling pulse washed over the creatures’ bodies, freezing them completely solid. “Finish them, Astigmatism!” Vulkin yelled.

With a roar, two massive invisible fists crushed the draconic creatures between them, smashing the abominations into tiny shards. From his position kilometres away, the round monster grinned to himself. Demon slaying as a force of good felt way better than ripping people off!

Guiding the party farther along were three streaks – two blue, and one orange. “TWIN NEEDLE STOOOORM!” Needles and knives – fired by Snowdrake and the Mad Dummy, then directed by Chilldrake – spread out and pierced each and every one of the group’s assailants. The projectiles were sharp and powerful, but even with dozens stabbed into them, the demons kept advancing.

“This is useless, useless, useless! We need to crush these bastards directly!” The Mad Dummy positioned himself between the two bird monsters and the enemies. “Fire your needles at me! Me!”

The Drakes did as they were told. The poltergeist’s ability let him absorb the force the needles were fired with, adding onto his own speed with each one. The cumulative effect caused the dummy’s speed to grow and grow. With this momentum, he now held the power to break a small planet in
“Behold, the living missile! Tremble before me, foolish beasts! AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!” As he dived towards the enemy, his body split up into smaller parts, each one a mighty cannonball that reduced its targets to rubble.

Gratitude in their hearts, Papyrus’ group continued. Bone blades rained down on them, this time far too many to deflect on their own. This time, what saved them was a rush of snow flowing upwards! Even though it wasn’t a Darkness-based ability or lifeform, it still managed to overwhelm the rain of death. What noble and powerful Fragment User was their saviour?

“Kids these days… you need to learn what a little old-fashioned elbow grease can do!” A deer and a wizard accompanied by several floating orbs arrived on the scene.

The wave of demons roared. They fired their weapons, but orbs clustered around the duo like a shield. Rather than the usual cross bullets, they countered with more snow. The pure white substance pushed back with equal might, reducing the force to zero!

Madjick waggled a finger. “You believe you can counter our mighty magic show with such an uncouth style? Fools!” Orbs rushed out and swerved around the demons, like giant flies orbiting a human. But they were just as insignificant. The wizard rammed his attacks into the creatures with as much force as possible, but all that provided was an annoyance. Against their bones, the projectiles uselessly shattered.

Evidently, the demons did believe they could counter the ‘magic show’. Ignoring the orbs, the demon army turned to the group and opened their jaws wide, ready to vaporise both the magician duo and the seven heroes. There was no doubt that the combined attack was unblockable as it was inescapable – with the draconic creatures all lined up, their Surging Fangs would form a single, wide laser of death and destruction. But it didn’t connect. In fact, it didn’t even emerge.

The beasts choked, coughing up red-stained snow. Each of the orbs contained a significant amount of Gyftrot’s special snow. The same snow that Gyftrot could control and manipulate with as much force as he wanted!

Both magician and deer monster let out loud belly laughs. “Simple misdirection – magic shows always consist of a distraction and the real trick! You brutes, powerful as you may be, fail to comprehend the ingenuity of the people! And that is your doom!” With a snap of his fingers, the entire dozen exploded, snow destroying them from the inside out!

The demons were destroyed, but for every one defeated, three more took its place. Papyrus felt small flitting forms push him out of a bone beast’s warpath. A voice echoed in his head. “Quickly! Hurry!”

“But… this is the wrong way!” The others had no choice but to follow as butterflies also surrounded them and carried them away from their goal.

“Please. Trust me.”

Demons swarmed them, charging at the heroes like raging bulls drawn to a flag. Even though they were getting farther away from the planet, each and every one of the draconic monstrosities were determined to eliminate the skeletons at any cost! In their blind bestial fury, they didn’t process the sudden pitch-black darkness they were suddenly enveloped by… nor did they realise being sliced into tiny pieces by the fiery net hidden within.
Grillby dusted his hands, while Knight Knight ground the pieces into fine powder with her mace to make sure they were dead. “Oldest trick in the book.”

“Indeed.” The armour-clad mercenary nodded, satisfaction rising within her at the sight. Finally, there was a clear path to the planet! She gave a knowing look to the frog on her shoulder. As the creature jumped off and hovered towards the seven heroes, Knight Knight abruptly raised her voice. “The express train to the Darkness is departing now. Hop onboard and hold on tight!”

Like they had entered a tractor beam, Papyrus and the others were sucked towards the Darkness, quickly making up for the distance they lost and more! The planet rapidly grew in their vision.

Of course, the living personification of Dr Gaster’s hatred wouldn’t allow them to approach so easily. The sound of powerful wings flapping quickly filled the air. Demons – the Darkness’ last line of defence – were coming at them from the other end, vicious jaws parted.

In a clash between seven people and seven massive dragons, it was obvious who would come out on top. Of course, Final Froggit was aware of that – he wouldn’t have sent the group down there just to be splattered.

Several chains emerged from nowhere and wrapped tight around the seven enemies. They pulsed as immense amounts of energy rushed from the demons into the Memoryheads that formed. Even these otherworldly creatures, alien though their minds may have been, were willing to fight for the sake of the world.

More demons arrived, ignoring their other opponents, and sped towards the party. They made no attempt to free their brethren, the weakened beasts shattering and being trampled over like garbage.

The heroes, inside Final Froggit’s makeshift tractor beam, were unable to dodge. But allied reinforcements had caught up to them. Two people, to be exact. Two people who were there since the ancient war, determined to finish this long battle!

A massive flame tornado engulfed the abominations, trapping them! This was swiftly followed by thousands of orange slashes. The fire dispersed, revealing nothing more than shards of melting bone.

The expressions of the former king and queen were solemn, eyes glistening. “Please… put an end to this. End this millennia-long curse.”

Papyrus flashed a grin. “Of course! Believe in us!” With that, the party finally made their way to the Darkness. The Fragment User army formed a shield between the heroes and the demons. They would make sure the only thing the seven needed to deal with was the Darkness itself.

The horned skeleton was at first confused why everyone was so much stronger here, but then he realised it – the true meaning of a Fragment User’s SOUL. Each colour embodied a virtue – Patience, bravery, integrity, perseverance, kindness, justice… and determination.

If a Fragment User demonstrated these qualities, it was only natural that they would draw strength from them – the brighter their spirit was, the more their powers would grow! And together, their spirits were at their brightest! This was the true potential of monsterkind!

Now it was time for Papyrus’ party to fight their battle. One of the Darkness’ draconic heads stared them down, the air trembling as it growled. It was like looking into the face of death itself… but the heroes had already overcome their fears.

Five more heads joined the first as they concentrated their lasers on the party! The group scattered, splitting up as they each prepared their counterattacks on the heads!
Undyne roared, an aura exploding around her! Her eye turned black, and her clothes morphed into the armour of a legendary hero. “INFINITE SPEAR BLOSSOM!” Thousands of spears emerged from behind her, like patterns of flowers blooming. The first wave of projectiles pierced all along the dragon’s head and neck, while the others hammered them in deeper. The end result? It was completely crushed to dust.

Sans galloped across the bridge of bone attacks, building up momentum. Using any magic beyond his powers as a Fragment User made his body creak, threatening to degenerate further into a feral state, but he resisted it with the help of the Ripple. Saying it was painful was like saying the ocean was slightly wet – every single bone in his body burned. But he could endure it! For his friends, and for the world. “Al! Now!”

“Alright! Here I come!” Rather than a bone, Alphys threw her golden sphere of heat and light. This time, Ball Breaker’s manifestation was on fire!

And combining with it… “SURRRRGING! DRAGON! FAAAAAAAANG!” The blast from Sans’ mouth merged with the spirit, creating the shape of a massive golden dragon. It was finally time to overcome the past and fly to the future! The dragon engulfed the demonic head, infinite rotation quickly taking effect.

The only thing preventing the complete erasure of the creature from time and space was the amputation of the affected head, cleaved off by one of the remaining ones. The Darkness was too quick to be taken down by Ball Breaker, but the two reptilian monsters had managed to make a huge dent in its defence!

On the other side of the monstrosity, Frisk slicked his hair back. His eyes had become fearsome and reptilian again, but rather than red, they were glowing a brilliant gold. He raised a worn dagger in front of him. Taking a deep breath, he manifested his laser blade. Rather than stop at the length of a one handed sword, it kept extending! It grew to fifty times his size, casting a rainbow light around the whole dark dimension.

“This one’s for everyone’s hopes and dreams! HYPER DT SWOOOOORD!” The dragon head was bisected straight down the middle, disintegrating into glittering shards. The remaining three heads screeched, the unearthly din piercing even into Ebott City.

Frisk’s sword glowed with holy light, ready to slice through another… but massive jaws closed around him! “What the-!” The boy’s weapon dropped into the abyss below him. He was more shocked than injured – his force field prevented the teeth from piercing his flesh. Still… how on Earth did a second dragon head get there?

A familiar shape tackled him free, just barely escaping the path of a laser. And where did THAT come from!?

“You alright, Frisk? Nothing broken?”

“Nothing but my self-confidence. Thanks, Papyrus.”

The horned skeleton inhaled, as if about to chuckle, but he was quickly winded by a force the equivalent of a freight train colliding with him. Unlike Frisk, he had no barrier to protect himself with!

“Papyrus!” Gaster aimed his tail, but an equally ferocious force crashed into him.

Dragon and humanoid were pressed against each other, immobilised by a demonic head each. They
were held directly in front of a third head, unable to move a single bone. They could feel the rush of hot air exuding from the Darkness as a laser charged…

Frisk tried to free the skeletons, punching and kicking the neck of the Darkness, but it was to no avail. It didn’t even acknowledge his attacks – all he achieved was tearing open the skin on his knuckles and legs. Was everything he did… was his resolve all for nothing? Was he doomed to be overwhelmed by the powerful, and drown in despair?

A vine wrapped around the boy squeezed to catch his attention. “Frisk… do you see that? I’m not just hallucinating, am I?”

Six very familiar shapes hovered towards the two. Their human forms were long gone. But even without them, the boy and flower could both hear the hysteric, choked sobbing of the dark blue SOUL. “Please… stop this monster… I’m begging you! I never wanted this!”

Flowey snorted. “So you finally gained a conscience, huh? Fine by me. Get in.” The priceless objects circled around the flower, before being absorbed into him. He immediately detached from the human, rapidly swelling and growing.

He was now in his near-ultimate form, the one he used when fighting Frisk for the first time. But for some reason, he didn’t look nearly as scary as he used to be. Why that was, the boy didn’t know – his appearance was exactly the same. Rather than the terror of hopelessness… Frisk had never been more pumped in his life!

The eldritch giant raised his claws, and with a flash, two massive sabres appeared. He looked down at Frisk with a confident grin, and chucked him one of the weapons.

Papyrus and Gaster were quickly freed. Two swift streaks – one huge, and one small – ripped through the giant heads keeping them captive! The skeletons escaped, a literal millimetre away from oblivion before they fell.

The final Darkness head growled and dived down at the still-vulnerable duo, but the twin blurs raced towards it. “Chaos Cross Slaaaaaash!”

“CUT THROOOOOOOUGH!” A beautiful pattern danced across the head and neck, a torrent of blood pouring out wherever the lines traced. It was heavily damaged, however…!

“Ack…!”

“Huh…!?!”

Before Frisk and Flowey knew it, they were soaring backwards, having been launched by bone blades. The draconic head had used its teeth as makeshift projectiles!

But their efforts weren’t in vain – they had bought enough time for Papyrus and Gaster to recover. Both skeletons roared, Papyrus holding Bonetrousle in front of him like a battering ram. “ONE MORE HIIIIIIIT!”

The Darkness opened its jaws to fire a laser and counter… but it was already too late. Papyrus took advantage of the opening, entering the head and destroying it from within. Not only that – he kept going and smashed through the dense bone plating that made up the planet!

Undyne pumped her fist. “HELL YEAH! We did it!” The fish lady and the others regrouped just in time to see this sight, gathering around the hole.
“Time to finish this for real!” Flowey also managed to get back to the planet, carrying Frisk.

Looking down into the darkness… Frisk’s hairs stood on end. An icy tingle went down his spine. “GET BACK!”

Everyone was grateful for their fast reflexes – they sped away just in time! A massive draconic head erupted from the depths, ten times fiercer than the last! How did all those horns and spikes even fit on it!? Five matching skulls emerged from the rest of the planet, looming over the heroes menacingly.

Alphys let out a nervous laugh. “G-guess Gaster wasn’t exaggerating a-about this guy’s invincibility, huh?”

“No… kidding…”

Undyne pointed a spear at it. “In that case, we’ll just hold it off until Gaster shuts it down from the inside!”

Just then, a familiar voice called out. “Asriel!”

Flowey hadn’t spent enough time in this form to learn where his ears actually were, but the metallic petals around his TV screen perked up. That voice… was it really…?

“NYEHEHEHEHEHEH~!” Bonetrouble’s fists broke through another wall. The inside of the planet was like a labyrinth, but he had no time! He charged straight into the core, smashing straight through layers of pulsing bones before reaching the innermost chamber.

The laws of physics didn’t seem to apply here, so Papyrus wasn’t surprised to find it was much bigger on the inside, the hollow space within the planet massive. Kilometres away, a small pinprick could be made out. A huddled figure hovered in the air.

Papyrus switched over to Bonetrouble’s vision to get a more detailed look. When he saw who was there, a vice closed around his SOUL. “D…Dad!?”

The hovering skeleton was unmistakably the humanoid form of Dr Gaster before the incident. But… its eye sockets were completely hollow. It was old and decrepit, almost as if a single touch would make it crumble. The body was an empty shell, not even a SOUL left inside.

Gaster confirmed his friend’s thoughts. “That’s it… the Heart of the Darkness! If we destroy that thing, I can take control!” The dragon sped towards the Heart, but he was yanked back by the tail again. A dog-like yelp pierced the air. “Papyrus…? Why did you… Ah!”

Flashing spheres of light were clustered around them. The huddled figure was now staring directly at them, hollow eyes filled with an impossibly black darkness.

Papyrus clenched his teeth, pulling his comrade close. “I have no idea what those are… but they can’t be anything good.”

The lights started to close in on the two. As they neared, the two could perceive the true forms of the objects. Miniature planets, stars, black holes… all of them were moving at an insane speed!

Having total control over time, the Darkness was using the power of several collapsing timelines to attack! Billions of years passing, so many lives being born and dying within milliseconds… all distorting and bending to the will of a single person! This was the end result of what the curse of Determination could do!
“LIMITLESS LIIIIIGHT!” The horned skeleton roared, ready to challenge this injustice. A blinding light streamed from his body, pushing away the collapsing universes. They were slowly being repelled... but they started to shake, before coming to a standstill. The Heart’s eyes appeared to grow even darker... and with that, the force of the universes matched Bonetrousle’s.

Papyrus growled, pushing back with all his might. But against an overwhelming enemy… against one with the privilege of Darkness and Determination… what did a single desire for justice mean? Slowly… the spheres encircling them started to close in…

“HYPER GONER! Suck them in!” A voice Papyrus never heard before echoed through the chamber. He felt someone’s pull add to his push, their combined force successfully drawing away the destructive spheres.

The lights disappeared into the jaws of a massive goat skull. And holding that goat skull was…

Papyrus rubbed his eyes before looking again. “Toriel!”

The robed Boss Monster groaned in an unmistakably masculine voice. “Come on, really? I was trying to make a cool entrance, and this is how you greet me?”

“Sorry, uh… Asriel?”

“That’s me.”

“Asriel! Want to do a retake?”

“No thanks, I’ve had my fill of- WHOA!” The Hyper Goner started darting around like an out-of-control horse, pulled in every possible direction by the spheres captured within. The self-proclaimed God of Hyperdeath was dragged along for the ride, the cool factor of his last-second rescue dropping into the negatives.

Seven SOULs manifested from within his chest. From the largest, multicoloured one, a humanoid crimson dragon emerged. Brandishing a red laser sword, it slashed through the skull, wiping it alongside the collapsing timelines from existence. Chara snorted, a puff of smoke coming out of his muzzle, throwing a glare at Papyrus. “Did you plan to just leave me down there?”

“Nyeh… well…”

An ear-splitting roar interrupted the reunion. Thunderous crashes started to reverberate through the air. Cracks opened in the wall of the chamber, demons swarming in.

The royal siblings faced the demons, readying their weapons. “Papyrus. Gaster. Get going! End this madness! We’ll hold these creatures off!”

Despite the pressure, the dragon’s expression could only be described as one of an overjoyed puppy. “Thank you, Asriel! Thank you, Chara! I’ll never forget this!”

Papyrus climbed onto Gaster and took off, racing towards the Heart. Both their auras were flaring up in hope, enveloping them in a heavenly golden aura.

Flanking them on each side were dozens of Gasterblaster-like demons. The rapidly fluctuating spheres inside their chest were too much for even them to handle – their bodies were breaking down, crumbling from the pressure. But the Heart was pulling out all the stops – it only needed them to last for a few moments to eliminate the intruders.
As the Surging Dragon Fangs fired, the demons broke apart entirely. In their place were an equal number of serpentine shapes, comprised of the collapsing universes. There wasn’t a single atom between the skeletons and the Heart that wasn’t covered by the attack. It was unavoidable, but…

“BONETROUSLE!” The guardian spirit slammed its fists into the inside of Gaster’s wings.

The membrane glowed, pure white light streaming out. The two skeletons’ light, focused and powerful, was too strong for even the collapsing universes to stop. As Gaster flew towards the Darkness’ Heart, each and every one of the lasers were blasted away! Nothing would stand between them and their future!

Papyrus and Gaster finally reached the Heart, the core of the Darkness. Bonetrousle put its fists together and charged, burning with hope. Gaster grabbed onto his Shadow Sword with his mouth and thrust forward, heart filled with resolve. The empty shell rose to its feet, arms outstretched to stop the heroes.

“NYEEEEEEEEEH!”

“GOOOOOOOOOO!”

The weapons hit a massive black force field. Darkness and light clashed! The two heroes came face-to-face with the last remnant of a broken man’s grudge. A curse formed from bitterness, the result of a faulty system. A curse that everyone was determined to break! The spirits of the entire world… The spirits of the entire universe were as one!

The bitterness and hatred that was in ‘my’ heart… I’ll overcome it all! Gaster’s resolve, and the resolve of everyone who was fighting alongside him. He wouldn’t let them down! He wouldn’t let himself down! The barrier shattered like glass, exposing the Heart’s frail body.

For my friends, and for the ones who couldn’t make it… I’ll forge a future that we can believe in! Papyrus’ eyes glowing gold, he threw a final, blazing punch.

Everything in their life lead up to that moment. Their very spirits, shining with the light of justice and the will to overcome everything… were bright enough to vanquish the Darkness.

Each and every demon screeched, dissolving into nothingness. The Fragment User army whirled around, panic slowly rising. What was going on? The entire world was quaking!

Sans spotted two shapes forcefully eject from the Darkness, launched like cannonballs. “Bro…!” He jumped up onto two legs and caught his brother, clumsily wrapping his arms… forelegs… whatever they were around the shorter skeleton.

“Sans… We did it…”

Frisk caught Asriel, scooping the older teen up in a bridal-style carry. The demons had really done a number on him. “Asriel! Come on, speak to me…! I don’t want to lose you again!”

“Frisk… What happened?”

“That’s what I’d like to know…”

Frisk and the others backed away as the titanic creature started to thrash, light streaming out of its body. Chara manifested, aiming to analyse what was happening to the living planet, but a strong pulse overwhelmed his senses! The draconic spirit clutched his head, forced to deactivate his ability.
More rays of light pierced the Darkness from the inside out, and as the number grew, so did the intensity. The light had become so blinding, everyone’s vision was drowned in white.

And then… it faded. The first thing Papyrus noticed was the environment. No longer were they all surrounded by the oppressive blackness of the cursed dark dimension, but peaceful, endless blue skies.

Hovering before the group was a truly majestic creature. The uneven, jagged texture of his body was now sleek and smooth – the only sharp points which remained were his claws and tail. His countenance was still beastly, but no longer warped and distorted. Rather than a terrifying hellbeast, Gaster now looked more like a wise, legendary dragon that had carried within it the wisdom of ancient times.

He exuded an aura of power, like the skeleton brothers… but it was different. Being in his presence made the heroes feel safe and secure, that they were protected by an immensely powerful being – the result of the hope and resolve they filled him with. He was now almost… holy. It wouldn’t have been surprising to see him worshipped by an older civilisation.

“Papyrus. Sans. Frisk. Undyne. Alphys. Asriel. Everyone. You have my sincerest gratitude. You stopped the Darkness. At last, Wingdings Gaster’s hatred is no more.” His voice was no longer guttural and demonic. It was deep and powerful, but almost soothing to hear.

“However… there is still something that must be done. Wingdings’ plan never came to fruition, but the Determination system and the Anomaly are still in power. All progress we made can be wiped away as easily as a push of a button.

“Right now… I am the Anomaly. I have the power to shape the world however I wish. But… I shouldn’t have it. I don’t deserve it.” The legendary beast’s sorrowful gaze fixated on the horned skeleton below him. “So, please… as the one who defeated Wingdings, overcame the Darkness, and became a true hero… tell me your desire, and I will grant it. I entrust you with everything. What do you want to do with the world?”

Papyrus swallowed the lump in his throat. “I… honestly can’t say. With or without Determination, people are capable of committing terrible acts.

“Power corrupts. The ability to Save and Load, treating life like a twisted game, changed an innocent child into absolute scum. I may have forgiven him, but the despair I experienced from his actions still lurks on the edge of my consciousness.”

Asriel bit his lip, the horned skeleton’s words cutting deep. A gentle squeeze on his hand cut through the crushing guilt and shame. Frisk reassuringly smiled up at him. The goat man smiled back.

Papyrus continued, his face solemn. “And yet, powerlessness corrupts even more. My father was no saint even before, but the broken system he was crushed under transformed him into the worst creature of all.

“The grudge of a single man caused all of this… If things return to how they were before, there’s nothing stopping another being like Wingdings from appearing, trampling over others to rise above an unfair system, and this whole mess starting again.”

“The goat boy who lost love, became drunk on power, and massacred the Underground… The sad skeleton child who grew up twisted by oppression, and committed terrible crimes for the sake of bringing about justice… The two should never return. I want to make a world where people like them won’t- no… the situations that create people like them won’t exist.”
“I understand. If that is your wish, I shall rid the world of Determination altogether.” The dragon god spread his wings, starting to shine.

“No, stop! That’s not what I mean.”

Gaster instantly dropped his wings back down, allowing the skeleton to continue.

“The substance Determination can achieve horrifying things if left unchecked, but without it, nothing will change. No one will have any agency for timeline abuse or negative change, but there will be no positive change either – without Determination, the world will stagnate for eternity.

“Therefore… this is my decision! Everyone should be able to use determination and change fate! Not the cursed substance that created Flowey and caused this tragedy, but the pure and just will to press on, overcome the world’s challenges, and make life worth living! Saving, Loading, Resetting… if everyone became able to reshape the future on their own, these previously necessary evils will no longer have a reason to exist.

“A predetermined course of events or a single dictator shaping everything… neither of them should be how the world is. It shouldn’t be just one ‘shepherd’, with others like clueless and powerless sheep. The fate of the world should be decided by the people living in the world. Everyone has the right to their own future!”

The legendary creature smiled. Without another word, a golden glow started to spread, growing and enveloping the whole planet in its warmth. It touched the SOULs of humans and monsters alike, awakening the potential that lay within them all.

Fate… had been broken.
“Hi, Dad. I found Grandma and Grandpa. It took a whole week to find your old house in the Capital. I was almost starting to worry that it was destroyed during our battle, but, almost miraculously, everything was still intact. What a wonderful stroke of luck! I can finally finish your funeral.”

Of course, there was no reply. Gravestones didn’t talk back.

Rest in Peace, Wingdings Gaster. Challenger of Destiny. Those were the words engraved in the homemade marker. The man was already infamous throughout Ebott City for what he did, so Papyrus decided to bury him in the remote, beautiful field he discovered on school camp. There, no one would disturb or defile his resting place. The man had suffered enough.

Placed alongside the tombstone mere minutes ago were two, slightly newer markers. Rest in Peace, Georgia Gaster. Brilliant Scientist.

Rest in Peace, Gilliam S. Gaster. Loving Father.

Papyrus turned to his quadrupedal companion, who had returned to the winged state he donned after merging with Wingdings’ Fragments. “Gaster, I think you should be the one to bury them. You’re the one with the closer emotional connection.”

“Yes… thank you.” Two floating mechanical hands – courtesy of Wingdings’ knowledge combined with Alphys’ technical know-how – manifested in the air. They gently lowered the boxes containing the gathered dust into the holes, before vanishing.

Papyrus and Gaster filled in the graves silently. Wingdings could rest in the earth, together with his loving parents.

At this stage, it was the best possible thing they could do for him. As a visionary who wanted monsters to be on the same ground as humans, he wouldn’t have wanted a monster funeral.

The horned skeleton turned and looked at the empty flower field behind him. Even though he sent out emails to everyone with directions as specific as possible, no one else was there but him and Gaster. Even Sans was mysteriously absent when he left the house.

It made sense – after what Wingdings had done, who would believe he deserved to be paid respect? Papyrus wished that his father could have been redeemed… that he could have been saved before this happened to him. But that ‘if only…’ thinking itself was what caused the abuse of time and destroyed the doctor’s mind.

“Papyrus…” The dragon gently nuzzled his friend, picking up on his thoughts with astounding accuracy. “I’m not sure whether I can say for certain, as a being formed from W.D. Gaster’s regrets… but I think he would have been happy to see this conclusion.

“The combined power of the people vanquishing the Darkness… everyone now free to fly towards a limitless sky… that’s exactly what Wingdings would have wanted before his heart was twisted by revenge. In a way, your father has already been saved.”

Papyrus nodded, wiping away a tear. “Yeah… you’re right.”
Two sets of soft footsteps approached from behind. Both skeletons perked up at the sound. “Frisk! Asriel! Chara! I’m happy you guys are here.”

The floating crimson dragon fidgeted with one of his new spikes, turning away. “I didn’t really want to come… but wherever Asriel goes, I have to go too.”

Frisk smiled gently, stepping forward. “I want to at least pay my respects to the man who helped me save the world.”

Papyrus tilted his head. “Save the world?”

The younger student laughed. “The Fragment lodged in me when I fell down was what let me utilise my Determination, after all!”

“Howie! That’s a positive way to look at things!”

“What can I say? I’m a positive guy.”

Asriel, not having spoken a word since he arrived, quietly laid a bouquet down by the deceased demon’s grave. Tastefully, not a single one of them were yellow or golden.

The goat man’s expression was hidden, only the back of his downturned head visible to the others. He was uncontrollably trembling, as if struck by the coldest of winter chills. “…This is my fault. I’m the one responsible for pushing Wingdings to this conclusion. Because I turned the Underground into my sick twisted game, your father transformed into a madman!”

He hugged his chest, tears starting to drip into the soil. “If only I was of stronger moral character… It wasn’t right to do what I did just because I could undo it! Not having empathy doesn’t justify my actions at all! Logically, I should have known how I affected others…! I should have known how repulsive I had become…!” He whirled around, revealing a blade pressed to his chest.

The black sclera made it hard to tell, but the goat’s eyes were puffy from crying. It was clear that since he had regained his conscience, his guilt was choking him. “Maybe… I should have just let myself die from the beginning. If I disappeared now, would it be a suitable punishment for all the pain I caused? I don’t deserve to enjoy this future… I want to make things right.”

Asriel plunged the weapon into his heart… but Papyrus was one step ahead. In a flash, Bonetrouble kicked the knife out of the teen’s hands. “It wasn’t just your fault. Please don’t see things as so cut-and-dried. Dad already had issues long before you came along – the Apocalypsis Cannon project and the destruction of Happy Town both occurred without any input from you.

“And what Dad did once he returned to our world was of his own volition – his own, independent choice. Ending your life won’t make up for the tragedies, but merely create more. Think of your parents. Think of us, your friends.”

“You… still think we’re friends? Even though we both know what happened between us?”

“Of course! Water under the bridge, not under the eyes.” To emphasise his point, Papyrus produced a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped away his friend’s tears.

One of Gaster’s mechanical hands clasped the Boss Monster’s shoulder. “If Wingdings could see you now under these circumstances, he would be happy.”

“How do you know that…?”
“When Wingdings died, his SOUL was left with Chara – that’s why you regained your form when he delivered it to you in the final battle. But his memories, his feelings… I inherited them, through the Fragments. Please trust me when I say this – he would be glad to see you finally acknowledge the consequences of your actions.”

Asriel’s left eye twitched. “Of course he would! He just wanted to see me suffer!”

The dragon blinked rapidly. “O-oh, er… well… darn.” Gaster cleared his throat. “Okay, that came out wrong. Then this isn’t coming from him, but me. You’ve made a horrible mistake, correct?”

“Yes.”

“And you want to do everything in your power to make up for it, correct?”

“Yes.”

Then you feel just like he did. But please don’t make the same mistake. Rather than focus on taking away what you think are the bad things… add more good things to the world. If you’ve cut down ten trees, plant a hundred more. If you’ve made dozens cry, make thousands smile. It’s not too late, there’s plenty of time.”

Papyrus stared at the dragon in wonder. “Gaster… that was wonderful!”

Gaster flashed a small smile. “I learned from the best.”

Asriel looked down at his chest. “I suppose… I’ll just have to take your word for it, Gaster.” The large, multicoloured SOUL – Wingdings’ SOUL… while it was instrumental in allowing him to feel positive emotions again, he didn’t feel any ‘second-hand feelings’ from it at all. It was completely his now.

The other six SOULs inside him had gone dormant, too – seemed those children’s consciousnesses really had passed on this time. Now they were essentially just glorified ‘feeling batteries’. The last gift of the six children left Asriel with the power to maintain this form, his empathy, and also granted him a significant magic boost. However, thanks to the actions of Papyrus and his companions, he couldn’t play god or abuse the power of Determination again. No one could.

Two more figures approached the group. “We bought some flowers… but looking at the scenery, I suppose it was slightly redundant.”

Seeing the duo made Gaster’s SOUL ache. “Alvin… Schala…”

The lizard girl let out an impressed whistle at Papyrus’ handiwork. “I’m surprised you guys went to the trouble of making a grave for him. His actions caused us all nothing but misery.”

“I wanted closure – not just for me, but for Gaster, too. This should be the full stop to Wingdings’ sad tale. After this, we can start walking towards a bright future.”

“Yes.” The silver-furred man placed a gigantic bouquet on the ground, three times the size of Asriel’s. “Wingdings ruined our lives… but I can’t deny that he was a troubled man, from beginning to end.”

Schala nodded, kneeling by the skeleton’s resting place. It was tempting… extremely tempting to spit on it, after what he did. But that would also be spitting on Papyrus’ efforts.

She reached into her jacket with a mechanical hand, revealing a photo. Gently, the lizard girl placed
it against the gravestone. It was a picture from a younger Papyrus’ birthday party, with several people gathered around a table. Schala and Alvin, alongside several other researchers had gathered to attend. Standing beside the birthday boy and Sans was a tired, but happy-looking Wingdings. It was the only time she could remember ever seeing him sincerely smile. “He… did his best.”

The seven shared a moment of silence, a gentle breeze blowing.

Once the wind settled down, Papyrus spoke. “Wingdings Gaster has vanished from this world. The history behind his actions with it, known only to us. But he has done more for the world than they will ever know.

“Even though he was unsuccessful… We managed to pick up where he left off, nurturing the seeds of hope he planted, and take back our world. At the very least, he deserves this peaceful rest.”

After finishing the funeral, the group prepared for the long trip back to the city. Asriel gave the skeletons his quiet, yet heartfelt thanks, before driving away with Frisk in Asgore’s car.

“Is he going to be okay?”

Papyrus grinned reassuringly at Alvin. “I’m sure he’ll be fine! I don’t see Asriel as a reckless driver.”

“No, I mean emotionally.”

“Only time will tell for certain… but I believe he can do it. His impact on Wingdings’ mental state was proof that his sins run deep. Witnessing the irreversible consequences of what he did must have torn him up inside, too. But he has the sincere resolve to face himself.

“His family and friends are by his side, too. Just like how everyone’s combined power vanquished the Darkness and its demon army… everyone working together can take down his inner demons!”

“Well-said. You’ve grown into a fine young man, Papyrus.” The feline man checked his wristwatch. “I suppose it’s time for us to head off, too.” The former denizens of Happy Town moved towards their car, about to leave… but they realised that their vehicle was the only one there. How would Papyrus get back? “Where’s your car?”

“I didn’t bring it. Gaster’s better transport for reaching remote areas like this. He’s faster than any car, as well as better with rough terrain. Plus, being able to fly helps us avoid traffic jams! Maybe if the Gasterblaster beast project is restarted, we could enter the transport industry!”

Both former denizens of Happy Town flinched. Schala’s floating hands flew to her mouth. “Oh, shit! I almost forgot! The Apocalypse Cannon!”

The realisation hit Papyrus like a truck. He was so focused on fighting the Darkness itself, the ultimate weapon completely slipped his mind!

Alvin stroked his chin. “It’s the perfected Gasterblaster, the stronger of the two viable models… We know that it isn’t Gaster. And you disposed of one of the failures in the Happy Town Labs. But… we had Aaron do a search, and both the first and final model were nowhere to be found.”

The horned skeleton looked at his companion. “Gaster, do you know anything about where it could be? You have Wingdings’ memories.”

For once, Gaster looked confident. “Everything is under control, Papyrus. I know where it is, yes. But I would prefer not to say anything just yet. Simple knowledge can be dangerous, and I’d like to
keep information about the doomsday weapon as controlled as I can.”

Schala arched a brow, sceptical. “You sure you’re not going to pull a Wingdings and hoard its power for yourself?”

The beast shook his head. “Even if I wanted to, I couldn’t. The Apocalypse Cannon isn’t something me or anyone but itself can control. Right now, the knowledge I possess is like a ‘key’. The Apocalypse Cannon is like a ‘lock’. Separated, both are completely harmless. But once the two unite… I fear a raging unstoppable hellbeast – worse than a berserk me, Sans, or Chara combined – could be unleashed.”

Papyrus clicked his fingers. “I see! In other words, you don’t want to run the risk of creating several more ‘keys’. If Schala, Alvin, and I knew in addition to you…”

“…then the danger would grow exponentially.” Alvin finished the skeleton’s sentence.

Schala nodded. “Alright. I accept that.”

The humanoid skeleton scratched one of his horns sheepishly. “Before you said simple knowledge was dangerous, I was actually planning on sharing my own pet theory! I had my own speculation about where the Apocalypse Cannon was, and how to activate it… but it required too many assumptions to be true.”

Gaster gave a friendly wink and laugh. “Just in case it is true, please keep it to yourself!”

The skeleton responded with a cheerful cackle. “Nyeh heh heh! That’s a wonderful move! Like this, if there was something like a hidden disciple of Wingdings who wanted to activate it, their chance of success would be quite low. Attempting to interrogate each one of us would just yield a different story!”

“Haha! I never thought of it like that, but you’re right! However, in all seriousness, no such person exists. As long as the world is filled with light and love, there shouldn’t be a reason for the Apocalypse Cannon to activate. It’s become a ‘failsafe’ of sorts… almost like a guardian angel.

“If a time were to arrive when the world would be in danger once more… if evil would threaten to engulf the universe and destroy all hope… that’s when I’ll use the ‘key’. That’s when Dr Gaster’s ultimate weapon will appear.

“Together, we can stand against any threat to the world, no matter how big. Us Fragment Users, monsters, humans… even the Apocalypse Cannon.”

Papyrus nodded, golden resolve blazing in his eyes. “That’s right. Together, we took down something far greater than that. The threat of the Apocalypse Cannon being used for evil – or any other threat for that matter – is a possibility, but when our virtuous hearts unite, there is nothing we can’t overcome!”

The skeleton turned back to the forest, his thoughts turning to the man resting in the field beyond it for one last time. His father may have been a twisted person… but it was thanks to him that he could grow. “I’m heading off now, Dad. I’ll live my life to the fullest in the future you helped shape.”

The strange dark vortex above Mt Ebot and subsequent light spreading over Earth caused a bit of a stir, but nothing major. For a few conspiracy theorists, it was a fresh batch of fuel for their fire. For a handful of scientists, it was another intriguing phenomenon that proved they had more to learn about the world. For everyone else, it was a neat lightshow.
Within a week or two, it was forgotten, the majority of the people moving on with their lives. It was just a normal Spring like any other. And so, the season changed…

Alphys panted as she pushed along a gigantic trolley, her lover filling it to the brim with snacks. “Isn’t this a bit too much?”

Undyne dumped another huge bag of crackers inside. “On the contrary! I think this isn’t enough! Think of all the mouths we’ll have to feed!”

She left the supermarket, disappearing into an entertainment store, before returning just as quickly with a Blu-ray box in her hand. “How’s this for a movie? It’s not edgy or dark, just straight-up fun!”

A pleasant sound escaped Alphys’ snout. *Mew Mew Kissy Cutie and Pink Dark Boy! VS: The Planet Devourer!!* “Great choice! I wouldn’t expect any less from you!”

“Oh, and also…” The fish lady revealed her other hand, effortlessly lifting a 3 kg karaoke machine. “This looks fun, too! Singing a duet with you would be freaking awesome!”

“Y-you mean, in front of everyone!? I-I don’t think…”

“C’mon, if even Napstablook summoned up the confidence to release a duet with him and Mettaton, you can too!”

The lizard girl was on the verge of protesting, but she remembered the much more terrifying things she encountered, and the courage she gained from facing them… Alphys grinned, mirroring her lover’s expression. “Sure. I’m game.”

“All!” A large, hunched Blaster beast approached, moving as fast as his walking cane would let him. A trolley of sweet treats trailed behind him, pulled by two floating mechanical hands.

“This look good? Got your favourite flavour Pocky, too.” Sans’ voice was still guttural and distorted, but he had already gotten a lot better at speaking through that muzzle. The big skeleton was also still a little dumber, but hopefully, in time, he could recover. Right now, he was progressing well.

Alphys beamed, resisting the urge to pet her beastly friend. “Yeah, you did great!”

Sans basked in the praise, wiggling like a giant, scary puppy. His grin would make a stranger soil their pants… but Alphys could sense the pure joy that lay behind it.

To Undyne’s dismay and Alphys’ surprise, he leaned down and gave her a great big puppy kiss. “Sans, no! People might get the wrong idea!” The therapy she had organised for him was intended to encourage less-animalistic behaviour… but seeing Sans like this was adorable.

The skeleton in question gave her the most ridiculous-looking puppy dog eyes she had ever seen. “Sorry, but no! You can’t lick me! We don’t want to look as embarrassing as Asgore and Toriel!” As if on cue… *Speak of the devil…* A bead of sweat rolled down the lizard girl’s head. She hoped they hadn’t heard that.

The couple waltzed in, all giggly and lovey-dovey despite their age. It was never too late to show such affection… but it *did* draw quite a bit of attention to them.

Their sons and ward were dragged along for the ride. Frisk pushed along the trolley as fast as he
could, shoving in what they came here for. He wanted to get in, buy the goods, then get out ASAP.

“Frisk, don’t be in such a hurry~!” Even though she was scolding him, Toriel was still smiling. “We need to make sure we get the absolute top-quality ingredients! I want to bake pies just as sweet as Gorey~”

“Oh ho ho, you’re selling yourself short, Tori! Your pies are going to be as sweet as you! <3” A floating heart, conjured up by Asgore’s magic, hovered through the air and landed smack dab on his wife’s cheek.

“Thank you, Fluffybuns! But your homemade tea will be even tastier!”

Asriel groaned and tried to hide his face with his ears, very much wishing that the powers of the God of Hyperdeath came with the ability to turn invisible.

In contrast to both his friend and brother, Chara smiled, satisfied that everything between his parents was okay again.

“Okay, Crystal! You can do it this time! Try again, just once more!”

The puddle of liquid on the ground trembled. It shakily rose up, taking shape, pale colours starting to fill in like a painting… but it collapsed into a white amorphous blob once more.

Now that monsters all had physical matter, the Amalgamates could be separated. Muttler and the dogs had their own bodies again. Each of them was still a little goopy, but just as happy and much less horrifying. Shyra, Moldbygg, and Aaron’s brother were fine, too, glad to have regained their own personal space.

The smaller monsters who fused with Crystal managed to regain their own bodies, too. They were currently gathered around the puddle, anxious for her. The oldest of the DT experiment victims was the last one remaining to reform.

“You can do it, miss!” Woshua encouraged.

Astigmatism stomped a foot, causing the hospital’s walls to shudder. “You’ve got this! Show your condition who’s boss!”

“Ribbit! (Think of your kid!)”

That’s right… Sno…wy… “HHAAAAAAAAA…!” With a roar that put the most hotblooded of anime characters to shame, Crystal Drake emerged from the puddle.

A warm applause welcomed her back. She smiled, and took a bow. Her body may have been a little more… drippy… but it felt good to be herself again.

Knight Knight and her fellow former mercenaries clapped. “Well done, Mrs Drake.” That was the hardest part over. Now there was the long road to recovery. Just like with Sans, it would take a while for their minds and proper motor skills to be restored.

Gaster’s light wasn’t an instant fix-all. It just removed unfair restrictions, giving people the potential to overcome their problems. They had to have the willpower to take that first step, and keep walking…

A polite door knock echoed through the room. “Ah. Excuse me. Is Crystal. Ready tah be picked
“Up?”

“Not yet, sir. Just thirty more minutes.”

“Okay. I can wait. Outside. Thank you. For everything.”

Knight Knight returned his warm smile. “You’re most welcome.”

The two Drakes went to the waiting area and took a seat. But for some reason, Snowdrake felt his feathers stand on end. Huh…? Why do I feel…? His eyes darted around the lobby. Nothing looked out of the ordinary… except for the heavily bandaged figure trying to look inconspicuous as it snuck out. Six arms… Wasn’t that…?

“Freeze!” The bird monster leaped up and fired needles, pinning Muffet to the wall. Just in time, the former mercenary team burst in.

The bandages fell off, revealing the frightened face of the anthropomorphic spider. “E-er… oh dear.”

Despite her injuries, she was still extremely dangerous – managing to escape like this proved it. So no one felt a shred of guilt as they ripped the lady off the wall and dogpiled on her. “Don’t think you’re going anywhere for a while, Little Miss Sadist.” Astigmatism hissed.

After preventing that near-incident, Snowdrake decided to chill out with his friends at the swimming pool. For those who were used to living in a cold climate, this was one of the best places to be during the hotter months. Ice Cap, Childrake, and Kid had showed up on schedule… but Frisk, Asriel, and the skeletons were absent. Odd… they said they were coming…

“Whee~” With the grace of an ice skater, Vulkin flew past the others. Generating beneath his feet as he moved was a beautiful ice bridge. The teens let out a contented sigh as another heavenly rush of frigid air washed over them.

“Stoop! You can’t do that! As a person, I wouldn’t mind, but as a lifeguard, I do!” Kid’s cousin, on a part-time job as a lifeguard, rushed after him on a jet of water.

“Too many slippy surfaces… dat dangerous!!!” Her fellow lifeguard’s limbs extended towards the volcano monster, knocking over several others in the process.

Of course, the two skeletons had to enter then, of all times. “Whew… carrying all that was really difficult.” Gaster stretched his large frame out like a massive cat.

Papyrus’ eyes bugged out. “You thought carrying it was difficult? I’m the one who had to actually make things out of them! And besides, I think you did great- WHOA!” Vulkin was headed straight his way!

In response to the approaching disaster, the skeleton’s quick reflexes sprang into action. Bonetrousle rushed out and grabbed the volcano, stopping him in his tracks. “Here you go, Schala! Temmie.”

“Thanks, Papyrus!”

“Tank u!!!”

“Ahh… But I wanted to help cool people down…” The boy in Bonetrousle’s arms pouted.

“I’m sure they appreciate that, but it’s too dangerous to make slippery ice at a swimming pool! And! It’s cool enough here already! You would be more appreciated as an aircon for people playing sport
outside.”

“Good idea! Bye, everyone!” Vulkin skipped away, leaving Papyrus and Gaster to get changed (in Papyrus’ case, anyway) and join the teens in the water.

Chilldrake folded his wings. “Took ya long enough. Where’ve you been?”

“Nyeh heh– It’s a secret!”

“Know where Azzy and the others are?”

“Nope!”

On that cue, a demonic scaled figure erupted from the water. Its eyes were the darkest of voids, its claws were curved and wicked, and a foul substance oozed from its vicious maw. “BOO!”

Kid summoned a third floating hand to wave. “Yo, Chara!”

The crimson dragon’s visage instantly returned to normal. “Man, not even a yelp?”

Ice Cap shrugged. “It got old the thirty-third time.”

Chara exposed his fangs in a playful smirk. “Maybe I should try it in unexpected places… perhaps you should all watch yourselves next time you go to the toilet.”

Bonetrousle flicked the draconic boy’s ear, which twitched in response. “Try that, and I’ll give you a time-out inside the vacuum cleaner. Anyway, where were you?”

“Nyeh heh~ It’s a secret!” The horned beast responded in a mocking imitation of his voice.

Papyrus facepalmed. “Very funny.”

The automated doors to the pool slid open, revealing two sweating and panting teens running in. “Sorry about the wait!” In one simultaneous smooth motion (almost as if it was choreographed), the two flung off their clothes, revealing their bathing suits underneath, threw their bags into the locker, then dived into the pool. The cool water was like heaven, especially for the fur-covered Asriel.

The black-eyed Boss Monster had a small smile on his face as he swam towards the group. That soothed the skeleton’s worries – something good had happened. “Frisk and I actually got the shopping done early, but then we were bogged down with paperwork.”

“Paperwork?” That doesn’t sound like something to smile about…

“Yeah! Paperwork. Guess who’s enrolling in your class next year~?”

“Wowie! I get to share my last year of school with a prince? That! Is! Amazing!!”

“Two princes! …Former princes, anyway.”

Chara shrugged, grinning. “I’m still technically a spirit, but seeing as everyone can see me now, may as well live the life I couldn’t earlier.”

The water behind Asriel was being stirred slightly – his short tail was wagging. “I’m really glad we could transfer into Year 12 – I’d say we’re both smart enough to fit right in. Hopefully, you’ll be seeing a lot more of us two – not just in Year 12, but in uni as well!” His eyes suddenly widened. “Speaking of which, what are your plans for the future? It won’t be long before you have to pick a
course.”

Papyrus had a hard time meeting everyone’s expectant gazes. “I… don’t really know. I was so busy with the immediate threat of Wingdings and the Fragment Users, the distant future never really crossed my mind. Being a Royal Guard, loved by all, was the dream I used to fixate on, but that’s an impossibility now.

“What I want, above all else now… would be to improve the world. To have everyone achieve their full potential and become as great as they can be. But anything specific… I can’t say.” The moment those words left his mouth, a loud tune emanated from the pool lockers. His phone was ringing…

Asgore greeted the two skeletons with a wave. “Howdy. Did you enjoy swimming with your friends?”

“Yes, thank you.”

When Papyrus heard that the two Boss Monsters had something important to talk to him about… this style of meeting wasn’t what he had in mind. It was a pleasant surprise, though. The two goats were seated across from them at the dining table in the Dreemurr’s new, shared house. It was large enough for even Gaster to fit inside, which was a nice way to escape the summer heat.

The aircon was at a pleasant temperature. Laid out on the table were slices of pie and glasses of iced tea. Papyrus took a sip. Deliciously refreshing.

The goat woman steepled her fingers. “Let us get down to business. We have all resolved that we no longer need entities like the Determined to shape our lives, and that we can carve a better future with our own hands. In order to do that… we would appreciate your help. The vast knowledge and potential Wingdings possessed… Gaster. You inherited them.”

Asgore warmly smiled. “And Papyrus! Your creative skills are unparalleled, and on top of that, you have an amazing work ethic! If you became involved in science, I bet you could create wonderful inventions.”

The horned skeleton quickly detected the Dreemurr’s intentions. “You plan on recreating Happy Town’s researcher team?”

They both nodded. “The city council is willing to provide funding. We intend to create a team of royal – well, not quite royal anymore – scientists to accomplish what Wingdings’ team originally set out to do: improve the lives of humans and monsters alike. We have already sent offers to Alvin, Schala, and Alphys. They all accepted. Sans is not mentally fit for this work as of yet, but we shall see once he recovers.”

Picking up Papyrus’ unease, Asgore quickly spoke up. “A single person being in charge of the project just led to ruin. I know that… but if you’re all together, you can stop each other from making mistakes. Or at least, if that doesn’t work… face and solve them together.”

It took three seconds for the humanoid skeleton to come to a decision. But each one felt like a whole hour. Fears of ending up like Wingdings, or creating the mess that was the Amalgamates circulated through his skull. But then he remembered how his friends were always by his side. He remembered the brilliant light that was born from the people’s combined hope. And so, he made up his mind.

“I accept. I still have one last year of school, but after that, I’m ready to help out full-time, full-force! I can already make room on my schedule to work part-time-”
“Wait, wait! There is still university to go through, is there not? Your enthusiasm is appreciated, but you still require the proper skills. Once you enter and pass the correct course, we will welcome you with open arms.”

“I’ll work as hard as possible! Every single bone in my body will go into this!”

Asgore chuckled. “Don’t overstrain yourself, alright? You shouldn’t be afraid to ask for help if you need it.”

The student nodded vigorously, before turning to his friend. “Speaking of which… Gaster, are you interested?”

Sweat poured down from the beast’s bones, as if he was still sweltering under the sun. He stared into space, large puffs of air threatening to blow his teacup over. With memories of what Wingdings did, this decision must have been several times more painful for the young man.

Papyrus reached out with his hand, but Gaster managed to regain his composure on his own. “I-I admit… I’m afraid of making a mistake again- I mean, making a mistake like Wingdings… but I should practice what I preach. I want to add happiness to the world.”

“Let the voice of love, take you higher…!”

“Atsumaru chikara de, toki sae koete…!”

Undyne whistled in admiration. “Man, Gyftrot and that Mad Dummy make an amazing singing duo! I’m not actually sure we’ll be able to stack up!”

Alphys giggled. “No harm in trying, right…?”

The weekend had arrived, and with it, a massive celebration! Everyone had pitched funds together to rent out a beach house at Eversunny Bay. With how big and luxurious it was, it was more like a beach mansion!

Within it, a huge party was held, to celebrate the new future they had achieved. Everyone who had helped in the battle against Wingdings was invited.

A giant feast lay before the guests. Stir-fries, stews, roasts, barbequed meats, salads… it felt like there was something for every imaginable taste. And everything looked absolutely delicious! The meat looked juicy and bursting with flavour, while the salads appeared to be tantalisingly crisp and fresh. Had Papyrus really made all of this!?

“I spent ages looking up recipes and following them to the letter,” he explained when asked. “I have to cater to everyone!”

Meanwhile, Grillby and Alvin were serving drinks, mixing together refreshing mocktails. In addition to the entertainment Undyne and Alphys brought along, Madjick was performing a magic show. With the help of the Memoryheads, he could pull off truly entertaining tricks, making candy come out of people’s phones and having their wallets overflow with chocolate coins.

Papyrus and Gaster, the heroes who confronted Wingdings, were the stars of the night. Everyone wanted to talk to them, and learn about their experiences.

The more humanoid skeleton soaked up the attention, but for Gaster… being in a large crowd was a little suffocating. “Sorry, everyone. I feel a little dizzy… I’d like to head out for a bit of fresh air.”
Thankfully, everyone was understanding. And the beach was just a few metres away.

The beastly skeleton sat on his haunches, taking in the seaside. A clear night sky spread out above him. A beautiful bright moon reflected off the water. The sound of the ocean waves soothed his heart. The land… the sea… the sky… all of it was safe, thanks to everyone’s combined efforts.

No one able to turn back the clock if something bad happened introduced an element of uncertainty about the future. But the power to Save, Load, and Reset was ultimately too dangerous. It was ripe for abuse, with how it stole away the agency of others and gave birth to demons. This new world of shared determination was how things should be.

The power to reshape fate was now where it rightfully belonged – in the hands of the people. True, there may be difficulties, and it may seem impossible to rid the world of all its troubles… But, with the decision Papyrus made, there would always be a ray of hope.

The will to overcome a sad reality, to break through the darkness and seize a happy future against all odds. Everyone together demonstrated that in the last battle. Gaster turned to the house, warmth rising in his chest at the sight of his friends celebrating within. As long as there were people like them, he was sure this golden spirit would last for all time.

Now, time could finally flow forward. Everyone, together… walking towards a hopeful future.

A friendly voice echoed from the house. “Gaster! Come back in, this feast isn’t going to eat itself!”

“Coming, Papyrus!”

Breaking Through Fate

THE END

Chapter End Notes

This is it – the end of the story. My thoughts, feelings, and wishes regarding Undertale’s conclusion… I took them, and poured them all into this. Now everything should be resolved. Papyrus and his friends can go on living, in a world that can no longer be toyed with by the Determined. Their world will never be ripped away from them again. Everyone has the right to their own future.

There were a few points I thought I could have done better in hindsight, but in the end, I’m glad this project got done at all! This is actually the first big project I ever completed ^^; I’m really happy I got to do it in the end – I had fun. Thank you so much for sticking with me all this time.

I hope you enjoyed it, and that we can meet again in the future someday.

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