

# **Heaven Help Us**

Chara picks up the knife and slashes it across their wrist.

They wake up hooked to machines and scream.

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Somewhere in the Underground, Asriel is learning about the history of the war between the Humans and the Monsters.

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Chara is...okay.

Not happy, not sad either, but okay.

As in, feeling not much of anything.

But that's okay too, because that's usually how Chara is. That's mostly what Chara feels, most of the time, especially since their father succumbed to disease and their mother isn't around a lot because she's trying to find the money for their next meal. Sometimes, she is home, and she cries a lot. Sometimes she yells a lot – at the wall, at the mirror, at Chara. Chara has learned to stay away when she's like that.

Sometimes she hurts Chara, but that's okay too. Because she's hurting so much, sometimes she has to let it out, sometimes she has to find something to hurt so that she would hurt less, she loves Chara so much, but she's sad and tired and angry and *don't you understand that, Chara?*

Chara does, they really do.

The hospital bills will be high, and Chara understands that too. They know that they've only succeeded in making their mother angrier, and she will tell Chara she loves them, and then hit them as hard as she can. But that's okay.

Chara is okay.

Everything is okay.

-

"Are the humans dangerous?" The Prince of the Underground asks his parents. Toriel looks at her son; wide-eyed, innocent and honestly curious. She chuckles and smooths out the fur on his head and presses a kiss to the crown of it.

"They can be, if they wish to," she says. "Just like Monsters can be dangerous if they wish to."

"Was that why they drove us out?" Asriel asks. "Did we want to be dangerous?"

Toriel's forehead creases and she shakes her head. "Darling, no," she says. "I suppose...perhaps the humans thought there can only be so much danger in one place." She doesn't tell him it's because the humans were fond of boxes, sorting things into boxes and then destroying the things that didn't fit into the boxes. "They were worried."

Asriel sniffs and looks at the ceiling, confused and offended. "They shouldn't have," he says, "You're not dangerous, I'm not dangerous. I don't know of anyone here who wants to be dangerous."

"I know, dear," Toriel says. She doesn't say, 'But the humans don't see it like that', she doesn't say, 'The reach of their vision entails only themselves and their benefit', and she doesn't say, 'The world doesn't work like that, and you would be naïve to think people will be satisfied if you tell them that. If you're a monster, then you're a *monster*, nevermind if humans were more monster than you were.'

She just reads him a book to sleep and leaves it at that.

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The children at school whisper behind their back. It's about the eyes, mostly. Chara understands that, really. Chara should understand that. That was how it worked. Nobody has natural red eyes, but then again, Chara is *Chara*. That tends to explain things.

Parents shouldn't beat their children, but Chara is Chara. That was how it worked too. Chara has learned how to deal with it.

Chara is okay. Doesn't feel much of anything, and with that comes resignation. It's normal, really. It's okay. It's alright. Chara is alright.

Chara is a very good liar too.

Their teacher finds the purpling bruises on their arm and they say that they fell down the stairs because they were clumsy. Poor, ditzy, clumsy, stupid Chara. Couldn't even walk properly. Be sure to be more careful next time.

The next week, there are wounds on their legs. Clipped themselves on the coffee table, they say. So sorry, I just can't seem to avoid getting hurt. Stupid Chara. Clumsy Chara.

Chara's house doesn't have a coffee table.

Their teacher sees the three-year-old scar on their wrist. They say they had a crafts accident with scissors. So sorry. Stupid Chara. *Clumsy* Chara. Lying Chara.

Chara is okay. Really.

Chara goes to school and listens to the whispers and apologizes for everything and smiles.

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Asriel loves watching his father garden. There is an entire area in the palace that's filled with rows upon rows of flowers, blooming in every color imaginable. Asgore takes care of his plants meticulously, and every day, Asriel watches.

Sometimes, his father hums as he works. Sometimes, he lets Asriel help. Sometimes, he and his father sit in the mud after a long day's work, and Asgore tells his son stories of the Surface, until Toriel comes to fetch them both.

Asriel says, after they've both washed up and are ready for dinner, that he's going to go to the Surface one day.

Asgore says that he believes his son will achieve that. He doesn't bother quelling the child's dreams.

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Chara learns about the Underground, and how they say no human can ever come back once they've visited Ebott.

They say they're going to go there one day.

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There are so many flowers in the garden that it starts getting overrun, and when Asgore says that some of these flowers are to be uprooted and burned, Asriel protests. He asks for them instead.

The king, of course, ever humoring his child, says yes. He doesn't imagine what Asriel can do with them. They'll live for a few days in vases, but they'll wither eventually. Still, he gives them to his son.

Asriel walks around the kingdom to look for good places to plant them. He keeps them in makeshift pots of whatever he can find as he treks throughout the Underground. Boots, gloves, empty cans, cracked but still whole bowls. He plants the buttercups wherever he can find space where they can be undisturbed.

He plants them by waterfalls, he plants them in patches of land in caves, he walks to the Ruins and plants the blooms in whatever spot of ground peeks through the cracks of the cement.

He spots a circle of sunlight and thinks that it's perfect for the flowers to be there. Feeling the sunlight in place of Asriel, in place of all the monsters that are trapped in the Underground.

He makes it a habit to visit his plants every once in a while.

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Chara makes good on their promise.

And falls.

And falls.

And falls.

And then suddenly, they're not falling.

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Asriel visits the buttercups by the Ruins on that fateful day.

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(the kingdom has hope)

-

(and then suddenly it doesn't)

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Once upon a time, the Royal Scientist makes one miscalculation and breaks into pieces.

Once upon a time, one son is consumed by grief.

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(gaster gaster slipped in the core)

(gaster gaster had a great fall)

(all the king's scientists and all the king's men)

(couldn't put gaster together again)

-  
(they don't know who they're supposed to be putting back together)

-  
Once upon a time, the Underground has two heirs.

And then there were none.

-  
Once upon a time, everyone thinks they've found the answer to their problems.

-  
(the question is violence)

(the answer is yes)

-  
Frisk is...okay.

Not happy, not sad either, but okay.

As in, feeling not much of anything.

But that's okay too, because that's usually how Frisk is.

# OVERGROWTH

The first flower appears near their left temple, a small golden bloom that peeks out of their hair when they move around too much. Toriel is the one who notices it, after Frisk had died at her hands and had woken up in their bed by the Ruins.

They sit up quickly, a hand on their stomach where Toriel had hit them with a ball of fire that had broken their soul in half, breathing hard and shaking as they scramble to lift their clothes and inspect the damage.

Nothing.

No burnt clothes, no blood, no wounds. They are in their bed in the house in the Ruins, tangled in sheets and sweating bullets. Flowey appears to be asleep from where he's placed on the desk beside the bed.

When they go into the living room, Toriel is there waiting, like they expected her to be, and when Frisk approaches, she asks if they would like to hear about the book she was reading.

Is it déjà vu when you're sure that you remember – when you have a clear memory of things happening before?

"Ah, did you like the flowers in the hallway, my child?" she asks.

Frisk frowns, and then follows Toriel's line of sight and starts patting their head. There's something soft and thin at the left side and when they try to pull, a stab of pain shoots through their head. Frisk closes their eyes and hisses, staggering as their vision blackens.

"Child?" Toriel has stood up when everything clears, book forgotten on the floor and arms outstretched to catch Frisk should they stumble.

Frisk signs, *I'm fine*, and gives her a strained smile. It's hard to smile at your mother when you remember them killing you.

Flowey only gives them a confused look when they reenter their room, having decided to postpone asking Toriel how to exit the Ruins again.

"You put a flower in your hair?" he asks.

Frisk shakes their head. Pauses. Looks down at the floor.

They sigh and sit down on the bed. "Don't know," they whisper. "Confused. Don't know what happened. Had a confusing dream," they wave a hand as they rattle off broken words. Their head is still ringing too much to make sense right now.

"I..." Flowey pauses and then clears his throat. "I think you died," he says, "And returned to your last save point."

Frisk raises an eyebrow.

Flowey sighs, “Go to sleep, Frisk.”

They lie down, but they don’t sleep.



Still, Frisk asks how to exit the Ruins, and still, Toriel stops them, again and again and again, until she decides to destroy the gate to Snowdin herself. And still, she challenges Frisk to a fight, threatening to bake them into a pie, too mad and too raw from having children disobey her before and dying at the hands of others.

Still, Frisk refuses to fight back.

They should be able to dodge now that they’ve fought the same battle twice, but Frisk jumps to the side too late and the fireball hits their eye. Frisk screams as the heat consumes half of their face and vision, their soul shatters, Toriel murmurs an ‘I’m sorry,’ and Flowey yells their name somewhere behind them before Frisk feels the ground being pulled underneath their feet –

And when they open their eyes, they’re staring at the ceiling of their room in Toriel’s house again.

“Frisk?” Flowey whispers, then, “Frisk! Frisk, are you okay?”

Their chest feels too tight when they breathe, and they put a hand on it as they try to steady themselves. Everything is spinning.

“Frisk,” Flowey nudges the boot he’s planted in and only ends up falling onto the surface of the desk face-first. “Dang it,” they groan, letting a vine sprout from the soil they’re set in and using it to push himself up.

Tears prickle at the edges of their eyes and Frisk covers their mouth with both their hands to muffle their sobs. Flowey stops what he’s doing and looks down instead, leaves curling in.

There’s another flower near Frisk’s cheek, a few inches from the one on their temple, but he doesn’t mention it until morning.



The next time Frisk asks to leave, Toriel looks at the new flower they're sporting with a strange look, but her attention is quickly diverted by Frisk's request. This time Frisk doesn't let Toriel talk them into staying and instead runs down to the basement with Flowey in their arms, Toriel on their heels, shouting in anger.

The only warning they have is Flowey's cry of "Look out!" before heat flares on their back and they stumble and wake up in their bed again.

There's a new flower near their ear.



Frisk forgets how many times they ask Toriel to let them leave, forgets how many times they *beg*, forgets how many times they yell for freedom, forgets how many times they're burnt in different ways and sometimes dragged to the kitchen screaming and feeling knives digging into their skin, forgets how many times Flowey cries over them and forgets how many times the voice at the back of their head says, "*Stay determined. Stay determined. Stay determined.*"

It sounds like them but at the same time it doesn't.

All Frisk knows is that every time they die and wake up to the same ceiling that they've memorized every detail of, there's a new golden adornment on their body. They hurt whenever they try to pull at the flowers, so they stop trying to get rid of them. Flowey explains the time jumps, but he can't explain the flowers. Toriel just gets too mad at Frisk's request to leave that they don't mention the child's new decorations.

It takes a long, long time – when the flowers have covered half their face and a part of their left wrist – that they finally dodge the last attack Toriel has to give before she breaks down crying. Frisk huffs a breath of relief and sinks to their knees, their soul holding on by the faintest of threads.

Toriel tells them to be strong, and that there may be monsters out there who won't have mercy on them, and that she's sorry for trying to keep them here. Frisk smiles and signs, *I forgive you.*

“You remind me of a child of mine, once,” she says as she hugs Frisk for the first (and the last) time and Frisk buries their head in her clothes that smell of baked goods and fire. Their mother presses their foreheads together before Toriel goes back upstairs and never looks back.

Frisk carries Flowey with them out of the Ruins and watches as the doors slam close.

“Remind her of who?” they whisper. Flowey says nothing but keeps staring at the doors. At the back of Frisk’s mind, Chara’s voice doesn’t stir.



Sans the skeleton is the one who greets them near the bridge, trailing behind them until he speaks and his voice stills Frisk in fear. When they turn to face him, he’s got one hand in the pocket of his pants and a lazy grin on his face, single golden tooth at the side glinting in the light, as he looks at the stick Frisk has picked up from the path, idly dragging it through the thick snow. Flowey ducks his head. Frisk’s eyes drift to the golden star hanging on the chain on the monster’s neck.

A save point.

“What’cha got there, sweetheart?” he asks, looking at the stick. Frisk doesn’t answer.

He chuckles and holds out a hand, “Don’t you know how to greet a new pal?”

Frisk takes a moment before they drag their eyes down to the bony appendage being extended. They lift a hand, slowly, before grasping Sans’.

The electric shock that makes them convulses equals the mental one they’re experiencing.

“Didn’t anybody ever tell you?” he drawls, but Frisk can’t see them. He’s getting far away and the side of Frisk’s face is getting cold. There’s white stuff everywhere. “In this world, it’s kill or be killed.”



When they blink, they're staring at the closed doors of the Ruins again.

Frisk lifts a hand, adjusting Flowey's boot-pot in the other, and stares at it.

"You okay?" Flowey asks.

"No."



This time, they whirl around before Sans can speak and don't take his hand when he extends it. They just clutch Flowey tighter to their chest.

"Kinda rude leavin' a buddy hanging, don'cha think?" Sans asks. Frisk shakes their head.

He clicks his...tongue or whatever. His mouth never opens. Frisk doesn't know how that works with speaking.

"So, where ya going?" he stuffs both his hands in his pockets and walks past Frisk and through the bars on the bridge. It's wide enough for both of them to cross. Frisk doesn't move and just looks at him.

Sans huffs, "You wanna freeze out here, honey, be my guest."

On cue, Frisk shivers. They pull Flowey closer and the flower huddles to their form too. Frisk takes careful steps until they're past the bars and beside Sans.

The skeleton makes a noise of satisfaction and continues walking. Frisk follows.

"There's a town further ahead. Snowdin," he says, "Ya headed there?"

Frisk frowns for a second and says, "Out."

"Out?" Sans echoes, "Out where?"

"Out here," they say and then point up.

"That's kinda ambitious, sweetheart," he stops in his tracks and Frisk follows his lead. "Especially with the folk around here. See, I'm a sentry around these parts and I'm supposed to capture a human," he says, "But if you're not dumb enough to trust everybody, I guess I can let you slide every now and then."

Frisk shifts their weight from foot to foot nervously. Sans motions his head to the side, "Now, my brother. He's a human-hunting *fanatic*. In fact, I think I can hear him coming now."

In the distance, there are faint metallic stomps, and Frisk's head snaps to the side, eyes wide.

There's a blurry smudge of red up ahead in the snow.

"Good luck, kiddo," Sans closes one eye socket slowly in a facsimile of a wink, "Papyrus isn't a fan of mercy."



Half of their left forearm is covered in flowers when they finally notice the huge boulder at the side of the path and scurry to hide there when Papyrus approaches again. Thankfully, Sans doesn't give their location away, distracting his brother with puns ("*I've been doing a ton of work. A skele-ton.*" "*SANS!*") until he leaves, grumbling loudly about his brother's incompetency.

Frisk peeks out a minute later, giving Sans an expression that's confused and angry at the same time.

Sans shrugs.

On one hand, Sans has killed them (once) and will do nothing to save them should they be in danger, but on the other, if they managed to avoid the danger, they're home free and he doesn't stop them. Neutrals, Frisk thinks. Bloody indecisive.

"Do you think he'll be back?" Flowey asks.

Frisk nods slightly.

Sans waits for them to step out of their hiding place. "Heh, guess you got lucky," Sans says. Frisk looks down at their hand, where the flowers are peeking out of their sleeve. It's a miracle Sans hasn't asked them about it. Maybe they'll pass off as some sort of flower monster at this rate.

"Snowdin?" Frisk points to the way ahead.

Sans nods, "Yeah, want me to take you there?"

Frisk takes a step back. The skeleton laughs.

He walks and Frisk follows, at two paces length behind him, stick dropped in favor of holding Flowey tight in case they have to run. Miraculously, there's no need for that, since soon, they see a huge banner that says *WELCOME TO SNOWDIN* adorned with Christmas lights. There are a few monsters huddled around a tree, as well as a few shops in the area. Frisk and Flowey both let out sighs of relief.

Sans spreads his arms around. "Welcome to Snowdin," he says, "Pap's not usually here, so I guess you'll have some time to rest for a while."

Frisk nods as they look at the inn a few ways off. "Thank you," they murmur, then point to themselves before saying, "Why are you helping?"

"Helping?" Sans does an impression of raising an eyebrow, which once again eludes what Frisk knows of physics, because Sans is supposedly made out of bone. Bones aren't pliable. "Nah, kid, you're helping yourself. I'm just watching from the sidelines and letting it happen."

"Why not take me to your brother?"

Sans tilts his head to the side. "Hmm," he shrugs again, "You're funny. Heard ya trying to stop yourself from snickering when you were hiding from Papyrus. You're lucky that Pap has a hard time hearing people over the sound of his own voice."

They may be imagining it, but Frisk thinks there's an undercurrent of bitterness in Sans' voice.

The skeleton gives one wave for goodbye before he continues on ahead. Frisk stares at his retreating form for a second before they make their way to the inn. It was time for a good night's sleep. And the hope of having even just one more pseudo-ally in this whole disaster fills them with determination.



Frisk wakes up in the morning, thankful that none of the villagers have tried to kill them yet.

They're cold and give Frisk hard stares, but that's something Frisk can deal with. Frisk is used to it.

They trudge out of Snowdin with Flowey in their arms, shivering in the cold. There weren't any clothes in the shop, and asking if they had any stock at all just gave them a curt "No."

So out in the cold with only the clothes on their back it was.

There's something light red in the distance, obscured by the falling snow that was starting to get harsher, and Frisk mildly panics that it's Papyrus. When they get a little closer and see that the stature is shorter and there's the golden glint of the save star, Frisk's shoulders sag.

Sans is sitting at a sentry station, chin in one hand as he leans out the window.

"Didn't think you'd be up for going this far," he says.

Frisk shrugs. He snorts. "Thought you'd want to stay in Snowdin. You know: warmth, safety, food. Pap only goes there every now and then and if you're lucky, you'll never run into him." Frisk shakes their head and points up, "Out."

Sans stares at them for a few seconds before shaking his own head, "You're really set on that, huh?"

The little pinpricks of light in his sockets flicker to the flowers that are covering one side of Frisk's head and he hums. "There's a lot of puzzles – traps, up ahead," he says, "Pap set them up. You get past them fast enough, you might be able to get out of Snowdin before he comes back."

Frisk turns to the path ahead and nods to themselves. Flowey touches one leaf to one of their hands holding his boot-pot.

The human smiles at him before they turn back to Sans. "Thank you," they incline their head downward slightly, before continuing their walk forward.

The last thing they see of Sans before they pass the station is his mildly surprised look, and the last they hear is his tiny laugh and the words, "Nobody's ever said that before."



It takes them at least half an hour to get through the first trap (several mines in the snow that electrocuted the weight on it instead of exploding), and half of that was spent playing 'guess which spot to hit' with Flowey. Frisk threw rocks at a few areas, Flowey extended a few vines to feel the ground for anything and then Frisk would walk, agonizingly slow, for fear of setting something off. The XO puzzle was easier, if it weren't for the fact that if they got something wrong, the ground would crack, and when they reset the puzzle, the crack was still there and they needed to solve it before the ground caved in.

An hour after that, they meet two hooded figures (dogs, Frisk realizes) that snarl threats and swing their axes at the human without abandon. Frisk gives up trying to pet them and runs instead.

Right into Papyrus.

The skeleton seems a little shocked seeing them, glancing at the flowers at the side of their head, before he frowns.

“Human,” is all he says before Frisk feels their soul being pulled out of their body and into a battlefield, and there’s a huge bone cutting through it.



They’re back in Snowdin inn.

“We need to hurry,” Flowey says as soon as Frisk bothers to open their eyes, “If we hurry, we can get past him. We know how to solve the traps now.”

Frisk hums.

“Frisk!”

They push themselves up to sitting position.

“Frisk...you want to get out, right?” he asks.

Frisk hesitates, but nods.

Sans is still there in his sentry station, chin in hand and looking as bored as he’s looked like since they’ve first seen him.

He says the same things, and Frisk thanks him again. This time Sans just laughs.

That’s when Frisk knows something’s wrong.



They pass the electric trap, the XO trap, and outrun Dogamy and Dogaressa (Frisk had learned their names when they called out to each other to *catch the human before it dodged and*

*swerved to somewhere else*) with time to spare. The next trap is a bunch of spikes with the switch hidden somewhere in the snow, and they'd only solved that because of Frisk's exhausted and frustrated stomping and Flowey's attempts to feel the ground and the trees with his vines for any niches.

They run into Papyrus again. This time Frisk dodges immediately, which throws the skeleton off-guard for a few seconds.

"Great job, Frisk," Flowey whispers.

Frisk spares.

Papyrus frowns deeper and calls up several bones to materialize in thin air again and launch them at the human. Frisk dodges one, two, ducks at the third that passes them by a hair's width, but something pierces their leg from behind and they fall onto the snow with a cry.

Flowey is dropped and he skids a few feet in the snow. Frisk twists their body to look at their leg— pinned to the ground by a bone – and looks up to see several more hovering in the air, poised to hit them.

The first bone hits Frisk's back, narrowly missing their spine, and Frisk arches, the motion making them scream harder. The second hits their arm, and the third cuts through their soul.

The last stabs through the back of their head.



Frisk shoots up the bed and immediately pats the back of their head, feeling for any wounds there.

Of course, there's nothing, but they think they can feel the phantom sting of something breaking their skull open.

There's something cold there. Colder and softer and thinner but wider than their hair strands. Frisk tugs a little and winces.

Another flower.

So far, the things have only taken their left forearm and the left side of their face, but the back had just sprouted one.

"Another one?" Flowey asks in a small voice.

They nod.

When they reach Sans' sentry station, Frisk speaks first, "How long does it take for Papyrus to come back to Snowdin?"

Sans looks at them questioningly and Flowey is the same.

"He should be in Waterfall right now," Sans starts, "Undyne usually checks the second half of Waterfall. So depending on what he's thinking, he makes rounds in a few hours. Never goes into town unless he needs it though."

"Like what?" Frisk tilts their head to the side.

"Sleep," Sans says, "We need sleep sometimes. Food."

Frisk makes a face, "You *eat*?"

He snorts. "Course we do," he says, "Would be a shame to pass up on Grillby's."

Frisk frowns in confusion.

Sans leans back a bit. "Wait," he squints as much as a skeleton can, which isn't a lot, "You never went to Grillby's?"

Frisk shakes their head. Flowey nudges their stomach, "Frisk, what are you doing? We'll get caught by Papyrus at this rate."

"It's okay," they whisper back.

"You stayed in Snowdin for a while and you didn't go to Grillby's?" Sans actually looks offended, "Breakfast?"

Frisk shakes their head again.

"Jeez," Sans hops off his seat and then steps out of the station, "You plannin' on starving yourself out here, sugar?"

"Didn't have time," Frisk says, turning to the path, "Had to hurry."

He throws the path a look that flashes into a sneer before facing the human again, expression lax.

"Come on," he says, walking towards them, "We're going to Grillby's."

Sans reaches down to take Frisk's hand, and the moment bone touches skin, Frisk draws back immediately, eyes wide and breathing hard.

They focus on Sans' hand. There's nothing there. He's not holding anything, and the sleeve of his jacket is riding up a little that they could see there really wasn't anything there. Nothing that was going to kill them.

Sans raises a non-existent eyebrow again.

Frisk swallows and closes their eyes. It takes them a few minutes to breathe normally again. They nod and fall in step beside Sans as they head to Grillby's, but they don't touch hands.



Grillby's is just like the rest of the shops in Snowdin, although significantly warmer. Frisk relaxes against their own will and Flowey shakes off a few snowflakes that have gotten on his leaves and petals, immediately leaning forward to urge Frisk towards the source of heat.

The other patrons give Sans a glance and then turn back to their own business. They don't even spare Frisk a look, which is favorable at the moment.

The source of the heat turns out to be the bartender – and from how Sans addresses him, the owner of the establishment. Grillby's entire head is a ball of flame with glasses, and Frisk doesn't know how that works or how his clothes haven't burned off.

Sans orders them two trays of fries when Frisk shrugs on what they prefer. Grillby hands them a bottle of mustard, much to the human's surprise, and Sans holds it out to them.

“Mustard?”

Frisk eyes the bottle, looks at the fries and then shakes their head.

Sans' grin gets wider, if that is possible. “Well, more for me,” he proceeds to drown his fries in mustard and Flowey lets out a small, disgusted noise from where he's placed on the seat next to Frisk. Frisk mechanically turns to their own fries and eats, forcing themselves not to look at Sans as he decides that his fries have been mustardized enough and then drinks the mustard straight out of the bottle.

Frisk looks around for the ketchup instead and Grillby seems to notice them, since he grabs the red bottle from the far away end of the bar and hands it over to the human.

“Thank you,” Frisk says. That seems to take Grillby aback for a few seconds before his flames glow a little brighter. Frisk takes that as a good sign.

Sans had reacted a little similarly whenever they thanked him. Was no one polite around these areas?

The fries actually are pretty good. The last they'd eaten had been in the Ruins, and they'd died at least two times since then so it's been over twenty four hours. Frisk's stomach clenches a bit

when they start eating too fast and Flowey taps their side with a leaf and tells them to slow down. They nod and take small bites out of their fries until their stomach settles.

Sans has already finished half of his tray and doesn't look too bothered by the disgusting amount of mustard on it.

"Food's good, yeah?" he asks. Frisk nods.

"Told ya it'd be a shame to pass up Grillby's," he says, "No one else makes the best fries here. Of course, this is the only restaurant in Snowdin, so when you remember to eat, I guess you'll be dropping by here."

Frisk pauses mid-pick of a fry. They shake their head, "Not...staying."

"Hmm?" Sans looks at them the same way whenever they say that.

"Out," Frisk repeats once again. They clench their other hand, "We're getting out."

"We?" Sans leans forward a bit to look at Flowey, "You and your little flower?"

"Mmm," Frisk nods. They turn back to him, "What about...you? Don't you want to get out too?"

"Heh," Sans returns to eating his fries, "Sure do, sweetheart. Why do you think we're on a hunt for humans?"

Frisk tilts their head in confusion.

Sans waves a hand, "Finish your food, sweetheart."



Sans says that Papyrus would be by Snowdin now, although whether he's going to enter town or not is unsure, so Frisk goes back to staying in the inn. They're actually running low on gold – the inn's a little overpriced in their opinion – but it's either that or freeze in the snow and risk dying again.

The flowers are getting too annoying, especially with half of Frisk's vision gone, so it's not worth it.

They set out the next day instead. Sans isn't at his station, they get past the traps, once again outrun Dogamy and Dogaressa, and then proceed to solve several more traps without Papyrus disrupting their progress.

"Thank god," Flowey breathes as they finish the latest trap (a bridge with several weapons hanging above it, dog included. The weapons dropped the moment they stepped onto the bridge and it was by sheer luck that Frisk had run fast enough to get to the end and Flowey grabbed onto the ledge by his vines to get them to the other side.) and look ahead the path. There's a raging blizzard that's obscuring their vision, but they are no other places they stay in. The bridge is destroyed, so they can't return to Snowdin.

Frisk coughs weakly and squints, trying to make anything out of the whirlwind of snow. Nothing.

Behind them is a gaping chasm that leads to nowhere, so they've got no choice.

Frisk runs into the blizzard headfirst, one hand around Flowey and the other shielding their good eye. The faster they get out, the better. Their boots are starting to sink into the white slosh at their feet, dragging them down, but the human pulls their legs up and trudges on.

"I see something!" Flowey yells and Frisk holds them closer, still trying to run.

After a few minutes, the snow starts to lessen and Frisk runs easier, although they keep one of their hands up.

Flowey suddenly hisses, "Shit."

Frisk digs their heels into the ground and skids to a stop, bringing their hand down so they can see.

It's easy to see how Flowey quickly caught sight that the snow was clearing. Papyrus is standing, red cape in stark contrast against the snow, but Sans is standing right next to him too, hands in his pockets with the lazy grin he always has.

Frisk clenches their fists.

"So they really did come," Papyrus says. Frisk lowers their head with the realization that Sans might have ratted out on them. They glare at the shorter skeleton, who just shrugs.

Papyrus kills them easily once again, although less painfully since the moment Frisk is hit; they stumble, letting the skeleton land a few more hits that kill them quickly.

They wake up in Snowdin again. They hadn't saved often.

Frisk rolls over and goes back to sleep, even as Flowey calls their name. They can't remember how to feel determined anymore.

There's a new flower by their right temple.



It's two days later that Frisk actually gets up and ventures out of Snowdin. There's no use asking Sans about Papyrus, since the information is doubtful, but since Sans speaks, Frisk listens anyway. It would be rude.

Before they leave, they say thank you again.

"Why do you keep saying that?" Flowey mumbles.

Sans' fists clench as they pass by.

"Hey."

Frisk frowns. That was another pattern break. Usually, people said the same thing whenever Frisk got pulled back to a save point. But then again...

Sans hops off his seat and steps out of his station. Frisk turns to face them.

His face is set in a deep scowl, head tilted downward so that his eyesockets are shadowed.

"What's your deal, huh?" he asks, "What's with the sugary-sweet schtick you've got going on?"

Frisk frowns further in confusion.

"Do you think you can just get out of here by being good to everyone?" several bones are materializing out of thin air behind Sans. Frisk takes a step back, but red magic wraps around their ankles, working its way up to their body until Frisk is lifted up the air and Flowey is dropped onto the snow.

"Frisk!"

Frisk flails around uselessly, still continuing to drift upward.

"Or are you trying to let us think you're good?" he asks, "And then, at the last moment, you kill us when we're most vulnerable?"

"Help!" Frisk tips forward and reaches down to Flowey. Sans raises his other hand and Flowey is coated in his magic in one second and thrown onto the trunk of a pine tree the next. Frisk gasps in horror, "Flowey!"

"Let me tell you, kid, if that's what you're aiming for, then that's not going to work," Sans moves his hand again and the bones behind him pose towards Frisk. "And if it's the other way around; didn't anybody ever tell you? In this world," the bones all fly towards the human.

Frisk screws their eyes shut.

**“It’s kill or be killed.”**



They shoot out of the bed screaming bloody murder.

“Frisk!” Flowey uses his vines to drag himself off the desk and onto Frisk’s bed.

The human puts their hands to their mouth, hunching over as they sob. Their shoulders shake with the effort and hot tears stream from their only remaining eye.

“Frisk, it’s okay now,” Flowey says, “We’re back – ”

“It’s *not* okay!” Frisk yells, throwing their hands down onto the bed, making the foam jump with the effort of the slap, “It was *never* okay. I...I – ”

They take in a shaky breath and exhale in short huffs, “I came down here to...to – and now...” they wipe their eye furiously. “I’m confused,” they say, “And I don’t know what to do.”

Frisk’s voice breaks at the last syllable and they let their face fall into their hands.

Flowey lowers his head in shame.

“Me too, Frisk.”



If there is anything Frisk has ever learned, it is that just because you are hurting doesn’t mean you have to hurt others too. People do not deserve to be hurt, and so if the world is in pain, a simple act of kindness can sometimes be enough reprieve.

So three days after they wake up in Snowdin with a new flower at their neck, they march down the same path to Sans’ station again.

Sans looks bored as always, but Frisk has suspicions. They let the conversation go as usual, and of course, say thank you.

Sans *flinches*.

His eyes flicker to Frisk's face, the flower at their neck and then to Flowey who's glowering at him.

"What?" he breathes.

"Thank you," Frisk repeats, and then turns to continue on their journey, never looking back.



This time they don't outrun Dogamy and Dogaressa, and instead end up being ripped to pieces. They wake up with another flower on their right cheek, too close to their good eye for comfort.



Sans isn't looking at them. He's staring at the snow instead, looking deep in thought and troubled.

"Grillby's?" Frisk offers instead of the usual spiel. That starts Sans out of his reverie. "Huh?" he says dumbly.

Frisk motions back to Snowdin.

"Y-yeah. Sure."

They'd left Flowey at the inn today. Said that they weren't planning on getting out of Snowdin yet, but just wanted to stretch their legs. The flower was understandably skeptical, and then apologized, ashamed that he'd doubted Frisk, the only person in the whole underground who'd shown him kindness so far.

Sans looks distracted the whole way to the restaurant. He doesn't say anything. Frisk notes that he hasn't used pet names in a while either.

They order two trays of fries again and Frisk hands Sans the mustard, to his confusion, and asks Grillby for the ketchup. Says thank you again. The bartender looks happy after.

"Where's your flower friend?" Sans asks.

"Inn."

He hums, "You stayin' in Snowdin?"

Frisk shakes their head no and points up like they always do, "Out."

Sans sighs, "You're really set on that, aren't you?"

It takes a while before they answer. A sad smile creeps on Frisk's face as they idly drag a piece of their food along a spot of ketchup.

"Only thing I know how to do."

From how the lights in his eyes dim and how he snorts, Frisk thinks Sans understands.



When they set out and end up running into Papyrus and Sans again, Frisk just shakes their head sadly and braces for their soul to be pulled out of their body.

The battle starts. Frisk dodges Papyrus' attacks while Flowey watches their back and warns them.

The skeleton gets fed up and throws Flowey to the side with their magic. Frisk reaches their hand out as if to grab their friend, and that's the distraction Papyrus needs to ram a femur into their arm, effectively breaking and nailing it to the ground, taking Frisk along with it.

Frisk yelps and squirms. They grab the femur and pull, but it's lodged too deep and their arm is barely hanging on to the rest of their body by a thin layer of skin.

This entire thing, Sans stands and watches at the side. He watches as the human doesn't give him that hateful look they did when they first experienced this, and how they cry out to their fallen friend, and how his brother breaks their arm, and then their legs with his attacks.

Frisk is breathing hard, red blood dripping from their mouth, staining the flowers at their neck and their clothes, along with the snow underneath them. The dyed slush looks like wings pinned beneath their body.

The human's soul is in front of Papyrus, pulsing weakly.

"Help," Frisk rasps, looking up. For a brief moment, their eyes flicker to Sans. "Please."

Papyrus calls up another femur and stabs them straight through the chest.



"Didn't work," Frisk mumbles as they wake up for the whatever-the-fuck-run-it-is time.

Flowey sighs from the desk.

"I'm sorry."

"Yeah," Frisk says, "Me too."



It becomes a pattern for the next few runs. Frisk goes out, finds Sans, they talk, they solve the traps which are getting easier and easier the more they work on them, they meet Papyrus and Sans. Sometimes they almost get past, sometimes they get killed straight away. All the same

Papyrus kills them, Sans watches.

Always watches.

The right side of Frisk's neck and cheek are already covered in flowers. There's always a new one with every death, and Frisk has long worked out that they're death counts. They mark their failures.

*Stay determined, the voice at the back of their head whispers every time they fall asleep, You are the hope of humans and monsters.*

Frisk hopes to heaven and hell that it'll be enough to keep them grounded and determined to get out. To see the sun again. To be safe from this hell hole.

Once, they agree with Flowey that Frisk find a way to get them out of Snowdin another way.

Maybe another route. Or maybe being diplomatic. That had worked with Toriel. Maybe if Frisk was determined enough and lasted longer enough, Papyrus would let them go too. And then they could go back for Flowey.

That proves to be hard during the first try since Frisk falls from the bridge without Flowey to grab onto the cliff and hoist them up. That is an unnecessary death that gains them another flower beside their right eye.

Frisk shifts uneasily and touches the bloom. It doesn't hurt, but it's annoying.

They never try it again.

Sometimes Sans greets them, sometimes he looks deep in thought and on those days, Frisk offers to take him to Grillby's and stops by the inn to leave Flowey there. No use bringing him around when they weren't making progress. And the inn was warm. Flowey liked the warmth better than the snow.

"Why'd you offer?" Sans asks them on one occasion, when the flowers have covered their left palm and leave only the fingers peeking out.

"You looked sad," Frisk admits.

He frowns, "What's it to you?"

"Dunno," Frisk shrugs, "Wanted to help."

Sans gives them a strange look.

Frisk chuckles.



When the flowers have taken over three of their left fingers, Sans is the one who offers Grillby's first, apropos of nothing. He didn't look sad, didn't look bored, he just hopped off his seat and held out a hand.

Frisk, of course, doesn't touch it, but he doesn't look offended.

Frisk passes him the mustard and he passes them the ketchup. Frisk still thanks Grillby when they are served.

“Why do you do that?” Sans asks when the bartender walks away a little brighter.

Frisk points to themselves and tilts their head.

“Yeah, you, honey,” he says.

Frisk thinks over how to string their words as they place the bottle of ketchup down on the bar.

“...be polite,” they say, “People don’t deserve to be...you shouldn’t be rude to people for nothing.”

“Doesn’t mean you have to be polite all the time,” Sans says, “You don’t even know anybody here. You could just leave it as it is and talk to no one.”

“Can be rude,” Frisk says, “Don’t want to. Don’t have to.”

“Huh.”

Sans eyes them for a second and then raises their bottle of mustard, “Cheers.”

Frisk giggles – for the first time in such a long time down here – and raises their own bottle of ketchup, “Cheers.”



The next time they go to Grillby’s, Frisk’s left hand has gone numb with the flowers.

Sans notices and doesn’t hold out his hand this time. Frisk smiles to themselves.

“Can I ask you something?” he says once both of their fries are smothered in their preferred condiments.

“You already did.”

“Heh,” Sans huffs out good-naturedly. He waves a hand towards them, “What’s with the...you know?”

“Flowers?”

“Yeah.”

Frisk lifts their left arm, although it's like lifting a sleeping limb – you can't feel it and when you try to move it, static runs through your veins.

"Tell you later."

"You're stayin' in Snowdin, honey?"

"No," Frisk says, "Going out. Wanna come?"

That's the first time they've offered and Sans actually throws his head back and laughs.



"Going out. Up," Frisk points upwards with their right hand before Papyrus can pull their soul out into battle. The skeleton stops bringing up his magic in confusion and Sans watches, intrigued.

"Wanna come?" Frisk asks. The pinpricks in Sans' eyesockets shrink and Papyrus stops, stunned.

Then he cackles.

"The only ones who are going up are us," Papyrus says as bones shimmer into existence behind him, "And we'll be doing that with your soul."

Frisk's eyes go wide. They're too surprised to move their feet and the first bone slams into their gut, bursting through their back stained with red. Blood trickles down their chin as they cough.



"Seven human souls," Flowey explains once they're back in Snowdin, "Seven human souls and King Asgore becomes a god powerful enough to break through the barrier to get us all out." He shifts, "They've gotten six souls...I imagine you know exactly how."

Frisk nods.

"They just need one more. One more and they'll be out," Flowey says. He sighs and looks away, "I know I should be happy about all of this, but once they're out, they're going to lay waste to humanity. And that's not something I can live with. Knowing I probably could have helped..."

He shakes his head and laughs bitterly, "Whatever, I'm pretty useless anyway."

Frisk reaches out and touches a petal. There's a flower above their eyebrow now and their eye is nearly covered.

"No," they say, "You're a friend. You're here. You count. You're helping."

Flowey stills, before he breaks down crying. Frisk hugs their pot close to their chest and lets him.



Frisk wanders by Sans' station too late, intent on another Grillby hang out just to cool down from getting killed again, and instead Papyrus catches them talking. Well, in the process of actually starting to talk. Sans was going to wave, maybe be the one to offer this time, but the stomp of boots makes both of them freeze and Papyrus catches them in what appears to be mid-conversation.

He frowns and turns to his brother, "A human is here," he starts, "And you're not even bothering to catch them?"

Sans says nothing and lowers his hand.

"Were you trying to befriend them, brother?" Papyrus asks.

Sans leans back into his chair.

"No," Frisk says, "I was trying to befriend him."

Both brothers' heads swivel towards them. Thank god Flowey wasn't here to see this or he'd be shrieking at them for being so stupid.

Papyrus tuts and then turns to Sans.

"Capture them, then."

Sans blinks. Slow. "What?"

"Capture them," Papyrus repeats.

*“What?”* Sans asks, louder this time. His brother huffs.

“They want a friend, don’t they?” he says, “And good friends show friends how things work in the neighborhood.”

Frisk clenches their fist. They look at Sans, but he’s staring at his brother and sweat is breaking out on his forehead.

Papyrus sighs. “Are you actually too lazy to do it?” he snorts, “Fine then. I’ll take care of the human. I never know why you’re still sentry, but I guess it has something to do with you riding off of my success.”

“Papyrus,” Sans says, but his brother doesn’t listen.

“I’m always the one who does everything here. And even when the opportunity presents itself, you act all kind and useless – ”

***“Fine, I’ll do it.”***

Frisk closes their eyes in defeat.

Papyrus looks at Sans and they stare each other down for a few seconds before Papyrus smiles and takes a step back. He mocks a bow and gestures towards the human who’s slightly shaking.

“All yours, brother.”

Sans stiffly gets off his seat, out of the station and walks in front of Frisk.

Frisk doesn’t open their eyes and bows their head.

They hear something wet tear before there’s a blast of light behind their eyelids and they’re consumed by fire.



“Grillby’s?”

They still offer. Sans looks shaken, the light in his eyes wavering, but he manages a shaky “Yeah”. Papyrus doesn’t catch them this time and they have their meal in peace.

“So, I’ve got a question for ya,” Sans starts. Frisk wipes their hand on a napkin and listens. “Do you think...that even the worst person can change?” He’s staring at his empty tray now. “That everyone can be a good person, if they just try?”

There is a flower right beside Frisk's eye and they know they are one death away from being blind.

They smile, a genuine one, and nod.

"Yes."



" – I'm tellin' you, this may not be a bad thing."

"I'll tell you what's a bad thing!"

Frisk hears them through the blizzard before they see them.

"That's new," Flowey mutters. Flowey always remembers the iterations. That's what keeps Frisk sane most of the time.

"*You* fraternizing with the enemy!" Frisk drops their hand to see Papyrus jabbing a gloved hand to Sans' chest. The shorter skeleton staggers backwards, but takes a step back to steady himself and holds his ground.

"I am *not* fraternizing. I am saying we think this through," he says. His brother laughs, "You can't think, Sans. All you do all day is sit in your post and sleep and eat and be useless."

"That's enough, Papyrus," Sans growls.

"Oh look, he knows how to talk back!"

"They're fighting?" Flowey whispers and turns to Frisk, "Frisk maybe we can run – "

They shake their head. "Papyrus will notice," they say, "Not yet. If I die, I might go blind. Can't risk that."

Sans and Papyrus are still yelling at each other. Frisk shivers in the cold and waits for them to notice that they're here.

When they do, Papyrus grins, "Speak of the devil." He summons his bones to attack and Frisk swallows, but then Sans marches over towards them.

The bones disappear. "What are you doing?"

"To spite and show you that I am not useless," Sans grabs Frisk's good arm and the human flinches on instinct, "*I'm* taking them to Asgore."

The human freezes.

A deep growl rumbles in Papyrus' throat, "**No.**"

**"Watch me,"** Sans bites back. The ground pulls out from beneath them and Frisk stumbles back. Flowey extends vines to take root in the ground, but touch nothing as light explodes around them in one second and disappears in the next.

When they blink, they're in front of a sentry station similar to one in Snowdin, but there is no snow around save for the roof of the small building. There's a bright blue flower at the side.

Frisk nearly falls back and Sans grabs their sleeve of their other arm to steady them.

"You alright there, sweetheart?"

Frisk pulls away quickly, careful not to drop Flowey. Sans lets them go and holds up his hands, "Easy there."

"Y-you..." Frisk hasn't hyperventilated in a long time. They'd thought they were doing so well, but they're back to having their chest too tight and taking in short breaths. "You're taking me to King Asgore?"

Flowey extends a few vines towards Sans, ready to defend if need be.

The skeleton spares the flower a glance, but looks back into Frisk's only visible eye.

"Would you believe me if I said I lied to my brother, honey?" he asks.

Frisk frowns, "Why –"

"He was going to kill you," he says, "Had to make use of what I had and get you out of there. Don't think he's going to chase us now except for if he wants to dust me." He laughs, "I reckon he's always wanted to do that, but I don't go down easy."

"Unbelievable," Flowey breathes. Frisk frowns further, "You..." they look at his held up hands and the expression on his face. "You're helping me?"

"You said you believed that everyone could be a good person, right?" he shrugs like he always does, "*I'm* trying."

He slowly lowers his hands and holds one out. Frisk eyes it warily.

It's a minute or two when they hold the left one out and put it in Sans'. He wraps bony fingers around their flower-covered ones and starts walking towards what looks to be a waterfall.

Frisk isn't dead. Nor are they dying. They got past Papyrus.

They smile to themselves. Determined.



They sneeze for the umpteenth time as they wade through the water. The waterfall is gushing strong and Frisk is soaked up to their hips. If it weren't for Sans holding them steady, they would have been taken by the current. The falling rocks aren't helping either. Neither is the fact that they've been taken from a blizzard to somewhere with no snow in sight, and then dipped in waist-deep water.

Another sneeze. Flowey looks at them worriedly. Sans probably hasn't gotten a cold in his entire existence (the perks of having no nose, probably), so he just looks confused and leads Frisk until they're at the other side.

Once they're on dry land, Frisk sits to rest their tired legs and gives another sneeze.

"You okay?" Flowey asks.

Frisk shakes their head. "No," they say, "Might be sick." They shiver involuntarily, "Bit cold too."

It's a few minutes before Frisk gets up and they continue walking, and when they do, the human is staggering and shaking like a leaf in a hurricane.

Their vision is blurry and their insides feel too hot although they're freezing. There's a rustle of cloth and then there's a weight on their shoulders.

"Here," Sans' voice says. Frisk turns their head towards him. He's not looking at them. He's *pointedly* not looking at them.

Frisk puts their arms through the sleeves and brings his jacket closer.

"Thank you."

They yawn and miss the smile that graces Sans' face, however briefly.



Most of the monsters that they encounter around Waterfall sniff the air and stare at the human for a few seconds before they scurry off once they register Sans' presence. The skeleton himself says nothing and walks on, Frisk's numb hand clasped in his and occasionally stopping to let the kid catch their breath. They've been breathing heavily for a while now.

Flowey shifts in his boot-pot and keeps on muttering things to Frisk, and the human nods, but Sans can barely make out words in the middle of unintelligible babble.

"Wait," Flowey says at one point. Sans stops and it's all the human beside him can do to not fall on their face. Sans catches them with his free hand.

"You okay, honey?" he asks, brushing hair out of their good eye. It's almost being devoured by flowers now.

"They're heating up," Flowey says at the same time Frisk nods and then slowly sinks to the ground to sit. Sans waits for the flower to explain. "Sick," the creature says.

On cue, Frisk sneezes. Sniffs and rubs their nose. "Sorry," they say.

Flowey's expression falls. "It's not your fault, Frisk," he says.

The human continues sitting on the ground covered with bioluminescent grass. Sans scans their surroundings for a minute before taking a seat beside them and leaning back, weight supported by his arms.

"Let's stay here for a while, yeah?" he offers. Flowey gives him a thankful look. Frisk nods again.

It's risky trying to stay in one place like this. Papyrus might be right behind them, or Undyne – or maybe for once, his brother has decided to trust him that he will deliver the human to the king.

Papyrus might insult Sans all he wants, but traitor has never been on the list.

This counts as treachery, he knows. But the monsters do not deserve to destroy *this* soul for their freedom. All else, yes. But not this one.

This one is confusing and bright and red and *Determined*, but it is also warm and kind and polite and forgiving. Sans barely knows kindness, barely knows politeness, barely knows forgiveness.

All mistakes are punishable by lashing here. Lashing and being kicked around. Sometimes offenders even get dusted for their trouble.

Frisk doesn't dust no matter how many times he's killed them or led them to their death.

He'd been furious when he noticed that whenever the kid died, time wound itself back to make it that they never perished. He's had his fair share of time shenanigans, and has given up hope several rewinds ago, so finding the object of his frustration, well, he wasted no time in killing them then and there, wrapping them in his red magic and watching as they screamed.

But then time jumped back again. And the kid acted like it never happened. He'd thought of the possibility that the kid never remembered, but the mustard-sharing gave it away. But they always tried to be good to him. One determined human with a weapon versus one monster with one measly health point already had a clear victor. But Frisk never fought.

Besides, it didn't look like the kid was doing the rewinds on purpose. They died, and then time jumped. If anything, the flowers on the kid had gone more numerous and the human looked even more tired.

Frisk tips to the side and their head lands on his shoulder. He jolts in surprise and the kid pulls back, blinking sleepiness out of their eye, mumbling an apology.

He pauses. Then shrugs. "It's okay, sweetheart. We'll be here a while."



"What are they?"

He's resorted to carrying the human on his back. Poor kid's still wrapped in his jacket and Flowey's looped his vines on one of their hands so he's conveniently perched on Sans' shoulder. All he's done is look around for potential danger while Sans focuses on getting them out of here.

Frisk is pointing to one of the tall blue glowing flowers. Sans doesn't stop but he answers, "Echo flowers."

"Mm?"

"They repeat the last thing they hear," he says. Steps to the side as they get near one. Frisk inclines their head towards it, but they don't appear to hear anything. Good. Kid's temperature has been on the steady rise though.

They make it through the last of the Echo flower fields after half an hour and find a cave. So far there's been no sign of Undyne, and Sans isn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth, so he continues on, Flowey holding his head high to watch for any danger.

They pass by a small corridor and Frisk mumbles at them to stop. He does so and the kid weakly tries to straighten and squints at one of the signs. They make a frustrated noise.

“A haunting song echoes down the corridor,” he reads instead, “Won’t you play along?”

“There’s nothin’,” Frisk slurs and drops their head back down to Sans’ other shoulder. He continues walking.

A little ways off, there’s a statue being pelted by drops of water from the cave ceiling. He doesn’t know where the water’s coming from, but maybe this part of the Underground was directly under a lake from above or something.

Just as they near the exit, there’s a small bin with umbrellas. He picks one up, since he can hear water up ahead and the downpour might be stronger there. Frisk says, “Wait,” and then picks one up too.

“We’re only gonna need one, honey,” he says. They shake their head, “Go back.”

“What?”

“Go back,” they say.

Even Flowey looks confused, but Sans does as he’s told.

He watches in amusement as Frisk opens the red umbrella and stretches their arm out as far as they can to place it by the statue.

He’s about to laugh when a music box starts playing.

Frisk gives a little squeal into the fabric of his sweater. “Pretty,” they say, “So that’s what the sign meant...”

They stand there for a while until Frisk falls asleep. Sans stares at the music box before they move on.



Frisk doesn’t wake up.



When they wake up, it's nothing but darkness. Frisk tries to blink. They feel their eyelids move, but it's still total darkness. Maybe they're still stuck in wherever they go before they reload. Like a limbo of sorts.

Something hard clasps their hands.

"Sweetheart, you there?"

Sans? They were awake after all, so why – they reach up and try to pull off whatever might be covering their eyes, but once they snag the offending objects and pull, hot pain shoots through their head and they pitch forward with a yelp.

Something catches them. Must be Sans.

"Steady there," he says, "Steady."

"They shouldn't pull the flowers," that was Flowey's voice, "It hurts them."

"So that's not just a human thing?" Sans asks. One hand pulls away and Frisk imagines he's gesturing, "I thought it was a human thing."

"No, it's not," Flowey says, "It's...it's complicated. Let's just – "

"One flower grows every time I die," Frisk croaks.

There's silence. Sans' one hand on their numb hand tightens by a fraction. Or maybe enough to snap their wrist, but Frisk can't feel much with that limb, so it's inconsequential.

"Frisk," Flowey's tone is reprimanding, "He doesn't understand, just leave it."

They shake their head, "No, he does. He remembers." They do their best to turn to where they think Sans is, "You remember, don't you?"

There's no answer.

"I know you do," they say, "Your reactions are always different every time I reload. Sometimes...sometimes you think about things. Sometimes you look conflicted. You remember that I like ketchup."

Sans still doesn't answer. Flowey pleads one last time, "Frisk..."

"When?" Sans asks. His voice sounds deeper and more subdued than usual, "Since when did you know?"

"Since you laughed at when I thanked you the second time," they say, "The first time, you were shocked. The second, you were just amused. I...I started thinking about the possibility."

"Are you doing the reloads on purpose?"

Frisk shakes their head, “I’ve wanted to die more times than I can remember and I can’t seem to.”

There’s another pregnant pause before Sans grunts. He starts tugging their hand after a few seconds and Frisk starts walking.

“Flowey?” they ask.

“Right here, Frisk.”

Ah, somewhere above them. He must be on Sans’ shoulder again.

“Where are we?”

“Waterfall,” Sans says, “Near the Echo flowers.”

Then he stops, and so does Frisk, blind without a guide. A moment later something warm and thick is wrapped around Frisk’s shoulders. Their mouth falls into a little ‘o’ when they realize it’s Sans’ jacket.

Sans takes their hand again, “Come on, sweetheart. We’re wasting glowlight.”



Occasionally, Frisk tilts their head to the side and strains their ears to listen to the Echo flower’s whispers.

Most of the people who’ve wished around here are either dead or have gone far, far away. Or have joined the royal guard in a quest for prestige, popularity and freedom. Sans knows.

He chances a glance back to see the human’s mouth curled in what appears to be discomfort. He slows down so that they can move closer before they continue walking. Flowey shifts on his shoulder, “I don’t remember the whispers being so noticeable last time.”

“We were preoccupied,” Sans says.

“What is this place?”

“People used to hang out here, to rest,” he keeps his voice low for the human’s benefit, “Others liked to wish. Others liked to promise.”

“*Seven souls*,” one flower whispers.

*“Seven souls, and King Asgore will become a god,”* another whispers back.

The flowers promise death to every human that falls into the Underground, whisper freedom to every monster trapped, and plan the destruction of the human race once monsterkind has been set free.

Frisk has one hand holding onto the back of Sans’ sweater.

“Don’t listen to them,” he says, “They’re death wishes.”

Once they get to the corridor with the statue, Sans does the same thing as they did before and places an umbrella over the statue. Frisk smiles. Flowey looks at the statue wistfully for some reason that Sans ignores. The flower is weird enough as it is, helping a human at the risk of execution, but he hasn’t done any harm yet so it’s all good.

He lets Frisk piggyback again and they hold the umbrella so that all three of them can travel easily.

They walk past the looming view of the castle. The kid has been impressed with Grillby’s and Waterfall when they first saw it, so Sans thinks they would be impressed if they could see the castle too.

“You can see the castle from here,” Flowey beats him to telling the human that. He continues walking as Frisk straightens in attention.

“It’s huge,” Flowey says, “And nice.”

The human giggles. Sans finds himself cracking a grin.

He returns the umbrella to the next bin they find and Flowey lifts them all up with his vines. The tiny thing is surprisingly strong when he wants to be – Sans turns to the flower at his shoulder and finds them panting. Okay, maybe not, but lifting a human and a skeleton (although he was admittedly light) was an impressive feat for such a tiny flower.

Frisk walks again this time, hand still clasped in Sans, and it’s in this condition that they run into Undyne.

She looks at their joined hands and frowns.

Sans straightens, “I’m taking the human to the king.”

“And the flower?” she nods towards the monster perched on his shoulder, who lowers his head on cue.

“Little tag-along.”

Undyne snorts. “We all know you’re just after your brother’s position,” she says, and goddamn, he wishes they would all stop thinking that. If he wasn’t lazy, he was an usurper and if he wasn’t an usurper then he was a traitor.

The rules of the Underground. Kill or be killed. Trust no one. It was easier when people weren't kind to you and you felt like you owed them shit.

Undyne brandishes her spear and points it towards them.

"I'm doing this so that we can be free," he says, hold on Frisk getting tighter. The human whimpers weakly behind him.

"That may be so," Undyne says, "But whoever brings the human to the king gets to be his right-hand warrior and I'm not giving that up to you."

Fucking competition in the Underground too. You'd think everyone would learn to work together to solve their problems, but it was still every monster for themselves.

He takes a step back and summons his Blasters, "Well, I can't let you do that either."

Frisk grabs his sleeve. He doesn't turn to them.

"Don't hurt her," Frisk pleads. Sans momentarily stills at the stupidity of that request. They were all about to be killed by another monster, and out of all things Frisk can ask, it's for said monster's safety? Sometimes he wonders if kindness is another word for stupidity.

"*Please,*" Frisk whispers, "Don't hurt her."

"Frisk," Flowey turns to them. At least the flower's reasonable, "We – "

"No," Frisk cuts in, firm. "Don't hurt her. We don't hurt anyone. Ever."

Undyne takes the distraction and attacks.

Sans lets Frisk go to raise his hand and stop Undyne in mid-run and then push his hand forward, slamming her back into the wall ahead of them.

"No!" Frisk yells. They wave their arms around and manage to catch Sans' outstretched arm. "Don't hurt her, Sans!" tears are streaming past the flowers that are covering their eyes now, "*Please.*"

Sans frowns, but he doesn't lower his arm as he stares at Frisk as they lower their head and cry into his sleeve.

Flowey grabs both of them by his vines, "Come on!" he hisses, "Let's get out of here if you don't want to hurt her."

Frisk snaps their head up at that and starts pulling Sans' sleeve, running blindly. Flowey makes sure to pull them back before they trip and that's when Sans makes his Blasters disperse and helps Frisk remain steady as they run past Undyne, who's still reeling from the impact of the blow. It probably wasn't enough to kill her, but enough to incapacitate her for a while.

They run.



Frisk doesn't explain why they don't want Undyne to be hurt. Sans doesn't ask anymore after the first few attempts only end up with them crying. Flowey is asleep, tucked in one of the kid's arms, exhausted from using too much magic. Frisk's head is lolling a little. Even Sans is a little drowsy from not having the chance to rest since the last reload and then nearly fighting Undyne.

So they sit by the patch of land just near the wooden bridge that will take them to the other side of Waterfall. Undyne hasn't followed. Sans probably threw her harder than he thought and she was dead. Or was biding her time. Or was looking for them in all the wrong places. But they need to rest now, because if she was alive, then she *will* find them later.

Frisk sits beside him and puts their head on his shoulder and this time he doesn't mind.

He closes his eyes, just resting but not sleeping.

"We shouldn't hurt people," Frisk mumbles once Sans thinks they're asleep. He cracks an eye open to look down at them. They chew on their lower lip before continuing, "Always be kind." A pause, "Sometimes kindness is all we can give. Sometimes kindness is enough."

Sans falls asleep with those words repeating in his head.



Undyne does find them later, and Sans hauls Frisk to his back, Flowey grabs onto him and wraps his vines around Frisk and his arms so that they're all secured together as Sans runs. He could fight, he *should* fight, but the kid doesn't want that and he did promise to try to not solve everything that's thrown his way by violence or a beam from a Blaster.

Always be kind. Sometimes kindness is all we can give. Sometimes kindness is enough.

*Always be kind.*

He dodges the spears Undyne summons to form in their path. One of the things narrowly hit his jacket which the kid is currently wearing, but thankfully, it's *only* the jacket. Not the kid themselves.

They reach a dead end and Sans digs his heels into the wood, skidding to a stop just before they're a push over the edge.

He turns back and only gets a step because Undyne is a few feet away from him.

She drags her spear across the bridge and he can imagine her grinning smugly beneath her helmet as their part of the bridge falls away and then there's darkness and a splash of water.



*“Sans? Sans! Sans, wake up, please, I can’t – I can’t – ”*

He wakes up to someone screaming his name above him. There's a light that's being obscured by something, and when his vision clears, the human's face is above him. Top half obscured by flowers and all, but it's Frisk, light above them acting like a halo behind their head, and they're soaking wet and maybe crying but he can't tell. Flowey is on his chest and he sighs in relief too when Sans wakes up.

“He’s awake,” the flower declares.

Frisk exhales and then leans back. Sobs and then lets out a watery laugh.

“Thank God.”

Sans tries to sit up, ends up wincing and then lies back down again. Undyne's not coming after them for a while.

Frisk feels around his chest to get Flowey off of him and onto the – bed of flowers? Yeah – bed of flowers they've all landed on. The things were thick enough to break their fall. They're gold too.

Like the ones on Frisk. He thinks maybe if the kid laid down, they'd blend right in.

“Mind if we stay here for a while, honey?” he coughs weakly, “I’m a little *bone-tired* right now.”

Frisk giggles and snorts unelegantly. Sans smiles anyway. Papyrus barely laughs at his jokes.

“Yeah. We’re not going anywhere,” Frisk says, “I can’t see without you anyway.”

He falls silent at that. Half of the flowers that have taken over the human are his fault. From his own act of killing them, to betraying them by ratting them out to his brother, and to neglecting their health.

They haven't taken off that jacket since he gave it to them though. "You're not sick from the water again, are you, kiddo?"

Frisk shakes their head.

He makes a contented noise and closes his eyes, exhaling.

"Thank you," Frisk says.

He opens his eyes again to look at them smiling down at him.

"For what?"

"For sparing her," they say.

Sans only curls his mouth in that curiosity-confusion again. Frisk reaches a hand up slowly and carefully tries to place it on his cheekbone. The skeleton stiffens as they drag their fingers down his cheekbone and near his mouth.

They laugh weakly, "I wish I could see your face. You feel funny right now."

Sans looks at where their right eye once was. "I was an eyesore anyway, sweetheart," he says.

The human appears to disagree as they shake their head again.



There is a dummy that blocks their path once they start moving again. It keeps on muttering things under its breath and Sans is half tempted to cut it down then and there since it's grating on his nerves, but Frisk is holding him back so he doesn't.

They try to get past it, but it snaps, and starts fighting them. Sans tries to dodge as best as he could, but the water is hindering his movements and he's still got Frisk and Flowey to worry about.

One shot nearly hits him, but Frisk pushes him aside and takes the hit.

He's the one that wakes up staring up at Frisk again, although the human's not yelling this time.

Their mouth is slightly parted in shock, and when they make a sound, it's laughing as they lean back. Sans sits up this time.

He asks what they're laughing about, but Frisk just laughs harder before they sag against him.

He checks their face for any new flowers and finds none, so he moves on to their arms and hands.

There's a new bloom on their right wrist.

"Let's not do that again, honey," he says. Frisk nods, "Yeah," they let out another laugh again,

"Let's not."



Undyne finds them again, and Frisk tells Sans one firm "No" when he turns to them to silently plead for permission. They didn't even need eyes to see what he was trying to say. They just held on to his sweater tighter.

So he dodges, making sure Frisk is behind him and Flowey in one of their arms. The flower tries to block shots as best as he could, taking in damage for Sans, and he's thankful for that. Undyne's not letting them get past her that easily, her magic rooting them in the same spot so he can't teleport them out of here.

But Frisk refuses to fight.

One mistimed block hits Sans and takes him out, one health point doing nothing to withstand the damage, and Frisk gasps as they feel him falling away. A second later, he blacks out. Another minute and they're back at the corridor with one Echo flower standing there.

"Sans?" Frisk asks, one hand raised to touch his face. He cautiously takes it and places it on his cheekbone. "Yeah, I'm right here, sweetheart."

"Good," they breathe, "Good."

He looks down at their right wrist and finds a new flower right next to the other one.

It's hard to face Undyne with so many people with you and her magic restraining all of them in place. Time jumps back and back and back until Frisk's right hand is no more, and then the flowers crawl up to their arm until finally, *finally*, Flowey manages to deflect one attack and

Undyne looks tired out.

Sans uses their momentary reprieve to grab Frisk and run.

Once they're a good few feet away from Undyne, who's yelling threats behind them, he teleports a short distance, and then another, and then another – short bursts enough to get them away but not to exhaust him.

Once their feet touch hot solid ground, he stops. Frisk pushes away from him and he staggers a little, shocked, before the human turns away and then retches.

He winces. He forgets how teleportation can be disorienting to those not used to it.

"Don't," Frisk shudders and draws in a shaky breath. There's sick in their hair and they wipe their mouth with their sleeve, "Don't do that again."

"Can't promise that, sweetheart," he says, "Come on, let's get you cleaned up."



Frisk can't feel both their hands anymore. It's Sans who cleans and patches them up, and then takes care of Flowey too. They're glad that he and the flower are getting along. Well, not exactly getting along, but they are learning to work together.

They have no idea what they're going to do, really. They've heard the Echo flowers.

Seven human souls and one monster soul in order to break open the barrier. The king has six, and Frisk is the seventh, and the voice at the back of their head insists that they are the future of humans and monsters and even though the monsters are horrible, nobody deserves to be trapped underground.

Sans doesn't know that Frisk can barely feel their legs too. The flowers have taken over both their arms and their torso is probably going next, but their legs are starting to get numb.

What if they can get out to the Surface, but it's in this condition? What if the flowers are irreversible? What if they could never be back to normal again? What if?

Sans tells them that they're making their way to Hotland, and then to the Royal Scientist's lab.

Frisk can't feel their feet as they walk anymore even though they know that the flowers haven't eaten them yet.

The scientist's name is Alphys, they gather, and she hisses, "You," when she sees Flowey. Even Sans steps back a little when Alphys starts to yell, starts to tell Flowey what a traitor he is for helping a human, says, "Do you think your parents would be happy with what you are doing, Asriel?" And that's when Flowey yells back at her to shut up **shut up**.

But Alphys doesn't fight. Instead there's an explosion of sorts, and Sans is fighting someone named Mettaton. A robot, Frisk thinks from what they've been hearing. A robot originally built for entertainment and then was modified to destroy humans. But Sans isn't letting Mettaton lay a hand on Frisk. Frisk wants to say thank you but their throat is getting numb now too. They wonder if there's a limit to how many flowers their body can hold.

All Mettaton does is ask questions and if Sans answers wrong, they would all die. But Sans answers them all confidently, *smugly* even, from how Frisk hears it, and eventually they're left alone. Alphys has long fled the lab.

Frisk drags their feet as they walk, too tired to muster the strength to actually lift them.

"Hey, honey?" Sans speaks. They lift their head as best as they could. He shouldn't lose hope with this. If anything, Frisk can do him one last favor for his help. "We kind of need to hurry. No pressure, but things are going to get a little heated if we lag."

Frisk giggles. Right, right. The Core is near magma and lava. Or maybe this place was called Hotland? They can't remember. But it's good that Sans is telling jokes. He's been telling jokes lately and whenever Frisk touches his face, he feels like he's smiling. Even Flowey is snorting an "Unbelievable" from the skeleton's shoulder.

So they try best to walk. *Determination*, they chant. *Determination*, Chara whispers in the back of their head. Hope of humans and monsters. They have friends who don't deserve to be trapped down here. Flowey and Sans don't deserve to be trapped down here. And then maybe Papyrus and Undyne won't be so mad anymore once they're free.

There is no doubt that Papyrus and Undyne are still chasing them, that's why they've been walking and walking for as much as they can now. No more stopping. Because they all know Sans is a traitor now. And Sans will die if they get caught and it will be Frisk's fault.

So they walk. And they stumble upon other guards in Hotland, and Frisk dies again, twice, because they're too tired and slow to dodge and they think that they're losing one of their feet for real now.

Sans is starting to get exasperated, they can tell, and they apologize, but Sans just sounds sad when he brushes their hair aside and says, "It's okay, sweetheart, it's okay."

Mettaton fights them several times more –it would have been ridiculous if Frisk could see, but they can't, so all they have to go on are what they hear, and it still sounds ridiculous. From the cooking show, to the newscasting, and Flowey points out that they might want to stay out of the spotlight if they don't want Papyrus and Undyne to find them.

They manage to rest at a hotel. Sans keeps them close to him at all times since the monsters don't appear to be very friendly around here. And Frisk thinks about just staying asleep, but Sans is right. They will be found out, and Flowey and Sans will die if they are caught.

*Determination*, Chara chants. For your friends. For *my* friends.

So they walk. And Muffet makes them reload and reload and reload until their right leg is out of commission and they walk with a limp. Sans gets frustrated and ends up killing Muffet.

Frisk cries.

They don't speak for a little while, but Frisk doesn't force a reload. They continue walking, Sans supporting their weight, while Flowey remains on his perch to scan for danger.

This time, they're really at the Core, Frisk thinks when Sans speaks again. They fight Mettaton and Frisk's soul shatters from defending Flowey and they all wake up at the hotel. And the human knows that it's their other leg that's going to pay this time.

This time Muffet doesn't die. Neither does Mettaton, although Sans keeps on growling as he dodges like he'd rather rip the robot apart. Frisk is thankful that he doesn't.

By the time that they're out of the Core, Frisk stumbles and falls to the ground with a yelp. They scrape their good knee and one of their cheeks. Their arms are useless.

"Shit," Sans curses as he moves beside them and then pauses before slipping one arm under their back and the other under their knees.

Frisk signs, *I'm fine*.

"No you're not," Sans says.

*Not your fault.*

Sans is silent for a while. Then they just continue walking.

"I'll get you to the Surface," he says, "Don't worry. No matter what it takes, sweetheart, I'm getting you to the Surface."

Frisk wants to tell him to not make promises he can't keep but they can't talk anymore.



King Asgore might have been a good king once. No, Sans knows that King Asgore was a good king once. But desperation and loss can do things to a man. The kingdom was losing hope, and with the death of both of his children followed by his wife's leave due to her grief, he has hardened and now looks at everything as mere things that can be expended if they reach his goal.

Sans knows. Because once upon a time, he cared for his brother although Papyrus always was a little ambitious. Once upon a time, he held out hope for getting to the surface and nobody hurt each other. Once upon a time, he didn't resort to so much violence. Then once upon a time, Chara and Asriel died, and Queen Toriel left, and everyone thought, *this is it, we are stuck here forever. Unless we take seven human souls and blast our way out of here.*

Once upon a time, everyone learned that sometimes murder got them what they needed. Once upon a time, time started resetting so much that Sans didn't care anymore how many times he needed to kill human children. He just needed to kill. And eventually he just decided not to because no matter how much he did kill, everything was going to be reset again.

Then once upon another time, a human with a red soul that sang Determination fell and was kind. Once upon another time, Prince Asriel Dreemurr's soul was put into a flower by the royal scientist and said prince was currently perched on his shoulder. Once upon another time, Sans remembers exactly how being happy feels like and wants to fight for it.



Flowey knows how to reset and reload, back when he still had that ability. Somehow, that was transferred to Frisk's soul when they fell, and Flowey feels guilty for being relieved. He could only reset so much to prevent the other children to be killed, see. And he knows he's weak in magic to defend all six of those who'd fallen. So he tries to wind time again and again until he gets tired and decides to just let it be.

And then a human falls. A human with a soul as red as Chara's. A human who looks like Chara. A human who is kind and determined like Chara.

So he goes with them. He helps them. He is a traitor, but he is loyal to his best friend and sibling whom he promised that he would find a way to get all the monsters to the Surface. He promised Chara. And he is not going to go back on his promise when he's being reminded all the time by Frisk's presence.

So sometimes he dies in the middle of battle, hoping to hell Frisk and Sans get out, but that never happens, because they always reload with a new flower on Frisk but Flowey holds on.

He sits on Sans' shoulder listening to his father explain why they should do this, and why the humans deserved to be punished, and thinks, that no, this isn't what King Asgore would do. Not the father Asriel once knew, but the enemy Flowey would face.

He defends Sans and Frisk for as long as he can, no matter if Frisk can no longer stand with all the flowers clinging on to them.



Frisk can't stand now. But they plead still. *Don't hurt him. Don't kill him. Spare him.* Asgore looks at them strangely, and Sans says nothing as he defends. When a fireball gets too close to Frisk, he starts to attack. Frisk can't see anyway. He won't kill the king. He'll just weaken him until he can't fight anymore.

Stupid child. Stupid human child believing in kindness and managing to worm their way into his ribcage. Stupid him for wanting this kid as a friend. Stupid *fucking* circumstances that made everything like this.

In another life, where everyone hadn't lost hope, they all could have been friends. And this entire mess wouldn't be necessary. And sure, they wouldn't be out of the Underground quick, but it would be happy and peaceful.

Flowey stills on his shoulder for a moment before whispering that he has an idea and then sinks into the floor, roots breaking the cement before he disappears and leaves Sans to fight alone. The skeleton curses, but whatever that damn flower had planned, it was probably worth it. He wouldn't leave Frisk like that.

Frisk is sitting behind him. Hands on the ground. Still praying that nobody got hurt. Can't see. Can't move. Can barely talk, even. Goddamn kid.

Sans strikes one blow before Asgore is down on one knee, weak from the fight.

"Well?" the king asks, huffing, "Do it."

Sans still has his bones behind him and he's still able to call his Blasters to finish Asgore off. It would be easy. *One* blast. One blast and he could kill the king and take Frisk out of here and out into the Surface.

He lifts one hand.

And then drops it.

Turns back to the human behind him, picks them up into his arms and faces the king again.

"No."

Asgore looks up and frowns, "No?"

Frisk moves in his arms and leans their head into his chest. They're signing something rapidly, hands making jittery movements that Sans can barely register them, but he catches a *Thank you* in the midst of that.

"Always be kind. Sometimes kindness is all we can give," he says, "Sometimes kindness is enough."

Asgore laughs, "That's not how it works around here, boy. It's kill or be killed."

Sans shakes his head and pulls Frisk closer.

"Not anymore."



He walks past Asgore, tense, but to his surprise the king lets him. He makes no move to stand and just keeps his head low. Sans walks over to the barrier and stares at it.

He needs seven human souls to cross the barrier. Or one monster soul and one human soul.

Whoever gets that gets to cross the barrier. He looks at the feverish human in his arms.

"Hey, sweetheart," he smiles as he looks at them. They're trying to press closer to him, it's almost amusing. "You still holding on good?"

Frisk nods slowly.

The cement in front of him breaks and Flowey emerges. He's got his vines wrapped into a ball and is panting, but he looks at Sans and then pulls his vines back to reveal six floating orbs of different colors.

Sans' breath hitches.

No, not orbs. *Souls*. The six human souls.

"We can...can cross the barrier," Flowey coughs, "Or at least take one of the souls. Cross the barrier, take one more, come back, take the rest and then break the barrier." He's shaking badly, "I don't know, just get Frisk out of here or something."

It's a good plan. Take one soul, get another from Surface and then go back to complete the job and free Frisk *and* monsterkind.

"No," Frisk rasps and grabs Sans' sweater.

"Frisk!" Flowey yells, "We need seven human souls to break the barrier; we only have six."

Frisk shakes their head rapidly and clenches their teeth. Painful to move, even. *Seven*, they sign, *Have seven*.

“No, we...” Flowey pauses and stares at the human, “...don’t.”

Frisk points to themselves.

Sans nearly drops them.

Flowey’s stares at them, disbelieving, and Sans tightens their grip on them, “Are you fucking stupid? You can’t just give up – not after all that – ”

“Not...not giving up,” Frisk croaks, “Can’t go back to Surface anymore. Nearly covered in flowers. Hah,” they laugh weakly, “Dying. Slowly.”

“Don’t say that.”

Frisk chuckles, “One last thing. Hope of humans and monsters. Have to do it. Take my soul,” they smile weakly, “Free everyone.”

“Frisk, no,” Flowey sobs.

Sans watches two drops of water land on Frisk’s cheek before he realizes he’s crying too.

“Won’t last long,” Frisk says, “Please.” They clutch Sans’ sweater tighter, “Please.”

The red soul flickers in front of them and Flowey starts crying. Frisk’s chest is still moving, up and down, but it’s getting slower. Sans looks at them as the red soul floats near his face.

Frisk whispers something, but he can’t hear it, so he lowers his head.

“Can you say that a little closer?” he asks. Frisk is falling asleep, and the soul is getting brighter in front of them, and he needs to shove it back in so the kid can keep breathing. His tears are falling faster onto Frisk’s face. But he needs to listen, because the kid can barely talk and it would be rude not to listen. “I didn’t quite catch that.”



King Asgore is a good king. He’s called off Undyne and Papyrus and even the plan to destroy humanity. They know that the humans are stronger than them anyway, with their Determination and all, so it would be useless to try and get themselves trapped back underground again.

Flowey – no, *Asriel* says that sometimes he hears the king tell tales of the seventh human. Of their sacrifice. Of how they rather chose to give up their soul for people that have tried to kill them.

Asgore doesn't know about Flowey being Asriel, of course. Poor kid's still a flower and he doesn't want to talk to his parents in his condition. Especially not when they've both killed him at least once too.

Asriel says he's insane. But not in the condescending way. In the 'I care about you so stop being stupid' way, and he thinks it's funny because there was a time when he'd love to pick the petals off of the little bugger. Now the plant's living in the same house as he is in the Surface. They'd built a little town in Ebott while Asgore tried to smooth out relations with the humans. Papirus doesn't talk to him so much, but he hasn't been insulting him either.

They'd buried Frisk back at the entrance of the Ruins. The same place they fell, Asriel says. He says that was where Chara was buried too. The first human, their sibling, the first red soul of Determination. The flowers had disappeared when the barrier had broken and he'd said that maybe Chara'd finally found peace and moved on. Asriel didn't say anything.

He visits the entrance to the Ruins every month or so. Another patch of flowers has grown there. They're gold, just like the ones Frisk was covered in, and just like the ones that grew over Chara's grave.

Sans lays there sometimes, staring up at the sun through that small hole above him where Frisk had fallen. He's thought about finding a way to reload – or reset. Get Frisk back, find another way, but it would be throwing the kid's sacrifice in their face if he did that.

So he visits. Sometimes Asriel comes with him, sometimes he doesn't. All the same, Sans lays there and waits. Frisk always reloaded after they died, see. And sometimes it would take a while, so he's waiting. Asriel says he's insane. He thinks he might be too.

"Knock knock."

*Who's there?* asks Frisk's voice in his head.

"Flower."

Please.

*Flower who?*

"Flower you today...."

Come back.

"...Sweetheart?"

Soon.

But nobody came.

# Chara's Theory of Determination

Chara wishes that they could blame themselves for why they're currently bed-ridden. Barely unable to get up without falling down or without asking Asriel for help. But they can't. They'd seen their own father – biological father – surrender to the same sickness when they were but a toddler.

Toriel and Asgore often watch by their bed, the hope in their eyes replaced by fear with every passing day, with every morning that Chara takes longer to wake up. When the first tear slips down their mother's eye, Chara reaches up and wipes it away, weakly mouthing, "I'm fine."

Toriel smiles at them and takes their hand in her own. "I know, my child," she says. Her hand squeezes and Chara responds in kind. "And soon you'll be up and walking again. You'll join your father in his gardening. He's been in need of an assistant."

"Does he?" they rasp and let out a weak laugh that turns into a cough, and then a fit, and then Toriel's helping them sit up as they attempt to cover their mouth.

When they pull their hand away, their palm is red.

That night, Chara hears Toriel cry from the kitchen, Asgore trying to console her.

*I'm sorry,* they try to say. Nobody hears, of course.



Asriel is holding onto their hand with both of his. Chara's skin is hot to the touch, the medicine of the Underground having no effect, but Asriel tries to offer as much comfort to his sibling as possible. They'd even gotten someone from Snowdin to cool the room every few days or so. Chara's been sleeping well, which was good, but some days...it was like they were dead.

"Mom...and dad?" they ask, blinking red eyes tiredly at him.

"Mom went to Doctor Gaster. Asked if there was anything he could do," Asriel says, "Dad's talking to everyone else. They're really worried."

"Sorry," Chara mumbles.

"Don't be."

"Shouldn't be makin' – makin' such a fuss 'ver me," they slur. The rasp turns into a cough. Just one, thankfully. Asriel breathes in relief.

"Ah, hush, Chara." Asriel moves on hand to push their bangs from poking their eyes. Their hair's gotten quite long. Chara's forehead is burning up. The prince forces a smile, "They've got every right to fuss over you."

Chara's laughter sounds like a wheeze. Asriel squeezes their hand. They squeeze back.

"Does...does dad..." they pause to catch their breath, "Does dad still garden?"

Asriel stops for a moment. He moves his hand from their forehead and back to join the other, covering Chara's limp one.

The garden has been overrun with weeds since the month Chara was confined to the bed for their illness. The King hasn't cared for it, always monitoring their child or asking the scientists what they can do for Chara's sickness. But monster science isn't quite that far yet. Not with their resources limited due to being cut off from aboveground. Monster food cured souls. Not physical maladies.

Maybe that's why Chara has been holding on for so long. Because their soul is strong.

"Yeah," he lies. "He still gardens."

"Good," Chara says. "D'you – d'you know..." They try to catch their breath again. Asriel's face contorts, but Chara can't see it since their eyes are closed in the effort of trying to breathe. "Did you know...the dead only ever have their flowers?"

Asriel stills.

"The dead...don't breathe," Chara laughs. "Sometimes, they're even forgotten. They can't – they can't talk to the people they love anymore. They can't...can't do all the things they used to love. The only thing that they can really have...is the ground that's swallowed them." Another pause for breath. "And the flowers they're given."

"Why are you saying this?" Asriel's grip on his sibling's hand tightens.

"Let – let Dad take care of his flowers, okay?"

"You're going to tell him that yourself, Chara," Asriel says, "Once you're better. You're taking care of the flowers with him."

"Stop lying, Asriel," Chara chuckles weakly, "It's not like you."

The prince opens his mouth to protest but Chara shakes their head as much as they can and wince at the pain of the movement.

"I like...buttercups," Chara says, "The golden flowers dad plants all the time. They're pretty..."

"The ones that broke your fall when you fell here?" Asriel asks.

Chara laughs hard, and it turns into another coughing fit that Asriel immediately feels guilty for and he grabs a handkerchief from their dresser. The fabric comes away red again. They both stare at the offending stain on the cloth.

“We both know I’m not lasting long, Asriel.”

“Don’t say that.”

“Asriel,” Chara smiles, “Please.”

The prince says nothing.



Chara continues to listen to their sibling as he talks. Mom and dad often come home with doctors, but none of them are able to do anything. Hell, even aboveground, none of the human doctors were able to save Chara’s biological father. Maybe it was one of those incurable diseases.

Asriel’s mostly the one who stays with them now. Toriel can’t stay for a few minutes before bursting into tears. Chara tries to comfort them as best as they can, but they can barely move their arms. Asgore takes his wife from the room, patting her back and consoling her, though Chara can hear the sadness in his tone too.

Asriel’s voice wavers sometimes, but he’s still there. Every day. Their strong, strong brother.

“Buttercups, okay, Asriel?” they remind him again.

Asriel stops talking and frowns. He hates it whenever they bring that up.

“Stop that.”

“Asriel,” they say, “Please.”

The prince of monsters sighs and looks down. He squeezes his sibling’s hand. They don’t squeeze back.

“What do you want me to do?” his voice is nothing but a whisper. Small and broken.

“Smile for me,” Chara says, “Be happy.”

“You expect me to be happy like this?” Asriel raises his eyes to them.

Chara tries to squeeze back. They really do. They can't.



"Do you remember the story mom and dad used to tell us?"

It's the clearest Asriel has heard them speak since they've gotten sick.

"Which one?"

"If a monster...can get a human soul..." Chara trails off.

Asriel shakes his head vehemently.

"No. No, you're not dying – "

"Do you...know why I came down Ebott, Asriel?" they ask.

Asriel takes a while to answer. It's something they've always wanted to ask, but never pressed, since Chara always looked so sad whenever the Surface was mentioned. He doesn't want to hear this, but his throat isn't working and Chara's speaking anyway.

"I came down here...to take my life," Chara admits, "But the buttercups broke my fall."

Asriel's hand tightens its grip on theirs.

"And then – and then I met you and you were...you were so *nice*. I never thought...anybody could be like that," Chara says, "Not to me."

"What happened to you?" Asriel whispers.

"I was happy...here. For a while," Chara pauses, "And then I had to ruin things again. I always ruin things."

"It's not your fault you got sick," Asriel says.

Chara laughs. "I sometimes wish it was. Then...then maybe I could have *chosen* not to get sick instead." They swallow thickly as their voice turns nasally. "I hate making people sad. That's the only thing I'm good at."

"No, it's not."

“It is,” Chara says.

“It’s not.”

The human shakes their head.

“When I die...”

“You’re not going to.”

“Stop lying, Asriel,” Chara smiles at him. They blink and a tear falls off the edge of their eye and onto the pillow. “Take...my soul? Please? Maybe you can – with your kindness...maybe you can tell the humans about how monsters are different. Maybe find a way...to break the Barrier.”

“Chara, you’re not going to die,” Asriel leans forward and puts a hand to their cheek. “I promise.”

Chara blinks. Then they lean into his hand and bury their face there as they cry.

“Brother, please,” Chara sobs, “Do not make promises you cannot keep.”



Chara’s taking longer to wake up each day. Asriel visits their room every day and hold their hand, vigilantly watching the rise and fall of their chest to indicate that they were still alive and fighting, taking the fever underneath their skin in stride.

Today Chara’s taking longer to wake up.

Asriel squeezes their hand. Their skin is cold and they don’t squeeze back.



The King and Queen come back to Chara's room in the castle destroyed. The door is completely gone, with the ceiling caved in and the walls half-crumbled. Both their children are missing.

Asgore sounds the alarms while Toriel searches the entire castle for their whereabouts.

They do not know that aboveground, Asriel Dreemurr has a red soul in his clutches and walks the earth, anger and bitterness in his heart.



To gain a soul – or to be one with another soul, anyway – feels like you give yourself up completely until you're chained to each other. Two different beings, merged into one, both in perfect control of their vessel, neither completely dominant. It's coexistence. Symbiosis.

This does not feel like harmonious symbiosis.

Chara is no longer Chara and Asriel is no longer Asriel and they remember and they know and they understand and *they know exactly what the other has gone through and Chara what have they done to you?*

Asriel sifts through memories upon memories of abuse and torment and screams and *Mother, please no*, and sees the small flicker of happiness from when Chara's father was alive, but the rest is nothing but pain and more pain and Chara whimpers under the scrutiny.

The moment the soul entwines with Asriel's own, he feels the pain, he feels the sadness and he feels *furious*, because how **dare** they mistreat his sibling like that?

*It wasn't always like that*, Chara whispers. *People change when they lose their loved ones, Asriel...that's why...*

"You wanted me to accept your impending death," Asriel says. He pauses in his step. There is a village up ahead and there are already people – children, even – who have seen him. From Chara's memories, there is no doubt that this is the same village that they grew up in. How easy would it be...

*Asriel*, Chara whispers again, and somehow the prince thinks he can feel their hand on his shoulder. *Stop lying to yourself.*

Asriel takes a deep breath.

And his shoulders sag.

He might be angry. He might be livid right now, but to hurt people...he sighs. He hears Chara whisper a *thank you* from within them as they turn away and walk. Behind them, children are already yelling, screaming "Monster!" and Asriel knows that it is only a matter of time before they are chased down.

But still. Violence will always beget more violence. And that is not what they both want.

*Home?* Chara asks.

Asriel feels something sting his back, but he continues walking anyway. It has started.

"Home."



*Why does the world mock us sometimes?* Chara thinks as they watch the human – Frisk is their name, they remind themselves – fumble through the Underground. Asriel has turned into a flower, how curious, and he hasn't changed at all. Still kind. Still trying. Even though Chara's seen him reset and reset to try and save all the other humans that have fallen until he eventually gave up.

Looking at Frisk is like looking at a mirror. Watching Frisk make decisions is like watching your entire life play out in front of you.

*Stay determined*, Chara whispers once again as they sit with the human. They're facing Asgore now. The King has changed so much that Chara feels guilty for dying, but they're doing the best that they can. Starting with Frisk. Chara's been trying to keep them holding on since they'd

woken up in the Ruins, confused as to why they were staring up at the hole they'd fallen through years ago and finding out that their brother had turned into a flower.

Even Frisk's decision to accept their inevitable death reminded Chara of themselves. Of that...one stupid decision that led to Asriel's death as well. But the kid was determined with theirs. And in actuality, nothing was ever sure. It was just up to how well everyone played their cards that they could take fate in their hands and shape it.

*Are you sure about this?* Chara asks for the first time, although they're not sure if Frisk can hear them. They're shaking, hands on the floor to steady themselves while Sans and Flowey fight the King off. Frisk tilts, and Chara immediately wraps an arm around them and steadies them. To their surprise, the human doesn't fall to the ground.

"Yes," Frisk whispers. It's a relief that they can hear them.

*You really want to help all of them, then?*

"Yes," Frisk repeats, "Only thing I can do now." They laugh weakly. "I'm dying."

Chara understands. And maybe this is why they were awoken in the first place. To help this child and to bear witness and say that Frisk Dreemurr – because by all rights, Frisk was a Dreemurr – was the selfless hero nobody deserved but willingly gave themselves up anyway.

*Remind you of someone?* Chara thinks to themselves. They hold the human tighter and repeat their mantra.

*Stay determined.*

i.

[scratched into the wall hidden behind the bed's headboard]

1. sweetheart you can come back now
2. Please
3. the surface is good, thanks for that, kiddo
4. sweetheart we need to try again we can get you up here
5. Frisk
6. i won't even be mad if you reset
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. my fault
11. sweetheart please come back
- 12.
- 13.
14. COME BACK THIS ISN'T FUNNY ANYMORE
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
19. the surface wasn't worth you
- 20.
21. why am i such a fuck up
- 22.
- 23.
- 24.
25. i don't want to do this anymore

ii.

angel, please come back soon  
your red death's waiting for you  
the flowers aren't taking him  
but he's begging for them to

angel, please come back soon  
your red death paces the floor  
he's looking for your wings and smile  
but find none since you're no more

angel, please come back soon  
I fear that he might give  
your red death isn't determined  
remind him how to live

iii.

'what a loser' papyrus sneers as he watches his brother simply sit there mourn the human.

he wonders exactly why his brother is attached to the kid (although he knows, he knows, he's *always* known that it's because the kid is the exact opposite of what he is

and he thinks he can hear the human say to him

'you're not a very good brother' and papyrus doesn't think he can argue with that

because he knows he's the worst brother there is

but that's the only thing he knows how to do)

# The Empty City

It isn't often that sans dreams

He is thankful for it too, because what he remembers of them is usually red, endless red and screaming and crying. Someone leaving, someone never coming back.

He hasn't dreamed since someone fell into the core, and shattered through time and space.

He's sitting on a huge slab of drift wood that's floating on water, staring up at the clear sky, the sun isn't in his line of sight and the heat isn't blinding. Just how he likes his days, he takes in a deep unnecessary breath and lets it out slow through his mouth. It mists, of course it does.

*"Do you like the surface?"*

His head snaps to the side immediately, in his left eye flares red, one hand raised and ready. "Frisk! Frisk!"

Frisk tilts their head to the side in their mouth purses, the only indication of confusion in their features since the rest are obscured by flowers. *"Do you like the surface?"* They repeat.

The magic in his eyes slowly ebbs away as he lowers his hand and his jaw and hinges slightly, when he doesn't say anything for a few seconds, the human turns their head forward and kicks their legs that are submerged up to their knees in the water, the ripple seemed to amuse them and they kick harder.

"F-Frisk? "Sans manages, Frisk stops their leisure and turns back to him, asking the same question again "Do you like the surface?"

"I..." Sans trails off. The human boughs their head sadly and looks away, "you don't" they resumed kicking their legs again, "Did I die for nothing?"

"Frisk No!" he reaches one hand out and stops it before it can brush frisk's shoulder "You freed everyone and you are not happy with it" They say, nodding to themselves.

The water here is not like it is back in waterfall: clear and inviting. The water is dark, cold, and as they continue to float on the driftwood, sans think they pass by a street lamp that is almost swallowed up by the water, with only its head peeking out.

"Look" Frisk says, and Sans tears his gaze away from the lamp to where they are pointing, up ahead there appear to be buildings in the same state as the lamp earlier, their bottoms under water. "What happened here?" he wanders out loud. The tessellations still tower over them menacingly as they pass, but they are dead, empty, silent, still and gray and just hulking masses void of life.

Monsters could now work in buildings like that because of Frisk, and he's happy for them, so seeing this, well, sans leans over the edge of the driftwood. He can't see the bottom, water is black. " You know what happened here, sans" Frisk, He frowns "No, I don't" "You do." Frisk says, they pulled their legs back on the driftwood and stand, their pants aren't even wet. Sans can see the golden blooms peeking out.

Frisk takes a step toward the edge.

"What are you doing?" sans braces a hand to push himself, but Frisk doesn't listen, they tilt forward and fall straight into the water with a splash. Sans rushes to the edge and throws his arm out to grab them, but there is nothing, the water is still, and Frisk isn't there. He wakes up gasping, one arm outstretched and Flowey is asking him what's wrong.

The next night, he finds himself on the same driftwood, under the same sky, in the same half submerged city with Frisk at his side. He grabs their sleeve and looks at them.

"Don't" He says. Frisk tilts their head to the side. "Please" his voice breaks. "You cannot help me" Frisk says. He shakes his head "Stay"

"I can't"

"Frisk please"

"I can't, Sans" they say.

Sans opens his mouth to protest when the slab of wood they are on suddenly collapses, turning on the side where they're sitting and dunking them both into the dark water, sans waves his arms around in the water before he regains enough sense to swim upwards. He breaks the water and looks around.

"Frisk!"

There is no answer, he dives back into the water again, but he can't see anything, and the chill is settling into his bones.

"Do you believe?" He asks Flowey one day when he's taking a walk through the nearby city with the flower on his shoulder. "About the dead visiting in dreams?"

Flowey hums as he thinks about it, "M-My suppose?" He says, "I mean, when I was revived as a flower, I used to dream about Chara, All the time"

"What would they say?"

"Lots of things" Flowey chuckles dryly, "you know, Chara never talked a lot, but in my dreams they did, sometimes I could tell it was a memory, sometimes Chara would say horrible things."

Sans turns to him briefly, he shakes his head.

"Chara never told me a single horrible thing the entire time we were together" Flowey says, "So I can never blame them, I think it was just me talking, only it took on Chara's form in my dreams" He smiles to himself.

"One of the things I used to hear them say in my dreams, was that it was my fault that they died, that I couldn't save them, but the real Chara never blamed me. The real Chara always told me to be strong.

"Why would you dream about that then"

"Like I said, I think it was just me talking" Flowey says, "I think it was my guild, I think it was me not being able to forgive myself."

They are standing over a cliff this time, The wind is blowing strongly against their clothes, The sea roars under them, and the sky is overcast with clouds.

"Why the change of scenery?" he asks. "You tell me" Frisk says.

"This is your dream." Sans moves so that he is standing right next to them by the edge of the cliff, he looks down at the waves crashing onto the rocks at the bottom.

"Are you going to jump?" He asks.

"Why do you dream about me, Sans?" Frisks instead, they extend a hand forward, spreading it to catch and feel it slip through their fingers. Sans looks at it as well, and his frontal bone creases in the way a skin covered forehead does. "I don't Know"

Frisk hums, Sans reaches out and takes their outstretched hand in his, the flowers are soft and cold against his phalanges, he presses the back of frisks hand to the space between his eye sockets.

"Please, Frisk" he whispers, "please stop this."

"Sans?"

He grabs them by the shoulders, dropping their hand in the process and crushes them to his chest. Frisk doesn't say anything as he presses his mandible to the crown of their hair in an approximation of a kiss, but human isn't stiff in his arms either.

He doesn't know how long they stay like that, because this is a dream, and in dreams time holds no meaning. All he knows is that he feels their heartbeats steady against his ribcage, beating for them both, and then he hears the wind and the sea roar around them.

"Sans" Frisk finally speaks, gently moving to push him away.

"Did I say you could let go?" he growls, tightening his grip around them. Frisk pauses, but steps away anyway, and sans arms fall away against his will. The water continues to roar, and he thinks that it's because they are calling frisk and that they are angry at his attempt to keep them with him.

The ground shakes once, Frisk slips and falls over the edge, they let out a small yelp, stretch out their hand towards him.

"Sans?"

And seeing the shift in pattern, when they would voluntarily disappear, this time they want to be saved. Sans reaches out too.

And wakes.

They are back in the water log city again, once more on that piece of driftwood, Frisk doesn't get a word out before Sans grabs them, in his left eye sparks, voice warping.

"Do you think this is FUNNY?!" he shakes them. Frisk stays undeterred.

"Do you think I like seeing you die over and over again and not being able to do a thing about it?!"

Something is rolling down his cheekbones.

"Don't fucking do this to me" he leans down until they're only a few centimeters apart, nose to nasal Conca..

"Don't you dare fucking do this to me, Frisk" he's sure that his grip on their shoulder would have been enough to crush bone, but Frisk doesn't cry out in pain, if he could see their eyes, he thinks they wouldn't have batted an eyelash either.

They reach up a hand slowly, and bring the thumb to his cheekbone, wiping the tear tracks away, their finger settle in their palm cradles his jaw, and Sans takes in a shaky breath as he closes his eye, his skull tilts, unconsciously leaning into their touch. Frisk's hand is warm, warm unlike the cold buttercups that have eaten their body.

"Sans. "Frisk speaks, Sans opens his eyes half lidded and sees that the flowers have disappeared from one side of their face. No, the flowers are gone, but Sans can only clearly see one half of their face, the other side is a blur. He realizes that he's never seen them without the flowers, they met when Frisk's one eye already went blind.

"you cannot save me" they repeat, just like they always have, "No one can"

Sans frowns, not the sort that depicts anger, but one of helpless frustration.

"only I can save myself." Frisk says, "but there is something else that needs to be saved here, Sans"

"What is it?" he asks,

"In the same way, Only I can save myself" They say, "Only you can revive this city again, I don't blame you for anything, Sans"

Frisk smiles, moves their hand to the back of his head, and presses their foreheads together." How can you save others when you cannot save yourself?"

"I can try!" Sans croaks, voice broken.

"Stay determined and hold your head high" Frisk says and moves their lips to his teeth, "Stay determined and love..." and then they fall back, spreading their arms and disappear into the water as sans screams their name.

# Fantastic Posing Greed

He can tell that he's woken up because he can clearly hear Frisk's voice – one of confusion – and Flowey's stuttered syllables that makes Sans imagine his dumbstruck face. The skeleton holds up a hand to feel his face and his phalanges meet cold, thin strips of something.

Petals, he realizes.

Flowers.

"Sans!" Frisk shouts, and he feels their hands fist into the fabric of his sweater. "What did you do? What did you *do*!?" their voice breaks into a sob at the last word and he feels their grip falter.

A warm weight gently falls onto his chest. It shifts and sobs, and he realizes that Frisk has laid their head on his chest. His sweater is slowly getting damp.

Sans slowly moves a hand and tries to touch where he thinks Frisk's head is. His fingers meet soft hair – flowerless; he smiles – and he settles his palm on Frisk's head, gently patting it.

"It's okay, sweetheart," he wheezes, throat suddenly feeling stuffy. He clears it and ends up coughing. Frisk stills. "It's okay," he forces out.

"It's *not*," Frisk says, clenching his sweater tighter, "*It's not, Sans.*"

He moves his other arm up to wrap around them, and they're both pressed against each other, Sans lying on the floor and Frisk crying into his chest. Sans still doesn't hear where Flowey is.

"But you're fine now," Sans says.

"I don't care," Frisk's voice is muffled by his sweater, "You're *not*."

"I can't fix everything, sweetheart."

He feels the tiny nod they do into his sweater, "I know." A shaky intake of breath. Release. "I know."

They stay like that for who knows how long, and Frisk's sobs blur into apologies. Sans is too tired to tell them it's not their fault.



Sans can't see, and he's confined to a room in the castle since Asgore was kind enough to let them stay and actually not kill them.

Flowey rarely speaks whenever the king is around, which is understandable, and Frisk has become the spokesperson for both of them, which leaves them tired from having to be so vocal when they weren't used to it. Sans would apologize if moving his mouth didn't feel like he swallowed death.

There's also the issue of the a new voice that only he can seem to hear since Frisk and Flowey just ask him what's going on whenever he tries to tell them there's someone else in the room.

They say their name is Chara.

And they sound a little pissed.

*Why did you do that?* They ask, voice tight like they're holding back their anger. *Why would you do that?*

Sans wants to ask 'Do what?', or maybe, if they're asking what he suspects they're asking, 'I didn't want Frisk to suffer', and maybe just, 'I didn't want to lose them'. But he can't. So he just shifts on the bed and tries to turn where he thinks Chara is.

*That was foolish, Sans,* Chara says. They click their tongue. *What do you think would come from this?*

He turns on his side so that his back is to the door, where Frisk and Flowey are both talking in low voices about what to do next. Sans brings his hands close to his chest and signs slowly. His joints sting everytime he moves them.

'Frisk safe,' he signs.

He can feel Chara's phantom gaze on him before they huff. *Safe but not free.* He can imagine them shaking their head. *Some roads lead to nowhere, Sans.*



They all sleep in a huddle. The bed is huge, and Sans takes up one side of it while Frisk is on the other, Flowey on their shoulder and resting his head on theirs. The entire night, Frisk's hands are holding Sans' sweater, like he'll disappear if they don't hold on.

It's nights like this when Chara's voice melts into soft and caring, and he can feel them watching over all of them.

*You know, Sans. He feels the bed dip on his side as they sit down and alarm bells ring in his head, but Chara just laughs. Don't worry, I'm not actually corporeal. Only you can hear and feel my presence.*

That doesn't help, but he doesn't move for fear of disturbing Frisk anyway.

*You know, Sans, if you try to hold on to something too tight, it usually ends up breaking. They draw in a breath and let it out, slow. Or sometimes, it doesn't, but you cut your palms open and bleed.*

He can feel Chara's hand move past his face, probably to touch Frisk, but then they draw back.

*Sometimes we need to let our selfishness go, Sans.*

He frowns and moves his jaw, but something stings as soon as that happens.

Chara sighs. *I know what you are thinking. I know that you justify your actions with selflessness since you chose to take on Frisk's burden.* They pause and then Sans feels a light weight on his shoulder. *But Sans, have you ever thought that this was never your burden to bear?*

There's another pause, like Chara's thinking about how best to say this. *You know, the universe will always smooth out its anomalies. Fate will always take back what belongs to it, even when you try to steer destiny into your own hands,* they say, *And this was never your story to tell. This was never your role to fill in. And now everything's ground to a halt, Sans.*

They chuckle to themselves. *I suppose this is what happens when we try to fight Fate.*

Chara's hand lifts from his shoulder and they don't speak for the rest of the night. Sans wakes up hours later wondering when he fell asleep.



He can barely walk, so Frisk somehow manages to get him a wheelchair. He suspects the king had it made by Alphys without her knowledge, because otherwise, Sans would be dead right now.

So sometimes Frisk wheels him to the garden while Flowey describes everything they pass by. Sometimes they bring flowers or rocks for Sans to touch. Sometimes he runs his hands over the surface of the wall to feel their rough texture scrape against his fingerbones. Sometimes he asks Frisk if he could touch their face, and they consent. He traces his fingers over their cheeks, the bridge of their nose, their temple, the space beneath their eyes, mentally mapping it out, trying to picture their face now flowerless.

If Chara is watching, they say nothing.

Once, on a lazy afternoon in the garden when Sans is sitting down a patch of grass and memorizing Frisk's face, he clears his throat and croaks, "I would do anything for you, you know that?"

Frisk stills.

And then he feels their lips curve up into a smile while hot liquid stains his fingerbones.

"I know."



*You know, Frisk did defy Fate, more than once, Chara says one night. They're sitting beside Sans on the bed again. Their soul refused to die, which is a glaring example. And then there's the fact that, despite the fact that they were dying, they were willing to offer up their soul to save all of monsterkind. Chara hums, Grim as it sounds, I think they were just supposed to die. And they turned that around when they wanted to do such a huge gesture with what was left of them.*

They put their hand on Sans' shoulder again and give it a gentle squeeze. *I really hate this free will bullshit we've all got around us.*

Sans shifts slightly so that he can move his jaw. It hurts like hell, but he wheezes, "What are you?"

The question takes Chara back, he can tell, because the hand on his shoulder freezes and then slowly withdraws.

*They say that the angel, the one who has seen the surface, will arrive in the Underground and it will go empty, Chara says, That was probably me, but just like everything else I do, that was a failure.*

The bed raises slightly as they move. *And I guess – I already told you – the universe will always smooth out its own anomalies, Frisk was supposed to take my place. To do what I never could.* They laugh. *Maybe that's why we're so similar.*

Chara puts their hand on his shoulder and squeezes again. *Sans, for however long this lasts, you need to make sure Frisk is happy, alright? You...you did this for them, so you better make sure this is all worth it. Before this iteration unravels – because it will, it always will, until the universe is satisfied – you need to make the most of this. You backed yourself into this corner now you need to live in it.*

He feels them rest their head on his shoulder too, just beside their hand. They sigh. *And please tell Asriel and Frisk that I'm sorry. I'm sorry I can't do anything about this.*

Then they touch their fingers to Sans' cheekbone and whisper, *It's your turn to stay determined.*

It sounds like a blessing.

# Anatomy

Before everything else happened, Sans the skeleton used to be one of the brightest minds in the Underground.

Alphys is not an idiot either, and only an idiot would reject ready knowledge set in front of them because their useless pride isn't letting them. So she sets her experiment accordingly, using Sans' research as guidelines. He had gotten quite far in the field before he...well, she figures the right term for it is 'softened'.

The flower's still stuck somewhere in the paper shredder. Alphys wonders if she's going to find blood there, considering that thing was sentient, but it didn't quite dust when she rammed it and its boot into the machine while it was screaming and crying. Not quite a monster, but not quite a normal flower either. Considering the biology of flowers though, she's probably just going to find chloroplasts smeared all over the inside of the paper shredder, bits of petals, stem and leaves, and the remains of a shredded boot.

How the mighty fall. Once the prince of the Underground, then a traitorous flower in a boot and now a slush of plant matter.

Sans is...incapacitated. Not dead, but incapacitated. No doubt Papyrus would want to run his brother through himself, and Alphys doesn't want to risk Papyrus' wrath, so she's left him alive.

The human, though, as long as its soul is harvested, is fair game.

But it's a Determined one. These ones are tricky to kill because if Sans' research is right, these ones have the ability to manipulate time.

It looks pathetic, Alphys thinks. Lame, blind and barely unable to speak and breathe with all of the flowers crowding its body. She can't quite remember if there were flowers on the other humans that fell here. It has been a long time.

But she's a scientist. And she's curious. And she hasn't had the chance to call Papyrus or Undyne between jamming Asriel – Flowey? – in the paper shredder and throwing Sans to the amalgamates before clamping magic restraints on him when he was weak enough, and then throwing him in one of the old nullifier tube prototypes.

She doesn't bother with anesthetic. She has no idea how human biology works on live subjects, and if the anesthetic proves to be lethal to the human, she might end up killing it and then the Determination would trigger a time travel, and she'll lose all progress and memory. So that's a no-go. Better to hear it scream its lungs out than die.

She does hook up IVs to it, dosed with enough substance to make sure that the human's soul holds strong and keeps it alive. Curious little effect of monster food on human souls. It heals the soul and keeps it alive, but the body itself is slow to response.

Asriel and Sans had both called the human Frisk. Alphys writes it down dutifully on her notes.

From what she can see of the human's torso, it's covered with golden flowers. There's a patch of skin just below their ribs, and the lower half of their face is still clear, but majority of their limbs, their neck, even under their hair are swarmed by buttercups.

The knives are still sterilizing. Alphys reaches over and pulls on a bloom on the human's neck. The human cries out, back arching, unable to flee because of the restraints on its wrists and ankles. The heartbeat monitor pulses rapidly.

Interesting. So the flowers are connected to its nervous system for it to be able to feel pain. That meant that the flowers were part of the body itself; they were probably *growing out* of the body, rather than just *growing on* the body.

She grabs her notes, writes that down, and then goes to wash her hands and puts on her gloves. Time to test the hypothesis.

Growing out or growing on?

She picks up her scissors first. They should be sharp enough to cut through flower stems if there were any.

Alphys tugs lightly on a petal and snips it.

The human lets out a choked gasp, mouth curling in pain.

Ah, well.

Alphys fists a handful of blooms and starts cutting away.

The human starts to whimper, and then starts breathing in short puffs before opting to clench their teeth in an attempt to muffle their pain. Admirable, Alphys thinks. She pulls on a handful of flowers tighter and raises them. The human shrieks and then clamps their mouth shut to stop from screaming. Alphys cuts the little strands of red that connect the flowers to the body.

It's a little funny. Because what Alphys is doing is just a little garden weeding, and yet there's a human writhing on the operating table because it hurts. It's hard to take it seriously because flowers usually aren't a part of human anatomy.

Maybe it's like putting scissors to your skin. *Snip.* Epidermis grazed. Doesn't hurt so bad. And then you cut further. *Snip. Snip. Snip.* And the skin continues to thin and thin and thin, tiny strips falling onto the floor until you're bleeding and realized you've partially flayed your fingers to the bone. *Snip.* Sever a nerve.

Once the torso is clear, the human is breathing hard. Alphys can see little tear tracks running from underneath the flowers on its head to what is visible of its cheeks.

Its torso is pocked with tiny red pinpricks from where the flowers had grown. Alphys has gathered a few samples in a jar, the ones that had the thin red 'stems' (nerves) most visible.

There are a few marks on the skin that are starting to well up with blood. Alphys tuts, grabs an alcohol-soaked rag and starts cleaning the torso. The human hisses and tries to wriggle away when the alcohol hits the numerous, tiny wounds.

So far, everything points to the flowers growing out of the body. Where else would the nerves on the blooms connect to?

It's possible they sprouted from the inside, worming their way to a pore, and then bloomed out.

Alphys looks over to her tray of surgical knives. She shifts the mask on her face.

She makes a straight cut from the upper part of the chest to the navel. The human grits its teeth and its groan is strained. But the cut is precise, and no blood is coming out of the incision, so long as the human doesn't think to move.

No anesthetic. The human's chest heaves as Alphys takes the knife away once the cut is done. Blood escapes to the skin. Wonderful.

Alphys grunts in displeasure as she wipes it away. The heartbeat monitor is going faster. It's still alive though.

She makes a horizontal cut just above the vertical one so that the first incision is perpendicular to the horizontal cut. Another cut by the navel to do the same. The human writhes. More blood wells up and Alphys has to hold the human down by the throat to make them stop squirming.

The blood is dry by the time they've stopped wriggling. Rather inconvenient.

Alphys reaches for another rag. She pushes hard onto the crusted blood to get it out. Alcohol squeezes out onto the human's skin, and into its wound, that *opened directly into the inside of the human's chest*.

The human screams.

Alphys pulls back. The human strains at its bindings more, and more blood gushes out of its wounds. Alphys clicks her tongue in annoyance, goes over to the nearest cupboard, and returns with morphine.

Just a bit manages to calm the human down.

It's not enough to completely drown out the pain, it seems, as the human still winces when Alphys cleans off the blood on their chest.

Once that's taken care of, Alphys switches her gloves for new ones.

Then she returns to stand by the operating table and debates if she should use her hands for this, or maybe use one of the tongs.

She chooses hands.

Carefully, she slides the tip of her thumb underneath the cut at the center of the human's chest while her index finger holds the skin on top. The human jerks a little at the contact.

Alphys *peels* the skin back. The human sucks in a long breath as she does so, back arching again.

She expected to see tiny pods on the underside of the skin, or maybe growing on the muscles, on the outside of the intestines, or the outside of the bones. But there's nothing. Just normal human biology from what she's studied from the other humans. It does look a little funny – there's ruffles everywhere, unlike when she'd opened up the rest of the six dead humans from before, but maybe that's the difference from dead and alive with humans.

She holds the edge of the other cut skin and peels back again. The human sucks in another breath that breaks off in a gasp. A tear escapes from under the flowers on its eyes.

More ruffles. Alphys can barely make out the shape of the intestines. Only the ribcage seems to be spared of this fate, as it's still recognizable, albeit bloody.

Alphys frowns. There's definitely something odd about this.

She pinches one of the ruffles – thin, soft, a little slick with blood – and the human whimpers a bit. She reaches for the scissors and snips it.

Then she drops in one of her tiny alcohol glasses and watches as red explodes in the liquid, freeing the thin film of an object from the blood. She pinches it by the tongs again and shakes it around the glass to get rid of the rest of the red clinging to it.

She lifts it out. It's bright yellow.

Alphys frowns. She looks around the room to look for a microscope, because she can swear that this looks like a flower petal.

She takes another sample, ignoring the cry the human gives, and cleans it. She runs the first one under a microscope and ungloves one hand to hold the second sample. She holds it hard enough to smear yellow on her nails.

She turns to the microscope and starts looking at the first.

The human's calmed down once she's done, and Alphys furiously writes on her notes in disbelief.

There are buttercups growing in the human's insides.

She checks to make sure, bringing a rag small enough to wipe off the blood on the flowers growing on the human's intestines. There's alcohol, of course, so the human hisses and whimpers the whole time.

The flowers are bright and healthy, lining up the walls of the muscles. Alphys lifts one up to see if it's connected by a nerve and ignores the human's scream.

It is. She'll have to harvest the intestine and open it up to see where the flowers are rooted.

The ribs, curiously, don't have flowers growing on them. Alphys adjusts the lamp above her head and squints so that she can see if the lungs are infested. It's not a very good view with the bones in the way.

Bone saw. She needs a bone saw.

The human's shrieking sounds like it's choking on its own blood.

It thrashes and Alphys is still holding the saw, so sometimes the blade slips and hits muscle instead. "Hold still," she mutters once, but continues to dig the blade into the sternum to break it apart.

She manages to open the ribcage, but the lungs are mangled from all the times the blade had slipped and sliced into it. Oh well. She takes a scalpel and holds the human by the throat as she cuts the lungs open.

The insides are, as expected, filled with blooming flowers too. The lungs' surface are covered with the red-drenched petals, and when Alphys wipes the blood off with a gloved hand, a bit of yellow peeks through.

The human is gurgling, kept holding on by the magic being pumped through their veins, but their complexion has gone pale and their skin is clammy. Alphys doesn't have that much time.

She digs around for the heart, jostling shredded lungs and bones in the process.

There it is.

It's beating, weakly, and on its surface are red flowers, speckled with a bit of yellow, as if they had just grown there and had just been spattered with blood.

Alphys reaches down and lifts the heart, tugging at arteries in the process. The human weakly squirms. One artery snaps and blood gushes out, pooling down the cavity of the chest and spraying the flowers and Alphys' face .

Alphys reaches for a rag and cleans the flowers as best as she can. The human twitches weakly.

With every uneven *thump* the heart gives, the flowers lift slightly with the muscle. Alphys lifts one flower, and yes, it's still connected by a nerve to the heart. The flowers are literally infesting the human's body from the inside, growing on every muscle it can, including the vital organs.

"How are you even alive?" Alphys murmurs, lifting her eyes up to meet the human's red ones, which are going glassy. The human's almost dead, so writing anything down will be futile if the Determination kicks in. It's already a miracle how this thing is even alive –

And then it isn't.

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# The Last Reset

Frisk comes back to life after receiving one last reset from a mysterious man. In this run, they decide to try to stand their ground and befriend the monsters instead of running away, much to Sans' dispute. Flowey and Sans must escort Frisk to the Barrier once more, without letting them die. They can only hope everyone can make it to the surface alive this time.



# The End of All Things

He should have known there was something wrong the first time Frisk came to their house in the middle of the night, not even bothering to text or call him. Just knocked at the door, and since Sans was a light sleeper even after all the years they'd gotten out of the Underground, he answered the door, was about to crack a joke, but Frisk shuffled inside looking like they dragged themselves out of bed and straight there. For all he knew, they probably did.

The kid – nineteen years old now, actually, but the nickname never wore off – didn't talk the entire time. Instead, they just made themselves a mug of hot chocolate and sat down the kitchen table, Sans across them, just like they always did whenever they got nightmares and went to the skeleton brothers' house. Not that Toriel didn't do a good job at comforting them. It was just that...Sans knew things. Things only both of them, to their knowledge, knew about.

Frisk didn't sleep for the rest of the night, and Sans didn't either. The skeleton walked the human home just before dawn, clapping a hand on their shoulder, squeezing and saying, "Take care of yourself, kid," before heading back.

That was the first nightmare Frisk had in three months of nothing.

It had been seven years. Seven years since the human had brought them out of the Underground, became Ambassador of Monsters; seven years since monsterkind was reintroduced to human society and although there were a few rough patches here and there, things were going smoothly for both races; seven years since Sans thought he actually had a future again.

Frisk was doing good with their nightmares. Three months clean. Of course, Sans didn't expect them to be clean for the rest of their life, because even he still had some, but he thought it was just the kid's usual nightmare. And since Frisk didn't want to talk about it, he didn't pry. He just let them have their drink and made sure they got home safely.

After that first night, it became more frequent. Frisk came again, the next week. And then two days after that. Until by the third week, it was almost a nightly occurrence for them to end up at Sans' doorstep in their pajamas and rumpled hair.

Sans asked. Frisk didn't answer. He didn't pry. He wasn't supposed to.

He figured Toriel knew about the resurfacing of Frisk's nightmares, since sometimes she came over to give them a few boxes of Frisk's favorite tea, favorite brand of hot chocolate, and a spare blanket and pillow. Her eyes were a little dulled and red around the edges. And she had the air of someone who felt like they were helpless as they watched the world fall around them.

Frisk would talk to him if they ever stayed for long in the morning, but they never talked about their nightmares. Papyrus made them spaghetti to cheer them up, and the human smiled and accepted; complimented that Pap's cooking had been getting better and better. The taller

skeleton beamed at the praise. Sans noticed that Frisk's smile was a little empty and didn't quite reach their eyes.

During the daytime, he still saw the kid go to college. They talked with a few of the monster students, but their demeanor still carried that burdened gait to it. He hadn't seen them laugh in weeks, not at his jokes or at their friends'. Frisk just smiled.

Once, when Toriel didn't come to deliver Golden Flower tea to Sans' house and the skeleton brothers decided to get some on their next supply run, Frisk tagged along, saying that it was the least they could do since they were sort of freeloading around the brothers' house. Which Sans thought was bullshit, since they were the one that freed all the monsters. If anything, they were entitled to freeload at any monster's house.

They passed by the aisle where the teas were shelved. Frisk picked up the box with the golden flowers at the front of the design, just below the logo of the product. Their gaze lingered a little too long at the flowers. They didn't even blink; when Sans gently pried the box out of their hand, they startled and rubbed at their eyes, which were tearing up.

A month passed. Frisk stayed at the boys' house every night, even brought their studying for their pre-finals there. They still didn't talk about the nightmares, and Sans still didn't pry, because some days Frisk looked like they were going to unravel if he said anything about what they saw every night.

Frisk visited the school where Toriel was teaching as part of a campaign to teach the younger generation about the monsters and that they meant no harm. A few of the monsters tagged along – Sans, Asgore, Undyne – to make sure nobody tried to hurt the Ambassador (Undyne) and so that a leader of the monsters was there to oversee the event (Asgore). Sans was just worried.

There was a garden at the back. Asgore tended to it sometimes, and the kids already knew him as the 'fluffy goat king' because of it. Frisk stared at the spot with the golden flowers, and again never blinked or took their eyes off of it until Sans touched them. Frisk jerked and turned to him, surprised. Sans raised his hands and tilted his head downward, "Easy there, kiddo. Just me."

Frisk looked at him. Their eyes darted around his face for a while, then his neck and his shirt, like they were looking for something. "...Sans," they said.

The skeleton nodded. "Yeah. I mean my jokes aren't too fleshed out, but you can't want to forget me just because of that, kid," he smirked.

Frisk didn't smile back. Their eyes did flicker to the left side of his teeth, again, like they were looking for something.

Another month. Finals ended. Summer came. Frisk stayed at the skeleton brothers' place most days. When Papyrus asked out of genuine curiosity, Frisk said they were more comfortable there. Toriel still came to give them supplies, but delivered a few clothes this time. She told Frisk that Asgore would love to garden with Frisk again.

Frisk smiled, hugged their mother, and said that they just needed to rest their mind a little. The stress of being Ambassador and college was just getting to them, along with their nightmares. They didn't want to burden their parents.

Toriel left, looking dejected.

"Why don't you talk to her about it?" Sans asked them, before they both went to bed.

Frisk paused on the stairs. Their brow furrowed. "She wouldn't understand," they said.

"And I would?" Sans asked.

To his surprise, Frisk shook their head. "No."

Frisk still didn't go to help Asgore with his gardening around their house. When asked, their answer was, "They're buttercups."

Papyrus thought the human was allergic to the flowers. Sans narrowed his eyesockets at the statement, confused.

At the end of the first month of summer, Frisk spoke to him when they were at the kitchen table again in the middle of the night. Frisk's voice was a little hoarse and nasally from crying.

"Do you think he's still there in the Underground?" they asked. Before Sans could ask them to clarify, they added, "Flowey?...Asriel?"

He frowned. They'd talked about the prince before, when Frisk was younger. That was usually associated with the guilt of being unable to save him.

"I don't know," he said. Then, "What brought this up?"

Frisk looked down on their mug. They moved it a little so that the drink swirled, then drank it. They didn't say anything for the rest of the night.

It was finally during the next Summit meeting Frisk had with delegates of nations around the world that the kid started to spill. Sans had listened to them practice their speech over and over during the plane ride, muttering to themselves and making faces whenever they forgot. He nearly had it memorized himself.

When Frisk had said their last line, he expected them to say 'thank you' before stepping down the stage. Instead, Frisk raised their hands and started to sign as they spoke. Their hands were shaking.

"Always..." Frisk's hands faltered, but then they steeled their jaw and continued signing with renewed determination as they spoke. Like it wasn't for them. Like it was for something or someone very important. "...be kind. Sometimes kindness is all we can give. Sometimes kindness is enough."

Years later, that statement from the Ambassador of Monsters would be a famous quote printed in history books and taught at schools. It would be called one of the most inspiring things the

Ambassador had ever said, and be noted as the moment the nineteen-year-old human silenced the entire world so that it would listen to their piece. Scholars would say it was the turning point for human and monster relations around the world. A turning point for the better.

But at the moment that it was spoken, Sans saw the sheen of moisture on Frisk's eyes, and he knew that this had something to do with the human's sleepless nights, and that somehow, the kid had broken.

The room broke out in applause after Frisk finished and stepped down. They excused themselves, and people let them, figuring that giving such an emotional and impactful speech must have taken a lot from them. Sans followed them out, cursing the fact that the kid had roped him into wearing a suit so that he wouldn't get kicked out. And he had wanted to stay and make sure Frisk was alright, so he had to go with it.

Once out of the room, he tried to follow Frisk as best as he could. The kid was running as fast as they could – luckily, just to the restrooms. He knew where that was.

The restrooms were empty and he found them slumped against one of the walls, knees to their chest as they cried. He approached them slowly and gingerly laid a hand on their forearm. When Frisk didn't react, he slowly gathered them in his arms. Frisk clung onto his suit and he felt the fabric bunch up, surely creasing. He didn't care.

"You did good out there, Frisk," he said, patting their head.

Frisk hiccuped and tried to bury their face further into his suit.

"Don't worry about it, sweetheart," he held them tighter and pressed his teeth to their hair. "You did great."

Frisk suddenly pulled back, taking Sans' face into their hands. The skeleton stiffened in surprise as the human searched his features, looking at his eyes and teeth a little too long, before their shoulders sagged and they collapsed against him again.

"Sometimes I forget," they mumbled. They turned so that their face was buried in Sans' suit, and he felt their mouth against his sternum as they spoke, "That I'm Frisk and you're Sans and we're not..."

"We're not what?" he asked.

"Not...them," Frisk breathed, "But it happened – it should have. I dream about it. I wouldn't dream about it if it didn't happen."

"About what, kiddo?"

Frisk didn't answer. Sans wrapped his arms around them again after a few minutes.

They stayed like that for so long that his bones felt like they were permanently being set into that position, or that Frisk had somehow fallen asleep. He was about to pick them up when the kid

whispered in a voice so low, he wouldn't have caught it if it weren't for the silence of their isolation.

"If I told you..." they started, "If I told you that, if when I fell down the Underground and you had lost all hope...if you had thought that violence was the answer to your problems, and that it was every monster to himself; if I told you that I would have tried to defend myself, would you hate me?"

Sans frowned. He could understand the need to defend oneself, although the notion of it coming from Frisk was out of place. He'd seen the kid get hurt. Never once had he seen them fight back.

"Where's this coming from, kid?"

"When I first fell into the Underground," they paused to lick their lips. "I had thought, that if it came to it, I would defend myself. The monsters were so kind, and they told me to be merciful, but I was just waiting for the other shoe to drop." They fell silent again, "And when it did, I had already learned that...the way things ran in the Underground, you never had to hurt anyone."

Their shoulders started shaking again. "And Sans, I have hurt you so, so many times. I killed your brother...sometimes I wonder if you're just pretending to be my friend because everyone doesn't remember. Or if you're scared because I can decide to reset any time."

"Frisk," he pulled away and cupped the human's face this time, wiping the tears away with his fingers. "Listen, I don't hate you, okay?" he said. Frisk seemed to cry harder at that. He mentally cursed himself. "It wasn't you who did those things. *You* are different. *You* wouldn't hurt –"

"That's exactly it, Sans!" Frisk's voice was hoarse enough that when they shouted, it sounded like a rasp as they pushed his arms away. "I *would*. I – me, not Chara – *have* thought about hurting people. I was always wary in the Underground. I didn't trust anyone! I was always...a-always..." the human's shoulder dropped as the fight left them. Their hands dropped from where they were gripping Sans' clothes, instead landing on Sans' knees, useless.

"I'm not as kind as everyone thinks of me. I can't do what they expect me to do," they said, "And I *hate* myself for it. I don't understand why, in a world that's lost all hope, a version of me can hold on to it, but *I can't*."

He stayed silent as he waited for the human's breathing to steady, chest rising and collapsing against his. When they had calmed down, he took their jaw into his hands again and tilted their head up so that they were looking at each other. Sans pressed their foreheads together and felt the human whimper.

"I know what you did, Frisk," Sans said, "And I know you feel sorry for it. And you know what *I* did..."

Frisk closed their eyes and nodded minutely.

"And I forgive you for it, okay?" he said, letting a tear catch on one of his fingers and wiping it away. "Because if we do lose hope, do you know who I believe in to bring it back?"

He waited for them to open their eyes. And when they did, he mustered every single ounce of gratitude and sincerity in his soul.

“You.”

# Unexpected

Sometimes, unexpected things happen.

Frisk had gained a little weight. It caused no alarm in the beginning, they were growing accustomed to surface life once again. Eating a lot of different things, showing Sans all the food that was unavailable underground. They had simply begun overeating. Frisk would start going for a jog every other day. No problem.

They felt a little sick from time to time, again, this caused no major alarm. The stress of helping humans and monsters cooperate was immense sometimes. Both parties were quite stubborn in some regards, but steps had been made towards a brighter future. They would feel better soon.

The real alarm bells rang in the distant corner of their mind when they were suspiciously light. Frisk still silenced them. Sometimes cycles were different. Sure they had gotten lighter than usual, perhaps from stress again. Periods could be very finicky beasts. They ignored it for a month.

And another.

And another

Frisk was now full blown late. Their menstrual cycle was completely absent. The alarm that they had so desperately tried to silence was now ringing full blast in their head, making them dizzy.

On a sleepy sunday they sat alone in the bathroom, leaning against the toilet. The immediate feeling of nausea and dizziness had woken them up, luckily, this was early enough that Sans would never be awake. Not for a few hours at least. They had time to figure this out.

Crimson eyes filled with all sorts of confusion and panic.  
Counting days, remembering months.

They had been light for three months and late for one. Frisk couldn't be pregnant. It was an absolute impossibility, Sans wasn't human. He was made of magic. They couldn't procreate.

Frisk stripped themselves of their nightshirt and stared at their reflection in the full length mirror that hung from the bathroom door.

They had gotten slightly thicker.

That couldn't be the beginnings of a baby bump.

Not even possible.

How?

Of course they didn't have a test in the house. Why would they even think to keep one around? This. Was. Impossible. Would a test even work? Hopefully. The hormonal changes would hopefully be the same.

More panic, they slowly set their hand over the small bump. Slender fingers tracing around it. Frisk couldn't be seen going to get a pregnancy test. Most humans and monsters knew who they were. Knew it was impossible for a monster to get a human pregnant. The rumors of infidelity would reach Sans. Gossip would break his heart.

Would Sans think that Frisk was unfaithful? Would he hate them?

A tear rolled down their cheek. They had to be sure before they told him. They needed the truth to smack them in the face before even they believed it.

Slowly creeping back into their room they hunted down some clothing, the only thing open this early on a sunday was a small 24 hour convenience store several blocks from their current abode. Donning a pair of sunglasses and their hair up in a bun they slipped out of the house unnoticed.

The store was empty much to Frisk's relief. They only thing they had to worry about was the redhead human cashier who leaned sleepily on the counter. Lazily scrolling through her phone; a cheap sounding pop song humming through its speakers. She didn't look like she cared too much about what was going on around her. Only acknowledging Frisk with a nod and a yawn.

Frisk was on a mission, hunting through the aisles of odds and ends until they found the small section with random bits and pieces for sexual health. Condoms, pregnancy tests, feminine products and the like. Scanning over the packages Frisk decided on the most reliable looking one and briskly walked to the counter.

The cashier raised an eyebrow, green eyes glancing over Frisk once or twice before scanning the item. "I ain't no judge," she shrugged as Frisk hastily put the money in

her hand, grabbing the item and leaving before they could get their change. The girl shrugged and returned to her phone.

Home was still quiet. Frisk peered into their bedroom, Sans appeared to be very much asleep. A sigh of relief escaped their lips and they returned to the bathroom, closing the door quietly.

Two lines is yes.

One line is no.

Waiting. The waiting would kill them. To pass the time they pondered how they were going to hide the package. If this was all for nothing they couldn't leave it in the open. Not wanting to plant even a seed of doubt in Sans' head. They would never be unfaithful. They loved him with all their heart and SOUL. No human or monster could ever pry them away, not even death itself.

Enough time had passed.

Frisk almost didn't want to look. What if they were just being stupid? What if there was another, more reasonable, explanation for all of this? They would look like a complete idiot. Feel like a complete idiot. Taking a deep breath they picked it up. Hands shaking.

Two.

There were two lines.

Frisk couldn't breathe. All logic and reason was gone. This didn't make sense. This was impossible. How in the world could they possibly be pregnant? What were they going to do? What would happen to them? Could... Could a child even survive?

They cried. Quietly sobbing into a towel. Fear. They were so afraid. They had to tell Sans. They couldn't hide it. If they were in fact four months pregnant they would start to show soon. Had Sans noticed the bump? Did he just not think anything of it?

Frisk splashed their face with cold water. They needed to gather their resolve, their courage. They had to do this now. It was too late to go back, too late to change anything now.

This was happening. They were going to have a baby.

They tiptoed into the bedroom and approached their sleeping skeletal husband. Words caught in their throat as nerves held them back. Maybe they would wait until a better time, go make breakfast or go clear their head. As they turned to leave his hand caught their wrist.

"Where were you Sweetheart?" By the looks of it he hadn't been awake for long, but enough to notice Frisk had been missing for a while.

"Sans..." Frisk bit down on their bottom lip, unsure how to proceed. A deep breath. Inhale and exhale. Now or never.

They slowly knelt onto the bed beside him. Rather than using words, they took his hand and placed it over the lightly defined bump, "It's yours."

-

It was there, this was real.

Sans could feel something under his bony hand. When Frisk straightened their back it protruded a small amount, noticeable if you really looked. It was a little firmer than the rest of their body. The slightest flush of red coloured his cheekbones. Sans' large hand lovingly held the spot where, tucked safely in Frisk's womb, a child slept.

His child. A wonderful seemingly impossible child, something tangible that would be part of him and part of the person he loved so dearly.

Frisk sat there, eyes closed, taking deep breaths. They removed his hand from their bump and laced their fingers through his. "I'm so scared," they breathed.

Their voice snapped Sans out of his trance, "sweetheart... i don't understand h-how," clumsy rushed words poured from his mouth, "i mean..." he paused, collecting thoughts, "how far...?"

"Three or four months," Frisk's voice cracked, grip on his hand tightening, "please believe me Sans, I would never cheat on yo-"

"frisk," Sans interrupted as he sat upright, his other hand brushing the hair out of their face. "sweetheart, i know that. i might not understand how but i believe ya," he flashed them a sweet smile, he was much calmer than Frisk had anticipated. It was almost an eerie calm.

Tears now freely rolled down their cheeks but they smiled. "Oh Sans," Frisk let go of his hand and wrapped their arms firmly around him, burying their head in his shoulder, "I love you so much."

"I love you too," Sans' arms held Frisk tightly, hand gently rubbing their back. The morning melted into the late afternoon. Frisk had napped most of the day, slowly fading in and out of sleep. Sans wasn't too bothered. The nausea from early that morning seemed to come back in waves throughout the day. Whoever had called it 'morning sickness' clearly had lied to females everywhere.

They hadn't spoken much about what to do next. The shock of everything still making them both a little numb, both expressing the utmost confusion with how this could possibly have happened.

What was known, or assumed as all knowledge was now thrown into question; was that humans and monsters were entirely too different to be compatible. Humans were physical and were blessed with 'DETERMINATION' while monsters were magical and their bodies were very closely tied to their SOUL.

Sans, albeit rather crudely, had brought up that they had slept together numerous times before. What changed? What went differently? It had to have happened on one of the first nights they spent together on the surface. Frisk wasn't covered in hundreds of buttercups. They were more relaxed, calmer. The last possibility was that human/monster conception was just incredibly difficult and not outright impossible as previously thought. For them, lady luck had rolled the dice in favor of creating a new life.

The subject of going to see Alphys was brought up.

"No." His voice was stern with a hint of fear, "she would experiment on you," the fear now more prevalent, "I don't know what I'd do if..." the connotation of his words hung thick in the air.

He laid beside Frisk, who had snuggled themselves back into bed. Sans hand gently caressed their baby bump. The gentle motion did seem to assist with Frisk's sickness.

Frisk and Sans agreed to keep the pregnancy a secret for as long as they could. At the very least until they had found more details; how far along Frisk was for certain and what exactly they were dealing with. The uncomfortable question of what the baby looked like weighed deeply on their minds. The more important question of if

the child was currently healthy had to be top concern. Frisk needed to see a doctor, a doctor that would agree to see them after hours.

The following day was filled with phonecalls.

Many clinics outright refused, the reactions varied between skeptical of how serious Frisk was to outright refusal to even speak to them further. It was heartbreaking, their emotions and hormones got the better of them once or twice. Violently swapping between rage and sadness.

The mood swings were often so fast it terrified Sans. Frisk had shouted at him once or twice for seemingly no reason. He quickly found out Frisk could be pacified with a glass of milk or a bowl of cereal. Which was odd, Frisk wasn't particularly 'obsessed' with either food before.

After many hours, Frisk had finally found a clinic that agreed to see them in the night immediately. The call was filled with giggles and a strange excitement, Sans asked about it but was met with secrecy. He would have to see when they got there.

Night sky sparsely dotted with stars and a cold spring wind in the air. It was a nice night. The pair decided to walk to their secret meeting. Well, Sans objected in concern for Frisk's 'condition' but was reassured that a walk was not going to break them. Fingers laced together, Frisk back in the large coat they had worn so much before coming to the surface. It was peaceful. Streets were mostly empty, they saw the odd car here and there and a human cyclist who gave Sans a double take, obviously still adjusting to seeing monsters walking around. Sans flashed them a toothy grin, partly to be an ass and scare them. This resulted in a playful elbow to the ribs.

The clinic was its own building, possibly independently owned as opposed to being in a large office building with multiple doctors.

In front of the building was a peculiar sight, Frisk's face lit up while Sans managed a confused expression. A bipedal dog in a pale pink sundress and a green cardigan. She didn't look much like the dogs from Snowdin, Sans didn't recognize her. Deep copper fur and floppy ears. Tail wagging absolutely out of control that Sans figured it would break off at any moment.

The dog sniffed the air and turned to look at them, an excited bark escaped her muzzle, "Human! Human! Come Come! Over here!" She beckoned, one paw holding a large keyring, "Doctor was running late so he told me to let you in!!" She unlocked the door and ushered them inside the building, "I'm Chienna! Please sit sit sit over there!"

"Thank you!" Frisk replied and walked into the building, Sans following right behind her.

It was your typical medical facility. A large front desk, various computers and printers all lined up next to neat stacks of papers. The waiting room painted with soft pink and blue stripes, some scattered toys in a corner and a myriad of chairs. One wall completely covered with photos and cards that Sans only gave a passing glance. He was beginning to become exasperated with the high energy of the dog and sat himself down in a comfortable looking seat.

Frisk stood at the desk while Chienna rummaged through files and papers, "Oh! Oh! Here we are, Mama human I need you to fill out some paperwork!" The volume of her voice was excessive but Frisk didn't seem to mind, "We have no records of you because, oh my gosh it's your first time here!"

"Thank you," Frisk smiled, grabbing a pen that was sitting on the desk and began to fill out various questions. Some were normal, 'is this your first child?' 'Do you drink or smoke?', and some god oddly specific, 'how often are you sexually active?' Frisk had to really think about that, absently counting on their fingers. They looked behind them at Sans, who had put his palm to his face as the dog woman continued to talk.

Chienna suddenly popped up beside Frisk, her loud voice now hushed to a whisper, "Can...Can I pet the baby?" Her paw hovering closer to Frisk's baby bump, "Doctor Pierce told me to ask and not to pet but...can I pet?"

Frisk nodded and grasped the approaching paw lightly in their hand, "Of course." Placing it gently on the bump, other hand giving Chienna a delicate pat on the head.

She gasped, tail once again wagging itself into a blur, "YOU PET MEEEE! OH MY GOODNESS PETS!!!" Giggles and happy yelps filled the quiet office.

"Sorry I'm late," a tall greying man entered the office. He lightly carried a yawning toddler in a pink onesie, setting her gently beside Sans, "It was my weekend with my daughter, I had forgotten."

"Doctor!" Chienna's large brown eyes sparkled, "This is Mama Dreemurr and Papa Skeleton!" She excitedly pointed her paws towards them.

Sans quickly rose to his feet, towering over the other man. Red eyes looking him over, but saying nothing.

"Hello sir and madam," the doctor smiled softly and extended his hand towards Sans, "I am Doctor Pierce and I am very excited you have chosen to come see me about such a unique situation. I look forward to working with you."

Sans firmly shook his hand, "yes, hey."

"Thank you so much for doing this," Frisk bowed their head, "your receptionist was so delightful on the phone, I felt that because she was a monster she would be easier to talk to."

"Madam Dreemurr, I will do everything I can to help you and your husband with this joyous occasion," Pierce placed both hands on Frisk's shoulders, "your situation is a miracle. We're going to start with a couple standard procedures. If you could leave your coat with your husband and follow me for a moment we can get started."

"I'm coming too," Sans protested, throwing the doctor a glare.

"I assure you sir," he started, "It's simple things like taking height and weight and some more questions. I'll call you when it's time to see baby."

"Sans it's okay," Frisk reassured and handed him the coat, he leaned down and gave them a quick toothy kiss before grumpily sitting back down beside the drowsy toddler.

Chienna leaned over and whispered something in Pierce's ear, he chuckled and nodded, "I'll take you on that bet."

Sans watched as Frisk, the doctor and the receptionist disappeared down the dark hallway into a room at the end.

Sans was alone. Well mostly, he glanced down beside him to see two expressive blue eyes and a mop of blonde curls. "hey there kid," he smiled, trying to be as 'not scary' as he could.

"Cassie," the girl grinned, one of her front teeth missing. She looked to be no older than four years old.

"sans," he replied, unsure what the child wanted with him.

"Sands" she repeated incorrectly and jumped off the chair and stumbled her way to the pile of toys, sorting through them before choosing a stuffed cat and bringing it back over to Sans, "meow meow."

Sans chuckled, "that's a pretty nice kitty you got there princess."

Cassie smiled and began to unsuccessfully climb on Sans' lap. The fact she wasn't terrified of a giant skeleton impressed him. Sans could see how it would be easier for dog and rabbit monsters to fit in, he had frightened a small child once or twice while grocery shopping. Gently he reached down and picked her up, setting Cassie in his lap.

She tugged at his sweater and pointed to the previously ignored wall of pictures.

"what's this?" Sans glanced over. Many pictures of human children, exhausted looking mothers in hospital gowns, a few graduation photos. Cards expressing gratitude for safely delivering their children or helping them through medical issues. It put Sans a little more at ease, this man might know what he's doing.

A white folded piece of paper pinned to the wall caught his eye, he leaned closer to make out the light cursive it was written in.

'Thank you for trying'

... for 'trying'?

The realization hit him and he nervously gripped the arm of the chair, digging his fingers into the wood. Sometimes, children didn't make it.

The small child in his lap looked up at him curiously. Anxiety and fear had hit him too hard to notice her attention. He was afraid. He had to play calm for Frisk's sake, he didn't want them to stress or worry about what he felt. He was so afraid, what if something happened to Frisk? To the child?

Sans almost didn't even notice the dog receptionist scamper her way over to him, "Papa! They are ready for you now! Aren't you excited! I will take the human puppy from you!" The shrill sound of her overexcited voice snapped him back to reality and he slowly handed the doctor's child over to the dog woman.

"Bye bye sands," the girl yawned as Sans entered the room he had seen Frisk go into.

Frisk waved at him from a strange bed they were sitting up in, their midsection exposed, doctor plucking something into the machine beside them. Sans quickly closed the gap and was at Frisk's side.

"Okay, we're all good to go to see what's going on in there." The doctor grabbed a small bottle of gel and squeezed a clear substance onto the bump.

The cold sensation caused Frisk to shudder and grip Sans' hand. His eyes darting over angrily, "did that hurt them?"

"No... Sans it was just cold," Frisk's chuckle caused his expression to soften, looking at them and smiling.

Neither of them noticed the doctor roll a small piece of equipment across where he poured the gel, "Hey mom and dad we're going to get a picture soon."

Both looked at the small screen as he hit a few keys and turned some dials, a strange black and white picture started to appear, looking like strange circles of black. Move movement, a darker circle.

"Well! I'll be damned! I lost a bet," Doctor Pierce moved over the spot again, other hand pointing at the screen, "See that," two reasonably well-defined shapes in the mess of black and grey, "it *is* twins, they look normal and healthy."

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### Heartbeats.

The twins were developing normally. Frisk's initial guess had been correct, they were indeed four months pregnant. Just a few short weeks from being able to feel their movements.

Frisk didn't show as much as other women carrying twins. The doctor speculated that they were carrying the children closer to their back. A possible reason was that Frisk's abdominal muscles were tighter due to this being their first pregnancy. It wasn't going to cause complications, the children would move to where they needed to be.

So much information Sans couldn't really grasp it all. Suddenly finding himself responsible for two small lives instead of the perceived single life. Three lives if you counted Frisk.

He glanced down at them, he only now noticed a glow on their face. Their previous worries had washed away, replaced by a serene tranquility. Their children were healthy and appeared human. Would they be like him at all? How could they not be? It was frustrating for Sans to think about. So much he couldn't really

understand about the situation. Frisk seemed happy. One hand on their bump and the other hand's fingers delicately laced through Sans'. They discussed future appointments being more frequent than a normal pregnancy. Some specific dietary plans, and perhaps consulting a monster.

If Frisk was happy, that was all that mattered.

Sans glanced around the room, on an old rocking chair in the corner the small blonde girl slept in the arms of the dog woman. It was passed midnight and understandable that a toddler would be dead tired by this time. Still, he felt a little bad he wouldn't be able to say goodbye. Hopefully next time.

Many books, pamphlets and forms were loaded into a cute baby bottle patterned tote bag. The item Frisk was most enamored with was a small black and white print out of the ultrasound that the doctor had kindly laminated. It was the first picture of their children. Doctor Pierce had outlined the children in a white pen. To the untrained eye it could appear simply undisguisable as blotches. Unfortunately, one of the children was not facing the right direction to be able to determine its gender. For certain they knew they were having at least one daughter.

After thanking Doctor Pierce and Chienna for their time, Frisk and Sans took their leave. Due to how late it was and just his newly kickstarted overprotective instinct Sans insisted upon giving Frisk a piggyback ride home.

Draped in his large coat, Frisk yawned. "Twins," their gaze locked on the grayscale photo and resting their head on his shoulder.

Sans was slightly lost in thought, the absolute surrealness of the situation hitting him all at once. Frisk gently nudged him prompting a response, "damn shame we didn't get to see sweetpea's *wombmate*," he replied. He for sure had a daughter. His sweetpea; a pet name he decided the moment he saw the grey picture.

Frisk giggled at the terrible pun then smiled, "you're already calling her sweetpea?"

Sans shrugged, a flush of red across his cheekbones, "just a cute nickname."

"It's perfect," Frisk reassured him with a few quick kisses on his skull, "we still do need to think of their names, but, we have time."

Frisk fell asleep almost instantly, Sans was more uneasy. The minutes turned to silent hours of just... thinking. Would he even be a good parent? The cruel voice of inadequacy and anxiety in the back of his head sure didn't think so. Cruel mocking he attempted to quiet. How could he do this to Frisk? What if they couldn't survive this? If Frisk died his children would surely resent him forever. If by some unthinkable (but entirely possible in this delicate situation) outcome the children didn't make it, could they both be whole again?

Of course Frisk would be the most excellent mother. Sans knew his calm façade helped them come to terms with the pregnancy, fear being replaced with anticipation. He had to keep them smiling and happy, deal with his concerns and fears by himself. He had a moment to flip through a pamphlet Frisk had set on the bedside table and read that unnecessary stress was bad for an expecting mother.

Frisk shifted in their sleep. Rolling onto their back, one arm up by their face the other across their lower stomach. Slow rise and fall of their chest, the odd twitch of their fingers, sometimes sleepy mumbles escaped their lips. Sans carefully pulled down their nightshirt which had ridden up exposing their underwear and pulled the comforter over them. Although their room was warm, he had to make sure they didn't catch a chill.

How in the world did Sans not notice? He realized now that they were a little more plush in their mid-section and just two days earlier they had been... intimate. He really didn't notice that their SOUL had some of his magic in it? Or notice the now obvious bump where his children were? Was he that bad of a husband? No. Again quieting those thoughts of self-hatred. Skeletal fingers absentmindedly touching his necklace.

Every young monster found out sooner or later from their parents, teachers or friends where children came from.

The thing troubling him the most was the why.

Well, the why and how seemed to go hand in hand. Human bodies were so amazing. Frisk was so petite compared to him, and there they were growing two entirely new lives inside them. Even with Frisk having such little magic of their own.

Finally giving into fatigue, Sans wrapped an arm around his sleeping wife. Pulling Frisk close, being ever so careful to not wake them. Resting his skull on their shoulder after giving their cheek a toothy kiss.

"SANS DO YOU DO THIS TO PURPOSEFULLY ANGER ME?" Papyrus angrily motioned to a sock that had been placed on the floor of his living room.

"i'd say i'm pretty *socksessful* at pushing your buttons," Sans chuckled, lazily lounging on his brother's couch.

"DO YOU NOT HAVE YOUR OWN HOUSE TO BEFOUL? OR HAS YOUR FRISK WIFE KICKED YOU OUT FOR BEING SO HOPELESSLY DISGUSTING?" Papyrus rolled his eyes exaggeratedly, Sans had been here for a few minutes and had already managed to exasperate him.

"what, i can't visit my favourite brother?" Sans feigned despair, "that hurts bro. you wound me!"

Papyrus sighed, picking up the discarded sock, "YOU WANT SOMETHING, I KNOW YOU BETTER THAN THAT. DO YOU WISH TO BASK IN MY GREATNESS? DO YOU MISS ME?"

"actually," Sans paused to scratch the back of his skull, hunting for the proper words, "i have to tell you something pretty important pap."

"WELL, GET ON WITH IT!" Papyrus crossed his arms, drumming his fingers impatiently on his humerus. "I DON'T HAVE THE LUXURY OF STANDING AROUND BEING A FOOL ALL DAY."

"frisk is pregnant," Sans sighed, then looked up at Papyrus with a crooked smile.

The words hung in the air for a moment. Papyrus processing what was said, then spoke, "FRISK IS WHAT?"

It was understandable, this was so strange and unheard of. Sans chuckled, "it's hard to believe but-"

"NO, LIKE ACTUALLY WHAT?" Papyrus interrupted, a confused and irritated expression on his face, "WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?"

Sans narrowed his eye sockets, not initially believing Papyrus was serious, "...i don't know how to make it clearer than that bro... frisk is uh, 'expecting'"

"THAT DOESN'T HELP ME AT ALL SANS," Papyrus was serious, "IS THIS SOME KIND OF STUPID RIDDLE?"

"uh," Sans struggled to find words, did Papyrus really need a clearer picture? "okay. so uh, shit how do i..." a bead of sweat trickled down his skull, "so," he took a breath, "pregnant is... it means that... inside frisk right now there are children that are m- mine."

"OF COURSE THE ONE THING YOU WOULD EXCEL AT WOULD BE PROCREATION," Papyrus finally getting it threw his arms in the air wildly, "YOU COULDN'T BE A GOOD SENTRY, NO! SPAWNING ANOTHER YOU IS WHAT YOU ARE GOOD AT. I DON'T BELIEVE THIS."

Sans burst out laughing, "if we wanna get technical i spawned two more of me."

Papyrus put his face in his hand, "THIS IS WHAT YOU DECIDE TO OVERACHIEVE AT??? WHY DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD MAKE ME HAPPY TO HEAR? MORE OF YOU TWO TO TORMENT ME? GEE HOW FANTASTIC!" His expression betrayed him, his eyes watching Sans with intense curiosity, "WHEN IS THEIR INCUBATION COMPLETE?"

Sans grinned, his relationship with his brother wasn't perfect but much better than it used to be, "uh i think four or five months?"

"GOOD! THEIR PROLONGED DEVELOPMENT MEANS I HAVE TIME TO MAKE THE NECESSARY PLANS," Papyrus began pacing back and forth, one hand on his chin.

"....plans for what?" Sans was almost too worried to find out.

"THEIR BATTLE TRAINING OF COURSE," Papyrus looked entirely too proud of himself, "SOMEONE HAS TO! YOU ARE MUCH TOO SOFT AND AS THEIR FATHER WILL TEACH THEM NON-COMBAT LESSONS. THEY ARE BLESSED TO HAVE AN UNCLE AS GREAT AS I AND WILL BE AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE!"

Sans put his head in his hands. While glad Papyrus was obviously excited he would definitely have to find a way to curb his brother's enthusiasm once the twins were born.

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Spring rain pitter-pattered against the windows; rivers forming in the gutters of the street.

Frisk sat in the window seat in their living room, resting on soft red pillows and wrapped in a black damask print blanket. A pregnancy book clutched in their hand. Absorbing as much information as they could.

The whistle of a kettle coming from the kitchen roused them from their comfortable pillow nest. Frisk threw a couple bags of golden flower tea into a clear glass teapot and poured the boiling water in. The kitchen table set with teacups, a creamer, and a sugar bowl.

A soft knock at the door, Frisk shouted from the kitchen that they could come in. The door opened slowly, a large imposing goat monster closed her umbrella before ducking through the door into the porch, "My child?" she called out.

Frisk poked their head out of the kitchen, "I'm here mom," they noted that the absence of Asgore, "oh, was dad busy?"

Toriel softly shrugged, "Unfortunately he had some business to attend to with a human delegate, but, he sends his love." She neatly hung her raincoat and umbrella on the rack by the door shook some of the stray raindrops from her snowy fur.

Frisk carried the teapot from the kitchen and set it on the table before moving to tightly embrace Toriel, "it's been too long."

"I know my dear," she gently patted Frisk's head, "it's a busy job helping your father with diplomacy."

Frisk took Toriel's hand and lead her to the table, pulling a seat out for her monster mother. Pouring her a cup of tea before returning to the kitchen to grab a plate of cinnamon oatmeal cookies.

"Oh goodness, what is the occasion?" Toriel asked, noticing that the table was beautifully laid out, watching as the cookie plate was set beside her. "What has that skeleton done now?" Toriel raised an eyebrow, she liked Sans but also was not above giving him a hard time when she could.

Frisk disappeared back into the kitchen, Toriel curiously watched as they grabbed something being held by a magnet on the refrigerator. A laminated card? They held it close to their chest, a lovely smile graced their face. "Mom," Frisk paused to set the picture in front of Toriel, "I'm having twins."

Shakily she picked up the photo, knowing very well what it was, "I did not think this was possible," running her fingers across the picture of her unborn grandchildren, "I had sensed his magic when I walked in, I had simply thought he was lazing around as per usual, but this," setting the photo down they turned to smile at Frisk, glowing with maternal love, "I had not known this was something you planned." "Well,"

Frisk absently scratched the back of their head, "it was an accident."

Toriel chuckled, "My dear, pregnancies with monsters are not ever accidents. I did not think it necessary to discuss with you as I was certain this was impossible, please sit."

Frisk did as instructed, taking a seat at the table across from her mother.

"Frisk Dreemurr," Toriel began, "as are aware, monsters are beings bound very much to their SOUL. To even have children at all, one in a personal intimate relationship must desire something... more with their partner."

Frisk was silent, only nodding once or twice.

"You may not have had the direct desire to become pregnant but it is clear you and Sans both desired something," Toriel took a sip of her now cooled tea, "familial. I can understand the desire to have a family of your own. Your father and I adopted you into ours and we love you very much but we are not the family you were born with. Sans and his brother have a strained -albeit mending- relationship and absent parents."

"Don't worry. I love you mom," Frisk reassured, no matter if they were adopted they loved Asgore and Toriel very much, "it doesn't matter to me if you aren't my birth parents."

"I know you do dear," Toriel nodded, "you two must have had a shared desire for something tangible to truly bond you to one another. The only issue I have is the act you performed is exceedingly dangerous between a human and a monster. I am not here to lecture you, however, you are an adult and an expectant mother so I must be respectful."

"So, it had to do with our SOULs?" Frisk asked, piecing together the situation.

"Your SOUL accepted a piece of his SOUL and a portion of his magic," Toriel clarified. She took another sip of tea, "it is quite interesting. I was unaware a human had

enough magic to accept such a thing. Let alone that it also seemed to translate into your own reproductive process."

Frisk set a hand over their bump. This was a lot to process at once. Sans had to know, right? Was that why he was so accepting when they told him? They both desired something more?

Frisk and Sans hadn't really spoken about such things. About the possible futures.

The two drained the teapot and ate most of the cookies. Having interesting mother and daughter discussions. Toriel joking once or twice that she would bring down her wrath if Sans was a lazy father. Toriel was glad that when they had settled Frisk and Sans they chose a larger home than they needed at the time. Possibly a mother's intuition?

After helping Frisk wash the dishes Toriel departed. The rain had not let up, opening the umbrella with a sigh.

"hey your majesty," Toriel turned to see Sans coming up the path.

Her face hardened slightly, "While I do not doubt you will be good to my daughter and your children, know that I will be watching you Sans." Offshe went, saying nothing more.

If he had blood, it would certainly have ran cold. His mother-in-law could always incite fear in him.

Frisk has returned to their book and their comfortable nest in the window seat. Looking up only when they heard the door open and close.

"sweetheart?" Frisk heard him call out, as well as the sound of his jacket unzipping. He was probably soaked to the bone.

"I'm in the living room Sans," they replied, setting the book on the end table next to them.

"how'd it go?" Sans asked, Frisk moved their legs so he could sit beside them.

"You first," Frisk leaned against him, looping an arm through his.

"well, pap seems to be cool," he chuckled nervously, "i have to keep him from turning them into child soldiers."

Frisk giggled, they couldn't say they were surprised in the slightest. Papyrus was eccentric. Their mind returned to what Toriel had told them, "Sans?" they softly asked, squeezing his arm tighter, "why didn't you tell me? How this worked, I mean?"

His pupils vanished, he turned his dark sockets away from them, "i-i..." stuttering, and the frantic hunting for words, "your ma'told you huh?" more nervous laughter.

Frisk nodded.

"i suppose," his mind was racing, "i need to do some *SOUL*searching for the answer to that sweetheart."

"Are you scared?" even though he wasn't looking he could feel their ruby eyes burning into his very being. He couldn't lie to them.

"heh, very," it was easier to come clean.

"Me too," Frisk sighed and stood up, moving to stand in front of Sans, "but it's okay, because it's you."

Sans leaned in, his head resting on their chest, skeletal arms wrapping around them. The steady beat of Frisk's heart drumming in his skull, "thank you sweetheart."

-

The lullaby Frisk sings is Dream a Little Dream of Me

Four weeks felt like nothing.

Their lives fell into a routine, every two weeks Frisk had an appointment with Dr. Pierce. Every two weeks they got to see their children on that same black and white screen. The gender of their other child was revealed to be male, which was interesting. It was determined that the children shared a placenta but were contained in their own amniotic sacs, thus, were identical twins. Dr. Pierce mused how rare it was to have opposite sex identical twins. Almost unheard of without some sort of mutation, then again, this pregnancy was unheard of on its own. Frisk would need to be observed on a regular basis, multiple births were always so much more complicated than single births.

Twenty-two weeks.

Frisk laid awake, it was nearly three in the morning and the unfamiliar discomfort of heartburn plagued them. They had sent Sans out to the twenty-four-hour convenience store fifteen minutes away from their house. Frisk needed relief, they had initially wanted milk to calm the acid in their stomach, but, foolishly Sans drank it all earlier that day. Hormones getting the better of them they lashed out, it wasn't even a fight, purely raw hormonal pregnancy anger. It was becoming more frequent, as was the growing discomfort. Feet now swelling when they stood for long periods of time, their back ached at random times during the day and the heartburn from the depths of hell. Frisk couldn't complain too much, however, their skin was clearer, eyes brighter and hair noticeably thicker and shinier. They were beautiful. Rolling over onto their side, they patiently waited for their husband's return.

The store was desolate, Sans noted the clearly unenthusiastic redheaded cashier sitting on a stool playing a handheld gaming system, ignoring all customers until they came to her register to make their purchases. He didn't blame her, it had to be boring to work overnight.

He was here for milk and antacid tablets... whatever those were. Looking around he spotted a cooler with jugs and cartons of milk of varying sizes. There were so many different types, which did Frisk want? Skim? 2%? Chocolate? Looking down at his phone he hesitated, unsure if Frisk was still in a hormonal rage.

hey sweetheart, what kind of milk didya want 2:55 AM

Waiting. He wondered if they were even still awake? They hadn't gotten too much sleep that night.

Not sure. Need to think... 2:57 AM

Sans, I'm sorry I yelled at you

I don't know why I did it.

it's ok babe. 2:58 AM

you want flavored or normal?

Normal please 2:59 AM

not skim ❤

aight seyya when i get home 3:00 AM

It was probably wise to get more than a small carton of milk. Sans opted to get two large jugs, setting them the shopping basket. Unsure about human medicine he wandered the narrow aisles. Painkillers, bandages, feminine hygiene products... Humans needed a lot of medical supplies. Life was so much easier with magic. Ah ha! Stomach aides! Frisk had told him what to look for; chalky white tablets in an oddly shaped bottle. What even was heartburn? He'd have to ask them.

A loud rustling sound grabbed his attention. In the corner of the store a human male was hunched over the ice cream freezer, filling his basket with ice cream and popsicles. Sans watched him with a puzzled expression and a quiet laugh. What the hell?

Sensing he was being watched the man looked at Sans, obvious embarrassment as he slowly stopped shoving the frozen dairy products into his basket. A soft cough, "my...my wife is pregnant, uh, she really needed ice cream.." His voice trailed off into silence, realizing how silly it sounded when he said it out loud.

Sans gave the man a crooked grin nodding in acknowledgment, "hey pal mine too." Sans lifted the antacid bottle and the man's face lit up as he nodded.

"I.. I didn't know it was the same for you guys," his words were chosen carefully, not wanting to offend the sharp-toothed skeleton, "first child?"

Sans froze, it wasn't really out yet that a human was pregnant by a monster, so, he decided to lie not wanting the encounter to turn awkward or unpleasant, "yea on both counts, you?"

"Congrats man, being a dad is great," the man became much more comfortable, "this will be my third child. I have a ten-year-old and a four-year-old!" The man set his basket of ice cream down and eagerly approached Sans, digging a wallet out of his worn jeans. Tons of photos rolled out, "my ten-year-old is Emily and my four-year-old is Jason," he pointed to a picture of smiling children. How did this man have so many pictures? Sans counted forty individual photos at first glance.

Sans wasn't much for this sort of thing but was polite none the less, "cute."

"Get a good wallet with lots of photo slots, also, don't go back with only what she asked for," the man began to dispense wisdom whether Sans wanted it or not, "if

monster women are the same as human women you need to go the extra mile because they really are miserable. Foot rubs and back rubs, get her a heating blanket or hot water bottle, tell her she's beautiful."

Sans shifted uncomfortably, "thanks man, i appreciate it. they're, uh, five months almost six?"

The man's eyes lit up, "heeeeey my wife too! Cool beans, I'm from around here so maybe our kids will get to know each other!" the man gently patted Sans on the arm then immediately sensing his obvious discomfort he backed up, "well, I should get back home, it's late and she's going to be worried about me. See you around man, good luck." He turned to pick up his basket of ice cream and take it to the counter.

The cashier looked up from her video game and raised an eyebrow, "seriously, dude that's like all the ice cream. The hell...?" they looked like they were familiar with each other, the girl giving the man a bonk on the head.

Sans immediately tuned out of their conversation. He decided to take the man's advice and grab some candy he remembered Frisk really liked, along with two boxes of cereal for good measure. Frisk seemed to be devouring it as quickly as he could bring it into the house, devouring anything and everything really. The human cashier didn't say much to him, her face bright red and green eyes watching Sans' every movement with awe. He flashed her a teasing grin before taking his change and leaving; he was smart enough to know why she was flustered. Of course, he was irresistible.

Nearly three-thirty when he got home, he noticed the light from the bedroom lamp in the upstairs window. Sans felt awful they were still awake waiting for him, their sleep had been so sporadic. He quickly poured a glass of milk and put the jugs in the fridge, deciding to just leave the boxes of cereal and the candy in the shopping bag on the counter. He could deal with that tomorrow.

Frisk yawned, having gotten a few minutes of precious sleep, awoken to the sound of Sans opening and closing the front door. They turned their head to Sans opening the door, face lighting up seeing a glass of milk and antacids.

"sorry i took so long," he said setting the glass and the pill bottle on the bedside table, "humans like smalltalk."

"It's okay, thank you for going," Frisk grabbed Sans' bony hand, lacing their fingers through his, "I'm sorry I've been so aw- oh....oh my god..." Frisk froze, words dropping. In a quick motion, they brought Sans' hand to their bump.

Movement.

He could feel the strange shifts from inside Frisk. "is that.." Sans couldn't articulate, the sheer awe of the situation hitting him like an avalanche.

Frisk could only nod, happy tears rolled down their cheeks. Overactive emotions getting the better of them.

As quickly as the movement had happened, they stilled. The twins settling into the new positions they had shifted themselves into.

Taking his skull in their hands they pulled him close, he was unprepared and almost lost balance. They pressed a kiss against his teeth, then another and another. Heart swelling with an unbearable amount of affection for him.

Frisk's arms wrapped around his neck as he crept onto the bed beside them, hovering carefully over them to return the kisses. Skeletal fingers threading through their dark hair

A deep affectionate sigh and smile on their face, "I love you so much Sans."

-

Sans awoke later that afternoon, the two of them didn't end of falling asleep until early in the morning. Sockets still closed he reached out to where Frisk would be, only to find empty cold sheets. Alarmed, he sat up, taking a quick look around their empty bedroom. Getting up and peeking into the hall he heard soft sobbing. Panic. Mind jumping to awful conclusion after awful conclusion. Checking the bathroom, nothing there. He headed down the stairs in nearly a full sprint, skidding to an abrupt halt in the kitchen.

Frisk sat on the floor, a medium sized mixing bowl full of cereal clutched in one hand and a serving spoon in the other hand, a look of sheer bliss upon their face. "You..you brought me more cereal," they wiped some tears away and ate another spoonful.

Sans picked up the box, shaking it once to determine it was nearly empty. All he could do was laugh in relief.

## Twenty-eight weeks

Frisk stood in the doorway of the empty room, green tape lined the trim and around the windows. "Can I help?" they asked as their mother and husband stood in the middle of the room discussing the plans for the nursery. Well, Toriel planned it out and Sans was merely ordered around. Sans still needed to get used to her regal commanding presence.

"Absolutely not my child," Toriel was the one to answer, "we know not what paint fumes would do to you."

Sans nodded in agreement as he pried open a paint can, a soft buttercup yellow. "why can't we just use magic an' get this done in minutes?" Sans asked as Toriel handed him a paint tray and a roller.

"Skeleton, we are bonding," her words were kind but voice low and gravely. Turning back to her child she beamed, "perhaps you can make lunch for us? If that is not too much trouble? Do not overexert yourself dear."

"I guess you're right, I'll be downstairs if you need me," Frisk wasn't going to get anywhere with the two of them, hand on their now very large baby bump they nodded and headed to the kitchen.

"Now then," Toriel cleared her throat, watching Sans carefully pour the paint into trays, "my vision for this is quite clear, pale yellow walls and white trim. It will match the dark wood of the crib and changing table nicely."

"yep," was it wise to challenge his mother-in-law? Probably not. Was he going to anyway? Of course, "did ya even ask sweetheart what they wanted in here?"

"Do you think I would not?" Toriel's eyes narrowed as she folded her arms, "we had a discussion while I was organizing to get the furniture made."

Rolling his eyes while Toriel's back was turned he moved his paint tray to the opposite corner. Toriel was an overbearing mother, but meant well, "ok."

A new ache settled itself in Frisk's back, they had been standing for a while roughly chopping vegetables. Carrots, celery, and potatoes into a large gently simmering pot filled with water and vegetable broth. Frisk was simply too exhausted from just walking down the stairs to put any more effort into making lunch. Toriel was right,

they needed to take it easier.

A sharp cramp caused them to double over in pain, head pressed against the cool marble countertop. A simultaneous tug at their uterus and SOUL. Catching their breath they decided to slowly stumble over to the sofa. Propping some pillows under their back and grabbing a blanket.

With slight concern, Frisk flipped through their well-read pregnancy pamphlet. Braxton Hicks. Wonderful, the pain was practice contractions. They couldn't understand the pain in their SOUL, it was an ache they never wanted to feel again. It seemed that the farther along they got the more aches they acquired, it felt like they had been pregnant forever. A few more months to go.

The twins had suddenly become very active.

"You guys, need to settle down so mama can rest," Frisk cooed, one hand rubbing their belly, "maybe a lullaby, you two can hear me I think."

*Stars shining bright above you  
Night breezes seem to whisper "I love you"  
Birds singing in the sycamore trees  
Dream a little dream of me*

*Say nighty-night and kiss me  
Just hold me tight and tell me you'll miss me  
While I'm alone and blue as can be  
Dream a little dream of me*

The silence in the nursery was deafening, neither monster speaking to one another. A deep sigh. "Skeleton... Sans."

Sans was sat in the corner painting the trim along the floor, "hm?" he mumbled, not bothering to look up.

"After some thought," she paused, very much swallowing her pride, "I seem to have been acting unfairly towards you."

"hmmm, hadn't noticed," Sans couldn't resist using light sarcasm. In his opinion, Toriel had brought new meaning to 'monster-in-law'.

Toriel rolled her eyes, "I know you better than you think I do," she stepped back; her half of the room was complete, "I just want to help my child, I should trust that you are also trying to help."

Sans remained silent, his portion of the wall almost complete.

"I was furious you didn't tell them Sans," Toriel's voice started stern but faded into a more compassionate tone, "you knew exactly how it is supposed to work. I thought you might run away, which was so foolish. Even an old goat like me can be 'stupid'."

"i was scared," it got easier to say the more he said it aloud, "i didn't know we felt that way, i didn't know ifelt that way."

"Are you afraid to die?" the somber words hung in the air, "provided the children can even use magic, you are their only source. Typically there are two magical parents to supply magic, it could make your life considerably shorter."

"i know," Sans let out a heavy sigh, "i'm not ready to tell them yet."

"I will trust you, this cannot be easy for you," Toriel rested a large hand on his shoulder, "I am sorry Sans. I will place more faith in you. You love Frisk and I know you will love your children"

"thanks your majesty," he couldn't deny finally getting a shred of her approval felt good.

"It appears we are finished our task," Toriel stretched her arms with a soft smile, "shall we see what your sweetheart has made for lunch?"

While in the upstairs hallway, the two monsters could hear faint singing. Sans grinned, leaning on the railing overlooking the living room. A flush of red across his cheekbones as Frisk's soft melody filled the house. His sweetheart was so lovely. Toriel sighed softly, closing her eyes. Her hand swaying to the tune, humming along.

*Stars fading but I linger on dear  
Still craving your kiss  
I'm longing to linger till dawn dear  
Just saying this*

*Sweet dreams till sunbeams find you  
Sweet dreams that leave all worries behind you  
But in your dreams whatever they be  
Dream a little dream of me*

-

Thirty-two weeks.

"like this?" Sans asked, rolling a warm tendril of red magic over Frisk's aching shoulders. Frisk was sitting in his lap as he sat at the edge of their bed. The sun had long since set and Frisk had trouble getting comfortable enough to sleep.

"Yes," they hummed at the feeling of pain melting away, being replaced by a pleasurable warmth, "Iache all over."

Gently guiding his magic down their back, around their hips and front of their now massive baby bump. Sans had rather bluntly commented on how huge Frisk was now, earning him a cold stare and a knock on the noggin.

"Hmmmn," a curious sound, "do that again."

"what?" he was doing multiple things at once. Both his hands directing magic. Being ever so careful not to somehow slip up and injure Frisk. He wasn't too terribly used to using non-lethal magic.

"They moved, when your magic went across them," Frisk's eyes wide. Sans noticed how bright they were, reflecting the red glow of his magic or perhaps they had a glow of their own, was that his? Strange. "Do it again!" They urged, grabbing his hand and setting it on their stomach.

Swirling a bundle of magic around his hand Sans gently caressed Frisk, it was like they had said, the twins would move if he stayed in one spot for a while. It was almost like they were drawn to him. "they... they can hear ya right?" Sans asked, "could you tell them i love them?" He sighed and nuzzled his head in the space between Frisk's head and shoulder.

"Your papa loves you very much," Frisk's voice was low, "your mama does too, we can't wait for you two to be here."

"can ya sing to them again?" his warm magic dissipating, arms wrapping tightly around Frisk.

Frisk smiled, taking a breath to collect their thoughts and remember the lyrics to the rest of the lullaby.

*Stars fading but I linger on dear  
Still craving your kiss  
I'm longing to linger till dawn dear  
Just saying this*

*Sweet dreams, till sunbeams find you  
Gotta keep dreaming leave all worries behind you  
But in your dreams whatever they be  
You gotta make me a promise, promise to me*

-

Toriel softly pulled the brush through Frisk's auburn hair, "my child, are you nervous?" Frisk had been oddly quiet the entire time the pair had been getting ready.

Frisk watched in the mirror as their mother curled locks of hair and pinned them down, "I'm just worried they won't believe me."

"One must expect a healthy amount of skepticism my dear," Toriel backed away to observe her work. Frisk's hair set up with golden buttercup hairpins, curls of auburn in an ornate pattern. "I assure you the monsters will believe you, my word is that of pure honesty and is always well respected."

Frisk sighed, "I just don't want rumors," they rested a hand on their pregnant belly, "I think about when they're older, what if they get picked on? Or someone tries to tell them Sans isn't their father?"

"It is a little early for those thoughts, no?" A soft chuckle, Frisk felt their mother squeeze their shoulder, "my darling grandchildren will have some trait from that skeleton, I truly believe that." Toriel softly kissed the top of Frisk's head, "even if it's just bad jokes and his troublemaking tendencies."

"The doctor says they look human," Frisk's concern was spelled across their face, "also I've been having the worst agonizing heartburn so that means they have hair... I think?"

"Ah yes, a human maid we hired mentioned that when I probed her for information," Toriel smiled and scratched her head, "I tried to look on that internet you children seem to enjoy so much but I spent most of my free time on that 'pinterest' spiderweb."

"Website," Frisk corrected while holding back a chuckle, "it's not a spiderweb."

"I am too old for this," Toriel sighed as she glanced at the large ornate grandfather clock in the corner of the room, "my dear, go acquire your husband it's nearly time. The press should arrive soon."

People had taken notice of Frisk's absence.

Normally Frisk acted as princess and ambassador, they would do the traveling their parents didn't have time for or mediated important meetings. It wasn't always an easy job, but, they were determined to create a lasting peace between both peoples. In the early stages of their pregnancy, Frisk got away with wearing looser clothing. Opting for large coats and more flowing feminine tops. Now, however, Frisk was large. A fact that their aching back would not let them ignore.

It began to cause unease through the diplomatic circles when fellow ambassadors from human nations were not greeted by Frisk's easygoing smile. Instead greeted by the stoic proud face of King Asgore. The tension came to ahead when a visitor flat out asked of anything awful had befallen the princess, leading to excuses and cover-ups.

It was just safer this way, too many opportunities for something to happen early on. Frisk was in the clear now, they were only a couple weeks out. Realistically they could go into the hospital next week if Frisk felt so inclined, they had even read that labour could begin at any moment from this point on.

Frisk hadn't decided for sure if they wanted to wait for nature to take its course or if they wanted modern medicine to assist them. On one hand, being pregnant was absolutely exhausting and they were ready for it to be over. On the other hand, not much was known about the effect any modern medicine would have on children that were not fully human. A breathy sigh, looking in the mirror more closely. The hairpins were beautiful, the buttercups had become a symbol of perseverance. Frisk would persevere. Things would work out.

The family decided to hold something akin to a press release. Humans and monsters alike were called to gather in front of Toriel and Asgore's home. Their home, while not as amazing as a palace, was a large estate on land gifted to them. The world had changed so much. There was no longer a small village near Mt. Ebott; it was a bustling city.

Frisk walked down the hall of her parent's large abode, as they were about to turn a corner they heard a conversation, quickly ducking back around they listened carefully.

"IDON'T CARE IF SHE'S PISSED AT YOU, I WILL NOT ALLOW HER TO ATTEND," they immediately recognized the voice of Papyrus. He seemed beyond furious.

"I'm tellin you, she has no interest," the other voice shot back, it was Undyne, "she was just a little hurt that such a big deal was hidden from her." It sounded honest, a pang of guilt settled in Frisk's chest.

"BULLSHIT," Frisk winced, the angrier Papyrus got the higher his volume, "SANS TOLD ME SHE SHOWED UP AT HIS HOME. SHE WAS SNEAKING AROUND IN THE COVER OF NIGHT. DOES THAT IDIOT SCIENTIST THINK IT WOULD BE WISE TO DO ANYTHING TO MY NIECE AND NEPHEW WHILE THEY ARE STILL INCUBATING WITHIN THE HUMAN?" This situation was simultaneously heartwarming and terrifying, "I WILL KILL WHOEVER DOES THE CHILDREN HARM," a momentary silence hung in the hall. "DO I MAKE MYSELF ABUNDANTLY CLEAR? YOUR DUTY TO THE ROYAL FAMILY COMES BEFORE ANY PERSONAL BUSINESS." His devotion to his unborn niece and nephew was intense, perhaps a little too intense. Hopefully, he would mellow out soon.

Frisk heard a dejected sigh, "Yes Sir, I understand Sir."

"UNDYNE, YOU ARE DISMISSED TO YOUR POST," the loud stomp of plate boots faded from earshot.

Frisk peered around the corner to see if Papyrus had left, only to be greeted by him towering above them. Frisk looked up and blinked a few times, unsure what to say. He always looked mad, it was hard to read if he actually was.

"THE CHILDREN WILL NOT BE GETTING ANY STEALTH FROM YOU IT SEEMS," his expression was softer than usual, his words almost sounded like a joke. Frisk was amazed. They secretly thought if he lightened up and smiled more his face would crack.

"I'm sorry I shouldn't have eavesdropped," better to apologize now, Frisk thought, "I was headed to get Sans and didn't want to-oof," the sudden ferocity of a child kicking made Frisk double over, leaning on the nearby wall for support.

The motion was alarming to Papyrus, so woefully unequipped to deal with a heavily pregnant human, "ARE YOU OKAY?" he asked, very real concern in his voice.

"Yes," Frisk sucked in a breath. The kick, unfortunately, was followed by a false contraction. "They're just misbehaving," an idea sparked in their head. Frisk

quickly grabbed Papyrus' gloved hand and placed it on their stomach. "You haven't felt them yet, right?" Frisk softly smiled, eyes almost glittering, "they're still bouncing around."

Papyrus was silent, not making eye contact but Frisk swore they could see light red blush across his cheekbones. After a few moments, he slowly took his hand away, his eyes darting from Frisk to his hand and back again.

"CARRY ON," Papyrus' words were slightly fumbled. Before leaving for the courtyard to resume his duties, he pat Frisk on the head. Saying nothing further he disappeared from sight down the hall.

"i don't think the big bonehead gets it 'cause monster babies are a lil' different," Frisk turned their head to see Sans standing behind them, "shit," he paused, taking in their beautiful glowing face, "you always look so irresistible when your ma' does your hair." They felt his arms wrap around them, he leaned in such a way he was able to rest his skull on their shoulder. "nervous?" unfortunately it seemed everyone was about to pick up on how Frisk felt.

"Yeah, it's going to be interesting for sure," a heavy sigh as Frisk rested their head against his, "I'm already exhausted from walking."

"you gonna miss being a human goldfish bowl?" Frisk barely noticed Sans sliding his hands under their shirt, resting them on their belly, "papa is here, settle down for mama." Sans whispered into Frisk's shoulder, hoping their bones would carry his low voice to his children.

Frisk looked down, a soft red glow from beneath their shirt and a comfortable warmth that made them drowsy, "your children are not goldfish..." they teasingly pouted, the stirring ceased and the pain subsided. Frisk relaxed their shoulders.

"everyone feelin' better?" Sans asked, removing his hands from under their shirt and buttoning the last few buttons his hands had caused to pop loose.

"Much better," Frisk turned to plant a kiss on his cheek, "thank you."

"anything for my sweetheart and my gremlins," he grinned when frisk teasing slapped him.

"Children! Not goldfish or gremlins," Frisk playfully scolded laughing until a throb of their SOUL made them frown, clutching their chest lightly.

"sweetheart?" immediate concern and fear plagued his face.

"Yeah, it's fine," it faded as quickly as it had came, "let's go... but first, I have to pee, again."

-

"Queen Toriel, how long did you know the princess was pregnant?" A blonde human reporter shouted, pens neatly holding her hair bun in place.

"Princess! Why did it take so long to address this?" A dainty white rabbit monster hopped up to try and see passed a tall lanky human cameraman. Noticing her struggle he stepped aside to let her closer to the stage.

"How will the infidelity affect your marriage? Will it affect the throne in any way?" a bipedal sphynx crossed his arms as a crocodile took notes.

Frisk stood beside their father, his massive hand gently patting their shoulder. Asgore stood tall and proud, he was a kind man despite his outward appearance and past interactions. Sure, sometimes he had trouble showing it, he was very busy after all. It was with small gestures and actions he showed affection. Frisk could hear her mother talking but not what she was saying, everything a hum and a blur. So many humans and monsters, so many news crews, maybe a doctor or two. They scanned the crowd for familiar faces. Papyrus, Undyne and the Snowdin Canine Unit worked to push the encroaching reporters back from the stage. The lithe deep copper form of Chienna stuck out from the crowd, only because she was waving ecstatically in an attempt to get frisk's attention, on her shoulders the small daughter of Doctor Pierce, Cassie. Frisk managed a shy wave, the acknowledgment sent the dog monster into overdrive, tail wagging excitedly. She was joined by the doctor who simply nodded and smiled when he saw Frisk watching.

Frisk glanced at Sans who stood beside them, he looked stiff and uncomfortable. Reporters didn't seem too interested in what he had to say. Any questions lobbed at him were of divorce and heartache. Frisk laced their fingers through his, giving his hand a reassuring squeeze.

"The children are of both human and monster parentage," Frisk tuned back into Toriel's speech, "This is a joyous unprecedeted event and it is as true as the sun rises."

A silence swept over the crowd, hushed whispers, monsters and humans alike in shock.

"Your highness," a brunette softly spoke, "you do realize your claim could change everything we know and everything your people know."

"We're aware," Toriel lowered her head, "things will be different now, with the possibility of interspecies children I would like to push forward with more social policies."

"No disrespect," the blonde from earlier chimed in, "but where would those children really belong? If they're not monster and not human, do we really want them double dipping in society and reaping the benefits of both?"

Another throb in Frisk's chest, a soft gasp attracted the attention of Asgore, silently looking down at the small human in concern. They waved it off as nothing. Sans however, was not as easily assuaged and carefully watched Frisk out of the corner of his eyesockets.

"Unfortunately," Toriel paused, quelling the irritation in her voice, "that was quite disrespectful, however, I understand it comes out of a place of fear. Fear of the unknown." Toriel's ability to keep composure was unmatched by any monster in the underground, "we all have a healthy fear of the unknown, but these are mere children. Do not pass judgment on them for they have not yet lived their lives or committed any actions."

Suddenly so dizzy, the pain in their SOUL growing stronger. Biting their lip to hold back a cry, hand squeezing Sans so tightly Frisk was concerned they would accidentally turn him to dust. They couldn't make a scene, couldn't show something was wrong. They needed to stay dignified until the conference ended. Just thirty minutes more. A sharp throb in their uterus made them double over slightly. Their body was not going to make this easy on them. Deep breaths, they leaned on Sans for support now. Still shaking their head before he even suggested they rest, they didn't need to sit down, they were fine. They had been through worse than this. Sans rolled his eyes at his wife's endearing stubborn determination.

Silently catching Asgore's attention, he motioned to the uncomfortable Frisk and then motioned away. Asgore nodded, moving to tap Toriel, who had taken a pause to hear concerns, on the shoulder and whisper in her ear.

"Unfortunately, that is all for today, Frisk need-

Their mother's words cut out, the world around them faded to black static for only a second before they found themselves in their bathroom. Sans instinctively turned them towards the toilet just in time for them to throw up.

"sorry sweetheart," he patted Frisk's back as they reeled from the nausea of teleportation, "i had to get ya out of there."

Frisk could only nod and groan in reply, breathing heavily until they could stand again. "I...I'm going to lay down."

"i might as well too," Sans reached to remove the hairpins from Frisk's hair, hair still slightly curled fell to frame their face, "if we need to go to the hospital or somethin' wake me up."

Frisk nodded, leaving the bathroom to flop unceremoniously on the bed. Sleep claiming them before Sans got into the room

-

Summer wind blew through tall grass, sky so clear it seemed to go on forever. Frisk could feel the cool breeze and the warm sun on their skin, they realized they were in a dream, they were at home in their bed after a long day. This was nice though. Their sleep had been dreamless or restless for a while now. Usually due to discomfort or the need to use the bathroom every hour.

Sitting up they looked at their surroundings, a large clear pond and what looked like Mt. Ebott in the distance. Foxtails and bulrushes lined the shore of the pond, Frisk suddenly found themselves at the shore, they didn't remember walking over. They didn't recognize this location, the town should be here, not a field. Everything felt so empty.

The glimmer of a golden buttercup caught their eye from under the water, reaching they picked it up.

Cleaning the mud from its surface they noticed two distinct features, the center of the flower was a soft pink and the back of the flower itself had an engraved letter V.

Frisk looked around, seeing the glint of several more buttercups. They decided to follow them along the bank and collect them. Seven in total, each with a beautiful pink center.

V-i-v-a-l-d-i

"Vivaldi," Frisk read aloud, flowers dissolving into pink dust in their hands. A warm feeling in their chest as they watched the dust get caught by the wind and blown to a nearby tree. Another golden buttercup hung from its branches. These were only slightly different, the center a soft blue. Again the letter V started them on their quest through the nearby trees. Each holding another letter. Another seven letters.

V-e-r-d-a-n-a

"Verdana," like the former, these golden flowers also turned to dust, the dust the same blue as the center. "Vivaldi and Verdana. These are names?" Frisk wasn't sure who they were speaking to, perhaps an entity beyond their comprehension had gifted them a dream.

It was shamefully true that Frisk and Sans had not put enough thought in naming their children. They were running out of time, they had only a week left before Frisk would have to be induced. Labour seemed so close yet so far.

An uncomfortable rush of fluid woke them. First confusion, had they embarrassingly wet themselves? They had done so well not to at this point.

Then, the realization hit.

Frisk's water had broke. The pain they had felt earlier that day were labour pains, or at least the beginnings. Gasping loudly they shook Sans awake, "We have to go now!"

-

A kindly middle-aged nurse had helped Frisk out of their wet clothes and into a hospital gown. It wasn't the most comfortable garment in the world, stiff and starchy. Sans had played with the knots at the back once or twice, playfully exposing a bit of their shoulders and giving them a nibble or two when a nurse wasn't looking.

Frisk laid back into the pillow, thankfully they were given a private room. Sans walked around looking at the small bits of equipment before finally settling on hunting for something to watch on the small tv across the room.

"Vivaldi and Verdana," Frisk said breaking the silence.

Sans looked away from the TV for a moment, a blonde woman was making absolutely dreadful looking food, "huh?"

"It's silly but I had a dream, Vivaldi for the girl and Verdana for the boy," Frisk took a moment to crunch on a few ice chips that the nurse had given them.

"vivaldi and verdana," Sans repeated, seeing how well it sat in his mind, "i think those are okay."

"Are they 'okay' or 'good'?" Frisk frowned, slightly irritated at his lack of meaningful input, "this is what they're going to be called forever."

"no I mean okay I like 'em," Sans rolled himself over to sit beside Frisk in the wheelchair he had 'borrowed' from a closet in the room. He fit rather poorly in it but found some fun in rolling around, "i'm bad at crap like this so i'm glad you figured somethin' out sweetheart."

Frisk let out a pained whimper, a simultaneous contraction of their SOUL and uterus stole the breath from their lungs.

"does it hurt?" Sans asked, reaching for their hand only to be shot an icy glare.

"N-not at all," sarcasm dripping on Frisk's words as they endured through another contraction, "g-go get me more ice."

Sans nodded, untangling himself from the too small wheelchair, "be right back."

As one would expect the maternity ward was filled with many women. An awkward feeling hung in the air as Sans wandered the hall. Some were yelling, some were outright screaming and others had settled on crying. One woman in particular, was grumpily pacing the hall, speaking in a language Sans had not heard before. Each word sounded bitter and spiteful. He decided it was best to avoid her path as much as possible. Frisk's rage had seemed a walk in the park compared to what some of these poor humans were enduring.

"Hey skeleton man!" Sans turned as he heard a familiar voice.

The man he had met at the convenience store months ago smiled back at him. The man was pushing a demure looking blonde woman holding a newborn baby in a wheelchair. "Hey I saw the press thing, wow that's sure cool!"

"uh, yeah, hey pal," he wasn't too sure what to say, "this your wife?"

"Yeah this is my Katya and our new daughter Cynthia," the woman smiled and held the child close to her.

"Привет," her voice very sing-songy and light.

Sans had absolutely no idea what she had said, however. Never before had he heard such a word spoken. He glanced up at the husband and shrugged.

"Oh sorry, she doesn't speak a whole lot of English," he smiled apologetically, "she said hello."

"oh, hey," he gave her the least frightening grin he could, "listen i gotta go, my wife hasn't had the kids yet and needs ice or something."

"No probs, I understand," the man shrugged, "hey good luck! Once Katya can walk around we're going to be discharged, see you around!"

Like an odd friendly force of nature the man disappeared down the hall, Sans decided he had to have some horrifying secret. That man was entirely too cheerful.

After wandering around for nearly twenty-five minutes Sans finally found a nurse to help him get ice, the hospital staff seemed so overworked and rushed. The nurse helping him looked ready to drop into a deep sleep where she stood. She acquired the biggest paper cup she could find from the busy kitchen and filled it to the brim with tiny shards of ice. A tired smile and she sent Sans on his way.

The chorus of crying in the hall had not ceased, he started to feel real pity for every woman stuck with this seemingly unreasonable pain. Finally he reached Frisk's room, his quest for ice completed he entered the room with a soft smile, "sorry it took me so long sweetheart..." That was odd. Frisk had drawn the curtain around their bed and remained silent, "you oka-"

It was like he lost the ability to speak. Frisk sat there in agonized tears, muffled cries escaping through their gritted teeth. Their SOUL in their hands outside their body. It looked... different. Thin threads of white magic being pulled from it, unraveling like a ball of yarn. White magic collecting inside Frisk's body where their children still resided.

"H...Help me," Frisk whimpered as they fought for breath, lip nearly bleeding from being bitten.

It took a moment for his mind to unfreeze, this was more akin to a normal monster pregnancy. He could handle this. It was just a transfer of magic. There was nothing he could really do until the process completed. He was immediately at Frisk's side, hand running through their sweat drenched hair, "shh, it's gonna be okay sweetheart."

"It..it," Frisk gasped as the threads pulled once again, "ithurtssobadplease," words almost unintelligible. Deep breaths, Sans gritted his teeth as they let out another painful scream and another. He felt so helpless.

A nearby nurse had finally decided the amount of screaming was beyond normal levels and rushed into the room, having much the same reaction as Sans did. "I don't know anything about magic," her voice panicked all her medical training meant nothing. "I'm gonna get the doctor."

Sans rolled his eyes, noting how fishy it was that he didn't see a single monster doctor or nurse at this hospital. Not that one could really help Frisk at this moment but they could help educate and calm people down.

The pain's intensity hit its peak. Frisk's face red, chest heaving to catch their breath as the last of the threads disappeared. Flopping over onto their back as Sans helped put their SOUL back into their body. All their energy expended but still crying, at least now only dealing with pain from one source. Heart still racing from the ordeal.

Moments later a doctor and several nurses ran into the room, checking charts and machines and vitals. Sans heard chatter he really didn't get. Dilated? They were dialated enough? He noticed Frisk's legs were now up, they had sat back up and gripped his hand as tightly as they could. Everything was silent, Sans couldn't hear or comprehend. Everything moving so quickly and slowly at the same time. He was so disoriented. Hand now on his face, his skull hurt. He hurt everywhere, every single bone wracked with the worst pain he could imagine.

Frisk was yelling, a nurse cheering them on.

It's a boy.

You have one more, she's right behind.

It's a girl.

The shrill cry of his children snapped him out of his daze. Numbness washing over him all at once in a few waves. He immediately understood.

He started aging.

"S-Sans...are you...okay?" Frisk asked weakly, nurses had set the two newborns on Frisk's chest. Weak exhausted arms clutching them to their chest.

"Yeah..." he removed his face from his hand to stare at Frisk and the newborns. Once again rendered speechless until a pair of nurses grabbed them and took them away, "where are they taking them?" he had become panicked.

A third nurse smiled, "just to the hospital nursery, you can come with me and see them if you want," she reached for his hand, "we need to clean up your wife anyway."

The nurse had brought him to a room with a giant window, he had been told he wasn't supposed to be inside right now but that she would make an exception. She lead him to two small hospital cribs sat side by side.

They looked so human. Pale with a few wisps of auburn hair. Already they looked so much like his sweetheart. Carefully he caressed the cheek of his son, his small face scrunched up, one eye opening.

A black sclera with a red iris.

Sans grinned, his kids would look like him after all.

-

Frisk slept soundly, someone had put their hair up for them and tucked them in. The moon high in the night sky, shining pale light through their open window. The room had become so stuffy, how wonderful someone thought to let some air in.

A breeze brushed across their face.



(rest now, you did perfect)

Sans snored from an armchair someone generously let him borrow, it was the only thing big enough for him to comfortably sleep in in the entire hospital.

Frisk's eyes sleepily fluttered open, they had thought they heard something but it was so faint. They yawned and closed their eyes again, must have been their imagination. They didn't have the energy to worry about it.

They needed their rest for the days ahead.

# Anything for you

"will they have hot chocolate?" the seven-year-old asked, hand tightly holding his father's and swinging it back and forth.

"dunno bud, maybe?" Sans replied with a smile, "you okay up there sweetpea?"

"mhm" his daughter nodded, tightly hugging Sans' skull from her perch on his shoulders. A gust of wind caused her to shiver. Sans used his free hand to pull his fur hood over her shoulders.

It was a warm February afternoon, the perfect weather for snowmen and snowball fights as the snow was just melted enough to hold its shape. The trio had partaken in a snowball fight or two in the front yard before making their way down to the winter carnival being held by the twin's school.

Originally Frisk was going to take them. They were becoming quite involved in the parent-teacher association, but, business had come up. Being technically the princess of monsters and ambassador meant that sometimes they were needed by their parents for diplomatic situations. Sans noted how formal and sexy Frisk looked when they wore their outfit adorned with delta runes. It took all of Frisk's will to resist his advances and make it out the door. With a giggle, they promised that they would spend time with him later.

"dad, will they have cookies?" Verdana asked, mind very much on the topic of food, "what about hamburgers?"

"probably," Sans shrugged and noted the kid's healthy appetite was definitely from him rather than Frisk.

The carnival was at a local park within reasonable walking distance from their home. Large colourful banners and flags came into view, several booths serving food and lots of happy children running around excitedly. The center of the park had a large frozen pond where parents and small children were skating.

"Hey! Vivaldi and Verdana you guys made it!" a teacher called out as Sans and his brood approached the entrance.

"hi miss hanwell," the twins said, both flashing her shark-like smiles.

"Mrs. Dreemurr couldn't make it today?" asked the teacher as she strained to look up at Sans. She was much too short for this.

"yea, official monster business," Sans said with a hint of pride in his voice, "they were needed right away."

"Awww, how sweet," Miss Hanwell smiled, "you kids like hanging out with your daddy?"

Sans narrowed his eye sockets, what an odd thing to ask.

The twins nodded earnestly.

"You kids go have fun okay?" she seemed satisfied with their reply, "Mr. Dreemurr we have picnic tables cleaned off over by the skating pond if you want to mingle with other parents."

"yep," Sans replied and walked away from the woman, mood still slightly soured over her question. Why wouldn't his kids like hanging out with him? He spent tons of time with them.

Finding a free picnic table Sans lifted Vivaldi off his shoulders and onto the ground, gently fixing her windblown hair, "what do you guys wanna do first?"

"i want to build a castle over there," Vivaldi pointed over to a place where children were building various snowmen and sculptures, "can i go? i see cynthia," a small blonde was building what looked like a snowcat.

"aight, play nice sweetpea," he planted a quick kiss on her forehead before she ran off. "what about you buddy?" he turned his attention over to Verdana who was practically bouncing with excitement.

"snowball fight!" Ver nearly ran off, Sans grabbed his arm and gently pulled him back.

"slow down kiddo," Sans picked a loose bobby pin from Verdana's hair, "you sure you don't wanna be a skeleton?" Sans asked as he fixed his son's hair, pinning unruly bangs to the side, "you need a haircut bud."

Verdana shook his head, "they don't wanna play with me when i am."

Ow. That hurt.

"kay, go have fun. i'll be here," his son ran off towards what Sans could only describe as a snowball battlefield. Hm. Papyrus would have had fun there. Maybe. Or caused unimaginable chaos

Sans yawned, one arm propping his head up, eyes switching between watching his daughter build a lovely castle and his son pummeling children with snowballs. This was supposed to be an area for parents to mingle but no one came over to even offer a greeting. He supposed it was because he was a giant skeleton monster and the people around were mostly tiny human women and some human men in fancy parkas. Oh well, he wasn't much for small talk. What could he possibly have in common with Sally Jo who ran the bake sale? Why did all the human mothers have the same pixie cut?

"What are you doing here bone man?" a gruff voice asked.

Sans ignored him, not really into a confrontation. Vivaldi was working on setting up the walls of her castle, that was much more interesting than dealing with some potentially racist fuckhead.

"Can't hear without ears?" the man wasn't giving up.

Sans rolled his eyes and peered at him out of the corner of his sockets. The man looked about six feet tall, good he was shorter, surrounded by four boys of varying ages. "nothin' wanna sit? i'm bone-ly"

"A comedian huh?" the man wasn't an appreciator of puns it seemed, "you know what I'm fucking asking. I don't see any skeleton kids around here, you aren't gonna steal some poor kids and eat them or something?"

Was this guy serious? Sans chuckled, flashing his pointed teeth, "gotta get em young when the bones are soft." This would probably only escalate the situation but it was funny pushing this asshole's buttons, "human kids go great with mustard."

"Don't be a fucking sicko," the man waved his boys away, "what are you doing here?"

"c'mon man i'm watchin' my kids," the fun had worn off, this was now needlessly annoying.

"I told you I don't see any skeleton kids," the man repeated like it was supposed to discredit Sans somehow.

"gee, i guess that means my kids don't look like me huh?" if sarcasm could kill that man would be dead, "the kids with the buttercup clips are mine. it's cold out so you'd think you'd have some chill."

"poor kids," the man sneered, "their mama has shitty taste in a step-daddy"

Sans set his face in his hands, holy shit this guy was a pain, "pick up a fucking paper, they're the hybrid twins." His children's birth had been heavily talked and written about. Being the first of their kind Sans was almost surprised this idiot didn't know about them, "i don't assume you can read though pal." Maybe Sans should have asked Papyrus to come along, people left him completely alone.

The man clearly done with Sans' bullshit stormed away, sitting at a picnic table some distance away. He hollered for one of his boys and whispered something in his ear.

Sans paid no mind, hoping that would be the most interesting part of his day. Vivaldi's castle was coming around great and Verdana had finally been bested by his peers and given a facewash. "ya kinda earned that buddy," Sans chuckled, Verdana had been using his magic to levitate snowballs and annihilate his classmates. When he eventually grew tired from magic use the kids saw their opportunity and playfully threw him into a mound of soft snow.

A scream snapped Sans away from his son's antics.

A boy, one of the sons of the asshole from earlier, had grabbed Vivaldi by her hair and smashed her face into a wall of her snow castle.

In an instant Sans was at her side, the boy horrified that Sans appeared out of nowhere shrieked, "my...my dad told me to... don't eat me."

Sans, too concerned with his daughter's well-being shot the kid a vicious glare as he ran off.

Snow dyed crimson, Vivaldi's castle had been composed of snow, ice and rocks. Her nose profusely bled, a cut under her right eye and bruises blossoming on her face.

Blind rage.

How fucking dare he.

How fucking dare he instruct a child to hurt another.

His sweetpea.

Sans could blast the man into nothingness. No one would ever know he existed. Ashes and charred remains. Lift him into the air and smash him down, shattering all his bones. Devour the fucker whole. He wanted Sans to be a monster? He would get a monster.

Left eye blazing with red magic, right socket empty, shaking with pure anger. Oh the things Sans could do to murder that arrogant fucker. Humans broke so easily.

"D...Daddy..." a soft sniffle, then another that turned into full blown bawling. Warm tears freely ran down Vivaldi's face, blood streaming from her cheek and nose.

Sans snapped out of his rage, "sweetpea..." he frantically looked around for something to clean her face with. Her scarf was the only fabric he could find, dabbing and wiping

away the blood. "ver" Sans yelled and gestured for the boy to come over quickly, "we're going home."

Verdana ran over, playfully dragging a child behind him, "daddy can richie stay ov—" his words quieted when he saw his sister's face, bloody and bruised. Turning to the young boy the colour drained from his face, "m-maybe another time..."

Sans picked Vivaldi up and quickly grabbed Verdana's small hand. Making their way to the exit of the park, Vivaldi sobbing loudly into Sans' coat.

Sans stopped at the table that the man was now leaning against, smug look plastered on his face. "verdana," he paused, "go get a hot chocolate from over there," motioning to a stall where teachers were handing out warm drinks to the children.

When Sans was sure Verdana was out of earshot he covered one of Vivaldi's ears and pressed her head into his coat to cover the other.

"listen here fuckstain," Sans spat and kicked the table to get the man's attention, "you're really lucky my wife is a pacifist. 'cause if they weren't," his grin terrifying, sockets black, "you'd be dead where you stand." An empty threat, but it got the point across.

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Frisk wasn't home yet when they got back. Good. It gave Sans time for some damage control.

Sans tossed Verdana on the couch and turned on some children's programming. He quickly took Vivaldi over to the bathroom to tend to her injuries. Sitting her on the counter and inspecting her face.

"doesn't look broken," he carefully cleaned dried blood from around her nose and cheek with a damp washcloth, "i'm so.. so sorry sweetpea."

"why," Vivaldi's face showed very little emotion, she was exhausted from the pain and crying, "i didn't do anything."

"i know honey people are stupid," what could he say? Maybe if Frisk had taken them this could have been avoided, they could have gone tomorrow. Life was going to be hard for them, and it was his fault. "i love ya lots, remember i am always here."

"my scarf is ruined," the young girl's eyes downcast as she held the blood-stained fabric.

Sans pondered for a moment before unwrapping his scarf from around his neck and folding it up, "it's a lil' long but you'll grow into it," he said handing his daughter the black and red scarf.

Red eyes wide and bright she held it close to her, "thank you, papa."

"anything for you."

# Calc

When we grow apart, it's destiny - It's just how it was supposed to be  
But I know that I'm not strong enough to accept that so easily

Each and every single answer that comes my way  
Are sold at too high a price for me to pay  
They rob me of the courage to leave it all and move on

The song that I once sang and gave to you  
It's now just a sad love song, overplayed a time or two  
Let the wind flow in and blow it away

Back to that time, that summer day when I fell in love with you

When we draw near each other, it's destiny too.

The way it's supposed unfold, through and through

If I could convince myself it was meant to be, maybe I wouldn't feel so alone

Each and every single answer that comes my way  
Have way too many hypocrisies to say  
They erase the path that I need to take to the other side  
The song that I once sang and gave to you

It's now just a sad love song, overplayed a time or two  
Let the wind flow in and blow it away

Back to that time, that summer day when I fell in love with you

If the past and future both decide to disappear  
Do you think that then I'd be finally free  
If I could pick one emotion to do away with at last  
If I picked my love for you would I be able to go back  
If I could one day hear every song that you heard  
Breathe everything you breathed feel everything you felt  
If I could be your eyes and see the world like you did  
Then maybe I could love you - the way I've always wanted to

Always be kind, Sometimes Kindness is all we can give, Sometimes Kindness is enough

## Secret Garden

He said

"Oh Mary, contrary how does your garden grow?"  
"Come with me, and you'll be, the seventh maid in a row."

My answer was laughter, soft as I lowered my head  
\*you're too late, I'm afraid, this flower's already dead

Resetting as I was, with blossoms in full bloom

(Blossoms in full bloom)

Never a chance to pause with magic to consume  
(Magic to consume)

A shadow walked behind me offering his hand But couldn't understand

He said

"oh Mary, contrary how does your garden grow?"  
"come with me, and you'll be, the seventh maid in a row"

My answer was laughter soft as I lowered my head  
\*you're too late, I'm afraid, this flower's already dead

Scattering petals down the road without an end

(Road without an end)

Left on the battleground for one I called my friend  
(One I called my friend)

Maybe he loved me as he took me by the hand And tried to understand

I said

"oh Mary, contrary how does your garden grow?"  
"stay with me, I can't see anywhere that we could go"

Their answer was laughter as darkness swallowed them up  
\*One more time, I'll be fine, sometimes kindness is enough

"oh Mary, contrary how does your garden grow?"  
"don't leave me, please don't be the seventh maid in a row"

My answer a whisper soft as he lowered his head  
\*set them free, I'm sorry, this flower's already dead

## Safe Behind the Ribs of the One I Love Most

if I closed my eyes and  
missed the morning light  
would you weep for me, love?  
would you weep for me,  
red death of mine  
if I closed my eyes and  
met the night  
would you wait still, love?  
would you wait still for  
that summer shine?  
forgive me please, but the strings  
have long slipped from my fingers  
time has bound us both  
and faded what hope linger'd  
buried in forgotten maybe's  
and failures golden on skin  
ghosts whispering of  
determination stretched thin

and I am so tired  
of pretending I'm alive  
still, I'll lie to my self  
and think I'm fine  
if I chose to carry  
the world on my back  
would you let me, love?  
would you live for me  
with faith intact  
if I kissed you farewell  
and became one with time  
don't forget me, love  
don't forget this fabled dream of mine  
smile for me please, no rain  
can touch the echoed glass  
memories trapped blue  
we'll always have the past  
buried in forgotten maybe's  
and failures golden on skin  
ghosts whispering of

determination stretched thin  
and I am so tired of  
pretending I'm alive  
still, I'll lie to myself  
and think I'm fine  
think I'm fine.

...

buried in forgotten maybe's  
and failures golden on skin  
ghosts whispering of  
determination stretched thin  
and I am so tired of  
pretending I'm alive  
still, I'll lie to my self  
and think I'm fine  
think I'm fine.

# The Art of Learning How to Choose

Don't you think you're asking too much of me

Don't put that much faith in rusty sieves, oh love

I'd sooner gather the stars and pin them on your hair

I'm selfishly unsavable/ But if I could have anything in the world/ I'd wish for you to  
stay and never leave my side

But happy endings are pretty lies they feed to unborn eyes

And the fools who believe are worse than those who sleep with the flies

How could I forget you when you've carved your name into my ribs

And how could you ask such a thing from me if you want me to live

Sweetheart, I'm tired of pretending I don't care

And all of my half-bloomed promises are going nowhere

Trace the sins that I've drowned in the water

But of this madness I won't go farther/ What fabled insanity do you expect from me  
now?

You're the worst ray of sunshine I could've found in this unrequited nightmare

But facing the dawn without you is something I can't dare

# Close to you

The flowers of the new and laughter of the past  
They're beautiful like you, beauty unsurpassed  
Gone with a whisper, you fall asleep like death  
Breaking through the earth, your smile shines again

My empty gratitude, another empty thank you  
I finally learnt regret from words I've always said  
Never meant to speak to hurt, yet it hurt to put in words  
Goodbye wherever you are, goodbye unbroken heart

In truth I want to feel, the truth I want to see  
I'm trying to embrace your drifting heart and smile

Whenever I begin to feel the burning tears overflowing from my eyes  
I keep on looking forward at you, hoping that your light will never pass me by  
I wonder what the stars that sparkle in your eyes are hiding from my mind

Hiding from my open heart and from your open heart

Together, you and I will always be alive, connected, close to you I'll stay  
As long as I can hold your hand again and again, forever, I will find my way  
You may never answer back my call, but you smile back at me with grace  
And everything remains the same, this pain I'll soon awake from

What I see will melt all away  
With my tears

A shape of broken line will never be the same  
It'll never find new life as a body of remains  
A soul without a form, endlessly it'll chase  
But will my broken heart find another place?

In truth I want to feel, the truth I'll never see  
I'm trying to erase how far we've walked in miles

Whenever I begin to feel the burning tears as I look up at the sky  
I keep on looking forward at it hoping that I'll find you soon enough in time

I wonder if the stars that sparkle in my eyes will eventually subside

Hiding from my endless heartbeat, from my endless heartbeat

Together, you and I will always be alive, committed, close to you I'll stay  
As long as I can hold your hand again and again, then maybe I will find a way  
I can never travel back in time, but they smile back at me, those days  
And everything remains the same, this pain I'll soon awake from

What I see will melt all away  
With my tears

Replaying time again, replaying time again  
Repeating time again, repeating time again  
Reflected in my heart, reflected in my heart  
Your never ending laughter

(Whenever I begin to feel the burning tears)

Can't you feel the burning tears overflowing from my eyes?  
I keep on looking forward at you hoping that in time your light will pass me by  
Now I know the stars that sparkle in your eyes are guiding me to light

Guiding to my open heart and to your open heart

Together, you and I will always be alive, connected, close to you I'll stay  
Time will never hold my tears or hold my feelings down they pour like silent rain  
All the colors forming back the life I knew when all remained the same  
Somehow in a finite time, this time I'll find my way out

And I see I've barely reached you  
And your heart