

Secret of Life

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Secret of Life

by [Serena Walken \(SerenaWalken\)](#).

Summary

Prologue to Together in Pieces. When Sans was on his way to successfully get everything in life he wanted? Toriel turns the tides on him, making him begin all again. Only to have it turn again . . . what will be, will be. No one can stop the future.

Meeting Her Future

“Majesty?” Undyne gestured to the next room. “She’s in there.”

Toriel didn’t like the way Undyne said ‘she’s in there’. Ever since they came back up to above ground, Toriel had been taking care of Frisk and searching for her parents. Frisk said she had a mom, and a daddy that she had never known.

Toriel took that as a sign that her father died or her mother stayed single. Thinking nothing of it, Toriel still assigned Undyne to go out and find her with the directions Frisk had given her.

As she opened the door, she understood why Undyne had not been so cheery with the ‘she’s in there’. Still, Toriel only smiled kindly. “Hello. My name is Toriel.”

Frisk’s mother was putting out a cigarette and blowing out the rest of the smoke. “Hey.” She addressed her, but didn’t look at her directly.

Toriel could tell where Frisk got her hair and eyes from. Her mom was almost a spitting image of an older version of Frisk, which made the view all that more unsettling.

Toriel wasn’t dumb, and when the kingdom used to hold many more monsters before the war that sent them underground, it was prevalent there too. Toriel didn’t ask right away, trying to warm up with some light conversation with her.

Frisk’s mother was named Candy, and she had a sweet but sassier personality. She didn’t open up that much, but Toriel could feel the same kind of soul inside of her that Frisk had.

Kind and gentle. Considerate of others. Toriel could tell she was raised rough, but had a naturally kind persona, that had to be subdued in her lifestyle.

As their conversation kept going though, the direction changed.

“So? I know this is gonna sound bad,” Candy said to her. In fact, Toriel could see tears trying not to well up in her eyes. “I want Frisk to stay here with you, okay? With you. Majesty. Um. I love my daughter to the moon and stars and all them bits put together, but she’s got a decent life here.”

Oh. “I understand how you feel.” Toriel gently touched her shoulder. “I am not naive as to your life.”

“Yeah. My daddy is Frisk’s daddy if I take her away,” Candy warned her. “I want the best for her. She should have everything I can’t, and if she saved your kingdom, then it’s only right she should stay.” She waved her hand, trying to keep the tears away again. “I’ll sign whatever documents you want, if you just take care of my Frisk. Don’t ever tell anyone where she’s really from. Who her momma had been. Please?”

Toriel watched her for a time.

“I know it ain’t no free ride too, raising a child that ain’t yours. How about I chip in so much a month? I can work harder and I’ll get whatever you need.”

Toriel couldn’t judge her, nor could she let Candy pay anything for her to take care of Frisk. “This has nothing to do with you Candy, but I’m sorry to say, I cannot watch Frisk for much longer.” She watched Candy’s heart break with just a look down of her eyes to the ground.

“I’d give up all my days with my precious little Frisk, if it made her life better.” This time, Candy wiped her eyes.

“I won’t send her just away with you in this state. I can watch her for a few more weeks,” Toriel encouraged her. “During that time, I wish for you to stay as well.”

“Oh no, no.” Candy sniffled, but crossed her arms. “No, I can’t afford to do that kind of thing. You know? A week off the job, I’d wake up dead. Sorry.” She sniffled again. “I can come back here and there, you aren’t real far from where we are. Well, I mean it’s not totally true, but I could make it maybe once a week. Maybe. I don’t know, I’m on automatic. Um? Nevermind.”

No. “You are a wonderful woman, Candy, and I may not know all of the details to your arrangements in life? But I know that you don’t deserve this.” Toriel stood up.

She would do something about all of this. She needed to help Frisk’s mother first, in order to help Frisk.

Toriel saw Frisk’s mother again two weeks later. This time, she didn’t look so good. She dressed a little better, knowing this time she’d meet royalty, but she was also wearing shades. When Toriel demanded she take them off, she didn’t want to at first.

When she was coerced, Candy shared the truth.

“My little visit up here last time got questioned by some people,” she admitted. “I shouldn’t have come back up, but I wanted to see Frisk. I got them off my back for a short time only.”

That was it. “You are marrying Asgore.”

Frisk’s mother didn’t react right away. “The King?”

“The complicated rules being set up between kingdoms and nations right now, it makes it impossible for royalty to simply give money to anyone without cause. It is supposed to prevent corruption between us. This hurdle can be overcome if you marry Asgore,” Toriel assured her. “I know it sounds absurd, but if you have Asgore’s support, you can live a new life somewhere else.”

Toriel continued to watch her reaction.

“I don’t know this King, and that’s pretty stupid. Sorry for saying that to you, I should find a nicer way to say it. But? I could like take half a kingdom.”

“No, there will be papers drawn up to protect the crown,” Toriel assured her. “Candy? Our money is gold, and has been accepted through all ages. It converts properly to today’s money too. With it, you can live in a new town. New neighbors. A better life for Frisk and you.”

“Someone would find us,” Candy said as she shook his head. “I’m gonna wind up dead. My daddy would never honor no exit fee.”

In that time away from Candy, Toriel looked into more details about Candy’s exact situation. “There will be no exit fee. You will have a new life and a new chance.”

Candy rubbed her legs unsurely. “I’m gonna trust a King to keep his end of the deal? For Frisk. He’d be good.” She was nervous. “I don’t know, Queen Toriel, I don’t know. I mean, trading in one for another. One with some ring too?”

Scared. Candy was scared. Asgore had met her of course, having heard the situation. Toriel had already let him go (and good riddance) but . . . “Would you trust me?” She blushed lightly.

Candy blushed too. “Marriage? Or just to help pull me out?”

“No. The power to rule runs through me, Asgore was simply my husband from before. We have been ruling the Underground together in a mutual agreement,” Toriel explained. “You wouldn’t gain any powers because of our agreement on how to handle things. But? Um.” *My, am I truly blushing.* “Arranged marriages have been happening for thousands of years. I would do nothing that would make you uncomfortable.”

It was an option Toriel would take. Frisk’s mother might not feel the same way about the option, but if she would rather be with her than trust Asgore. “You have a good, kind heart. I like that in a person.”

Candy looked at her in the eyes. “I’d be a lot happier with you. If you’d be happy with me?”

Toriel smiled delightedly. She could feel Candy’s soul even stronger now. Filled with warmth and love.

Once it was decided, they both started to ease around each other. Toriel went to see Candy when she deemed it safe to get to know her future wife.

Asgore had the biggest temper tantrum, but Toriel didn’t care. They told Frisk and she was delighted to have Toriel as her mother too. They had a private ceremony with the three of them, a sour Asgore, and only the most trusted royal guards there.

Candy’s identity remained secret as they each worked out the plans as they could.

Candy didn't need a big and exotic life. A decent sized town so Frisk could make friends. A nice home size for two people, with a guest bedroom if Toriel came to stay for a little while. A normal wage job and a reminder to stay on the straight and narrow path.

That's all she needed.

Toriel wanted to see her wife for at least the weekends. Pulling away from royal duties shouldn't be so hard since Asgore would take care of things during that time. She wanted to get to know Candy's world a little, but mostly have Candy and Frisk there at the kingdom.

Candy started going by Cindy Dreemur when almost all of the arrangements were prepared, having taken Toriel's last name. She didn't have to, but she liked the last name and it would help wipe out the traces to follow too.

Frisk and Cindy would live on the outside world. Cindy could live in the monster kingdom since she was over 18 and married Toriel. However, Frisk was not 18 and even though she was Toriel's daughter now? Apparently a person could not become a citizen just by wanting to be. Not anymore.

Frisk would have to be 18 and married to a monster from Toriel's kingdom before she was allowed in. Ooh, the rules! However, they must have stood the test of time for a reason.

Monster Nations hiding among the humans. They did things a certain way for a reason. If Toriel wanted her kingdom to blossom, she must follow the rules.

That would be something to save for when Frisk became older.

That was everything settled. All that was left?

The protection.

The Lucky Guard

ZZZZZ . . .

“Sans.”

ZZZZ . . .

“Sans!” Papyrus yelled at his older brother to get up. “Wake up! The Queen and King want to see us personally.” He shook with anger as Sans continued to sleep. “Saaaans!”

Z’s stopped floating from him. He opened one bony eyelid. “What?”

“The Queen and King want to see us personally,” Papyrus repeated. “Let’s go.”

Eh? Why? Sans stood up beside his brother and started to head away.

Toriel watched for the brothers. “I don’t know if I should do this. This is a lot of responsibility. They are responsible but? No, no. It needs to be done as covertly as it can.”

“Those guys don’t scream covert,” Undyne disagreed. “What you are asking from them, your majesty, are you absolutely sure you want to offer it to the sentries? If it was my wife involved, I’d say no.”

Toriel knew what she worried about.

Sans and Papyrus were the equivalent of human teenagers. Underground, mostly the young survived with the adults giving them more food and protecting them during fights.

It was another reason everyone wanted to get out. To improve their chances of not becoming extinct. Before being Underground, most monsters tended to be amongst their own type of monsterkind. All of the fighting between the different kinds almost wiped them out the first year Underground.

It was a terrible time. Especially since it was hard to tell age from monster to monster and even children were being killed as adults with less respect. It was why they started to put monster children below the age of 12 into striped shirts.

While Sans and Papyrus were teenagers, Sans was the equivalent human age of about 16 or 17. He was 198. Papyrus was only 102, making him about 12 or 13 in human years or so.

Undyne walked with her, but she wasn’t speaking to her. Toriel watched and waited for Sans and Papyrus. They hadn’t shown up yet.

“A final plea,” Undyne asked her. “They can’t handle this. The only reason they were guards for humans is because they had to do ‘something’ and it was doubtful humans would ever

come down. The sentries shouldn't be involved in this matter."

"The choice will be left up to them. If they put in the work, and it is the best, then that is that," Toriel insisted to her. "Considering Sans' predicament, he'll most likely take it seriously, Undyne. They are capable of much more than what they did. Their powers and their personalities will come in handy."

"Did you explain this to Frisk? Exactly?" Undyne asked.

"Of course I did."

"In a way that she understood?"

"I've talked to Frisk about her journey through the Underground at length. Sans and Papyrus both aided her, and I want her safe."

"Sans and Papyrus both aided her?" Undyne found it hard to believe. "Sans is lazy, he just didn't even care to try. Papyrus aided her through a telephone. I didn't see either of them trying to fight against anyone else for her."

"No one did until the end," Toriel reminded her. "One couldn't just go against the kingdom easily."

Toriel trusted Sans. She trusted him to watch Frisk once before. She had come to know Papyrus through Frisk's stories and knew he would be a good fit too for the role. Though young, he was responsible.

Besides, if fighting did have to occur, Asgore did assure her that he put Sans and Papyrus as sentries for more than 'just a place to be'. He left it at that, but she understood.

They were the best two for this job, so she would increase their chances to see if they could win it.

"Sans, keep up!"

If either of them really wanted it. The final decision would rest with her and Cindy.

"I am. I can see you ahead."

"Sans, the queen is ahead!"

"Yeah. I see her too."

"Sans, you slowpoke, there isn't even snow, stop being so slow!"

Undyne whispered to Toriel. "Papyrus is so loud. Sans won't even walk at a normal pace. They aren't ready for this."

Toriel didn't answer.

Undyne left her side as Papyrus showed up triumphantly in front of her.

“Your majesty! I am happy to see you,” Papyrus greeted her. “Good evening.”

“Hello, Papyrus.” Toriel smiled sweetly. “Lovely to see you too.”

“Sans is . . . coming.” Papyrus looked behind him. “Soon! Sans will come soon!”

Toriel watched as Sans rounded the corner. He strolled up to her, oblivious to how long it took him to get there. “Good evening, Sans.”

“Hey, Tori. So, what’s up?”

“Do you have a sacred job you want us to perform?” Papyrus raised his hand in a salute to her.

“Did you wanna hang out and tell knock-knock jokes?” Sans asked. “I’ve got some killer ones.”

“No, Papyrus is right. I do have an important task for you.” She watched Papyrus try not to dance around, but his body was quite lively. “It involves Frisk.”

“Ah, the human!” Papyrus said delightedly. “Yes, I can help aid the human in whichever way Frisk needs!”

Toriel took a deep breath. “I am asking certain people of the kingdom, and determining which is the best one for this job. Someone needs to take Frisk to her new home, and watch out for her for a long period of time.” She watched their reactions. They didn’t get it. To them, they wouldn’t see Frisk in any more harm. “Asgore will give the monster chosen a boost of magic to see her. Alphys has technology to make sure everything is also okay.”

Of course, they still weren’t picking it up, so Toriel put it another way. “Would you like to meet Frisk’s mother?”

Frisk combed her mom’s hair who’d been on the phone. The monster kingdom was amazing. Frisk never thought that someone as young as her could have been their ambassador or that they could help her get back home.

She didn’t think anyone would be able to get her back to her mom safely. Frisk loved combing her mom’s hair. It was always put in different styles in funny ways. Less funny now though since Toriel became her second mom. Still fun to comb though.

Her dresses had changed too, but for some reason she was back in her old dressings. She said her other mother wanted her in it for that trip.

Frisk watched as Toriel, Sans and Papyrus all came into the room. She jumped off the pail and waved.

It was her skeleton friends. They had helped her Underground months ago. She didn't always get time to see them, so it was nice to see them. She should make an effort to be real nice to everyone she met.

Her mom always taught her that. Don't make serious eye contact, but be real nice.

"These them?" Her mom stood up and walked over to the skeleton brothers.

They were always so funny. Papyrus looked half scared when her mom went up to see him. She even bent down to get a better look at Sans.

Frisk's mom shrugged. "People are people."

Yes they are.

"Out the door a second for momma, Frisk," her momma said. "I need to talk to Toriel and your friends."

Toriel smiled and waved at Frisk, telling her there was extra pie waiting in the kitchen for her.

Ooh, pie.

Toriel closed the door.

"Uh? Well, hello Frisk's Mom?" Papyrus said shyly. "You should consider putting on more clothes. It's quite cold out here."

"Yeah. I got other threads but the queen wanted me to meet you in these," Frisk's mom said as she went over to the corner and pulled over a jacket. "So hey."

Sans had never seen nothing like it in his life. Frisk's mom looked at them directly only to take notice. She didn't make any contact after that. Frisk had always been the same way, never looking at anyone directly.

Guess she got it from her mom.

The clothes were? Human clothes Sans didn't know about, but if a monster were dressed in those clothes. Maybe Bratty or Catty, but even then . . .

"Frisk would like to go back with her mother soon," Toriel interrupted Sans' thoughts. "The only thing is, that Frisk doesn't have a very safe life. Her mother is a . . . a giver of . . . hm."

"If they're halfway smart, they've figured out enough," Frisk's mom said. "Name is Candy. I mean, Cindy. I'm starting over with some of the kingdom's help."

“They won’t be starting over inside the kingdom though,” Toriel told them. “We have been working on establishing rules. It protects the young if things go bad in either kingdoms or villages.”

“Or Hollywood,” Cindy added. “I’m being moved to a little place in Oklahoma where shit never happens.”

“Frisk has done so much for this kingdom, she will have a bright future.” Toriel’s words were firm. Very firm. “If Frisk’s mother does not get out of her situation? You are looking at Frisk in the future. Pardon, Cindy.”

“Eh, it’s probably the truth,” Cindy agreed.

Sans looked back at Frisk’s mom. She had a look that said life didn’t turn out right. What exactly did she do? *Shoot, I should have judged when she looked down, she won’t make direct eye contact anymore.* He couldn’t judge her to get any extra information. Yeah, Toriel was going to be doing something desperate. She wouldn’t want to take Frisk away. Apparently couldn’t with the new rules anyway.

“I’ll leave you be with your threads and Frisk,” Toriel smiled to Cindy as she scooted Sans and Papyrus out of the room.

“Okay, gentlemen,” Toriel said politely, but through gritted teeth, once they were out of the room. “I want Frisk and her mother safe.” She looked like she wanted to go into another discussion, but stayed on topic. “Anyhow, I will choose one monster to watch over Frisk from now on when I can’t.”

“I would be honored, Queen Toriel!” Papyrus saluted.

“You two had the bonus of seeing Frisks mother. She hadn’t arrived yet for the others. Undyne has met her, yet Undyne isn’t invited for this opportunity.” Toriel waited. “The chosen candidate will have to be . . . patient, I suppose is the right word.”

Okay? It sounded like there were several candidates, but him and Papyrus had been considered highest to Tori.

“The winner will be the one who comes up with the best strategy to Frisk’s dilemma. They will be considered the Royal Entourage.”

Fancy name attached? Papyrus would definitely want that.

“The Royal Entourage?!”

Frisk wasn’t even royalty, but people like names. Especially with the word ‘royal’ in them. It probably came with a uniform and everything. Sans didn’t make much motion. He definitely didn’t want this gig, but he’d vouch for his brother.

“This is Frisk’s dilemma.” Toriel handed them each a piece of paper and then held her middle paw to shoosh them. “This is confidential. You will keep this secret, and not speak one word out loud. The only ones who know are the other candidates.”

Sans read the paper.

Oh.

So.

Hmm.

“There is . . . a lot of not nice things that could be after Frisk.” Papyrus left it at that. He turned the paper around and sideways, like that might help. “Two-”

“Not a word out loud, Papyrus,” Toriel reminded him.

Sans scratched his chinbone. “This is one heck of a boney situation.”

“Yes. The chosen Royal Entourage will be paid a higher salary than normal, while also attaining certain benefits,” Tori said. “Said benefit will be one of the choices below.”

“A Royal Guard with Advanced Training?!” Papyrus caught on quick. “You mean if the greatest ever, I, Papyrus were chosen? I could be guaranteed to be a royal guard and quickly?”

“Yes, you could,” Toriel said.

Heh. That’d make Papyrus happier than anything. Sans looked at the paper.

Then suddenly wanted to write one stellar essay himself. “This for real, Tori?” He gestured to it too. It wasn’t a joke, right? It couldn’t be.

“No, it’s not a joke,” Tori assured him with a smile. “You could be void of all monster traditions from Underground for fifty years.”

Fifty years. Fifty freaking years. “So the marriage clause that already says I gotta get hitched in two years ‘cause I’m adult crap?”

“Null and void, if you were the candidate, and were chosen,” Toriel agreed. “Yes.”

Only fifty years though. “Can’t we just null and void it for life?” Sans asked. “Come on, it’s cruel and unusual punishment to shove anyone with me.”

“Fifty years, Sans. That is the length of the position,” Toriel assured him.

Length of the position. Fifty year job. “Some bunny’s heart would be broken down at Grillby’s, wouldn’t it?” He joked. It was who he chose.

Since she was always at Grillby's, kind of drunk in the corner, and had to do the same thing, she didn't really care. He just said 'if you marry me in two years, I'll buy you a Grillby burger and your next shot.' Instead, she took a Grillby burger and two shots.

There was nobody Underground for him. At all, and according to the insights showing on that paper that no one else knew? *Fifty years might be enough time to find a way out.*

A part of him felt like kicking himself. Papyrus clearly wanted the role, but Sans thought of three important things to go ahead and try for it.

Papyrus was a great brother, but he wasn't so sure how he'd handle all of the situations Frisk could be facing. He had to make sure Frisk's mother (Tori's wife) was staying on the straight and narrow, at the same time protecting Frisk from any human's her mom had associated with that might want to hurt or take them back.

Or worse.

And third, that these other monsters that nobody was spilling a word about (only on this hush-hush paper) wanting to come after Frisk, or monsters who wanted to get their grubby hands on Frisk because she actually . . . was royalty.

Frisk's mom married Toriel. Toriel wanted to adopt Frisk to keep her safe and provide for her in the long run, but she didn't want to take Frisk away from her mom. Apparently there were some guidelines the kingdom had to follow, to get along with the other monsters native to the topside.

That kind of explained the weird change in rules he'd seen. It was everywhere. Some things were suddenly not allowed. Things became real hygienic.

Then another big secret. Nobody knew why, but there was suspicion Frisk wasn't just a human rock. Toriel suspected foul play with her father.

Sans held up his boney fingers, trying to think of all the new responsibilities. *Greedy outside monsters wanting the kingdom. Monsters in or out of the kingdom wanting to get rid of Frisk due to her being human. A fan of King Asgore from inside the kingdom. Humans wanting to hurt Frisk because of her mom's uhhhh previous activities. Investigating a possible parent that nobody knows about. Plus, watching over Frisk's mom for all the same damn reasons.*

It was a lot for a job.

Sans held three bony fingers on his left hand, counting them down. *Kid should grow up safe and warm after saving the whole monster kingdom, that should be a given. I don't want Papyrus to deal with any of this stuff. I don't want to marry a drunk rabbit, and I might even find a way to escape it forever in fifty years.*

Yeah.

Yeah.

Sans would actually try to work for this one. “So how big is this paper the candidate has to write supposed to be, Tori?”

“Yes, that’s the spirit, Sans!” Papyrus said as he patted his brother on his back. “Strive for something you want.”

Good to hear from his brother. “I will.”

Sans was already thinking of step one before they even reached home. When Papyrus said he was fixing his spaghetti, Sans told him he’d start writing the paper. Papyrus cheered him on.

Before Sans put pen to paper (because hell if he was gonna type it out), and he did some research on the profession of Frisk’s mother. The paper details left out many bits but with what he’d seen and the keywords being used? *It’s uh . . . yeah.*

Frisk’s mom was in a tough, tough situation. Getting away from it wasn’t easy, and Toriel was tearing Cindy and Frisk away for a new life. *Yeah. If they are found, they could be goners.*

He called up Undyne to get details on the marriage to Frisk’s mom that had been so hush-hush. He was going to dig as deep as he could into each thing, and Undyne sounded like she knew it all. She’d even been at the private marriage.

Undyne said Cindy wasn’t half as proper as someone should be to end up with royalty, but Toriel didn’t care. She wanted to help heal her wife as well as watch her new daughter-in-law.

That was where the straight and narrow came in. Toriel wanted to make sure Cindy didn’t fall in with any wrong crowd when she wasn’t around. *Yep, I got it right. It’s not just watching Frisk, it’s watching Cindy too.*

He better add that into his paper. It was actually a hell of a lot more of watching Cindy.

Lastly, monsters. The hidden monsters that nobody even knew existed up on the surface that had actually had nations of their own. Some would want to grab Frisk or Cindy to hurt or inherit the kingdom, because they were humans and didn’t like them, or just because they might make good collateral to force the monster kingdom to do something. Anything really, so he narrowed it down to two things.

Monsters or humans attacking vs monsters of humans who posed no threat.

His tactics would have to change, depending on whether the attacker was monster or human, and whether they were really attacking or spying. Whether they meant to cause harm or they were curious. He wouldn’t want to start a world war just because some monster decided to see who the mysterious wife and daughter had been.

Overall? He'd have to put a little more than an average amount of work into it. It would probably take a little more sweat than his usual amount of effort.

Okay, it was going to take a lot more sweat than his usual amount of effort.

It would be worth it though.

Toriel watched her wife looking through the papers. She already had something she had wanted to discuss with her, but she wanted to give Cindy the chance to look at them too without bias.

"This looks like chickenscratch," Cindy said holding up an interesting paper. "All the others were typed and some emailed. This chickenscratch one though is really good." She handed her to Toriel. "Clear winner."

Toriel looked at it. "Sans the Skeleton." She read through it and could see what Cindy liked about it. "He's cautious but wise."

"Beats these others." Cindy looked at the papers. "On the outside, you'd think one of these would win. Each one is more interested in killing whatever comes after us, and then hiding the evidence to keep the peace. Except this one."

Toriel knew which other paper she had picked up. It was Papyrus'.

"We aren't all going to get along well with just apologies either." She chuckled. "If only the world worked like that." She sat it back down. "I want Sans the Skeleton. Frisk has talked about him the most with me anyway."

That made sense. "Sans watched over Frisk Underground. He made the harshness of her journey a little easier to bear."

"No marriage for fifty years, that's the award?" Cindy looked confused. "I don't get it. Can't he just not get married?"

"No, no. In the Underground, there were not many monsters left," Toriel told her. "So, every monster when they reach 200 must take a wife or husband. If we didn't do that, we probably wouldn't exist today."

Cindy looked at the paper. "Maybe you should consider changing that, T. You're above ground now."

"Yes, with other hidden monster nations. Now is not the time to rock the boat," Toriel insisted. "Besides, 200 is an accurate age for marriage."

"200? I'd say so," Cindy remarked. "Monsters live such a long time, don't they?"

“They do,” Toriel said. “In fact, I suppose you would call every hundred years or so about maybe . . . ten years? Perhaps, it’s not an exact science.”

“So he’s about 20?”

Toriel couldn’t help a small chuckle. “It’s not an exact science with a year formula. Let’s say Sans is more along the line of not quite adult. Hmm, a teen? No, he would be . . . sixteenish? Seventeenish? His brother would be about . . . thirteenish?”

“Interesting. Ten years to age even a year.” Cindy shook her head. “It sounds like one day you’ll just blink and I’ll be gone.”

“Oh no,” Toriel comforted her. “No, not me. I am over a thousand years old. We will both go out close to each other.” As it felt like it should with her. Seeing her live only a flash would be hard on her heart.

Hardly any monsters in the old days fell in love with humans for that exact reason. She had only known of one couple. The ritual to extend life to their spouse wasn’t hard, so it wasn’t the biggest deal. However, the ritual was painful so it would be saved for some time.

However, time took its toll earlier than expected and the human had died. The monster was so heartbroken, it just couldn’t go on. It was found in dust a week later.

“If you were younger like this Sans, it wouldn’t be the same is what you are saying?”

Yes. “Oh, yes. That would feel like half a year to him.” Cindy didn’t have that problem to worry about though. Cindy kept staring at Sans’ paper. She already said she wanted him to be Frisk’s bodyguard, what else was troubling her. “My Dear C?”

“My mind’s just thinking of something horrible,” Cindy admitted as she finally put the paper down. “I want my Frisk to live in the kingdom with us when she gets older, but she can’t because Asgore is def gonna say no. Right?”

Asgore’s rebellious streak. He couldn’t create new rules to keep Toriel from leaving and marrying someone else without her say so. She was way within her time of rights. 100 years of marriage and then a divorce if it didn’t work out. Even before then she had cause to leave (collecting human souls was not nice husband material), which would have been granted an instant divorce.

To counteract that though, he changed other rules about citizenry, saying it would be better for the kingdom, especially as small as it had been, to protect itself better of others wanting to join and corrupt it. As her Cindy best put it? “He is an A, C.”

“Most guys are an A, T,” Cindy said back. “Not all guys, I’m sure. My own actual dad, he was one of the good ones a long time ago.” She touched Sans’ paper again. “Are you seeing what I’m seeing, T?”

Hmm. Toriel smiled. “That might work, Honey!” Ooh, good eye. She would give Sans a break from the marriage rule if she could, she knew he just wasn’t into anyone but she

couldn't change rules on her own.

She did have some leverage when granting rewards, and she gave what she could. Fifty years. "Sans is practically 17. Frisk may be young but when she's 18, Sans will be about 18 or 19. Approximately."

"He's the only monster here capable of protecting her, right? He's in the kingdom. He isn't looking to become no husband or dad. Am I a terrible mother?" Cindy asked. "It's a lot better of the options I got to choose at her age."

Well? *Overall, he would lose Frisk before he even turns 20! No messy divorce reasoning. He would never have to marry afterward again.* He might go with that choice, when Frisk was older. Right now, it would be hard to see if any connection existed.

Frisk was only eight of course.

"Okay, what if we arranged them, but we told Frisk at 16 she could marry anyone in the kingdom she wanted if she fell for someone else?" Cindy was trying to put a nicer spin on it. "I want her protected, but I don't want to command . . ."

Command her to go to anyone.

Toriel nodded and went to hold her C. She had gone quiet and her vivacious soul was curling up. "Sans is a very good monster." She gently kissed her, trying to uncurl her soul again. "You could never be a terrible mother, nor a terrible wife. This arrangement may work out for the both of them."

Sans would go for it. There were no laws that said he had to have children or sleep in the same bed. She could be a practical roommate with him and Papyrus for the span of her short lifetime.

Frisk would still have options, and if she decided not to join the kingdom, that would be an option too. But? With Sans, there would be no trepidation. Sans wanted nothing to do with a kid or a wife. He wanted a way out for good. "I will go and discuss the offer to him."

Either way though, they had their bodyguard.

"Sans!"

Eh.

"Sans! The queen is here!"

Cool.

“Saaaaans!”

“Hello, Sans!” Tori’s voice was heard from downstairs now too. “I brought a gift basket of Grillby’s finest for you!”

Sans rolled off his bed, opened his door and looked down. Ooh, it was Tori with a basket of Frys and Burgs. He moved down the stairs toward her. “Hey, Tori. Those for Papyrus?”

“Of course they are not for me. I don’t eat at Grillby’s!” Papyrus proclaimed. “It’s covered in grease! I feel it just walking by there everyday.”

“I came to give the winner of Royal Entourage his just desserts.” Tori handed the basket to Sans. “Or just his meals.”

Heh heh, good one. Great gag. Nice setup. A little too nice. “Great. I don’t need the name attached.”

“Sans, the name is of great honor,” Papyrus complained again. “You won a great and prestigious position.”

“Yeah. Sans is fine.” Sans saw it annoyed Papyrus. “R.E. Sans then.”

“Yes, and there is something else I would like to chat with you about,” Tori said. “About the marriage reward.”

“You can make it for lifetime?” He really didn’t want to get married.

“Sorry, my hands are tied in that direction,” Tori simply said yet again. “Fifty years off.”

Dang.

“But, there is another proposition I would like to discuss in that regard?” Tori smiled a little too wide. “Humans don’t have a long span. Some only live fifty or sixty years.”

Sans waited. *Where’s the punchline?* “So . . .?”

“Frisk is 8 now, but in 10 years she will be 18. The citizenry rules won’t let her live in the Monster Kingdom even then,” Tori revealed. “If?” She glared at him. “Mind you, I said if. If! She married you at 18, she could live her life out here and you only have to be married one time legal.”

One time. *Humans live only 50 years or so.* “Frisk just has to live with me and Papyrus for like 50 years or whatever?”

“Yes.”

Hell yes, I’ll take that! “Cool. I’m in.”

“If she accepts it,” Toriel warned. “If she doesn’t, the issue would not be pressed.”

“Then I’d have to marry the bunny at Grillby’s?”

“I suppose so.”

Well I don’t want to. Frisk wasn’t a get out of marriage jail card, but a human was dang close. Fifty years would fly by and he wouldn’t have to get married again after she died. “You know, it’s not real fair to keep that from Frisk. She might start edging toward humans if you don’t tell her.”

“When she’s sixteen, we’ll tell her the option,” Toriel said confidently. “That way she can feel free to choose another monster, or know the consequences of choosing a human or no one. It will be Frisk’s decision.”

It’s a good thing skeleton’s had no real face. They always looked like they were smiling. *Yeah, right, I’m gonna accidentally mention it first thing when I see her. I’ll get her so used to the concept of wife as roommate to me and Papyrus, she’d feel guilty about not marrying me.* “Cool.” He looked at his gift basket, acting like he only minorly paid attention to that part. It would be his excuse later when he did see the human again and ‘goofed’. “Did you get extra catsup on this?”

Forever Roomates!

Ten years later in Frisk's Family Home. . .

"See? Sweet agrees," Sans pointed out. He stopped hanging upside down and flipped down. He was now just in the yard and used his magic to open the window. He rested his bony arms across it. "We already talked about it."

"Yeah," Frisk said. "Best Skeleton is Papyrus. Husband is Sans. Wedding Food is Grillbys. I'll live with Papyrus and Sans. It's all taken care of."

Her moms just looked at each other.

"Hey? Did you two forget that you were the ones that wanted this?" Sans blamed them. "It's here. Time's up."

"There is no 'time up'," Toriel insisted. "It is still a choice, and it doesn't have to happen right away."

"Sure, of course it doesn't," Sans agreed. "As long as I don't have to get married in the process of 'not happening right away'."

Frisk groaned. Why even bother about this? The whole thing was set up, and she liked the set up. What was wrong with it? "Sans is right. The Monster Kingdom better not be setting up things one way for me, and one way for him." Sans didn't want to get married any more than she did.

He hadn't for the last ten years, but the Monster Kingdom stressed it. Frisk wasn't going to make him suffer to some other random woman monster just because her mom Toriel didn't like the way they wanted to run things.

Not only that, but the last thing she wanted was to settle down with some human man. People were okay, but to just have to marry and settle down with . . .

Frisk still remembered how it had been. As she got older, she got a clearer picture of things, and the last thing she wanted was to become property to any human man. Any human, period.

Sans wasn't human. He was her friend and no threat at all. Shoot, he didn't even have parts, he was just bones and magic. Safe, secure, and the best choice for the decision.

If they both had limited decisions, then *they* should decide the way they would run with it. It was their life! Geez. Besides? "If I have to go to prom, I want to go with Sans."

"Is their food?" Sans was up for it.

“Sans isn’t going to be easy to get in,” her biological mom reminded her. “Plus, I doubt he can dance.”

“Who cares? I can’t dance,” Frisk pointed out. “They’ll just think he’s dressed like a skeleton for the dance.”

“It is a night of ladies in dresses and gentlemen dressed in suits,” Toriel said to Frisk. “Not skeletons. It won’t work.”

“It is a night of dresses or suits, worn by either male or female,” Frisk corrected Toriel. “A monster teen should be able to come with another teen.”

Her mom Toriel was eyeing her now. “It’s too dangerous. No prom for Sans. Decide yourself whether you will go with a human boy.”

That answer was emphatically no.

“I am going to take C for a little while. We need to discuss some things in the monster kingdom.” Toriel looked toward Sans. “Watch her.”

Her mothers both joined hands and disappeared.

“Finally.” Frisk watched Sans crawl inside. “My moms drive me crazy sometimes. What’s their deal?”

“I dunno.” Sans reached in his pocket. “Hang on, I got something for you, Sweet.”

Was it a wedding ring? She was 18 since yesterday, and she was ready to actually live in the monster kingdom. She’d visited almost every weekend since she was a little girl.

“Where is it?” Sans kept searching around his pocket. “Dangit. Hang on.” He checked his second pocket. “Oh, here it is.”

Frisk watched him pull out a Grillby burg in it’s wrapper. “You got me a Grillby burg?”

“Nah, it’s from Grillby.” Sans handed it to her. “*Bone* Appetite.”

From Grillby? Frisk opened it. It was a Grillby burg, but it was luxurious. It had two burgs on it with extra tomato and catsup, including mushrooms. “Ooh.” The wrapper on the inside said ‘Happy Birthday’. “That’s so sweet.”

“Nah, you are.” That line came from Sans all the time. “Oh yeah.” He snapped his bony finger. “I’m forgetting something else.” He reached in his pocket. “I . . . uh . . . think I forgot it though.”

Aww. “Can you go back and get it?”

“Can’t. No way am I allowed to just leave you here by yourself,” Sans reminded her.

Oh come on. "I'm 18. It won't take long, will it?" It had to be the ring he needed. "You won't have this job for much longer anyhow." It would take a little more. Sans could use his return magic on his own, but he couldn't come back without Asgore's container. "I won't leave the property, it'll be fine. Plus, you have Alphys thing."

Sans tapped his slippered foot. "Won't be gone real long, promise."

Frisk watched him disappear. Oh good. She'd finally get the ring that would let her stay in the monster kingdom with both her mothers. Her mothers had waited ten years to be able to live with each other, and only Frisk not being part of the monster kingdom prevented it.

The marriage would solve every problem. All she needed was that ring.

Monster Kingdom

Oh, come on, I like jokes but this isn't funny. Sans knew he had the ring. It was right in his other pocket. The opposite of Grillby's burg. He had been extra careful with it, he even held a little magic against gravity so when he went upside down, it would still be safe in his pocket.

Where was it?!

He looked all over his room. He had a nice shiny gold ring, even had it engraved with FS for Frisk Sweet.

"What are you looking for, Sans?" Papyrus asked.

"The ring!" Sans didn't just casually mention it. "The ring, Papyrus, it was right here in my pocket. I know it had been." Sans checked his pocket for the millionth time. "I need to give it to Sweet." He looked at the dog resting on his tornado. "Hey, you seen a ring around here?"

"Oh? Oh, the one with FS for Forever Soulmate?"

"For Frisk Sweet." Papyrus sometimes. "I need that ring."

"Oh, Sans, I can't believe you actually lost something so important!" Papyrus scolded him. "You'll need that ring."

"Yeah, and like now." Toriel and Cindy looked like they were wanting to reverse their damn decisions, and they couldn't! Frisk was his and he needed to make it official. Even if he had to run off and get married the human way.

It would still count. Except? "I can't do nothing without-" Wait. If Tori was second guessing their decision, she wouldn't just run off to let him- "Tori."

Tori had to have it. "I gotta go, Papyrus. I know where it's at." Sans opened up some of Asgore's emergency power to get back to Frisk.

Tori. How could she start to betray him like that?

Frisk's Home

Sans appeared back in the living room. "I think Tori took it." He looked in front of him. "Frisk?"

"Right here."

Sans went out in the back where Frisk was hanging some of her laundry. She still wore some of her unisex clothes her mom preferred, but she had started to wear dresses too.

When she did, Sans could guarantee some human guy was probably staring at her. She filled them out nicely. "I had a ring but I think your mom took it."

Frisk looked back at him in shock. "One of my mom's took it? Toriel?"

"Yep." Sans moved closer. Frisk's soul was always like a roaring fire in the middle of winter. It was nice to be up close to it. "Sorry, Sweet."

"What's wrong with them?" Frisk finished hanging her dress on the clothesline. "That isn't right. Why are they doing this?"

"I don't know," Sans admitted. "It was all their idea to begin with." Toriel and Cindy had been all for it. Why were they changing their mind so much?

Sure they pointed out Frisk might decide to just stay in her native country, or she might choose to be with someone else. But, Frisk never wanted anyone else. She never dated at 16 when they encouraged it, and never tried anyone else. So what the heck was their problem?

It was bunk, Sans was right. Why were they being so hard about this? Frisk continued to hang her clothes. Her dresses liked to swing around in the breeze, including the one she was wearing. She liked the feel of dresses, and sometimes it did cause guys to stare.

She didn't have to worry about it though. Who cared if they stared? Sans always told her to just be herself, and he'd always be there if he was needed. Night or day. He'd never let her down once.

“Sans. Frisk.” Toriel came back with Cindy and stood beside Frisk. “Before you decide to go through with your plan, you should be aware of some changes that have happened since the idea was conceived of marriage between you.”

Decisions?

“What kind of decisions, Boss?” Sans asked.

Ooh. Sans never called her moms Boss. Frisk finished hanging her dress and waited.

“Changes occurred six years ago,” her mom Cindy said to her. “When you were about 12. Asgore made them.”

Asgore. He never wanted Frisk in the kingdom. He still thought that her mothers staying distant would let him steal her mother Toriel back away. Frisk coming into the kingdom, would destroy his chances of that.

There was no chance though. Still.

“What did Fuzzy Pushover do?” Sans asked with a certain amount of grinding in his voice. Her mother Tori handed Sans a note. He stared at it. “Bullshit.”

Bullshit what? Frisk tried to lean over to see, but Sans pulled it away. He mostly did that kind of thing when she was a kid. It was something he really didn’t want her to see then.

“This wasn’t part of the deal.”

“I know, Sans,” her mother Toriel said calmly. “I can understand that it’s not to your liking. Frisk is still only human. That is an extremely great perk? It will be over time anyway.”

What will be over time?

“You really shouldn’t be forcing this kind of thing on your own daughter.”

Ugh. “Will everyone stop talking over me like I’m not even here?” Frisk demanded.

Sans looked really strange. Even though he was skeleton, he was sweating. A lot. A whole lot. “You should have said something long ago, Tori. Six years ago.”

“It would only have stressed her,” her mother Toriel insisted. “Please, Sans. Talk it over with Frisk.”

Sans still seemed to be watching her mother Toriel very close. Frisk understood why. Her mom and Asgore ruled mutually. Changing significant rules without the other’s approval should be impossible.

Whatever her mom Toriel was pinning on Asgore, she must have some part of in too.

“What’s the paper say, Sans?”

“It’s okay,” her mom Cindy spoke up. “Look between the lines, and I know you’ll see something better to choose. It would fit you both better.”

Sans stared at the paper. His light guiders were focused tightly, dragging themselves slowly across. “By the end of the year?” he asked Toriel.

“C will be moving into the kingdom,” her mother Toriel said. “It is high time I can live with my own wife.”

Frisk was still lost. What was going on? Why wouldn’t anyone tell her anything? *Will they quit treating me like a kid?* Frisk yanked the paper from Sans and looked at it. “What?!”

No way.

“Take the paper to your room, Frisk Sweet. We’ll talk in your room later,” Sans commanded.

Frisk didn’t listen. She quickly flashed her attention to her mothers Toriel and Cindy. “It’s impossible!”

“No, it’s not,” her mother Cindy revealed. “Honey, your skeleton friend isn’t completely harmless.”

“It isn’t completely set up to be the way you think,” her mother Toriel corrected her. “Frisk.”

“No.”

“Frisk, Honey?”

“No!” Frisk flung the paper away and went to her room, slamming the door. As Sans wanted. “It’s not true! It’s all fake!” She looked at Sans who was leaning against her bed post. He took a shortcut into her room from the other side. “It’s not possible.”

Sans just let out a heavy sigh. “I’m going to talk to your moms, but are you okay, Sweet?”

No. It wasn’t fair. “I didn’t know.”

“Yeah, well it shouldn’t make a difference.” Sans moved over closer to her. “I’m still *just* Sans.”

But the whole concept of what marriage could be . . . changed for her. They had changed the law which wouldn’t make it difficult on anyone else in a marriage. It was so subtle, it wouldn’t have affected anyone else. But them? “Is it really, really true?”

Sans didn’t answer at first, instead providing a quick groan. “It doesn’t matter. Just, relax. I don’t think this is how it quite looks. I’ll be back.”

Frisk didn’t even bother hiding her tears. It wasn’t fair. “I won’t choose anything.”

“Well, *I* don’t get that kind of luxury,” Sans said to her. “This is bunk.”

“This is fucked up is what it is!” Frisk didn’t care about her cursing as she wiped her eyes.
“Why did they do this?”

“Life is kind of fucked up in general, Sweet.” Sans wouldn’t hide it. “Just relax and breathe. I’ll find out all the details to this deal.”

He left. Frisk just sat on her bed, her arms crossed. Not an ounce of her feeling like the adult she just became.

Okay. Sans stared at Sweet’s moms. This couldn’t really be as bad as it looked on paper. Cindy alone would never want to entrap her daughter like that. Tori would never hurt her either. So what was going on?

Maybe he should go visit the brains of the family to see if he saw anything.

Monster Kingdom . . .

Papyrus listened to Sans’ story and heard about the paper. “So. That is where you are at now, huh, Brother?”

“Yep. It’s one heck of a puzzle.” Sans groaned. “This is bogus. I need a solution to this The Great Papyrus.” He leaned in his chair so far backwards that he would have tipped over without magic. “I can’t take this lightly.”

“I say you go for it,” Papyrus said. “A human’s lifespan for marriage is only 50 years or so. Maybe 60. Not even 100. That’s not bad.”

“But the rest is.” Sans leaned back even further in his chair as he stared at the cracks in their ceiling. “I’d rather be stuck Underground than dealing with this one.”

“It’s such a simple thing, no wonder no one ever talked about any change in rules,” Papyrus noted.

“Sure, a simple thing for people who like each other and already got married. Heck, they probably had the whole thing licked before they got married.” For him and Sweet though? It would be required to be magically checked to make sure she ‘connected’ with him.

In other words, they’d use a magic connector. It kind of worked like a blacklight. If Frisk sparkled blue, it meant he’d touched her wherever she sparkled blue in it. If Frisk was literally the color blue underneath the light, then it meant . . . yeah.

Sans wouldn't be able to deceive that stupid detector. If she didn't turn as blue as a blueberry, she'd be thrown out of the kingdom and as his wife choice. He'd have to pick another because of 'fraud'.

You know, 'cause not every monster wants to get married and get it on with each other, fraud did happen.

The second choice would give him exactly what he wanted. If he found a monster for Frisk that she wanted to marry in two years, he'd be given immunity to never have to marry anyone.

The options though? "Cindy went through a lot of shit in her life. I imagine she's using that as a second option as me as the trust buddy. The one Sweet trusted all her life would be the one to help her through it. Bull."

"They made it so that you *must* play the devil either way, Brother." Papyrus sighed. He curled his finger bones beneath his chin. "Sometimes the solution to a puzzle is what we don't see. What happens if you say no?"

"I get sentenced to be married of course. No is never an option," Sans groaned.

"Okay, but what if Frisk says no instead?" Papyrus asked cunningly.

If Frisk didn't marry him, and didn't come to the monster kingdom? "Tori wants her wife, and Frisk is old enough to move on." Technically. Frisk wasn't part of the kingdom. Her nation gave her choice. So? "Nothing would happen, but she'd have no protection."

"Right and the queen would not allow it," Papyrus pointed out. "The answer, do you see it?"

"Hey?" Oh yes. "Thanks, Papyrus. You are the coolest monster I know."

Frisk's House . . .

Frisk was lying on her bed, her stomach churning as she saw Sans appear above her. "So, what's it gonna be? As if I didn't know."

Sans winked. "Well, I don't feel like it's time to make you Mrs. Frisk the Skeleton after all."

"Of course."

"As much as I like the thought of finally being free of having marriage like ever too?" Sans laid his bony hand on her head. "There's no way I can just pair you up in two years with some monster just for my freedom."

Hmm? Frisk looked up at him. There were only two choices. "What are you saying?"

"Toriel and Cindy had you apply to colleges, right?" Sans pointed out. "That'll be the next step. Until then, your mom Tori will keep paying the bills here."

Really? Was he serious? "How?"

"Just whatever they offer, no matter how tempting it is? Just say no," Sans assured her. "Keep saying no and I'll step in when the time is right." He winked at her. "You trust me, right?"

Forever and always. "Right."

"Okay then, just say no. Even to me." He winked at her. "Until I give you one of these, you gotta say no to me too. Okay?"

Frisk nodded.

Saying no started easy for Frisk. She said no to marrying Sans, and she said no to finding a monster in two years to marry. The next no was a monster in four years to marry.

She was now in twenty years to marry a monster territory. Twenty seemed like a decent amount of time to find someone to marry. *Sans said keep saying no until he steps in himself and winks.* "No."

"Twenty years, Frisk!" She had made her mother Toriel angry. She was even arguing with Asgore on her monster cell. "I can't get anything better than twenty years, and twenty years isn't done very often. Do you not want to be part of the monster kingdom that bad? You will be able to live in the monster kingdom within those twenty years, you know."

"No." *Trust Sans.*

"I think it's clear that Frisk doesn't want to get married." Sans finally stepped in. "Anything I can do to help change your mind, Sweet?"

Frisk shook her head.

"You know, the deal with the monsters grants me immunity. That'd be pretty sweet," Sans told her. "Isn't that good enough, just helping out a monster too?"

No wink yet from him. "No."

"Twenty years is older than you even," Sans said laying it on thicker. "You get more time than you've even been alive to decide on a monster husband. Does that help any?"

Still no wink. "No, I refuse."

Sans shrugged at her mothers. “You know your daughter. She’s big on refusing things, and she doesn’t ever give up.”

Her mothers didn’t say anything as they moved to the other side of the room to talk amongst themselves.

“She is 18 now,” Toriel said to her wife. “I want you with me in the kingdom. I can’t believe she’s being so unreasonable.”

“I want to be there with you too, T. Frisk must want something else for herself,” C said as she looked out at their daughter. “Maybe she really wants to go at it alone for college or a career? Maybe that’s even what she wanted in the monster kingdom after marrying Sans.” She wrinkled her fingers together. “We shouldn’t force Frisk into starting a family.”

“We aren’t,” Toriel insisted. “There is no force for family and for goodness sakes, it would be twenty years.”

“I just wanted her protected,” C said. “She’s ready to grow up and go it alone and . . .” She started to wipe her tears away. “I know she’ll be a smart girl. She won’t ever turn into what I did. I shouldn’t fear the same way for her but I . . .”

“I know. The monsters too.” Toriel held her close. Frisk was still an important part to them. She was their daughter, and she wanted to live in a world that didn’t understand monsters well.

Monsters were known of now. They tended to keep to themselves though. Most didn’t intermingle, but they were allowed to the world of humans.

Toriel worried about the monsters, C also worried about the human side of things.

“If she doesn’t want to get married and come to the kingdom.” Toriel looked toward Sans. “Maybe we should let her follow her own path . . . with the protection?”

Sans' protection time was over. Toriel and her Cindy didn’t want to keep traveling back and forth anymore. It was time to create a new plan, so that Frisk could follow her own way.

She moved toward Sans.

Sans saw it. He knew the look that hit Toriel’s eye. “Hey, Tori. Sup? Everything okay?”

“Frisk has chosen not to marry nor try for any deal in marriage to come live in the Monster Kingdom,” she started. “She wants her own life. Would you be willing . . . to guard longer if I placed marriage on hold for the extent of your guarding?”

Bingo. *Thank you, Papyrus.* “How am I gonna guard a few hours each day if you aren’t staying? You deciding to stay too with your wife?”

Tori shook her head. “Frisk is 18. She should have her freedom to live here if that’s what she wants. Could you possibly?” She wiggled her paws. “Watch her full time?”

“Full time?” Sans acted surprised. “What do you mean full time?”

“I know you will miss your brother and Grillbys, but I promise occasional visits back when we visit her,” Toriel assured her. “Frisk trusts you as her guard.” Toriel snuck a look at Frisk. “Can you accept Sans in your life so he can stay as your guard?”

Ha! Even asking her now. I got this. Sans looked at Frisk. “Looks like I’m going to be rooming with you for awhile, Sweet. Now, I know you should have some decent colleges to pick from. When you pick, try to find the most woke one you can.”

“Woke? Why?” Frisk asked.

“Because they are going to have to let in a monster student,” Sans chuckled. “Anyhow, I guess it’s about time I get noticed in this world if I’ll be here 24/7. So what day is this prom thing?”

“Are you kidding?! No!”

“Are you kidding? Yes, Tori.”

“It’s not safe.”

“What do you mean? *I’m* the guard.”

“It’s putting even more of a spotlight on Frisk, Sans!”

“I can handle that and more for Sweet.”

Frisk watched Sans argue back and forth with her moms. Now she understood why she wasn’t even supposed to agree to the twenty year deal. *He wants something different too.* She wasn’t one bit upset about it.

Sans was delighted with the idea of prom and college and living away from the monster kingdom. Either that, or he was rubbing it in that they were trying to manipulate her and

didn't get away with it. (Probably the second.)

"Can I get one of the school jackets too?" Sans asked.

"Sans, you only went so high in school," Toriel complained. "You won't be able to get into a college."

"Says you, I can test in easy. I helped Frisk with her homework and it was baby stuff. Especially the math. Gimme the equivalent test. It's not the first time a monster went to college."

"That was a very special case," Toriel insisted. "It involved a different monster nation, not the Monster Kingdom."

"Then it means it's possible. I'm joining Frisk's school dance-"

"Sans!"

"-and that's the start. Then I'm going to college like a normal teenager can."

"You'll be attending your own classes and helping guard Frisk?" Toriel complained. "How will you manage that?"

"Give me some emergency containers. I'll keep Alphys' thing. I'll still be near her, we'll share a small apartment and school. It'll work," Sans insisted. "Try to see if you can get some harder classes too, I'll take prerequisite tests any teacher wants to throw at me."

He should be able to. Sans was more than just a good friend and guard. He was brilliant. Frisk got A's in math all the time because he always managed to explain in a way that even she understood. *He's probably so smart compared to everyone else that he's bored.* Maybe he could learn new things in college too?

"Also, I'm going to this prom thing," Sans insisted. "It'll be a good test to see how people deal with a monster in their room."

"Souls, Sans. Humans have very strong souls," Toriel warned him.

"I'm fast, and without a board to get a chance to use their soul on, most won't know how to fight with it on command anyhow." Sans looked over at Frisk. "Hey, Sweet? Can you fight without your soul being pulled onto a board?"

"Nope." Only monsters could do that, or a human that had to fight for their lives. Without aggression from the other side, even the older humans couldn't have fought with their souls.

"See?" Sans pointed out to her.

Frisk moved up toward Sans. "Moms? You two are asking Sans to give up his whole life in the Monster Kingdom to guard me. Not only is it right to grant his wishes, I wouldn't say yes without it. Sans deserves his own life too."

Sans held his bony hand out and Frisk bumped it with hers.

Her mothers sighed and looked at one another.

Her mother Toriel took a step closer toward Sans. “The prom will be the test to see how this goes. C and I will be here for Frisk’s graduation, so there will be no worries. We’ll keep this same deal until then.” Her mom smiled and hugged her. “You’ll do well, Frisk.”

Bad. This was bad. Sans had grown too close to not only Frisk, but the outside world. It should not be surprising, but there was still so much he didn’t know. As time moved by, he would learn even more. So much more.

He did not have the degree of responsibility that he needed to handle the real truths. Tonight, during prom.

Toriel watched Cindy sitting near the window. “I’m going to do something you won’t remember Cindy.”

Cindy glanced to her. “Those aren’t good words, T. What are you going to do?”

“Sans. I messed this up with Frisk. There are dangerous things he doesn’t understand dealing with the nations. They are more than just places monsters hide in,” she revealed. “He is less into Frisk as a protector, and more into selfishly carving a place for himself in the world. You heard her too. They are both used to more flexibility. That kind of . . . silliness. Isn’t serious enough for the darkness the nations can bring.”

Cindy didn’t know how to react. “What are you going to do?”

“Well? I could erase monsters from Frisk’s mind altogether. Make it so that she can’t remember them whenever she met or meets them,” Toriel said, “but then my daughter would not know me. I am selfish myself, and I don’t want to lose Frisk. I? I am going to turn back time instead. Back to when I first made the decision to choose Sans.”

“Sans was a good choice,” Cindy warned her. “He’s the best with her. He never scared her, never harmed her. He’s able to fight and show weakness. He was far from perfect, but also cool to her. I don’t want to change that.”

“We won’t change the one we chose,” Toriel told her, “just the way we treated him with Frisk. Frisk needs to see more potential for a husband than just him too. He worked on her every day, making her happy and feeling safe for her future with just him. We need him to be less of a friend, and more of an actual guard.”

“I don’t know about that,” Cindy said with uncertainty. “T? Things could be worse. It’s better not to mess around with this stuff I bet. Right?”

“Normally, but with what the nations want?” Toriel shook her head. “We must be vigilant. The nations are just looking for a weakness. Besides, I think it’s better this way. I just wanted you to know.”

“What will it feel like, erasing time?” Cindy asked. “Will it hurt?”

“Oh no.” Toriel smiled at her. “No, C. It’ll feel like nothing at all.”

Toriel Turned Back Time

Chapter Summary

Frisk goes from growing up in an engagement, to back to eight years old all over again.

Oklahoma

Frisk investigated her new house. It was nicer than the old one. It had a big kitchen so they could make meals and cookies. It had two rooms and a bathroom. It even had a nice big living room. It even had a little frontyard to play in, and a twice as big backyard with a swingset.

She loved it. She danced around from room to room.

“Hey, Twinkletoes, watch out.”

Frisk looked into who she bumped into. Sans? “What are you doing here, Sans?”

“Didn’t you hear?” Sans asked her. “I’ll be watching out for you way out here.”

Hm? “You live in the monster kingdom.” Was he doing something similar to Toriel? “Are you visiting on the weekends like Toriel?” Did he know about Toriel being her second mom?

“Nah, just occasionally and never weekends,” he said. “Your mom gets weekends.” He winked.

Oh, he did know! She winked back. “It’s a secret.”

“Yep. Don’t go squealing it around to anybody,” Sans insisted. “You seen Alphys around here?”

Alphys too? “Is she staying too?”

“Nah, she’s just setting some stuff up for me so I don’t have to be here 24/7.” Sans rubbed her head affectionately. “Be good, Kid.”

“I always try to be good, Sans,” Frisk insisted.

“That’s good. I wouldn’t want a real evil wife.”

Umm? “I don’t get the joke, Sans?”

“No joke. When you grow up, you’ll marry me.” Sans patted her head. “Don’t sweat it, Kid. It means you’ll just live with me and Papyrus when you grow up. That way, you can stay with your moms happily ever after in the monster kingdom.”

Oh really? “I get to live in the monster kingdom?”

“Yeah, sure, at 18 if you marry me.”

Aww. “That’s a looooong wait, Sans,” Frisk complained. “I’m 8. That’s older than double my age.”

“Eh. Time passes faster than you think. You’ll see Tori on the weekends though, and hey, you can visit the monster kingdom in the meantime,” Sans reminded her.

“Okay.” Still? “Why do I have to marry you when I grow up to be part of the monster kingdom?”

“Just rules.” Sans shrugged. “Rules aren’t always fair.”

Yeah, that was true. “So are you really sure I’m going to marry you?”

“What? You got a problem with a bone-ified husband?” he joked. “Go ask your moms if you don’t believe me.”

It didn’t make a good joke. There wasn’t a punchline. It was just . . . weird. “Then are you caught in unfair rules too? There must be a reason you’d want to go through marriage and stuff.”

“You called it right. I’m caught in rules too!” he chuckled. “Can’t fool you, Kid.”

“So you’re really marrying me when I’m older.” It still sounded so strange. “Do you think I’ll be pretty?”

“I don’t know.” Sans shrugged. “You have skin covering your bones.” He chuckled. “Just kidding. I don’t care, Frisk.” He moved closer. “Seriously, it’s way more like roommates. Don’t ever worry about it, okay? None of the grown up kissy touchy yucky stuff. We’re all stuck in whacky rules, and we’ll deal with them the same whacked out way.”

Frisk laughed. Now Sans was making more sense. “Yeah. Monsters do have some whacky rules.”

“Don’t discount humans. You things are weird too. Who’s ever heard of red stop signs?” Sans teased her.

“I guess we’re all just different.” Frisk shrugged this time.

“Hey, you’re a little chattier than you were before in the Underground,” Sans noticed. “Feeling better about this move out here?”

Oh. "It's different. My moms are really happy." Frisk felt kind of good she got to call Toriel her mom. With her own mom being really cool, it almost seemed unfair to have two great moms. "As long as I don't fuck up, everything will be a-okay."

Oops.

"I mean . . ." Frisk went silent. She screwed up. The new neighborhood would have different people in it. The move had been exciting enough to actually have a nicer conversation with Sans.

And she blew it.

Sans just leaned to the side. "Don't sweat it, Kid. I don't have ears, so I couldn't have heard anything."

Frisk nodded. Sans wouldn't tell on her. "Sorry." She didn't want to risk anymore. There was a way to talk to people, and a way not to talk to people. From Underground, to her old home, to her mom's 'frenemies' (that's what she called them) and to her new home.

It was just easier to stay silent. Toriel tried to coax her into talking, but she was trying to make sure she didn't mess up either. Frisk's momma had the same trouble. Dialogue. Between where she used to live, and where she lived now. "Dialogue's shitty," she murmured under her breath.

"You'll get better."

Sans heard her?! Frisk whispered that really low. "Sorry, Sans."

"About what?" He let her get away with that too. "You'll adjust to your environment. No worries. Besides, you already got the idea of what you shouldn't say anymore." He pointed to his skull. "You just need more practice so it's more instinctive. Whispering or staying silent isn't gonna help with that, Kid."

Oh.

"Neither is not looking at people. You always ignore looking straight at everybody, like you're gonna make them mad if you do."

She felt Sans try to move her hair more out of her eyes.

"I'm here to make sure you can look at people with your own two eyes, okay?"

What a weird thing to say. Frisk's mom was just always real careful about that kind of thing, so Frisk did what she did. As for other stuff? Well, her friends her age, they did things a certain way too. *But staying silent doesn't help. I'll have to start to talk.* "All the do nots, they became do's. All the do's, they became do not's," Frisk complained. "I don't like it."

"You'll learn. I'll be visiting you at least once a day on the days you aren't with Toriel," he reminded her. "Think of me as your tester. I'll let you know if you screw up, but I won't make a big deal about it."

That'd be nice.

"I'll also have some of Alphys magic or tech to keep tabs on you. No matter what, you'll be safe and happy here."

Well? Technically, he did help Underground a little. "It's a little scary, Sans," she admitted. "I don't know . . . all things? But, I know. Life before Underground. It wasn't good, was it? I mean, momma is good. But. Momma isn't good-good at the same time. Does that make sense?"

"Them whacky rules of life again," Sans said. "Just whacky rules your mom got away from. You don't gotta dig or explain any deeper. I'll be watching out for monsters *and* humans."

Frisk breathed a sigh of relief she didn't even know she had been holding. "Thanks, Sans."

Alphys showed Sans how to run his little watch on his wrist. It had a digital timer, but also another display. If trouble fell around Frisk specifically, it would turn red and go to a display of Frisk's surroundings.

Alphys had given Frisk a cute red broach she kept pinned on her shirt each day. It read her emotions. When Frisk got scared or too excited, that's when Sans display for her went off.

Both were tech magic, which meant it didn't work like cameras around Frisk's house. It worked everywhere, so no matter where Frisk had been, he could find her.

Alphys also gave Sans a double container of Asgore's energy. He had filled it for two emergency visits. Otherwise, Sans needed to go see him at 3:00 PM every day. He would be there when Frisk got off school until about 6:00. He'd return and go back from 9:00-11:00 for checkups around the house.

Sounded easy. Sounded like it'd work. "Ummm . . . majesty?"

It wasn't. First day and Sans already messed up. Tori and Cindy glared at him. "What?"

"You told her!" Tori scolded him. "She is eight, and you told her about it?"

Damn. "Got cameras on me too?" So not fair. "No one said I wouldn't get any privacy in this job." Damn, damn! "It's something to keep in mind. I won't bring it up again."

Tori still didn't look happy. Cindy seemed more reserved than Tori about the matter. Funny.

"You made it sound like when she gets older, she would just be a roommate!" Tori warned him. "Your first day and you are already starting this with her!"

“Well, she would be?” I mean, the law never said he had to do anything else.

“No!” Tori looked the most upset. “She is eight, and you just dictated her future to her!” She pointed at Sans. “You can’t do that to Frisk, no one commands Frisk of anything!”

Damn. He triggered the main momma? If anything, he’d think maybe Cindy would be super upset. Why was Tori blowing a cylinder? “Sorry?”

“Sorry isn’t good enough!” Tori demanded.

Whoah. Sans didn’t think this was such a big deal. Everybody makes mistakes. “Fifty-year job and I lasted just a day? New low I guess.”

“I have to speak with Cindy now. Wait here, Sans.” She took Cindy to another room.

Sans waited. One day. He screwed up in one day. Well? Maybe he didn’t want a job that had cameras on him too all the time anyway. Lack of privacy. Who needed that? Probably a good thing.

Sure, it was a good thing. *Fuck, goodbye fifty-year break.*

Sans watched Tori head back out.

“Frisk will need a positive influence in her life,” Tori told him. “However, she will also need someone who can help protect her. You are not both of these things anymore. Cindy has lost all faith in you being around our daughter as a protector.” She folded her arms. “However, you still have the best idea on how to protect them.”

Cindy did? Looked more like Tori. Maybe she sensed something that he couldn’t feel in Cindy. She was closer to her, and it was Tori’s closeness that blew it all out?

Maybe. Maybe he didn’t completely lose the job yet?

“Papyrus will take the visiting hours with her. He will stay hidden in the house and not go out.” She pointed at Sans. “You will be given a different set of hours. During those hours, you will observe Frisk only. You should not be seen by her or any other human.”

Ah, cool. “I became a spy. Wicked.”

“If trouble finds her, then you can take action and reveal yourself. I won’t put Frisk’s life in danger just because I want you to stay hidden. But, I mean it, Sans. If Frisk sees you again out here?”

“Fired and no more fifty-year ride on marriage?” He got it. “I can hide really well. Know a ton of shortcuts.”

“You don’t have to hide from Cindy. I’d rather you didn’t. Stalking her unseen might hurt her in a different way. Just, make sure at some point you say hi to C. Or? Or if she gets anxious, just reveal yourself. I really want you to keep tabs on my family. Please.”

Less scolding, more desperate now.

“Only Papyrus’ paper was lenient enough to not want to outright kill and just hide bodies. So many are just too vicious at first glance of someone. Yet, Papyrus would never take any serious action fast enough either. You really are the perfect candidate for what I wanted, Sans, I really wanted this to work. You have no idea how much I wanted this to work!”

Sans nodded. “Sorry I blew it, Tori.”

“No, you aren’t, you are just sorry that you got caught!” Tori caught him. “Frisk will be urged to marry a monster more as she gets older, and we’ll tell her what will happen if she chooses to marry a human or no one at all. It will be her decision. I can’t force anything any other way.”

Nah. Not with Cindy, not an option. “I’ll watch out for the kid behind the scenes. I won’t reveal myself unless I really gotta.”

“Good. And?” Tori moved toward a desk and gave Sans a portfolio. “These are papers to research into. There are so many out there that might come. I have done my best to leave no traces, but always watch. This is just the human side. Hang on.” She went back to the desk for another portfolio. “The Magipipe Nation of Monsters is the most likely to attack, but there are so many others. There are still several things for you to do. Please do the best you can.”

Yeah. Sans was still earning his keep. Two portfolios full of potential enemies she already dug up since she just met Cindy? Geez.

“Cindy as well, do not discount her. She is trying to make a new life, but her old life was so different, and certain temptations. Certain corrupt things made things easier. Just, watch her too. Okay?” Toriel asked him. “Please?”

“I screwed up and I’m the one getting all the pleases.” Sans didn’t chuckle.

“I am serious, Sans.” Tori’s attitude still. It was just one mistake, but she was taking it like a knife to her heart. “Keep hidden. You are not a teenager playing around out there. You are a spy and a protector. If you mess up, my family will suffer.”

Okay, okay. “I promise, Tori.” He didn’t get the world, but he still got his fifty-year break. No more pushing.

Papyrus and Sans arrived earlier than the 3:00 arrival time. While Papyrus would be watching over Frisk, Sans would use the same time to investigate possible enemies. “Hey?” Sans called out to Asgore.

Asgore was still tending to his garden. Ignoring him. “Ooh, these are coming along nicely. I think another row right below would bring it all together.”

“Majesty! It is I, Papyrus! Here for duty.” He saluted Asgore.

Asgore ignored him.

“Majesty?” Sans tried. *Dangit.* Toriel wanted to conserve her power for protecting on the weekends, and for her own emergency cases. He and Papyrus were supposed to be getting the boost from Asgore. “Hey, hey, I know this doesn’t sound like something I’d ever say? But, I don’t want to be late. Could you just shoot your power over here or something?”

“In a bit.” Asgore continued to tend to his flowers.

Mmmm. “Boy oh boy, I hope nothing happens to the one human who singlehandedly pulled us all out of the ground.” Sans laid it on thick. “Nobody’s watching her in a world full of predators.”

“Egad, you are right, Sans! We should get to her right away!” Papyrus shouted.

“She survived down here with monsters trying to take her soul,” Asgore said. “I’m sure she can last a little while without someone watching her back in her own world.”

Dangit, I’m not losing this. The thickest thick than even the thickest ketchup. “If it were me, I wouldn’t risk it. Being blamed for leaving monsters down Underground for a thousand years was bad enough, but letting the one that actually brought them back up to die?” Sans shrugged. “I don’t know, I just wouldn’t see it ending well.”

That seemed to shake Asgore more. “It’s nothing against the child.” Asgore stood up. “I was trying to find a way to win Toriel back. Maybe over time, she could see the truth, but she just went off and married someone else!”

Yeah? *I’m not a soundboard. Just get us over there already.* Would they have to put up with this each time? “Not talking to the right monster for that one,” he said honestly.

“I had even agreed to marry the human for her, so that she could help protect Frisk,” Asgore went on. “I thought such a gesture would be seen as good, and the human would probably pass on before we do anyway. We could reconnect after forgiveness. Instead the human said no to me, and yes to Toriel, and she accepted!”

I don’t care. “Uh huh.”

“I would love to believe that she is doing this all for Frisk, but she’s just . . .” He wagged his paws. “She is so touchy with her, and they have some silly thing where they call each other by only the first letter of their name. What kind of nonsense is that?”

You named your own kid a joined name. Ugh. Seriously, Sans didn’t care. “Uh huh.”

“It’s just a passing fancy between them,” Asgore said. “It must be.”

I don’t care, and now we’re late. “Uh huh.”

“Stop saying uh huh!” Papyrus scolded Sans. “Love is a complicated manner.”

“It is, Papyrus. The marriage was too convenient. Toriel just wants to be a part of a child’s life again.”

“Uh huh.”

“She just misses ours.”

“Uh huh.”

“Maybe I should offer to give her more children? Maybe before she goes off into her own age duststorm, she just wants more children?”

Nuh uh. Clueless. Sans didn’t know shit about women, but he did know that offer wouldn’t do anything. “Can we . . . go now?”

“A little more patience with the King, Sans,” Papyrus scolded him.

Asgore sighed. “Very well.”

Yes.

“After you answer the question, Sans and Papyrus. Do you think that’s what it is? Am I jealous over nothing, is it really just Frisk she wants as her child?”

Papyrus was stuck. “I don’t know?”

Ugh. Sans didn’t want to go through this. “I don’t know because I’ve hardly got to know the situation. Maybe give me some time and I can answer, Sire?”

“A good point. Okay.” Asgore pointed his paw at them.

Oklahoma, Frisk’s house

Finally. Sans found himself in Frisk’s room. Like he knew anything about wives, women, or kids? He was doing his best to stay ignorant of that. Ugh. He waited by Frisk’s little bed.

He got one chance to say goodbye and tell her Papyrus would be here instead for her. He’d see her if she visited the monster kingdom. That’s as far as he could go, and he couldn’t screw this up.

Afterwards, Papyrus would hang out with Frisk for a couple of hours. He already told his brother to help her watch the way she talked. Then Papyrus would go back home for the day, and Sans would come back to check on things at night when Frisk went to bed. Easy.

He watched the little girl come into the room. “Hey, Frisk. How was your new school?”

Frisk shrugged.

“Gotta use them words,” Sans reminded her.

“I don’t think people could tell I was a girl.” Frisk looked down at her clothes. “Could monsters tell I was a girl?”

“Not at all!” Papyrus never needed an introduction. “We barely could tell you were a human and not a rock or something.”

Sans would add to that. “Monsters didn’t even really know what a human looked like, Kid.”

Frisk looked around her clothes. “Should I start dressing more like a girl? Mom liked me to stay more centered in my clothing. She didn’t want me looking too pretty like a girl, but Toriel said she could buy some dresses.”

“Ah, the age old question since time began: What should I wear?” Sans joked. “If you want to try wearing a dress, try it. If you don’t want to, don’t.”

Frisk nodded. “If I wear a dress, will people think I’m a girl?” She gestured to her hair. “I have an awkward hair cut too.”

“I don’t know.” What was it with people asking for his advice about stuff he didn’t know about? “Ask me about things like mustard, ketchup, Grillbys or things like that. Everything else I don’t know shit about.” Heh. “Nothing about.”

“Sans! Don’t do that,” Papyrus scolded him.

Frisk smiled at him. “You mess up too, Sans.”

“Yeah, I guess I do.” He didn’t, he just wanted to make the transition better. “I really messed up. I can’t watch out for you anymore.” He gestured to Papyrus. “Papyrus will be here instead for you now.”

“Hello human,” Papyrus waved. “I mean, Frisk. I will be here to help push you toward healthy goals and a good life!”

“Oh? Okay.” Frisk looked at Sans. “I guess you made a big mess up.”

“Yep,” he agreed, “but hey? Papyrus is the coolest. You’ll learn a lot from him. Don’t keep your problems bottled up. Got it?”

Frisk nodded. She talked a little about her school to Papyrus. She was pausing to think before she spoke. Good approach for now. Frisk had to get started on her school work, so Sans went out on patrol.

It’d be the last time he’d see her unless she visited the Monster Kingdom. Or? Unless she got in real big trouble.

Hopefully, he kept things good enough on his end, she’d never get in that much trouble.

Sans walked around the property, watching here and there when he saw Cindy coming down the sidewalk. *It's only right I say something. I scared her about Frisk.*

Cindy He-Didn't-Know-What. Toriel never even told him Frisk's real last name. They were going by a fake last name now. "Hey, Cindy." He made his presence known so he didn't startle her.

He still startled her. "Oh. Sans?" She looked from side to side and went over to the side to meet him. "Did you say goodbye?"

"Yep, no prob. I'm just patrolling," he said. "She's okay. Getting used to school. Usual."

"Okay." She still looked around. Her soul was definitely troubled. There was a lot written in there showing she had done some iffy things in the past. Nothing too terrible though, not like murder. Not even once.

So she was fine to him, but the bravado she had when Tori was present was completely gone. Telling him to basically back off, that level of courage was drained out.

Careful. He needed to be careful. "I planned on getting Frisk used to the idea of a loveless marriage. I don't want to love much of anyone, I saw it as a forever roommate. Nothing else ever."

That didn't help. She seemed to scrunch her soul up more.

"I watched her Underground more than she knows." He'll try a different approach. "I'll watch her above the same way. I won't interact, just with you."

"I'm going in to fix dinner," she said as she unbuttoned her purse and rebuttoned it for no reason, except not to look at him. "Let me know if you see something."

"Got it, Boss." It was his usual line for those above him, but he felt a weird sting right against Cindy's soul right there. Maybe that wasn't a word for her. "You want me to call you something specific?"

"Just Cindy is fine," she insisted. "I'll be going now."

Wow. That whole time she didn't look at him once. She moved just like Frisk did Underground. "Hey?" Sans said as she started to leave. "It's probably a good idea to try and look at who you're talking to, you know. Not only is it rude not look at someone, but it'd be good for Frisk."

"Uh." This time, Cindy looked straight at him.

And he kind of wished she didn't. All of her feelings, emotions, and every worry on her soul flooded his way. She felt like a damn of icy water. Until he got closer to her, he wouldn't be able to push through that damn of icy water at all.

It's a good thing Toriel could feel it, Sans wouldn't have trusted her. Too ambiguous. *Welp, bad news for Asgore.* If Sans couldn't feel the warmth that Toriel had? Then Toriel felt deeply

connected in the inner depths of the soul. They were definitely an item.

“I’ll try,” she added. “I’ll be going now.”

Yeah. It’d take some time to get to know her.

Monster Kingdom Castle

He went back and found Toriel, telling her everything was fine. She didn’t seem surprised. It was just the first day, and it’d be great if every day for the next fifty years or so this was the scope of the day.

“How was Cindy after her first day on her job?” Toriel asked him. “Is she well?”

Sans shrugged. “Don’t think she’s messing up?”

“She has a lot of blocking in her soul, but underneath there is nothing but pure absolute warmth.” Toriel hugged herself, like she was remembering how she felt. “I don’t know how to describe it.”

Eh. “Who needs to?”

“Frisk though, I can’t quite get to Frisk. Her heart is warm, I know it. I can feel traces of it,” Toriel said. “She tries to be a good child.”

“Frisk is less ambiguous than her mom,” Sans pointed out. “I can feel warmth from her soul. No cozy fire kind of thing, but it’s there. The rest is just stress blocking her. She’ll be okay, Papyrus will be sure of that.”

“Sans-”

“Papyrus is a way better choice for the actual meeting Frisk part. He’s good with people. He’s smart and wise. He’ll be a great influence on her, unlike me.” He should make sure Tori didn’t feel any guilt about the mess up now that it was all said and done.

Toriel smiled. “Well, I’m glad you feel that way.”

“So, are you sure you can’t spare none of your power? Asgore is kind of a stop sign for travel.”

Toriel didn’t look happy he brought it up. “You’re cunning and getting paid well. Make sure he gets it done.”

Ah, the old ‘make the miracle happen yourself’. “I’ll do what I can, Boss.” Well, if she was going to go that way, he would too.

“Oh, I? I didn’t mean it like that,” Toriel apologized. “He’s just . . . he won’t accept the truth that it’s over. I’ve divorced him and married someone else, and he still won’t accept it. He may never accept it.” She crossed her arms. “Give him up to ten minutes of the deadline to send you and Papyrus. If he still refuses at 3:10, come and get me. I will see to it that he helps.”

“Okay, Tori.” That was more like it. Tori didn’t often lose her temper. If she did, it was usually Asgore.

Sans could see why. Asgore bugged him too. *He’s not gonna be happy to hear my advice.* Sans could use that excuse to get bumped to Frisk a few more times, but eventually Asgore was gonna ask for his advice again.

Monster Kingdom - Two Weeks Later

Ah. Sans knew it’d come sooner or later. He’d already seen Cindy about ten times and now Asgore wanted their thoughts.

“The Great Papyrus is an expert in all manners!” Papyrus said triumphantly. “However, I don’t always get love parts right. It might be? Might not? They seem to care for each other. Yes, they care for each other and Frisk. Frisk is happy.”

Papyrus didn’t give anything concrete. *Well, I can’t lie.* Sans shared his thoughts. “Tori can see farther into Cindy’s soul than even I can. That’s kind of my thing, so? Can we go now?”

Sans was hoping Asgore would be angry enough he’d just send them off in a huff. No such luck. Sans watched his watch. 3:05. He had five minutes to get Asgore to cooperate. “Let’s just quietly send us off and nothing more needs to be said.” Nothing. *Damn.*

“We were together for so very long,” Asgore pointed out to Sans. “We were so well together. How? How can some simple human have captured her heart and soul so much away from me?”

Tori was long gone before then. *This guy.*

“It was probably the six human souls you had, Sire?” Papyrus suggested softly.

Sans wouldn’t offer much else. “I don’t know, I’ll go dig around more to see once you send us off.” A swoop of a hand for Asgore, that’s all it took. Why did he have to keep doing this?

“I’m not . . . evil. I didn’t want to collect the souls. I wanted to rescue the monster kingdom, and I was doing it for everybody.” Asgore looked at Sans. “Why can’t she see that I did what should have been done?”

Sans didn’t want to give advice in an area he didn’t know. Papyrus didn’t even attempt an answer this time. “Maybe ‘cause you had a human as a kid. It was too close to her? You

followed what you wanted, and it wasn't what she wanted?"

"What would you have done?" Asgore asked him.

Whyyyy? He had to think about it? He wasn't even bothering Papyrus for an opinion anymore. Whether Sans would wait for people to fall and steal their souls or just take one and get more on the outside? H really had to answer that? "I think I'd screw it, forget the sun, and go to Grillbys."

"Be serious," Asgore demanded.

"I *am* being serious," Sans said. "I wouldn't bother. Can I go now?" They were past time.

"Yes you may." Tori showed up next to Asgore. "Stop getting in the way! A zap of your power takes seconds. You can practically send him while tending to flowers without a single word!"

Sans watched Asgore. He acted brave and mighty, but he was a weak mouse when it came to his ex-wife.

However, Asgore didn't move. "If you want him to watch your family, then *you* take care of it. Why should I help all the time?"

"Because *my* Daughter is the Pacifist Child who saved Underground! It was not *you*. She endured *you* and all of the others who tried to take her soul. Show her the respect she deserves! Send her the bodyguards for her and her mother." Toriel crossed her arms and with a snort added, "or should *I* let the kingdom know that the King does not care about the Pacifist Child that saved them all?"

That Sax

A few nights later . . .

Frisk stared at the window. This place. This neighborhood. Everything was just so . . . different. Papyrus had gone home. He gave her very Papyrussy advice. It was okay advice but it was just that. Advice.

She also couldn't help feeling a weird sense inside. Even though her mom was there, and Papyrus was there to help out her other mom sometimes? It felt . . . scary. It felt scarier than being Underground.

Then? Frisk heard someone in the neighborhood start to play a saxophone. They were playing a nice song. No one cursed or yelled for them to quit. It just kind of drifted on the wind around her for a few minutes.

It made her feel better. *We are so safe here. Super safe here. This isn't Underground. No one wants to fight or cause trouble.* She kept telling herself that as she climbed into her bed.

Her mom came in. "Hey there, Sweets." She came over to her blanket and tucked her in. "You getting pretty used to life here, huh?"

She nodded. "Guess."

"I know it's different 'round here." Her mom looked a little unsettled herself. "It's new. You'll feel better soon."

"Papyrus left," she told her mom.

"Yeah, well, he gotta life too now, don't he?" Her mom patted her on the head. "No worries. You'll see your friend again later. You'll see your new mom too. Okay?" She stood up and went right by the door. "No worries. Okay?"

Frisk knew her mom was worried herself, but she wanted her to feel better instead. "Okay. I'll try."

"Good, Frisk. You just make some friends and focus on having fun and doing good at school. It's all I want from you," her mother remarked.

Yeah. "What about Sans? Am I still-"

"Nuh uh, forget that name." Her mom didn't even let her finish. "We'll discuss things when your way older, but your life is yours. No man is deciding anything for you. Not me either, no

one. Just, when you're older," she insisted again. "Papyrus is your friend here too. If you need to talk about something, you can talk to him when he visits. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Good. Love you, Sweets."

"Love you, Mom." Frisk watched her close the door. Tonight was the first night her new mother wouldn't be there either. It was making her mom a little scared too.

But, then the soothing sounds of the saxophone started to play again, and Frisk felt better.

It would be okay.

Four Years Later . . .

"Hey, Frisk."

Frisk looked behind her and saw one of the guys in her classroom following her. *Oh no.*

"Hey." She tightened her grip on her backpack. "I didn't know you lived this way too."

"No, I just wanted to catch you when we weren't in school," he said. "Bryan. Remember?"

Frisk nodded. "Yeah. What is it?"

"Well? I thought that, if nobody asked you out, maybe you'd like to go to the dance with me?"

Oh you unfortunate soul. How to handle this? Toriel and her mom both said she should go to prom, but she didn't want to take anyone. That and . . . "It'd be strange."

"Strange?" he asked. "Strange to go with me?"

Oof, she didn't mean to make him feel bad. "Well? I'm not technically going with anyone. I just don't want to go with anyone."

Yes, she knew he must have a broken heart now, but she couldn't lie, and she needed him off her trail *now*. She didn't want a boy following her home from school. Something tended to happen to them when they did that.

Missing a car. A branch almost falling. Some friends even thought it was cursed against guys. Her friends that were girls never had problems coming over, unless they started to yell or cause trouble.

It was probably something set up by her moms, or it might her protective Papyrus. Either way, it never ended well.

Plus? You never know, both moms might get to be home. “You can stop following me now.”

“Are you sure you don’t want to go?” Bryan asked again. “You’re beautiful when you’re happy.”

“Nope, I don’t want to. Sorry, I have to get home.” Frisk rushed home faster.

She opened the door and saw her mom. “Hi, mom.” She looked in the next room. Her other mother was there. “Hi, mom.”

“Hello, Frisk.” Toriel came over to her and gave her a gentle hug. “How does it feel being 18?”

“That was yesterday,” she reminded her. “It’s okay. Not much different.” If her other mom was here, then did that mean Papyrus wasn’t? “Is Papyrus here?”

Frisk jumped as Papyrus showed up, hanging upside down in the kitchen window.

“Right here,” Papyrus said. “Hello!”

“Hey, P.” Frisk did that on purpose. Papyrus hated foul language, even just the letter P for his name seemed like it was too dirty for him.

Papyrus didn’t seem to care this time. “Who were you just with down by the street, Young Lady?”

Yep, he noticed. “Just a friend.”

“What’s your friend’s name?” Papyrus asked. “Favorite snack? Book? How come I don’t know about him while you let me know about all your other friends?”

Frisk sighed. “He was asking me to prom.”

“What’s a prom?”

“It’s a human ceremony where boys traditionally ask girls to go with them to a dance at school,” her mother Toriel explained. “That might be good for her.”

“No way, Frisk can’t do that.” Papyrus didn’t miss a beat. “She doesn’t need to be hanging around with human boys.”

“It might be a good idea.” Her mom Cindy came over toward her too. “Going to prom might help Frisk decide about her future more.”

“I still say the answer is no,” Papyrus disagreed. “She should concentrate on her studies and become someone important!”

“Oh, Papyrus,” Toriel warned him. “Frisk is officially 18. She can marry, she can vote, and she can even leave school. She is an adult now, and you can’t decide things like that anymore for her.”

“Right,” Cindy added. “It’s time for things to change a little.”

“She has just begun to live! I have only watched over her for ten years or so. There is another forty to go. She doesn’t need disruption with all this dating business.” Papyrus still couldn’t let go of that reasoning. “Besides? Someone else thinks that this is all a bad idea.”

Someone else? Frisk was confused about that. Who else could think it was a bad idea?

“We aren’t discussing a someone,” her mother Toriel shut Papyrus down. “Ever. Not if that someone knows what’s good for him. Be good, Papyrus.”

“But? But this ‘other’ says things have not been so easy. That her putting herself out like that will be a huge sign to cause trouble,” Papyrus said again. “We should listen. It’s what he was hired for.”

Hired? Once again, her momma Toriel looked like she was ready for battle with Papyrus. “I don’t want to go to prom anyway,” Frisk said. She’d never let poor Papyrus deal with her mom.

“Well? The monsters, we are also going to be having a dance in the kingdom,” her mother Toriel pointed out. “Perhaps you would like to go to that?”

To the monster kingdom? “I can go to a dance in the Monster Kingdom?”

“Yes. Sure. We would even arrange a nice date with a monster,” Toriel said.

“I will go!” Papyrus volunteered to Frisk. “That way you can have fun at the dance without having to get to know any monster romantically first.”

“Papyrus.” One word yet her mom Toriel held so much hatred in it this time. “That’s the opposite of why we’ve recommended it!”

What? Why did they keep giving Papyrus such hell about the whole thing?

Then someone knocked at the front door. Frisk went to answer it. It was the guy from earlier again. “I really don’t want to go to the dance with you.”

He just smiled. “Look, I just want a few minutes to talk to you out on the street. That’s it,” he promised. “After that, I’ll leave you alone if you really don’t want to go. Give me just a small chance?”

Frisk sighed but came out. She walked down the street with him. He talked about his feelings, and how they fit together-

-and then she was shoved hard into a bush?! Frisk had scratches on her body from all the branches too. She pulled herself out and looked around.

No one was there anymore. “Hey?” Hm? Frisk forgot that guy’s name but he was gone. It was like he just pushed her into a bush since she wouldn’t go out with him, and just left? That was mean.

Frisk started to head back home, but she heard something from behind her again. It was the guy again, except now he had wounds and he was holding a knife. What?

He was charging right at her. He was charging right at her? He was-

Frisk tried to run, but he was faster. He tackled her to the ground, flipped her over, and Frisk saw the tip of the knife ready to plunge into her. "Learn rejection!"

She tried to hold her hand up on the knife. Her determination helped, but this guy was more powerful.

"Fuck it."

That was an unusual voice. She heard that voice a few times in her life. Mostly when she was young. Sometimes, she would hear it when she visited the Monster Kingdom. But overall, it wasn't a voice she knew real well anymore.

But it's baritone and interesting sound had always been unforgettable. Frisk watched as the potential date turned maniac was lifted off of her and sent into a nearby tree, cracking his skull against it first.

He was motionless. He was dead. Frisk was about to scream at the sight of such death but- she couldn't. She couldn't move a muscle. She couldn't make a sound.

Sans moved in front of her. He just held his bony finger up to his mouth and shooshed her. "Don't scream. Don't tell your moms you saw me." Then, he seemed to stare at her extra hard. "You've grown up a lot, haven't you?"

Sans. "I haven't seen you since I was a kid." He was never even in the Monster Kingdom when she did visit. "Thanks."

"Don't mention it. To anyone," he said right before he disappeared.

Then, he was gone.

Frisk immediately ran down the street and back inside her house. "Moms!"

Her mothers appeared almost instantly.

"Someone tried to kill me." It was hard to believe. Why after all this time, would someone try and hurt her? For what reason? "Someone saved me, but I don't know who." She lied, but if Sans saved her and wanted nothing in return but her to not tell her moms? Then she'd give him that.

They both hugged her, along with Papyrus.

That Night . . .

Frisk felt restless. She went over what happened in her head again. When her mind had thought about the person she knew when she was smaller, it didn't attribute any of those actions to him.

He had been a funny jokester. A punny person. He liked to take shortcuts to weird places. That? *That was a guy saving my life.* Frisk wasn't used to that.

Then, she heard the same saxophone she heard almost every night. That was something he was silly about too. Sans had loved playing the saxophone. It wouldn't make any sense though.

If Sans were here protecting her, like Papyrus was during certain hours, then why didn't he ever talk to her? The last time they spoke, he said Papyrus got the job instead. He never said he stuck around. Then again, it was the very night he said he was gone, that she heard the saxophone playing at night for the first time.

If that sax is Sans the Skeleton, then he's been here almost every night of my life. Now, Frisk felt like she had a mission. She got her shoes on quietly. She tended to wear long PJs with pants already so she didn't make any extra noise with changing.

She snuck around the house, unlocked the front door (and it's alarm) and went outside. Her momma Toriel always had super security on the house, but she also knew all the codes too. She was good at figuring out codes and puzzles.

Speaking of puzzles? *There!* She spotted him on the other side of the neighbor's roof. That explained why the sound seemed to move around so much. Sans liked shortcuts, if someone caught him visually, he probably just moved out of the way and played somewhere else.

He played a soothing sax too. It always helped Frisk feel better at night. *Sans. How come you never come see me?* Why was he there to save her, yet he told her not to tell her moms she saw him?

Why did she never see him every time she did get to visit the Monster Kingdom? She could go around and here about him, like he was there every day. He was just never there. Never.

Well? Let's see. "How do I get up there to see him?" She couldn't shout, her moms would catch her. She couldn't-

Up on the Neighbor's Roof

Frisk grabbed onto the tile as she figured out she'd been moved to the neighbor's roof.

“No one can blame me for this one.” Sans silhouette said from a small ways away as he started to head over. “It’s better this than a nosy kid trying to figure out how to climb the roof.” When he was close enough, she could see him.

He looked just like last time. Almost. He had a different coat now.

“Don’t climb out of your bed and undo the security alarm to try and climb roofs at night,” Sans said to her. “Everybody needs a hobby but find a different one, Kid.”

Kid? “I’m not a kid, I’m a teen.”

“You’re 12, Human, you are a kid,” Sans said back to her. “Go back to bed before I get caught talking to you.”

“Why? I’m not leaving without knowing,” Frisk demanded. “Papyrus comes to see me all the time. Why don’t you if you’re here? How come I never see you in the Underground? How did you know that guy would try something earlier today? Is this the first time you’ve helped out like that, because I’ve had stuff happen more than once.”

Sans didn’t answer at first. “I pissed your moms off, but I was the best for the job. Papyrus is your good influence. I just watch over you.”

“Since the first day we came here?” Really? “That’s creepy.”

“Your moms said I couldn’t meet you. I don’t want to lose this job, so you better get back to bed. Pretend you didn’t see me.”

“But you have done this before,” Frisk asked him. “Once, when I was ten, something like this happened before. I was just thrown somewhere and then the person I was talking to was just gone. Then, when I was eleven last year-”

“Yeah, it happens. I take care of it. Don’t worry about it,” Sans said. “You better go now.”

“Why can’t you even talk to me?” Frisk asked. “You’re a nice monster.”

Sans sighed. “I messed up when you were younger. Messed up first day on the job, so me, right?” he teased her. “You’ll get us both in trouble if you don’t go home.”

“Are you always around?” Frisk asked him. “How do you know when I need help?”

“Not always,” Sans said. “Alphys made something for me that lets me get a reading on you. If you’re anxious or something, there’s usually a reason.”

“Oh.” Well. “What did you do, Sans the Skeleton?”

“Ha ha, no way, I need this job,” Sans complained to her. “But what’s with the ‘the Skeleton’ to my name? I’m Sans.”

“You’ve been spying on me, saving me, and telling me to leave. I didn’t know if you liked just Sans from me or not,” Frisk explained. “You saved me today. You saved me more than

once.” She bowed slightly. “Thanks.”

Yeah, she felt herself blushing too. Maybe it was the fact she hadn’t seen him for so long, yet he’d been there protecting her that caused that?

“It’s my job, Frisk,” Sans said back to her. “It’s either watching snow or dig up on people or monsters trying to hurt you or your mom. Let me tell you, this job is a lot more challenging. You have got a ton of enemies.”

He started to head away again.

“Wait!” Frisk headed back over, being mindful of the roof. “It’s weird that you just protect me but you never talk to me. Can’t we talk like this every once in awhile?”

“Are you kidding?” Sans stared at her a minute. “Nevermind, you’re the pacifist child. Almost forgot. Never expect the normal from you.”

Grr! “I am *not* a child,” she said to him stronger. “I am Frisk. I’m in middle school.”

Sans pulled up his boney fingers and counted on them slightly. “Fine, but not often,” he warned her. “I’ll talk to you on the last day of every three months. No more, okay? Not much longer than five minutes too.”

Three months? Once every three months for only five minutes? “Fine, I guess,” she agreed. “Will you ever tell me-”

“Time’s up,” Sans said to her. “It’s been five minutes.”

Dangit. “You can’t just go saving someone, and then just brush them off.”

“Ya do when you don’t want to lose your job. I’m not going back to snow.” He looked at her for a second. “Three months, be ready with questions then. But I warn you, no guarantee I’m gonna answer. It’d probably be a waste of time.”

Hm. Then? “Then I’ll . . .” Oh yeah. “You like hotdogs. I’ll make you special chili dogs for what you did for me today.”

“Ooh?” Now, Sans didn’t seem so annoyed. “Shit. I gotta wait for three months for that?”

“I could make them tomorrow?” Frisk offered.

“Weird as ever, Kid. Making me food to say ‘thank you for killing somebody for me’.” But, instead of being as mad as those words sounded? He just chuckled. “Back to bed, Frisk. Three months, last day of that month. One word to your moms though, and you can forget it.”

Boy, Sans seemed like he really wanted those chili dogs too. Which meant, he really couldn’t risk getting caught. The three months was probably even risky for him. Frisk found herself back on the ground, right next to her house.

Not even time for a goodbye. When she looked back up where he'd been, his silhouette gently played the saxophone again. *Um? Wait.* He used his power, but he didn't bother to put her inside? *Great, if I get caught, he'd just take off.*

She went ahead and snuck back in her house, reset the alarm, and went back to her room. The saxophone continued undisturbed. It looked like she was in the clear with Sans.

Five minutes to talk, every three months. He probably wouldn't want to address what he did in detail, but? *Momma Cindy has things she won't address, ever. He must have stepped in bad territory. That would mean Momma Toriel would step in.* Momma Toriel was super careful of Momma Cindy's feelings.

What could it have been? Sans told jokes. She never heard him say an inappropriate joke, but she'd been eight when she was Underground. He might have said dirtier stuff, just not around her. *He also liked puzzles too, he made one Underground for sure. Yeah, it was a crossword.*

Puzzles and jokes. What else? Well, he clearly had fighting power if he . . . *Sans really killed someone for me.* Hard to believe. Sans never fought with her Underground. Every other monster did.

No monster ever . . . hurt another one though. Was the power of the silly skeleton she used to know, so awesome in power that he couldn't be let go, even if he did upset one of her moms?

Eight years old. *I don't think I know the real him then. I want too. If he watches over me and mom, then I should.*

Asking questions about his job would be a waste. He probably wouldn't answer. Instead, she should use those five minutes to get to know the real him.

To see who the funny skeleton really had been beneath it all.

Frisk Takes the Wrap

Three months later . . .

Frisk was prepared this time. She held her plate of chili dogs. She had warmed them up ahead of time, and would have given the excuse she was hungry if her momma Cindy caught her. Momma Toriel was of course gone. She was never there on weekdays, only weekends.

Sometimes, special occasions. She tried to.

She waited on the lawn, having already left the house. It wasn't even a whole minute before she felt tile underneath her again.

Her tray had also been taken away.

"Not bad." Sans' voice came from the corner of the tile near her. "Props to you."

Five minutes. "Will you tell me your favorite joke?"

Sans chuckled. "Hmm. That's a hard question. I don't have one. I like all kinds of jokes, I don't have a favorite."

Then she was right about him being funny. "What did the human say to the skeleton?" Frisk asked.

"Whatever you say next?" Sans guessed.

"It said, 'Will you tell me your favorite joke?'" Yep, it was super lame.

"That jokes so lame you should take it out of it's misery." Sans made a swishing gesture against his neckbone. "I like all jokes, but even I have a limit. Tell me a good one."

"I can't. I suck at jokes," Frisk said. "Crosswords were funner than junior jumble, right?"

"A hundred percent," Sans said. "You really wanted to take your five minutes asking this kind of thing?"

"No," Frisk answered. "I know you won't answer what I want to know, but I want to get to know the monster that has been watching over us. I know Papyrus really well, but all I know from you are a few memories. Do you know who my friends are?"

"Yeah."

"What do you think of them?"

“Okay.”

“Are we safe?”

“Relatively.”

“Do you sing? I like to sing,” Frisk said. “I don’t sing in front of others much. I got better at talking though.”

“Yeah, I know you sing. I hear ya,” Sans told her. “Pretty voice. Nope, I would shatter all the windows if I attempted to sing. Voice can be a deadly weapon for me.”

Frisk couldn’t tell whether it was a joke or not. “I like your saxophone. I just thought you could make the funny noise, I didn’t know you could play for real.”

“Uh huh. Time’s almost up.” Sans still looked anxious.

“You used to play songs that relaxed me, but that I didn’t know,” Frisk said to him. “Now, I recognize your song beats. They are more popular.”

Sans picked up a music book from beside him. It was titled Popular Hits. “Yeah. I don’t always hang around your house for my part of the job,” he revealed. “I do a lot of research. I pick up things from your world all the time.”

I knew it! So, Sans isn’t grounded like Papyrus to this house to watch us. She got an answer, even without asking about it. Although? “There is a security system. It watches the whole house.”

“That’s not for me,” Sans answered. “I watch the outside of the house. Time’s up.”

Okay, she wouldn’t fuss. “What do you want me to bring you next time?” Frisk asked quickly.

“What else can you make?” he asked back.

Not much more than chili dogs. “I’m kind of limited.”

“Good, I’m satisfied with a limited palette of things,” Sans said back to her. “Never go wrong with hot dogs. Don’t even need the chili.”

Great! “Each time I meet you, I can warm up some hot dogs in the microwave and add ketchup on top,” Frisk offered. “Does that sound good?”

Sans didn’t respond right away. “Yeah. Sure, Frisk, sounds fine.”

Frisk visited him every three months, using her five minutes to their fullest. The more she visited, the more she got to know him. Even though he never answered real important questions, she still found ways to get at the details he never shared.

Three years later

Frisk bit into one of the hot dogs she gave to Sans. “I smacked the shit out of a boy today.”

“Ouch.” Sans glanced back at her with his cool lightguiders in his eyes. “What did he do?”

“He said he liked me and he puckered his lips to kiss me,” Frisk said. “I raised my arm back and knocked his lights out. My hand really hurts because of it. Moms were mad.”

Sans chuckled but shook his skull. “Aw, Frisk. I’m supposed to be protecting you, not others from you. Guy sounds like he got more than his heart smashed.”

“I didn’t know what to do. What, I’m gonna just fall into his lips and arms?” Frisk stuck her tongue out. “No one’s gonna kiss me without my say so or I’ll beat the shit out of them.”

“Sounded like he was waiting for say,” Sans said to her. He wasn’t on her side. “Sounds like your ma’s did make the right choice, Frisk.”

“Yeah, I know. I moved too fast. I made up for it,” Frisk informed him. “I brought some flowers to his house, apologized, and said I didn’t want to be with him, and that I was sorry for punching his lights out by his locker.”

“Locker?” Sans groaned. “Did you punch him out right in front of the whole school? Pretty embarrassing. Poor guy. Thought he found something sweet but got something sour.”

Frisk finished the hot dog and crossed her arms. “I do have a nice reputation. I help out in school events a lot. I guess I am sort of a teacher’s pet. But-”

“Sour Patch Kid.”

What? “What did you call me?”

“First your sour, then your sweet.” Sans chuckled. “SPK.”

Oh no! “You better not, Sans.”

“I give all my friends nicknames,” Sans reminded her. “Aren’t ya happy you get to be treated like them finally?”

“No!” Yes, she wanted to be his friend. Yes, she knew he gave all his friends nicknames. No, she didn’t want that. “It took you forever to just call me Frisk instead of Kid all the time. You can’t call me Sour Patch Kid.”

“Come on. You punched a guy out in the middle of school, and showed up at his house later with flowers. Sour Patch Kid,” Sans insisted.

No! Anything but Sour Patch Kid! “Sans, please, anything but that! I’m not a kid anymore, I’m growing up!”

Sans laughed. “You walked right into that one, Sweet.”

Oh. Oh no. Frisk’s last name.

“Frisk ‘Sour’ Sweet,” Sans said fully. “Perfect. Sweet was too cute. Never fit the Frisk, but Sour Sweet?”

“Sour Sweet doesn’t go together right,” Frisk complained.

“You’re right. Let’s get an N in there. Sour N Sweet.”

“Sans!” Not fair! “Then, I’ll call you Sansy Sweet N Honey!” She stuck out her tongue and looked away.

Sans just started to laugh and kicked his bony knees off the roof. “Your terrible at jokes.”

“Whatever, Sansy Honey.”

“Frisk ‘Sour’ Sweet.”

“Sansy Honey.”

“Hey, who can last longer with our new nicknames?”

Grr. He shouldn’t test her determination.

“Time’s up, Frisk, but I had a good time with you tonight,” Sans said to her. “I’ll see you in another three months. Try not to punch any other guys out unless they are actually doing something wrong. Telling you their feelings and waiting for a kiss isn’t smackworthy.”

Hmph. “What if someone tries to kiss me instead of waits?” Frisk asked.

“Huh? Oh yeah, then smack the shit out of them,” Sans agreed. “Night, Frisk.”

Frisk found herself back on the ground and looked back at where he’d been. “Night, Sansy Honey.”

They adjusted the days to meet if it were a weekend, so momma Toriel wouldn’t be there. Momma Cindy would never know she met Sans for five minutes every three months.

The more they met, the more Sans seemed to ease up too. Frisk continued to fix him hot dogs, sometimes chili dogs, but as she grew older? She started to learn how to cook other things.

Sans favorite was her chillburdogs. They came in pairs. The idea came to her when she realized he loved hot dogs, fries, and burgers with lots and lots of ketchup. She would fix a burger, break it up, and spread it on a hotdog with cheese and catsup. Then beside it, she would tear a hot dog apart, put it into a circle on a hamburger bun, and add catsup and fries.

It was a combination of the taste and just the random weirdness of it Sans loved, and she was fixing them for tonight.

After all? Tomorrow was her 18th birthday.

It barely took two seconds to go outside before she felt tile underneath her. He was extra eager to get at the food.

“Yay, Frisk knows me so well.” Sans went right over to the food. “Chillburdogs. Who’s birthday is it again?”

Frisk laughed. “It just gets shortened every time by you.” She gave them all to him.

“Happy Birthday early, Frisk.” Sans sat down on the roof. “Eighteen. You humans sure do burn out quick.”

“I’m not hitting retirement,” Frisk complained, “I’m just almost 18.”

“Not too long ago you were just eight,” he said to her. “Then you were 12 and trying to spy on me from the ground.” He took a bite of the food. “Now look at you. Freaking 18.”

Monsters lived for a really long time. Their concept of age always felt different to them. Frisk would be born and die, and they’d hardly feel a ton of time pass by. “Turn around too fast and I’ll be 30.”

Sans gave a half-hearted chuckle. Frisk moved around the house in a circle. “What are you doing?”

“Oh no, I took too long to circle the house. I’ll probably be dead before you get back around to see me.” Frisk smiled from behind him. “I’m 80 now. How dee do.”

Sans used to joke about that all the time. That if she took much longer to do her homework, she’d die before it finished. Morbid weird, he even liked those jokes.

He didn’t seem to be laughing tonight though. “18 is a big birthday,” he said softly. “Have your moms talked to you about it yet? What happens now that your 18?”

“Why, is there supposed to be a party or something?” Frisk doubted that, her moms weren’t big on parties at the house.

Sans instantly seemed to stop. “Nothing then.”

“I got something for you too,” Frisk insisted. “I left it by the door. You can pick it up later if you want. I couldn’t handle the food and it.” Plus, a part of her felt embarrassed to give it to him, but he totally deserved it.

Sans disappeared a second, and reappeared with the present. “What’s this?”

“Mister Mystery never shared his birthday date,” Frisk said with a smile. “So, I wanted to do a double sharing of it this year. I’m sorry the five minutes is up.”

Sans opened the gift. “Aha, Yes! This is perfect.” He held out a new coat. She got him a new leather black coat. He always tended to wear black, probably so he wouldn’t be spotted.

“Hey, it’s soft too.” Then, he noticed the second thing. “Black furry slippers. Double yay.”

“Sorry, I couldn’t get much after the jacket,” Frisk apologized. “Just one more thing.”

“Ooh, what’s this?” Sans went in and found the best thing hiding in the paper.

Frisk was waiting for it. He pulled it out just right making her giggle.

He winked at her as he slid his black shades on. “So wasted on a skeleton. Now I can wear my sunglasses at night.” He broke out his sax and started to play an improvised riff of the song.

Yep, he got the joke. She winked at him. “You look good Sansy Honey.” She was definitely past five minutes. “I’ll see you in three months.”

“One month,” he said to her as he took the glasses off and put them back in the box along with his other gifts. “We never get caught. Let’s change it to once a month, Frisk.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, for like ten minutes,” he added. “Once a month for ten minutes. That okay?” he asked. “You don’t have to make something every time we meet though.”

“I will still.” Yes! A whole month of ten minutes.

“Heh. Papyrus would be dreading more time with me. You’re a weird human, Frisk.” He put his silly glasses back on.

Frisk laughed and then-

Ow! She just got rolled over by Sans? She almost fell off the roof.

Sans' bony hand was clamped tightly across hers. “Sans?”

“Shh.” He watched out around them.

Oh. Did her mom catch them? Sans was dead quiet. The wind blew around them and the ripple of the leaves and sounds of crickets was all she could hear.

“Frisk!” Her momma Cindy came out of the house in just her bathrobe. “Frisk, where are you? Please? Please, please, please.”

“Shit, shit, shit!” Sans whispered harshly. “Your mom is freaking out, she knows you aren’t in your room. We’re busted.”

Busted? *Sans only saw me once every three months. For only five minutes. Just five minutes.* If her mom’s worry of randomly checking on her at one point ruined Sans’ job? “We aren’t,” Frisk insisted. “Drop me off a block from here.”

“What?”

“I don’t want you to lose your job. You’ve done everything you could to keep us safe. I don’t want anyone else to take your place,” Frisk said to him. “Please?”

Sans gave her the shortcut she wanted. “Your mom is going to be pissed off at you, Frisk. Good luck ‘cause when your momma Cindy gets upset, Tori rains down lightning and thunder.”

“I’ll be more careful next time we meet,” Frisk said with a smile to him instead. “Get back to the roof. Spot me coming back from a party. Rag on me. I’ll try coming home and sneaking in while you do that.”

Sans nodded. “Your funeral, Frisk.”

Sans hated to do it, but Frisk was willing to take the fall, and he didn’t have long. Not only would Tori tear him a good one? He personally felt a lot of the overwhelming feelings from Cindy right now. “Yo, don’t bark at night. That’s too dangerous.”

He watched her come toward him. She moved back a little, then came forward again.

“Frisk is okay. I can see her from the neighbor’s rooftop,” Sans answered. “I see her down by the block.”

“Oh thank goodness.” Cindy looked around toward the end. “Where?”

“She’s a teen,” Sans said to her. “She probably snuck back in.”

“Oh.” Cindy looked toward him carefully. “What party?”

Sans shrugged as he pulled out a folder. “I just came back from research. Papyrus is the one who watches your daughter, remember? Maybe he knows.” He placed it back away.

Cindy walked back toward the front door and went inside.

Sans braced for it.

“Frisk!”

“Mom? What’s wrong?”

“You were not in that bed earlier, Young Lady! You weren’t in this house at all! Where were you?!”

“Maybe I just didn’t hear-?”

“Don’t even, Frisk!”

Yeah. Frisk was taking the ear beating for him. *I owe her something for that.* It isn’t what he was about to do either. No way Toriel would believe if he didn’t give her a heads up. “Hey, Tori?” He said on the phone. “Cindy’s not feeling so good, Frisk just got caught sneaking out of the house.”

That was it. *I’ll figure out something for what she did for me.*

Inside Frisk’s room

Frisk tried to figure out how to act about this. Not only was Ma Cindy there, Ma Toriel was there too. Of course, when her human mother was unhappy, her monster mother was almost always there to show up.

“Frisk Dreemur!” Toriel scolded her right away. “How could you sneak out and go to a party? You are the daughter to the Queen, that was dangerous! You worried C to death.”

“I just . . .” What? “I just wanted some freedom.” That didn’t sound right. “I mean? It feels like you two are always in charge,” she said, trying to find her groove to the answer.

“We’re your mothers, Frisk,” Ma Cindy said to her. “Of course, we are in charge of you. Your grounded, and that’s at the very least. T and I will talk about your punishment.”

“But I’m 18. I should have some say too over my life,” Frisk said. Yeah. She realized what she just said. “I’ll be 18.” She stared between her mothers. “You two never get to live with each other because of me. When I turn 18, you both can live together. Be happy together in the Monster Kingdom where it’s safer.”

“Well?” Ma Cindy sighed and looked at Ma Toriel. “T? Should we tell her now?”

Ma Toriel nodded at her and looked at Frisk. “Frisk? You are right, we do wish to be together. But, we do want you to have some choice. If you marry someone, the rules will change.”

What? “If I marry someone?”

“If you marry a monster, you can live in the Monster Kingdom,” Ma Cindy said with a smile. “Oh, Frisk. We could all be somewhere that’s so much safer and sounder.”

“If you marry a human, then you can’t ever live in the Monster Kingdom,” Ma Toriel revealed. “Same if you decide to marry no one ever. But? I. I don’t have as much privilege with my life as other monsters do right now. I want . . .” She held onto Ma Cindy’s hand. “My life span is almost the same, or a little shorter now, than C’s.”

Oh. “You two really want to live together.” She was the block in the way.

“You don’t have a limit to decide anything, Frisk,” Ma Cindy told her. “Your life is your life. The options though. They are up to you. I’d much rather have you with us.”

“But we can’t force your hand to marry a monster,” Ma Toriel answered. “Still, I want to live with C.”

“I’ve kept you separated for nine years.” Frisk knew that. “It’s only right. You two should have a nice life living together.”

“What about you?” Ma Cindy asked her. “Frisk?”

“I’ll have to think about that.” Frisk knew her Ma Toriel would help if she decided not to marry anyone or just a human. But? If she married a monster, she could stay with her moms. Both of her moms.

Like she always should have been able to do. But? *Marriage is love. I don’t love any monster. I don’t love any human either. I can’t get married if I don’t love anyone.* “I doubt I’ll join you right away. If I can.”

She could see the hurt in their eyes. Frisk knew she couldn’t simply marry someone just to live near them though. She would be a wife, and she should be dedicated and in love.

“I know,” Ma Toriel said with a sad smile. “We will come and visit. I won’t leave you empty handed without protection either. Trouble might still be after you. You are still my daughter.”

“I’ll get through it somehow.” She refused to marry without any love. “College is around the corner. I had to start moving soon anyhow. So.”

“In the meantime? Papyrus and S . . . um?” Ma Toriel just leaned her head to the side. “We can use a similar arrangement.”

Ha! *Momma Toriel almost dropped Sans’ name.* She’d still want him spying on her. *I would be on my own, with a spy around me, Mom. You’ve got to confess Sans’ presence at some point!*

“I don’t. Well I?” Ma Cindy seemed skeptical.

“She isn’t eight anymore,” Ma Toriel said to her. “It might be better if she knew. If she ever spots him because she’s in trouble, I wouldn’t want her to overreact.”

They are finally going to tell me about Sans. Finally.

“When you turn 18 tomorrow,” Ma Cindy said to Frisk. “We will share something important with you.”

Drats. Frisk still wasn’t supposed to know about Sans’ presence? At least she knew she guessed right. It was Ma Cindy that didn’t want her near him.

“Yes, but it could be helpful afterwards,” Ma Toriel said to Ma Cindy. “Persuasive. He might be able to get past . . .?” She chuckled at Frisk. “Nevermind, Frisk. I will talk to C about it.”

Persuasive. Be able to get past what? *I know she was talking about Sans. What would he be persuasive about?*

Frisk's Close Call

On the Neighbor's Roof

Sans was looking over profiles as he finally heard Frisk stop getting hammered by her moms. He still had a job to do, and an important one.

He had to admit, Frisk had grown up well. She really wasn't a kid anymore. She was smart for a human, downright attractive, and still had the bravery she never lost.

"I wear my sunglasses at night." Sans slipped them back on. "So I can, So I can, see how much of an idiot I've been." He waved one of the profiles. "Is it you maybe?"

Life wasn't just about having a fun birthday that day. Frisk never had any idea just how many were always out there, ready to take out and hurt her and her moms.

If it weren't for him and Papyrus, Frisk and Cindy would have been gone during a weekday in the first year. The amount of enemies only grew from there. He had about 300 profiles now, from humans to monsters, with detailed research and folders he made on them. The kid even had a powerful mysterious dad he had to keep tossed in the mix.

On average in a given year, Sans dusted or killed ten people. That year, he'd been up to 30. They were getting desperate, probably having a feeling as Frisk got older, that Toriel wouldn't keep them out there as easily to get to.

They were right about that.

Sans studied the profile. It fit the description the best of someone that had been skulking around Cindy lately. It was an ex-monster of another nation, and a recent monster of the Monster Kingdom having married a monster from it.

But? It had been coming around lately. He couldn't take a whole lot of action until he saw something negative or positive from it. Monsters liked to come and sightsee Frisk harmlessly. Once he knew their game, he could usually scare them off appropriately.

Then there was Jesse Helms. A human who in recent times, had actually married into the Monster Kingdom too. It was someone Cindy had known, so it looked strange, but it had been one of Cindy's coworkers. So, neither Toriel nor Cindy gave him an answer about that one.

"Sans?"

Sans glanced behind him. Toriel could always work her magic really quick to come see him anytime she wanted to. “Queen Toriel.”

She didn’t look as happy. “I know that I usually have you watching over Cindy more, and that you generally provide research and the dusting for Papyrus.”

“Yeah, I know the job,” Sans said. “What’s wrong? Cindy’s goofed a little here and there but nothing major.”

“She isn’t? There hasn’t been any sneaky drugs or anything?” she asked hesitantly. “Frisk was missing, but Cindy knew not to get loud, and to just call you. You are right here, you could have found her faster.”

Uh oh. “I told you she’s been having a suspicious lunch partner, and she’s been taking longer in the bathroom. That’s all I know.”

“Watch her even closer if you can?” Tori touched her chest. “This world. I fear that it’s just too easy to get temptations, it makes it harder to stay away from it all. I don’t want her to end up on any kind of bad path.”

Sans couldn’t help there. “I’m not a motivating speech guy, Queen Toriel. All I can do is tell you if I see something wrong.”

“Things are getting more proactive the older my Frisk gets,” Toriel stated. “It’s obvious. You’ve killed 30 this year alone. They must know that I want to take Cindy home soon.”

Eh. “Probably.”

“We told Frisk tonight about what happens when she becomes 18,” Tori revealed. “Frisk said she wouldn’t marry without love. I have a feeling that she will stay out here for a long time to come. If so, then? Then I will protect Cindy in the Monster Kingdom, while you start watching Frisk closer here.”

Closer. “You finally tell her about me?”

“No, Cindy didn’t want to. She wants her to have a whole year to decide things for herself before she knows about you and what you did,” Toriel stated. “What do you think of Frisk? She’s quite attractive as a human.”

You gotta be kidding me. “Was I supposed to notice?”

“When Cindy is gone, Frisk will have to know of your presence. Any coercing of my daughter won’t be known to her or I.” Tori smiled. “Frisk has a tough mind, but you have another forty years out here with her. In that time, maybe she’ll cave?”

“Uh huh. Just so you can have her safely in the Monster Kingdom again.” Boy. Sans didn’t know how to feel. “You banned me from talking to her. You banned me from being in the Monster Kingdom at the same time as her. You even got me disguising power and a car and an apartment to lure me to stay in this world.” It was- “Now you *want* me to go after her?”

Yeah. It was time to address the elephant in the room. “Queen Toriel. I used to play around with time. Not much, not that much power, but just a bit. A few minutes ahead. Great for practical jokes.” He watched her carefully. “Whenever I reached the moment I kind of jumped, there was this *deja vu* feeling inside. I’ve had this *deja vu* feeling inside.” That look. “Did you ever play around with time?”

“If I did, then it’s best not to know about the future,” she reminded him. “If I did, it would not be for play. If I did, it would have consequences that I accepted to take before I caused it.”

Nice round way of saying yes. “At least it wasn’t in my head.”

“Oh. I know how it sounds,” Tori said to him. “Everything is fine. That’s all that matters. Don’t worry about the change, it isn’t healthy.”

Yeah, she was half right. He couldn’t help but think that the future was dictating her current behaviors though. “You filled my plate with guilt and shame to the tip top. You gave Papyrus my job.” He looked away and back at the moon. “Queen Toriel.”

“You drove Cindy to be so scared. Telling Frisk so young, after everything she’d been through,” Toriel said again. “The offer to marry Frisk was never taken off the table verbally for you. This was why.”

“I’m not supposed to come in until after your wife is long gone from here.” Sans sat at the edge of the house. “I admit, it’d be nice not having to worry about marrying in another forty years. I just don’t know if I should trust *you*, your Grace. What if I do manage to slide a yes from Frisk, and then *your* wife comes unglued? You gonna ban me from going through with it? You gonna mess with time backwards by a few minutes?”

Toriel didn’t look so well. “I react harshly whenever something threatens Cindy’s emotional state, but I do not play in mere ‘minutes’ with my duties, Sans.”

“There’s a real honest answer,” Sans replied. “We’ll see is all I’ll say, but I wouldn’t expect much results while Frisk is young. I know her, even if I never got to talk much to her.” Sans stood back up. “She would protest against marriage for the wrong reasons, but if at the end of her elderly life she decided to set me free from the marry rule? I could see her doing it.”

Toriel didn’t answer back at first. “Please try to convince her sooner?”

Pshaw.

“I won’t have another hundred years to make up for the time I lose with Frisk. I will be lucky to live to see her come to the Kingdom if you do that.”

What? “You’re that . . .” Ancient?

Both Toriel and Sans’ words came to a stop as they watched the house blow up.

The house. The house with Frisk and Cindy.

Just blew up and it was on fire.

“Cindy! Frisk!” Toriel took off right away into the blaze along with Sans. Each of them were checking the rooms as best as they could, hoping they could find them. “This is all my fault, I distracted you from watching them!”

It was, but Sans wasn’t going to say that. Life in general was distracting.

“Cindy!”

Sans watched as Toriel appeared next to him with a burned Cindy who’d been caught in the fire. “Tell me later if you find Frisk, I must get her home!”

Home. Toriel’s home. Sans kept searching for Frisk but he couldn’t find her. No charred remains, no screams, no nothing. Sans immediately left the house, hearing commotion outside.

Someone had a person wrapped up in a large white containment bag. *That’s definitely Frisk.*

He knocked the bag down out of his enemy’s arms, but his enemy wasn’t going to run away.

Frisk struggled to get out of the white bag now that she hit the ground. When she managed to get her head out, she saw Sans caught in a tussle with someone. She looked back at her house. It was on fire! “Moms!”

She felt someone else grab the whole bag, picking her back up.

“No.” It was Sans’ voice.

Frisk couldn’t actually see him either. He was moving way too fast. The person he was fighting was moving really fast too though. “Sans!”

Then, she felt a gun right next to her temple.

When she was younger, she fought for her life against monsters. She knew what she was getting into though. There was a board that made them take turns, and she had options besides fighting. There was even an option to always flee.

There were no options to this. There was a gun next to her head, no board, and as she heard the finger drawing back, she knew her life was over.

But, it wasn’t. She felt herself getting yanked away in the bag right before the gun went off. Free on the ground, she quickly got out of the bag this time to dive what another bullet would do.

She didn’t have to though. Whoever it had been, she could see them lying on the ground. Bleeding and unmoving.

Frisk choked as dust scattered heavily in the air. The air was thick with it, almost like fog. With her senses coming back, she coughed as she headed toward the house.

She found herself stopped though and taken farther backwards. This time, she couldn't keep up with the scenery around her. One second she was on a driveway, up on a car, above some bushes, and above another car. She had to close her eyes to keep herself from getting dizzy. Still. "Moms!"

"They're out, Frisk." Sans' voice answered her. Good. It was Sans carrying her. "Keep your eyes and mouth closed."

Good idea. Frisk tried to imagine traveling with Sans this fast was just a scary amusement park ride but she failed. This was battle, a battle for her life.

If Sans lost, she was dead.

"In a battle, leave a message please."

Frisk heard Sans phone and his voice answer it. Why even bother answering in the middle of battle? He was already being slowed down by watching out for her!

"Got it," Sans answered. Sans didn't say anything else for several minutes. Frisk felt like getting sick from all the constant fast traveling.

Then, it stopped. Frisk opened her eyes. The sight was gruesome. There was a ton of dust in the air, along with the smell of blood. There was lots of blood on the ground and bodies. One was still alive and twitching, but from the look of it, he'd be dead soon.

She lost it right next to Sans all over the pavement. As she did that, she felt his bony hand rubbing her back. He didn't say anything as Frisk finished and wiped her mouth. "Sorry."

"Perfectly normal," Sans insisted. "Guess what? You finally get to spend more than five minutes with me. Cool, huh? Follow me."

Follow? Frisk was weak from throwing up, but she tried to follow. Sans held his grip on her. He was heading to a car she didn't know. "Did you hear from Moms?"

"Yeah. Inside." Sans opened the door to the car. It was his? "I'll tell you about your moms when you get inside."

Frisk pulled herself inside slowly. There were a bunch of folders all over the seats. She watched him get in on the driver's side. "Moms?"

He started the car. "Your Ma Cindy is burned, so your Ma Toriel went to heal her in the Monster Kingdom." As the car purred, he drove off. "There were more enemies waiting in the Monster Kingdom. She took them down with the Royal Guards."

Ma Cindy is burned. Ma Toriel had to fight with Royal Guards. "Can I see them?"

"Not legally yet," Sans reminded her. "You just visited this month. Not only that, but it's also just dangerous for you right now. Your home's been demolished, I just took out twenty monsters and humans in a night, and your Momma Tori wants you out of there."

Her Moms. Herself. Frisk looked around the car, noticing all the folders. "Is this your stuff?"

"Yeah," Sans answered. "It's mine."

There was like 100 folders strewn about the car. "What are they?"

"Profiles mainly. Don't worry about them," Sans told her.

Frisk touched a folder but wiped a tear away. "Where am I gonna go? When can I see them?"

"You are going to go with the only monster from her kingdom that doesn't actually live in the Kingdom." Sans gestured to himself. "It's still a little ways away. I could just teleport us there, but this is my car too. Can't do us and the car."

What? "With you?"

"Just for a night, Frisk," Sans insisted. "Your Ma Toriel will figure it out after that. She needs to protect your Ma Cindy."

But? "You don't live in the Monster Kingdom?" Frisk asked. "How is that possible?"

"Oh. I made your momma really, really mad," Sans said. "I had to promise that I wouldn't even run into you in the Monster Kingdom. It worked out okay at first, but when Toriel saw how dangerous it had gotten over the years, she got me my own place and vehicle out here too."

"But you are so close to Papyrus." Frisk knew that. She knew Papyrus so well.

"I could visit as much as I wanted, but my duty lied here most of the time anyway," Sans said. "I don't get paid hourly, I get a salary for just protecting you. Watching over you and Cindy, while staying out of sight, is a full-time job." He gestured to the folders around them. "Queen Toriel knew that, so she set me up here with what I needed. Moms are the best, aren't they?"

Oh. "That was nice of Ma Toriel."

"Guess. She used to be nicer." He shrugged. "I had it coming I guess."

Hm. "Can you tell me now what you did?" Frisk asked. "You are going to be with me for the night."

Sans turned a corner. He was quiet for a little while. "I didn't take my job seriously enough at first. I was just getting to know you and your mom. I told you something you weren't supposed to know until you were older."

Oh! "Wait, is it the marriage thing they went over tonight?" Frisk asked.

"Yeah," he admitted. "I don't keep toast, bread and jam for breakfast over at my place. Sometimes you eat cereal. I don't know, let's stop at this gas station up ahead."

Oh no, that's not fair. “Why did they get so mad? Don’t just tell me one part of it.”

“Meh.” Sans shook his head again. “I might have saved your life, but I could still lose my job for squealing. That’s all you get.” He stopped. “Come on, out.”

Frisk got out of the car. She watched Sans walk into the gas station. He didn’t change his appearance or anything, just started grabbing some bread.

Frisk grabbed a jam she could tolerate and some butter. She watched as they went to the register. The guy behind it didn’t react at all. “Sans?”

“I’m still in a movie,” Sans answered back to her. “I’m background skeleton 3. Aren’t I, Bob?”

The register attendant looked up at Sans. “Movies take forever to make. Weren’t you still doing that when the guy who worked here before was still here?”

“Movies take a real long time to make,” Sans said as he gave him his change. “Thanks. Let’s go.”

“A movie?” Frisk asked as they walked out. “We live in Oklahoma, what kind of movie are you doing?”

“A skeleton western,” he teased. He brought out a little silver device from his pocket. “Just a little hypnotism once usually for anyone who gets curious enough to ask. Most don’t even ask.” He put it back away and unlocked the doors.

Frisk was quieter on the way back. When they got out and reached his apartment door, she spoke again. “Moms have to know that I know now. You saved me even. Are they still going to keep you away?”

Sans didn’t answer as his door swung open. “Chez Sans. Enjoy.”

Frisk looked inside, still waiting for an answer, when she found herself smiling. This was the Sans she remembered.

There was a half put together puzzle on the floor. Pictures of Papyrus and him in frames. A new sock collection forming in a doorway to another room. Books and more folders strewn about the room.

This looked like it was Sans’ alright. “Lovely home.”

“Mind the decor,” he teased. “Don’t mess with the profiles. They are in an organized mess, and I don’t want it getting mixed up at all. Especially after tonight.” He scooted some of the profile folders over to the left side of the couch so she could sit down.

Frisk didn’t want to sit down yet. She started to look at the bathroom first. His toilet lid cover was up, and it covered the whole thing with the face of a duck. His toilet lid was the duck’s beak. The towels in the room were covered in ducks. “Like ducks?”

“Oh yeah,” Sans said to her as he showed up beside her. “How could I forget? You have to explore new surroundings. Papyrus likes ducks. I got him the same thing for Christmas.”

Oh no. “He does not,” Frisk said, “and I know you bought something for him for Christmas. It was a couple of years ago. He was yelling all about it.”

“Yeah. Reminds me of home,” Sans said as he left the room.

Oh. *The ducks don't remind him of home, giving ducks to Papyrus to drive him crazy still reminds him of home.* “Do you have ducks for bedsheets too?”

“Let's see. Here, you can sleep in here. Papyrus sleeps here when he comes over.”

Frisk stared at the extra bedroom. *Poor Papyrus.* It was covered in ducks and bones, and duck skeletons. The curtains were covered in bones, the ground rug was a huge duck, and the bedsheets? Were duck skeletons. “Don't miss an opportunity to mess with your brother, do you?”

“Huh?” Sans asked. “What? You want my room instead?”

Frisk shrugged. She followed him to his room and couldn't help but grin. The bone curtains were now ducks, the ground rug was a huge bone, and it had the same duck skeleton bedsheets. “There's no one else out there like you, Sansy Honey.”

“Yeah. It's a good thing, I think the world can only handle one of me, Sweet.” He went over to a lamp and turned it on. It quacked.

Frisk snorted before she could stop it. “I'll just stick with the guest room, thanks.”

“Don't be surprised if Papyrus makes an appearance early,” Sans said to her before she left. “We have to figure out the next step. Get some sleep, Frisk, and I'll see you in the morning.”

Frisk went back to the guest room. The covers at least looked comfortable. As she turned on the lamp though?

It mooed instead of quacked.

She snorted in the darkness, then tried to hide her laugh afterward.

Sans's Room

Sans stayed on the line with Toriel. Cindy wasn't in good shape, even with healers. *The queen's heart must be breaking.* They were doing what they could and Toriel wasn't leaving her side. Meanwhile, they had to figure out what to do with Frisk.

Queen Toriel came up with more than one backup, but to just move Frisk by herself wouldn't be easy. Not only that, he took out nearly twenty monsters and humans last night alone.

The longer Frisk and Cindy were known to be the good human wife and daughter of Queen Toriel, the more monsters and humans were starting to mix. The more monsters and humans started to mix, the more the traditional ignorant thinkers had to think too hard.

To traditional thinkers, the monster line would get polluted with weak human blood. Magic would be lost. It'd be the end. With traditional human thinkers, they thought humans would become savage. Unbridled, and uncivilized over time.

There were others after them for different reasons, but the ones causing the most waves were those traditionals.

"Her whole arm. Cindy will be lucky if she can keep her arm." The Queen's voice was so lost on the phone.

Sans sighed. *Well? Like I can leave someone in that kind of state easily.* "Knock knock."

She didn't respond fast. She eventually said, "Who's there?"

"Still a friend, Tori," Sans said.

"It's nice to hear you say Tori to me again, Sans." She sounded like she was starting to cry. "I know that it wasn't as easy to hold a friendship when my . . . when life changed so much. I appreciate you being there for us. Thank you for watching for Frisk too. I was so scared that I would get terrible news while I was trying to save Cindy."

"Your daughter's fine," Sans said. "She knows about me though. I couldn't, you know, save her from people wanting to kill her, and then let her stay with me, without telling her about me. Hope that's okay."

He managed to get a small chuckle. "I'm sure someone like you is very good for her right now."

Yeah. Maybe? "She's got a cute snort."

Toriel laughed. "She does, doesn't she? She can't help it. You hear it before she laughs. Sometimes she grows all red and blocks the laugh, but she can never hide the snort."

"Yeah, she's good," Sans agreed.

"Will you take her to the next home?" Toriel asked him. "This time, Cindy and I will remain here. Frisk will be 18 now, and she gave us her blessing to do this. I didn't plan on it being so soon, but? She turns 18 in about four more hours. Oh, I just don't know what to do for her schooling."

"If I am full time watching Frisk, then I guess I could watch her in her school. How much longer she got?"

“If you want Papyrus to join you over at a new place near Frisk, he may, but you cannot get involved in her schooling area without him.”

Ah, she was ready to really sweeten the deal. “Does he get a fancy red car?”

“Mm. I suppose if he gets a driver’s license,” Toriel said. “But? Could I ask you for one more tiny favor?”

Another favor? “What?”

“Frisk’s schooling is technically over. She just needs to graduate, but . . . prom night is coming up. It’s an important school dance, a dating sort of thing. It’s fitting I offer this at least. Do you think you could go with her?”

Ooh. That’s why she was sweetening the deal, or even bothered to mention school. “How’s your Cindy gonna handle that?”

“She won’t know. Not yet,” Toriel promised him. “Just see how she responds. I know it’s been a very long time since you talked face to face with Frisk. She might not remember you very well at all. This could be a good opportunity to get to know her. She doesn’t plan on going, so make sure she goes to get a dress too.”

“Gee, ‘Ma Toriel’, really don’t think ‘Ma Cindy’ is gonna approve with this one,” Sans warned her. “I’ll ask you again. If I do get Frisk to say yes to marriage, and Cindy no likey it? Are you gonna ban me from Frisk?”

A sigh was heard through the phone. “Cindy is in such a bad state right now. I can’t talk to her about this. I just know that . . . that for Frisk. For us. For you?”

Hm. “Have a quickie wedding before Cindy finds out?”

“Close, Sans. I, um? Asgore tends to mess around in things. So?”

“Have a quickie wedding without you or Cindy or King Asgore knowing?”

“That would work! Afterwards, you can come back to the kingdom with her. No gallivanting outside the Monster Kingdom anymore afterward.”

“Fine,” Sans agreed. “If I get her to say yes, not even you will know about it. I can be the ass that everyone can hate together.”

“Take pictures though! Lots of pictures. Oh. Recordings would be lovely. Oh, I don’t want to miss my daughter’s wedding! Well? No, I have to be fair. Plenty of recordings and pics though.”

“If.” She couldn’t get overexcited.

“If,” she agreed. “If.”

Frisk's Chaperon or Date?

Frisk woke up for breakfast. She grabbed the toast, butter, and jam. Now that the night was over, she had to figure out what to do. She was lucky she had still been up and not in her pj's yet.

She noticed four suitcases on the ground though. Ma Toriel was always prepared. She went over by them and opened them up.

Yep. There was extra bought for storage. It fell mostly within her taste too.

"The first thing you gotta do waking up 18 is explore," Sans teased her from behind. "Yeah. Queen Toriel had provisions yearly for you. You gotta go out and get something specific though."

Something specific? "What?"

"A prom dress," he said surprisingly. "Would you like to go to prom with me?"

Prom? "Prom?" Prom with Sans? "Why should I go to prom?"

"Toriel wants something nice for you, since she decided she'd be staying with Cindy now."

Wow. Frisk already knew after last night, Ma Toriel would want to keep Ma Cindy safe. "I get to go with you?" She was never even allowed to talk to Sans, and she was allowed to go with him? *It must be for safety reasons.* She didn't want to make her moms upset. "If I do, will you tell me why you were banned from talking to me?"

"Yeah, sure," Sans insisted. "You're gonna stay with me until after Graduation and Prom, then we'll head out to a new place near your college you were accepted at. You'll be alone, but I guarantee you'll be okay."

College. Right. *Graduation without moms.* It felt heartbreaking. Frisk didn't even want to bother with prom, but graduation? They would have had such a great time, enjoying each other's company before she went off to college. *I didn't get to leave first. They did.* Bad thought, unfair too.

Her moms were in trouble. Frisk had to deal with her own life events without them. "Okay. You aren't going to be spying from above the dorms when I go to college, right?" Yeah, there wasn't much of an answer. "Security is tight at a University, Sans."

"True. I already feel sorry for the security camera inspectors." He shook his head. "The amount of ghosts showing up might put some at mental health risk." He shrugged. "They can always quit." He gestured out his door. "Come on. Let's go find you a dress this morning."

"I . . ." It was another reason Frisk really didn't even bother with prom. Her moms knew it was coming. She never even declared she wasn't going. She had never brought it up at all.

“Clothes are one thing, dresses are another.”

“What’s wrong with dresses?” Sans asked. “I’ve seen you in dresses.”

“Dresses, but not prom dresses.” Frisk didn’t want to explain it, but now she had no choice. “It’s hard to find dresses that fit me. I don’t shop at specialty shops, but normal places rarely have my size.”

Sans just looked at her a little longer. “Oh. So? We’ll take more than the morning if we have to go to multiple places.”

“Prom dresses aren’t really in a lot of places near here,” Frisk tried again. “I don’t want to walk into a specialty store, just to walk back out with nothing or maybe one dress that isn’t me at all but happens to fit for 400 dollars.”

“400 dollars?” Sans pulled up his phone and it looked like he was looking into it. “How many times do you wear this dress?”

“Just once. Just prom,” Frisk said.

“ . . . human traditions are weird sometimes.” Sans groaned. “Welp? Fine, but we’ll hunt for a white dress so you might be able to use it twice. Either that or your moms are picking up the check.”

Use it twice? Oh. “You’re talking about the marriage thing, aren’t you?” Hm. “If I get married, do you and Papyrus stop guarding me?”

“Depends on who you marry,” he said simply. “If you don’t get married at all though, will be following you too.”

“Okay, but you need to at least not hide from me,” Frisk said to him. “You should live near me instead of all the way across town. Or? You two could even live with me.”

“Yeah. Might end up doing that,” he said a little strangely. “Come on. Let’s get going.”

Dress Shop

Frisk went through the dresses. She wasn’t even looking at anything but size and color. There were lots of pretty dresses but none were really her size. *I knew this would happen.* She saw some other girls from High School going through the dresses with one of them coming out to show it off.

Screw prom. Why did Ma Toriel want her to go to it now? This wasn’t any way to make up for leaving her to stay with Ma Cindy. It had to happen, but prom wasn’t a good idea, it was bad.

Frisk went down further into the store. She asked for some help from a store attendant and they tried to help by doing the same thing she did. Looking at the dresses.

If that wasn't enough? Sans was nowhere near there now. Frisk was all alone on this stupid mission.

"I don't know what to say," the attendant said to her. "You've just got . . . rare dimensions. You can buy one and have it customized, but prom is tomorrow night."

Yeah, of course they knew that. "Thanks for your help." Then, Frisk felt a tapping against her. She turned and saw Sans. He had a white prom dress, that looked like it might actually fit! "Where did you find that?"

"A couple of shortcuts," Sans said as he gave it to her.

It wasn't just white, it was beautiful. There was no settling, it was the most impressive dress she'd seen. "It's beautiful. Thank you."

"Yep. My tux isn't gonna be half as cute. Poor you," he teased her.

"His tux?"

Frisk saw the high schoolers near her look at them.

"Frisk? Are you really going with the . . . guy dressed as a skeleton?"

"Hey," Sans said without pause. "It's skeleton dressed as a guy." He pulled out the shiny silver object Frisk saw before and put it in front of him. "I'm a hottie. You secretly want to yank me away from Frisk at the prom, but you can't, because she's better than you." He put it away again and winked at Frisk. "Prom's gonna be fun."

Damn it! Frisk tried to hide her snort.

"Anyway, don't thank me," Sans stated. "That came from the fella who helped you most in the world."

Aww. Frisk smiled. Right about now it would be so good to see-

"Friiiiiiiiisk!" Papi spun her around. "I am so sorry about everything happening! I knew after losing so much I had to find you a dress! I searched high and low for the perfect dress. Mainly high!"

High and low? "The stores just opened an hour ago or so."

"In certain places. I search many, many stores!"

Poor Papi was crying rivers of tears. "It's okay. We all survived," Frisk said gently. "We are okay. Thank you for the pretty dress, Papi."

"Who is the guy dressed as a skeleton next to the hottie? Her dad?"

This time, Frisk didn't hide the snort.

“Oh humans. Monsters exist!” Papyrus corrected them. “It’s been how many years already?”

“Not in their little worlds. News reports don't make a diff to most,” Sans corrected him.

“Especially around here. Big things happen away from small towns in Oklahoma.”

“Hey.” One of the high schoolers seemed offended. “We are big enough that we are separated from the elementary building, so don't give us flack just 'cause you think you're special.”

Frisk moved Papi from the topic. “Are you staying with us too, Papi?”

“Absolutely!” Papi assured her.

“Frisk?” One of the high school girls were getting braver. “Why do you keep calling one of the . . . uh . . . guy skeletons . . . Papi?”

“Yeah, that might be a little misconstrued out in the real world.” Sans shrugged. “But hey, we’re monsters finding a prom dress. Doesn’t matter much.”

Frisk smiled and gestured to Papyrus to the other high schoolers. “This is Papyrus. He’s one of my best friends ever, and practically raised me. My mom always called him Papi, so it just stuck over time.”

“I am proud to be Papi. Although I don’t see why the word is such a big deal?” Papi looked up the meaning with his phone. “I am all these things! I am a special man! I am attractive!”

“As long as you stay loose in the definition of ‘man’,” Sans kidded him.

Nice. It felt nicer now. Ever since last night, Frisk was trying to hold onto some semblance of reality. Her moms were no longer there. Her Ma Cindy was in trouble. She was trying to get to know Sans again, but now that the skeleton she saw almost every day of her life was back?

Everything felt better, and at the same time? More real. Frisk hugged Papi tightly. “I missed you. I wanted to see you so much.”

“I am here now,” Papi assured her. “I will be staying with Sans from now on. I will also be getting a pretty red car when I get a driver’s license. Isn’t that wonderful?”

Really wonderful. Frisk held him so tightly. Every weekday, a day never being missed by him, he had come to visit her. It was his job, but it was so much more. He was her friend. He helped her get over her rockiest moments in life. He was full of optimism. To a fault really, but with her life, she needed that overzealous fault he provided.

“Yeah,” Sans agreed. “I’ll share my room with Papyrus, and you can keep the guest bedroom, Frisk.” he insisted. “Yay. Hope you can get used to such a different kind of room, Papyrus.”

“It’s exactly the same!” The irritation in Papi’s voice couldn’t be missed.

“Nuh uh,” Sans egged him on more. “It’s ducks, bones, and skeleton ducks. Instead of bones, ducks, and skeleton ducks.”

“It’s the associative property, it’s the same thing!” Papi continued to scold him.

“What if I make it skeleton ducks, then bones, and then ducks?”

“I!” Papi held Frisk tighter. “I missed you Sans, but you are making it harder to say that right now.”

“Nah,” Sans went over and patted him on the back. “The associative property just said it for you.”

These two. *I remember these two together now. Life will never be the same at all.*

“I suppose I should buy a suit too,” Papyrus insisted. “I shall be a chaperon.”

Hm? Frisk already had one of those. “Sans is coming,” she said.

“Yeah, she said yes easily,” Sans agreed. “It’s a good thing. There’s a lot of high schoolers around here who think I’m a hottie.”

Uh? Frisk understood the hottie remark, but not the first part. She said yes easily? *Wait.* That was a joke, right? Sans was a monster, and she was 18. So? *Monster age.* She wouldn’t know the exact age, but Papi and Ma Toriel taught her a lot about aging differences. Every ten years was about a year to a monster. So, a hundred years felt like ten years.

When she first started meeting Papi everyday, he was a little more mature than her. Of course, she was eight or so. Then, as time went by, she noticed that his maturity didn’t quite measure up. Like? She could handle certain things with ease she used to be scared of in movies. Papi was still scared of the same things. He hadn’t changed much.

He might be 14ish. Fifteenish?

Now, Sans, was his older brother, but how much older?

“It looks like your brains gonna split open soon,” Sans said to her. “Watcha thinking so hard about?”

Sans was annoying like a younger brother, but he didn’t always act like a young brother. Like? He used to buy his brother action figures. He also used to pay for the rent of their house in the Underground. He also kind of brushed her off more when she was eight, while Papyrus used to connect a little closer to her. *I don’t know. Is he joking or not?*

Frisk knew it was rude to ask, but she had to know. He’d either laugh and get a kick out of her falling for it, or she’d at least know what she agreed to for real. “How old are you?”

“Whoah. Why you gotta be like that?” Sans asked back. “What’s it to you how old I am?”

“Are you taking me to prom as a chaperon, or not?” She just flat out asked.

“Ah.” Sans shoved his bony hands in his sleeves. “Thought that yes came a little too easy. You know age groups for monsters I bet?”

“Of course, I taught her!” Papi said proudly. “I am . . . 15.3 in human years. You, Frisk, in monsters years are a mature 180 years old.”

Yeah, but how old was Sans? Her moms just never told her anything about him at all. He had to be older than 15.3 in human years, but Frisk didn’t know much more than that.

“You’re just as young as you feel,” Sans teased her.

“Sans is 20.8 in human years,” Papi revealed to Frisk finally.

I thought so.

“Yeah. Were closer to the same age,” Sans said to her. “You’re even 18 now. Makes it easier to date, doesn’t it?”

Was he kidding? Was he not? “You asked me out to prom as a date?”

“Yep. No takesy backsys,” Sans said.

A date? She was dating Sans? *Twenty. I knew him as a child, and now, we are almost around the same age.* Strange. “Have you ever been to a dance before?”

“No,” Sans answered back, “but neither have you.”

He was right about that. “I don’t . . . dance,” Frisk said to him.

“Nah, I don’t either. We can just shuffle around the floor,” Sans answered.

“I don’t do anything,” Frisk told him. “Nothing.” Still, she felt her face start to turn red. “I don’t do hugs or kissing or anything like that. Not with anyone.”

“Well, I’m a skeleton. Not really big on kissing,” Sans said, “although I think already got hugs.”

“She means romantically on a date,” Papi corrected him. “Be nice. Frisk has not gone on many dates at all. She just keeps attractive posters of people she likes.”

Sans already probably knew that, Papi didn’t need to say that out loud.

“She has liked the occasional boy and girl before. She told me about that in confidence.”

If he had more than bony toes to step on right now! Frisk felt her face glowing red. The high schoolers were right there still.

“Probably should **can** this conversation, and **opener** up back later,” Sans said to Papi.

“Yes please,” Frisk agreed. “Let’s go . . .” Wait. Home? That was destroyed. Was it back to Sans’?

“We’ll head back to my place,” Sans said for her, “before we embarrass you anymore in front of your friends or crushes.” He winked at her and pointed. “Save the rest of that for our prom date.”

Date again. “Did Ma Toriel tell you to make it a date for prom?” That was the only thing that made sense. Sans could barely be called a friend the way they secretly saw each other.

“She gave some guidance.” Then Sans added to it. “But it’s not all her idea. Human conversion aging, makes sense we try a date. Besides, I want to go to a dance with basically human peers. Don’t get to do that for long. Humans drop like flies too fast.” He just waved to the other high schoolers, still staring at them. “I know, huh? You know you should be ignoring us and looking at dresses but you just can’t resist.”

“Let’s go to your place already,” Frisk said quickly.

The Next Night . . . Prom.

Frisk had no idea how to handle this situation. She loved the look and feel of her dress. Papyrus was cute in his tuxedo, complete with a red tie and sash. Sans?

Wore a glittery blue tuxedo suit, with a glittery blue bowtie, and a fedora. That? Also had that same blue glitter.

How could this really be the same guy that took out twenty guys all at once? Be the same one that saved her when she was younger? *There’s just no way this could be a real date, no one would wear that on a date to the high school. Unless he doesn’t know that’s out of style? But, it was never in style.*

“I know, I’m spellbinding, but the dance is that way,” Sans complained.

Frisk stayed in the middle of Sans and Papyrus, ignoring the looks around her. She was wondering what she would do when she got in, but she found out she didn’t need to rush that.

They came in from the back of the high school. It had been twenty minutes later, and they only made it to the southside bathrooms. All in all? *The dance might be over by the time I even get in.*

In the meantime, Sans teased Papi. Papi did Papi things, like talk about everything he saw and introducing himself to everyone near him. Few people responded. Some people laughed. Some genuinely talked back to Papi.

“Dang, Frisk,” Sans said as they were rounding the corner. They were just now getting to see the metal detectors ahead. “Your prom might be over by the time we get in.”

Frisk felt him lightly tickle the back of her hand.

“If that’s the case, then we’ll just have to make sure to set a proper date again.”

What? *Joke. Right?* Why did he want to date her so much? She knew that he might want to get to know her. She surely wanted to get to know him. She’d been apart from him for so long and he was such a mystery. But? Why did he want to truly date her?

It’s not like he said she looked nice, or that he liked her. Nothing like that. He just said it like it was a casual thing they should, you know, just kinda try. *He’s hiding something about this.* “You said that if I went with you to the prom, that you’d tell me why my moms didn’t want me seeing you.”

Sans looked over at her. “Shit, why’d you have to remember that?”

“Language,” a teacher said as they passed Sans. “You’re in school.”

“Never thought I’d hear that phrase,” Sans said out loud. “It’s not your school hours, Frisk, what’s their problem?”

No. He wasn’t weaseling out of it. “A deal is a deal,” Frisk said firmly. “You told me that if I went with you, you’d tell me. So?”

“You should probably just tell her, Sans,” Papi said to him too. “It won’t make a difference now either way.”

“Meh.” Sans looked like he wasn’t going to spill. “Rather finish the date first.”

“Nothing magical is going to happen on this weird date to make what you have to tell me change,” Frisk insisted. “I want to know.”

“Weird?” Sans didn’t sound like he enjoyed that. “What’s weird about this date? I’m not doing anything weird. This is me.” He straightened his glittery bow tie. “Just like your damn curiosity never changed from when you were a kid.”

“Let’s not mention her being a kid right now, Sans.” Papi sounded firm in his resolve. “That’s a terrible idea.”

“Uh? Yeah. Forget that,” Sans apologized to her. “You do you. I’ll do me. That simple.”

“Not that simple, you are still dodging the question.” Frisk wouldn’t be distracted with that whole thing.

“Hey look, we are up finally.” Sans moved first through the metal detector. “Just bones and clothes. Let’s go.”

Grr. He couldn’t evade the question for long.

“You want punch?” Sans asked her.

“I want the truth.” Frisk wasn’t going to give up or get distracted.

“Then let’s shuffle around out on the floor for a bit. Papi, why don’t you go get some punch?” Sans asked him.

Papi left while Sans held Frisk’s hand and brought her to the middle of the floor.

He started to shuffle. “Having fun yet?”

Frisk barely shuffled. “Why did you want to date me?”

“Your moms told you about that marriage thing,” Sans said to her. “How if you marry a monster, you can move to the Monster Kingdom. If you marry a human, you never will, or if you never marry? Well then you just never will.”

“Yeah, they told me,” Frisk agreed. “Right before . . .”

“I bet I can get special permissions to see at least one of your moms,” Sans said gently to her. “I know you’re worried. You’ve been a real great woman about the whole thing, even coming to this prom with me.”

“Why did you call me woman?” Frisk had to ask. “You never say that.”

“I didn’t want to call you kid,” he said. “Like Papyrus said. It’s . . . kind of tough. I was about 19 in human years when you were 8. Now I’m about 20 in human years, and you’re 18. The comparison is crazy, it’s like you grew up in just a year or so. And?”

“And what?” Frisk pressed. “You still see me as eight-year-old then?”

“Nah. You grew,” he said. “You grew a lot. Humans mature fast.” He shrugged. “Kind of hate that. Kind of don’t. Um?” He was fidgety. He was trying to clearly tell her something. “Look? I brought you out for your prom date, as *your* date, to show you life with me wouldn’t be so bad. I mean? This is it. I’m not gonna demand hugs or dates. Nothing at all from you. In fact, I’ll even take care of you financially if you want. Or I won’t, if you don’t want.”

What was he saying? Was he . . . “Are you asking for . . .”

“You aren’t fond of the idea. I don’t blame you, I’m not into marriage either,” Sans said. “In fact? It’s sucky, but if I do get to be friends openly with you again, then I gotta be honest.”

He backed away a smidge before continuing. “All monsters have to marry when they turn 200 in the Monster Kingdom. I can’t join another nation, I can’t run away without being hunted for treason, yada yada.” He moved his hand around. “Toriel sweetened the deal for me by allowing me to stay single as long as I protected you. I had a fifty-year task of just watching you. Balls to the wall awesome good, right?”

His words sometimes. Frisk was starting to see what he wanted. “I’m not marrying you.”

“Yeah, I figured. You want love and crap in a marriage,” Sans said not so eloquently. “I just stated why I got involved in this whole thing. Now, you know, for the keeping the promise thing.” He paused a few seconds. “In ten years, you’re already 18. It flew by for me. In about fifty years, there won’t be any kind of a threat bugging you. Why bother? You’d die off naturally anyhow.”

Boy, he was so nice with his words! Frisk thought angrily. “People live longer than that all the time.”

“Point being, you won’t need me guarding you,” Sans said, “hence, I have to go get married if the law still stays the damn same. To you, it won’t even seem like nothing. To me, fifty years is like a few years. Are you getting it?”

No. “Why do you want to marry me?”

“I just have to marry once. If I marry you and you die, it’s over,” Sans said bluntly.

Ugh. “I’m not marrying you.”

“Listen, Frisk, I’m still in the middle of that keeping the promise thing,” Sans warned her. “I get it. You don’t want to marry me, but you’ve been bugging me about knowing why your moms won’t let me see you. So, are you going to listen or just keep refusing over and over?”

Frisk sighed. “I want to know. Continue.”

“Your Ma Toriel and Ma Cindy figured it out way before I did. They thought it’d work out for everyone if I got hitched with you when you got older. I would just have a roommate for fifty years or so, and that’d be it. You would get to live near your moms. You’d be happy.”

What? They wanted to marry her off? “They wouldn’t do that.”

“Nah, it was an idea they wanted to curb to happen that way as you got older,” Sans said. “It was an idea I wanted to curb sooner. They told me not to tell you about the whole marriage thing. I did, saying it was sort of like a forever roommate. I promised none of that yucky adult stuff.”

Hm. That? Hm. “Did you?”

“Yeah. Your moms probably repressed that from your mind.” Sans shook his skull. “I thought my actions would help you choose to just live out your days when you got older with me and Papyrus. Instead, it scared the hell out of your Moms.”

Yeah. Doing something that bold with her might. “I can’t believe you did that.”

“I was still the best for the job. My original job is the job I have now, plus Papyrus’ job,” he revealed. “I went from the guy you were supposed to see almost every day to the guy hiding in the shadows and watching over you a little. My main job was researching potential threats, and watching your mom.” He moved a little closer again. “It’s nice that my sax relaxed you, but I always played it when I was near at night, that way your Ma Cindy knew I was near. My actions scared the hell out of her, Frisk. I can’t change that.”

Yeah. Frisk knew that. Her mom wouldn't handle that well at all.

"Your mom grinned and beared it because I really was the best for watching over you two. It took a lot of convincing, soul bearing, promising, and secret keeping to even keep what I had. I still ended up getting banned from the Monster Kingdom whenever you visited, and I was banned from talking to you."

Frisk didn't know what to say as she shuffled around with Sans. It was kind of weird. It was just one incident, and if they could block it from her mind, why did they have to take it to such an extreme? "Ma Toriel still wants me with you, against Ma Cindy's wishes? That's why I'm at the prom with you, isn't it?"

"Good guess," Sans answered. "Truth is? I don't really care when you say yes. If you want to make Queen Toriel happy, then we can get it over with. If you want to live out the rest of your forty years? I mean, I'm just saying. That last year. Maybe, if you haven't found anyone . . ."

If she didn't marry by the time she was almost 68 years old. "Would I do you a solid and just marry you?"

"It'd be awesome of ya," Sans said. "Your Ma Toriel though wants it sooner. Much sooner. She doesn't have the luxury of seeing you turn 68."

Oh. Frisk understood now.

"Still, I mean? If you still don't want to, or you find a human you really like? Well, the heart wants what it wants." He shrugged. "If I had one, it would probably beat for Grillbys burgers."

Frisk smiled.

"You had a date to an important human event," Sans said to her. "You made your Ma Toriel happy tonight."

Yeah. Frisk got that now.

"And? I know it sucked to hear, but I'm glad I finally got to tell you the truth. Frisk." He said it so seriously. "I can read certain things about people, but I can't read everything. I misjudged my actions, and I try to do what I can to make sure I *don't* cause that kind of pain again. So like it or not, Pap and I will still be traveling along with you for those college days. Then, whatever days happen after that."

Frisk didn't answer right away, but she did shake her head. There's no way she was going to just marry anyone right now. She did have her college days to get through. Her own career goals. She wanted to achieve a lot first. Maybe? Maybe. Maybe towards the end she could kind of . . . wiggle her ideals of love or romance in a marriage out some.

Maybe, but she couldn't promise that either. If she did actually fall for someone, she couldn't ever keep that promise. So? She finally answered him. "I'm going to live my life for me,

Sans. I'm not going to keep myself away from anyone, or run to anyone. If I do get to an older age though, then I'll keep what you said in mind, but I can't promise anything."

"Nor should you," Sans said. "If you find someone you love more, then go for that person. No problem."

"Do you really believe that?"

"Nah, I'm selfish, and I'd rather never have to deal with real marriage crap like love or kids," he answered honestly. "Like I said. You do you, Frisk. Looks like Papyrus found the punch."

Happy College Times

Toriel stayed close to Cindy's side. For so long, Cindy's soul had been so warm next to her. She never felt alone, or betrayed, or misjudging when she was near. That same trust radiated between them.

They had lived a happy life with Frisk. It was over so much sooner than Toriel wanted. Cindy looked as if she would be able to keep her arm, but the burns would need constant attention with magic to make sure she felt no pain. Toriel couldn't stand to see her in any sort of pain.

Cindy was starting to wake up. She would be so numb from all the magic, but she would be okay. It was wonderful to see her eyes looking back at her again. "T?"

"I am right here, C." Toriel took her hand in hers.

"Frisk?" C had asked her.

"Our Frisk is okay. She will stay over there where she belongs," Toriel said firmly. "You will stay here with me now."

"I know, but Frisk just turned 18," Cindy insisted. "She's not quite ready for it all on her own yet. We got some more time with our baby girl, don't we?"

"Frisk isn't our baby girl," Toriel said gently. "She's grown up. She handled liberating the Underground when she was eight. She can handle graduation without us. Tonight, she went to prom."

C smiled so huge. "Aw, that's so nice. Good for her."

Now for the harder part. "I asked Sans to take her as a date." Oh yes, she could feel her heart reacting. "I know that I told you that I didn't trust any demon who acted so quickly and selfishly like that. That he'd be a great protector but he couldn't be trusted to ever be selfless."

Yes. Toriel now had damage control. When Sans had once again screwed up and told Frisk at a young age about the future, she couldn't just release her anger on Sans. Not alone, it wouldn't be within her character. Sans had been a friend and Frisk was young. She could have easily scolded him and left it at that.

But. It would have given Sans more leeway. He would gain that leeway just like he did through the years again. She wasted half of her life to use that kind of magic! Time reversal. It took so much magic from her.

She had to. To leave Sans out there, exploring the world beyond his protection limits. He would learn the life changing secrets of the nations. Toriel had reverted all the years back just to correct all the things that went wrong. She needed Sans, but she didn't need him to try and

get involved into the real world outside the kingdom. “He has watched over all of us for all these years. I know his actions were quick, but-”

“He told an eight-year-old he was gonna marry her when she got older!” C shouted. “You said that it was just a start. That a selfish demon would grow worse in such a free society. That we couldn’t trust him beyond his pay wage. That being friends would be just a slippery slope of a start. You said all that with such confidence, how can you be wanting this now?”

“And he was the wrong way at first.” Toriel hated to say it. She loved C with all her heart, but she couldn’t do this anymore. “We had decided it together with him. At eight, both of us decided to push her toward him. He was harmless, not wanting any romance, which is why we did it too. A short lifespan would be a bonus to him, and Frisk wouldn’t have to become any kind of lover.”

C couldn’t answer right away. “I didn’t want her to know. I didn’t want to decide what future was best for her. But. I mean, it’s not like we were going to force it. Just . . . what is right? You said so many things to me, T.”

“Persuade. Sans wanted to start very early, so she would have it in her head already for the future. He meant no real harm. He just . . . had the courage to tell her what we all wanted in the future for her.”

“ . . . and we hated him for that! We didn’t want to run Frisk’s future. She should have been able to love anyone she wanted. Or no one even.” Cindy started to cry. “But we just . . .”

“We wanted to keep seeing our daughter every day, and be together too. I know, I have always wanted that myself,” Toriel confirmed as she squeezed her hand. “Sans will have told her everything on their date. I doubt Frisk will change her mind, but now she knows. She knows what everyone wanted from and for her.”

“He’s taking care of her now,” C said gently. “He’s got our girl, and he’s caring for her now. Right?”

“Right.”

“Tell me Papi is there too though, yes?”

“Papyrus and him both together. Yes.” Toriel nodded her head. “They will keep watch over her in much the same way, except Sans will talk and see her now. He saved her, C, I had to get you out. I had to depend on him to find and take care of Frisk. I just can’t ban him anymore.”

C looked away. “He better not be forcing anything on her.”

“He won’t,” Toriel promised. So many things she had said out of fear. It made C’s trust in Sans disappear. The best way to handle this? “I feel like I was talking more through my personal feelings than the truth. After this long, I feel like Sans isn’t as bad a match for Frisk. I can’t promise everything, but I can promise that. He won’t use his power to ever hurt her. He’ll tell her the truth. He might try and persuade her. He might try very hard to persuade her

the more time goes by, but he won't ever force anything on Frisk. If he does, I will kill him myself."

C nodded. "You think . . . you really believe he's safe for her?"

"Yes. I'm sorry I triggered so much fear," she admitted. "Sans after all these years has been loyal, harmless, without a shred of doubt in either one."

"Okay, T." She squeezed her hand. "Frisk stays with Papyrus, not Sans though. Limit it."

"I know how you feel about it, C," Toriel admitted. "They will all be living together just until college."

"No, T. Please. He could use this moment against her."

Oh. *Cindy. Your experiences have driven a wedge between you and the truth. My interference only amplified it. That was wrong of me. I'm so sorry.* No matter how many times Toriel explained it. "I will honor your wishes."

"Okay. Okay. I feel so different. I don't hurt none, but I feel different."

"It's the magic effects," Toriel explained. "Just get some more rest. Rest and magic will help heal you." She gently kissed her. "Feel better, C. I will stay right here with you."

"You should go see Frisk when you can," C told her.

"Frisk will be okay. I will stay right here with you," she said more strongly to C. "Rest." She watched C close her eyes. *My wonderful C. Even if I wanted to take care of both of you, Frisk's life must change. It's time for us to step out, and let her live her own as she sees fits. In it's place, I will spend the rest of my life with you.* She rested her head against C's chest, hearing her beating heartbeat.

Toriel already knew her decisions. Already knew her own truths.

Frisk's University. Two Years later.

10:30. The doors would be locked now. From that point in time, a person would have to call someone from the inside to get in. This process was normal for Frisk.

11:35ish the crowd would die down even more. Less people would be up. Not everyone would ever be asleep, but Frisk made her way down around that time. She'd double check no one was there and then text.

She would open the door for no one in particular, and then close it. She would head back up to her room, and . . .?

They'd be right behind her door. She did that every night, including that night. "Such a long day. I'm still doing homework." She went over to her table desk, and they would find a place to veg out for a little while.

Tonight was especially terrifying. It was a math paper she was finishing up and it was only a matter of time before-

"You are doing math this late?" Papi asked her. "Why didn't you say so? Are you doing well? You'd better do well."

"I am trying my best." Math was a good subject, but not a perfect subject. Instead of helping, those two would-

"Baby math," Papi insisted. "100%, you should know all of this."

"Look? College math is harder," Frisk warned him. "I'm shooting for an A."

"100%," Papi said again. "If you can't get that, then we need more practice."

"I already have a full schedule." Ugh. Maybe she should have forget to let them in tonight? Going downstairs past hours and opening the door was the only way she condoned shortcuts into her room.

Still, she rarely missed a night to let them in.

Sans came over and looked. He was usually more chill about it. "Eh. You got anything after this?"

"No, I'll be freed," Frisk told him. She went back to her paper. "I won't call tomorrow. I will have a date."

"Name?" Papi just had to start. "Do they live on campus like you? What are their living conditions? Are they sanitary? Vegetarian? Hygienic? Intelligent? Do you think you love them?"

"Got it." Sans was always simple. "We'll go take in a movie. If you're going to the movies. Drive-in preferred."

Yeah, that's usually how it went. Unless she asked for private time, one or the other was always watching her. During the day it was usually from the rooftops. Sans was even proud of making a legend about ghosts on the rooftops in school. He thought it was a great game to not really get a great snapshot of them ever, but to barely leave something behind.

Them far away was preferable, especially around her human friends. A lot of the world still really didn't see monsters much. Most hid, while the Monster Kingdom had such a low number, most didn't leave their own base much.

If they couldn't watch far away, then it became tougher surveying up close. Yet, they both kept tabs on her. The one time she asked to be given just a little time with someone she was closed to for their third date, Sans made her sign a ten-page paper contract, absolving them of all the terrible things that could happen without their presence near her at the times she specified.

Frisk didn't sign that paper often. There was something about signing a paper about her imminent possible death that was never appealing. She wouldn't say it was the reason she didn't have more than a couple of dates often with the same person, but? It definitely didn't help things.

When Frisk visited the Monster Kingdom, it was a different issue. Her moms gave her plenty of space on those dates, as did the bone brothers. Also, pretty telling. They could all say over and over 'your choice', but they were all still persuading her to go one way.

At least, Sans was the most honest about it. "Name?" he asked. "I gotta research and see if they killed anybody or stole a candybar, you know, the usual. Humans are more prone to bad histories. You know that."

"His name is Oscar Williams," Frisk told him.

"He's got the first name of a hot dog. Stand him up," Sans insisted. "You can do better than a hot dog named guy. Several better that just used to sell hot dogs instead of being named after them."

Frisk could never blame him for being subtle. "Oscar is nice."

"Oscars are nice, as hotdogs that you eat," Sans corrected her. "Dump him."

Frisk rolled her eyes. "I'm dating him at 7:00, before it gets dark. We'll go to the drive-in to make it easier. After that, I have more homework to do."

Frisk had dealt with these two at night for detailing. Some casual conversation, but other than that, they did try not to interfere in her life. She didn't even see Papi half as much as she used to. She had downright lived with Papi after her house caught fire, before she started to come to college. Sans didn't live with her, he lived beside them. He rarely talked to her, just a little while at night usually.

"Okay." Papyrus came over closer to her. "I hope you have fun on your date. Sans will be there watching you."

Wait. "You aren't coming, Papi?" That was strange. Papi was always around whenever Sans was around. Always. Sometimes she'd see Papi alone, but she hadn't actually had just Sans being near since . . . since the night he saved her.

That was her Ma Cindy's doing probably.

"No. I have my own date," Papyrus admitted.

A date? "You're dating?"

“Yes. She is very nice,” Papyrus said. “She is from another nation, which might cause problems later, but I like her. She likes puzzles a lot. I have to get to know people.”

“Yeah. Marriage sneaks up quick on monsters,” Sans complained. “Hope you have fun, Papyrus.” Sans was digging into his digital media. “Meanwhile, my bologna has a first name. It’s O-S-C-A-R.”

Movie Theater Next Night

Sans hung out on someone’s car a ways back from Frisk’s car with Mister Hotdog. For the last two years, Sans had been able to see Frisk for more than five minutes every three months. Pretty sweet, but Cindy still didn’t trust him. Every time he went to see Frisk, he had to have Papi with him. Even then, he couldn’t visit for more than half an hour. Before or after her college days.

Half an hour each night with his little brother in the room. Half the time, Frisk was busy doing homework and they just talked at length about what they had to say. Sometimes, Papyrus stayed longer. He was allowed to do that.

This was the first time Papyrus wouldn’t be on duty, and he’d have hell to explain if Tori found out. Which was stupid because he shouldn’t have to explain.

Sans just watched the car bitterly. *How the hell am I supposed to make any progress Tori, when your damn wife won’t let me spend any free time with her? Papyrus always gets free time if he wants, but oh no, thirty minutes.* He started using her voice in a mocked tone. “Try and get her to accept marriage, Sans, but remember not to spend more than thirty minutes with her, and never alone. Papyrus must always be there. Go on, you can do it! Make her your perfect wife through these difficult circumstances.”

Hmph. He leaned back further on the car. More than once he’d thought about giving this whole thing up, go back to selling hotdogs, and just accepting the whole dang marriage to the drunk bunny.

But, he couldn’t really do that. The level of alertness he had to use was less, and he didn’t really dust or kill in the last year or so of her college but . . . danger was still out there. He’d feel like a heel if someone hurt Frisk.

Mister Hotdog’s date passed by easily. Frisk went home, no problem. Later that night, she still followed procedure. Went downstairs and opened the locked door. From where he was at, he could always see her do that.

Sans thought about it for a second. He wasn’t supposed to technically do this. Being alone with Frisk was a no-no, but it could be nice to have one private conversation with her.

When Frisk came into her room, she seemed surprised a moment. “Oh right. Papyrus has a date tonight.”

“Yep.” Riveting conversation so far. “Homework?”

“No. I got it finished up earlier than I thought,” Frisk said as she came in. “Oscar was a gentleman.”

“Gentleman’s Hotdog. You know, that could be a brand name,” Sans teased. “Second date, yes or no?” The closer Frisk got to people, the more time he had to spend looking at their backgrounds.

Frisk shook her head. “I just didn’t connect. He was nice and asked me out and I complied but no sparks.” She moved away from the door.

“Just going through the motions of life,” Sans said as he followed her over to her bed/couch. “Are you gonna actually watch some TV?”

“Unless there’s some pressing thing you need to tell me,” Frisk reasoned. “Anything new?”

“Nah.” Should he tell her that he shouldn’t be there? He wasn’t supposed to tell Frisk he was limited by her moms, but then again, she probably already knew.

Frisk glanced toward him. “Papi is always here, I don’t know what to say. Are you still sleeping on ducks?”

“No way, I never did that,” Sans answered back. “I prefer beds.” He got a small smile, but nowhere near the snort that meant she found something funny.

Frisk just turned on the TV. She didn’t have anything else to say, and Sans wasn’t going to push. He just joined her on her couch/bed. It was a dorm, there wasn’t much except a chair and two couches she pushed together as a big bed. “So? There’s a reason we haven’t been alone before since your prom. I’m not supposed to be alone with you is the rule from my bosses.”

“Yeah, I kind of knew that,” Frisk admitted back to him. “You never stay long even with Papi.”

“With Pap, I can stay a half hour. Gotta follow rules to pay the bills.” He shrugged. “You aren’t gonna rat me out, right?”

Frisk shook her head. “I’m twenty. I should get to talk to who I want to. You’re close to 200, you should definitely get more say-so in your life.” She shook the remote. “You want to watch something specific?”

“I think there’s a good documentary on the National Geographic Channel.”

“Are you kidding?”

“Of course I am, freaking Comedy Central, Frisk,” Sans almost laughed. He got a bigger smile now as she changed to Comedy Central. “Who’s your favorite comedian?”

“John Mulaney.”

“Sans the Skeleton was the right answer,” Sans teased her.

“I don’t know, Mulaney is pretty funny,” Frisk told him.

“Well, I’m pretty ugly. I guess I got him beat.” Got it. This time, he heard a pause from her brain deciphering it, then the snort with the covered up laugh. *Winner. I’m still best.* “He’s no slouch though.” Sans kicked his feet up and down, mimicking Frisk waiting for the commercial’s to be over.

They watched the line up for a little while and laughed. When the half hour mark came, Sans stayed anyhow. He already broke the rules, why not? They had a pretty good time together. Frisk made them some popcorn while they laughed at the comedians.

Time just drifted by. Sans told jokes between the jokes, and he managed to get a couple more snorts out of Frisk. He still never met anyone, monster or human, that snorted and laughed like her.

One day he’d get her so well, that she’d keep laughing and not be able to stop after the snort. Not tonight though. “This dude’s lame.”

“It’s getting later,” Frisk said. “These are upcoming comedians.”

“Still suck,” Sans complained. “How come no one works well with puns? It’s the spice of life. Salt, pepper and paprika of living.”

“Sense of humor is different between monsters and humans.”

“I made you laugh though.”

“Yeah, but I had Ma Toriel. I wasn’t raised strictly the same way as every other human.”

Yeah. Speaking of Tori, he did have to go soon. “These ones are too lame to watch.” He stood up. “It was nice spending some time with you, one on one, Frisk.”

“Yeah, it kinda was,” she admitted. “I liked kicking back and just watching shows with you like a lazy bum.”

“Eh, a woman after my own heart.” Sans patted his coat’s chest. “Guess that’s where it went, huh?”

A smile. Not everything would be a winner, but it was a tender smile. “Night, Sans. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Almost.” Sans felt his stomach seize. Yikes. “A parting gift?”

“You better not,” Frisk warned him. “You’re gross.”

“I’m Sans.” Sans went to her bathroom. Human food was his main diet. There were drawbacks and bonuses to it. He came back out of the bathroom. “Chocolate-”

“Rose as a parting gift,” Frisk finished for him, “and no, I don’t want you to leave one to remember you by!” She rolled her eyes. “I’ll see you tomorrow, Sans.”

Sans laughed but saw which comedian was coming on. “Ooh.”

Frisk forgot all about Sans grossness and focused back on TV. “Oh, no one beats him.”

“*He’d* find my joke hilarious.”

“I don’t doubt that, it would be something Carlin liked.”

As Sans sat down and started to watch TV again, he remembered something else. Since Frisk didn’t want marriage without love, he’d figured he’d learn a thing or two. A little romance like dates or whatever in a short marriage wouldn’t kill him. So? He learned how to dance. Now probably wasn’t the time he could do anything with it though, but he’d try anyway. “Wanna dance?”

Frisk looked sideways at him. “To George Carlin?”

“Sure.” He shrugged. “I learned how to dance.”

“Oh. I still never learned.”

“I could teach ya?”

“Rather not.”

Hmm. He’d save that one in the back pocket for later then. They were watching George Carlin. What could he do?

He pulled out his phone and pulled up a list of songs. He researched more than dancing. *Let’s see how much she got into chick flicks.*

He put his phone over his head. Frisk looked confused. “New interpretive style.” He played In Your Eyes by Peter Gabriel. No snort or even a smile. “Yeah, you aren’t a real chick flick woman. Why you shooting for love when you don’t even wanna watch it?”

“I . . .?” Frisk shrugged. “What does playing your phone over your head mean for love?”

“Hell if I know, it was a human meme thing, not a monster thing.” Strike out. “You know more about Joe Pesci I bet than about love.”

“Joe Pesci was funny in his day, but I don’t get what you’re talking about.” Frisk groaned. “Are you trying to be romantic or something?”

“Think I’m doing the something,” Sans said. Oh yeah, now she gives a small smile? “Why do I even bother looking up fanciful romance stuff. I could start singing Chicago’s Your My Inspiration and never get anywhere. What about Aretha Franklin’s At Last?”

Frisk started to snort, and she couldn’t hide the laugh afterward.

“That wasn’t even a joke, why’d that make you laugh?” Sans complained.

“Oh. I just envisioned telling you that you had a lot of bones, but not a romantic bone. I just made myself sort of laugh.” She shrugged. “It was funnier in my head. It’s late. I should probably go to bed.”

“On a scale of 1-10, how’d I do with the romance with you?”

“I’m not the best at it,” Frisk admitted, “so I’m not a good judge. Five?” She winked at him. “You made some headway into being stronger friends with me though.”

“Ouch, friend-zoned.” Sans put his hand on his coat. “999999.”

Ha, that made her explode with laughter, even more than before. “That’s morbid for monsters, Sans!”

“Hey, you laughed at it, not me,” Sans reminded her. *Got her.* He knew what made an impression on her now. Would it just bring him more into the friend zone, or was she attracted to the joking too? She definitely liked it.

Both of them ignored the time and what they said, and kept watching George Carlin’s best hits, until they started to get too tired.

Sans and Frisk fell asleep with the sounds of the TV on. Each of them knew tomorrow would be tougher because they stayed up so late, but sometimes life just stirred you a certain way.

And neither would regret their decisions at all soon.

All Around Yet Gone Forever

Monster Kingdom

“Why?” C asked again. She held Toriel’s paw tenderly. “I don’t get it. You always said that, you and me, we were gonna live out our days together. We’d die close to the same time.”

Toriel watched C from her bedding. It was only a couple of years ago that this position was reversed. “I helped out with a lot of magic to sustain you. I love you.”

“Then you wasted too much,” C complained to her. “I love ya, T. I? I don’t want you to go!” She moved her head close to Toriel’s paw. “I can’t do this without you.”

“You are protected,” Toriel said confidently. “No one will ever come after you. I left enough to make sure you will be okay in the Monster Kingdom, no matter what. Sweetie.” C would be safe. It was someone else that now was not. “You must let Frisk go.”

“Go? You mean, to a monster? Or to Sans?” C asked.

“As in, let Sans take care of her right now. C. Frisk’s danger level just went up very high.” Toriel squealed a little. A small amount of pain with lack of breath. “You can stay here in the kingdom. We made sure before we were married, that you wouldn’t be able to inherit anything from the crown itself. But?” A gentle sigh. “But.”

“Then why’s Frisk in such danger?” C asked her. “Please tell me?”

“Frisk freed the Monster Kingdom from being Underground. Not I nor Asgore. We just couldn’t see how we could steal power away from her,” Toriel admitted. “I was supposed to live as long as Asgore. As long as you. Frisk would outlive all of us though, and one day, I wanted her to take the kingdom.”

“Frisk?”

“Yes. I’m sorry. I went before Asgore,” Toriel apologized. “I’m sorry. He is the reason you need to contact Sans. I know you don’t want to, but Sans?”

“Sans the Skeleton what? T?”

“He can keep her away from all the nations. He can bring her Underground, in a new way.”

“I don’t understand, T.”

“Frisk and Asgore cannot make a contract like I had with him. You have to be married, or officially divorced, to make it. When I go, they will both rule Underground. Asgore will have

to either kill her for the crown, or marry her for it.”

“What?! No, that’s not right!”

“Only one ruler, or one pairing. Many enemies will know of this information.”

“Then, Papi. Papi can keep her away and safe from everything.”

“Oh, C. Papi is sweet. Do you want him to kill to keep Frisk safe?”

“ . . . no. It’s not in him. That’s what I like about Papi,” T agreed. “Don’t leave like this, T. There’s too much unfinished business and all that. People can’t just leave with unfinished business.”

Toriel smiled. “Not being able to stay with you until your end is unfinished business. I’m afraid fate won’t let me stick around just to make things fair.”

“T, please!” C wrapped her arms around her. Toriel could taste the salt from her tears as she gave her a thousand little kisses.

If only she could stay. Toriel knew that night two years ago, to help C, that it would cause this. “Give Sans permission. All permissions, Love,” Toriel said to her. “He will know what to do, once he knows what happened.” T had to understand one more thing. “Sans is a good monster. I lied for my own benefits and greed. You need to accept and see it.”

C didn’t answer.

Before she left, Toriel must get her to understand. “Asgore will ask something of him. If you see Frisk soon? Then I was wrong, and Sans wasn’t a good monster.”

C looked like she was listening now. “If I see Frisk soon?”

“Yes. If you don’t see Frisk for some time, then Sans was a good monster.” The look on her love’s face again, it tore at her poor soul. All Toriel wanted to do was repair the pain, but she couldn’t. Not this time. “You might not see Frisk for a long time again.” Toriel could hear the mourning sounds of her wife. She felt the gentle but pleading lips of her on hers again. It felt so wrong to have to leave all of this upon her family. “You will see Papi.”

“Which means, Papi isn’t gonna see Sans or Frisk, ‘cause Sans is gonna keep everyone away for Frisk’s safety.” C managed to say it. “It’s gonna be a few months, huh?”

“Probably more.” Which wasn’t fair. Cindy needed Frisk, and Frisk was going to want Cindy after she passed on. “When you see her, it will be safe again. I’m sure of that.” She tried to reach out to C one last time, but couldn’t quite make it. She felt the shudder. The tremble shake that monsters felt right before the end. “Take care, C. I love you. I regret nothing.”

“Toriel!” C sat there, dust over her, in the bed, beside her on the chairs, and on the floor.

Her wife was all around her, and yet gone forever.

Frisk's College

Sans awoke to a vibration on his side. He'd never wake for sound easy, he learned a long time ago to set his phone on vibrate. *Asgore?* Sans moved away from Frisk, realizing they both went to sleep to the soothing works of George Carlin.

He moved to the other side of the room and whispered into the phone. "Yo."

"Sans," Asgore answered back. "I have good news for you. Enough time has passed by legally that we can finally change our laws according to the nations. You no longer have to marry at 200."

Ooh? "When do we have to get married then?"

"You don't have to ever get married."

Yes! It took twelve years but they finally got rid of that dumb rule. "Sweet."

"I have- I mean- we have also eliminated the rule about who can live in the kingdom. Well, it can't be completely eliminated, but we've fixed it so that the offspring of all monster parents are able to live in the Monster Kingdom if they so wish."

Hey, hey, now Toriel would be able to watch over Frisk fulltime. Except? "Uh? That's nice, but Frisk is already going to college. She might bite that later."

"That's fine. Oh, and you can have your job as sentry back with Papyrus. We are even more aware of trespassers now," Asgore finished. "Please bring Frisk to the Monster Kingdom before morning. I'll send you the energy, just give me a call when you are ready. I believe Toriel has something she'd like to add to everything."

Then without even a goodbye, he hung up. It was great news that Asgore reversed a lot of that mumbo jumbo finally. Yet, Sans felt too unsettled to actually tell Frisk anything yet. *I have to take her to see Toriel by morning?*

It's not like Frisk didn't have a great relationship still with her moms. Instead of just seeing them on the holidays like other college students, Frisk still saw them every single weekend. Why did he have to actually bother bringing Frisk? If Tori wanted to see her that much, she'd just bring her herself. *It doesn't feel right.*

Sans decided he'd check it out in the morning. He looked at his comfy spot on the bed/couch next to Frisk he left. *Eh. Fuck it.* He moved back to his spot. He'd bail when she got up herself.

Sans stirred as he felt Frisk stir next to him. She was on the phone.

“Mom?” Frisk looked concerned. “What’s wrong? Ma? I can’t.” She glanced at Sans. “Mom, can you calm down? I can’t hear you.”

Yeah, naw, this is bad. Sans didn’t say anything as he watched Frisk’s expression.

“Momma?” Frisk’s eyes immediately started to water.

Yep. This was bad. Sans felt Frisk latch onto him. “Frisk.”

“Momma’s. Momma’s. Momma’s dead. Momma’s dead!” Frisk screamed into his coat. “Momma!”

Sans held her about a minute, trying to think about his next action. He wanted to comfort her, but there was also something else. She kept saying *momma*, and she was talking to her *momma*. Which one was dead? Cindy or Toriel? Both would be hard on Frisk, but only one was going to make *a big difference* in the outcome of what he had to do.

Asgore calling earlier made Sans almost sure of which one actually died. He’d apologize if he was wrong, but he had to do this. “Sorry about Toriel.”

“Why?” Frisk looked up towards him, her eyes wet and questioning. “She was supposed to live as long as *momma*. They were supposed to go close together.”

Yeah, it was Toriel. This was bad, real bad. Now Sans knew what the hell was up with that phone call. “Frisk. I’m sorry about your Ma, I really am, but we don’t have time to grieve for this.”

Sans got up and headed toward her dresser. He started packing. He didn’t even care about the first drawer, he still tossed everything onto the bed. *Suitcase.*

Probably the closet. He looked in the closet and found them. He dragged them out and put them on the other side of the bed. They were only taking what he could get to fit. He grabbed handfuls of clothes and shoved them into each suitcase. He tried to grab some picture frames too for her. Definitely one of her moms and Papyrus.

Asgore made the law sweeter so I’d have no reason to keep her away. Sans closed one of the suitcases. *The whole pizza pie too, not just a slice. I got to be back with Papyrus. No worrying about a wife. Made it all real nice.*

Sans looked at his phone. Asgore would track that, he was waiting for Sans call before the morning light. Too bad. He couldn’t even risk saying something to Papyrus via a text.

He grabbed Frisk’s hand. “Gotta go.” She was confused. Of course she was, her mom just died, and instead of any comfort he just grabbed her belongings and threw them in suitcases. “Frisk. It’s been awhile since Underground, hasn’t it? I know the last thing you want to do is even move from that bed, but trust me. Will you trust me?”

Please. Sans knew they weren’t the closest. Her moms made sure she didn’t get much time to bond with him, but? “Remember the Underground? Good friend Sans? Yeah?”

Frisk nodded. She wasn't ready to talk yet, but she followed his lead. Using his magic, he carried the two suitcases and took a shortcut outside with Frisk.

He put the suitcases in the back of it, and helped Frisk into the side of the car. She didn't talk, but at least she wasn't putting up a fight. He got in on the driver's side.

Sans didn't have long to think. Everything just changed. Life just set something new into motion for the both of them. If he just followed his King's directions, no doubt he'd be fine. He'd be great with Papyrus and they'd be living back at their old home, probably with higher pay.

It's what Asgore would be doing to assure Sans complied. Sans had complied with requests in the past, when other humans came. *If it wasn't Frisk. If it wasn't the one who freed all the Monster Kingdom from the hell of never seeing sunlight.*

Yeah. He wouldn't. He would never pick a fight with the king, except for her.

Sans took off down the road. He quietly left the campus. Magic, the heavy magic that Asgore used to send Papyrus or him back and forth when Frisk was younger, it could be used now too.

However, he wasn't the only monster out there in the world. Others simply covered themselves up with disguises. All he had to do was get Frisk away from the area that Asgore would expect it. The call from Sans would make the location even stronger.

Moving at a normal pace away from the college would make Asgore think that he stayed around the area. That he planned on taking that awesome offer he knew would be coming. It was Asgore's way, he rewarded monsters who were 'good' monsters for him.

Slowly he kept driving away from the city of Frisk's college. Frisk was over in the passenger seat, not asking questions. She was just staring out the window, probably thinking about her moms.

That worked for Sans. No questions meant he could concentrate on the best ways to leave, without looking like he was especially hightailing it out of there. Asgore would be calling that phone right before morning.

It could be anywhere between then and 6:00 am. He kept quiet, hearing Frisk switch between silent and crying. *Hold it together a little longer, Frisk.* He knew the area he needed to go.

They were one more hour from the prime area of one of the monster nations that liked to stay hidden from humans. The population was almost exclusively monsters in a population of 23,000. The humans there were either involved with monsters, or scared off in some way if they were looking to settle down in the area.

Or, they were murdered if they didn't turn away. In this case, Sans would be vouching and staying with Frisk until he moved onto the next place.

“What do you think she said to Ma Cindy?” Frisk asked out of the blue. “Her last words? Did she know what she would have said to me if I were there?”

Damn. *Not yet. Close, Frisk.* “Toriel was a good mom. She probably would have said she loved you, and to take care of each other. It’s probably what she said to your mom too.” Good. He was at the entrance.

The town looked normal, cute little welcome sign that simply said ‘Welcome to Plain.’ Named the most boring name to dissuade others too. That was usually the first thing to look for.

Small towns. Boring names. Never making waves. Even odds, it was a monster nation keeping a low profile. The first place he stopped by was the first house labeled ‘Mort’s Coffee.’ It was the only little place on a whole block. The rest of the town would be five blocks away to the south of the only busy road so most people would stop at Mort’s Coffee and just continue on their busy way.

Sans glanced at Frisk. “Come on, Frisk. I need to introduce you to someone.” He watched Frisk wipe her eyes and start to get out. *I’m such an asshole. Just a little longer.* He got out and headed in with Frisk. “Hey there, Mort’s coffee.”

The monster behind the counter noticed him right away. “You’re new?”

“Sightseeing the country with me friend.” Sans moved closer toward him. “Don’t worry, she’s a human raised among monsters. I’m her plus one in the town.”

“As long as she doesn’t cause commotion,” the monster insisted. He gave Sans a couple of red passes. “Where do you plan on going?”

“Straight to a hotel, and maybe some fast food between if we get tired of ordering pizza,” he said clearly. He got two red passes and left with Frisk back to the car.

Hotel

When Sans reached the hotel, he gave them the red passes, some money, and rented a room with Frisk. *Finally.* He put the suitcases on the ground, glanced at Frisk, and held his arms out. “Come here, Frisk. Give Ol’ Sans a hug.”

She accepted the offer and launched straight toward him. He gently moved her to the bed with him where she could cry and sit next to him. Boy, he wanted to let her do that for so long, but stirring up more emotions would have been even easier to track.

Now they were safer.

After Frisk dealt with her emotions for awhile, Sans laid down next to her on the bed. She was still curled up on his side, exhausted. She’d probably be sleeping soon. He gently

touched her arm up and down with just the tips of his finger bones.

“Do you think Ma Toriel knew something?” Frisk asked.

“Yeah. A monster can feel how close they are to running out of hit points or their magic source. Your Ma Toriel probably used a lot when she saved your Ma Cindy,” he explained. “She didn’t want you or your Ma Cindy to worry, so she kept it secret. Even from me.”

Frisk was quiet for awhile again while he gently stroked her arm. After a few minutes, she spoke again. “What are we doing?”

“Bailing,” Sans said, knowing this conversation was coming. “Toriel wouldn’t want what happens next this way. Although your Ma Cindy was protected from getting any royal assets, none of it excluded you. Now that Toriel’s gone, you are technically queen.”

He felt Frisk sigh deeply. “I don’t want that.”

“Yeah, but it’s not a choice. Asgore has to either kill you or marry you.”

“Asgore won’t kill me.”

“You’re right, but he’s gonna marry you and force kids to keep the line going.”

“Asgore wouldn’t do that.”

“Frisk?” Sans had to strike her with a little bit of reality to their current situation. “Asgore killed six kids before. Six human souls.”

“He wouldn’t ever kill me though.”

“Frisk?” Yeah, he would have to hit harder on it. She couldn’t take this lightly. “I don’t have to worry about marriage anymore, Frisk. Isn’t that awesome?”

Frisk noticed his change in tone. “Really?”

“Yeah, I can just be friends witcha and never have to worry about figuring out romance or nothing. Which is good ‘cuz I sucked at it anyway,” he chuckled. “Nah, I’m good. Oh, and Papyrus and I are getting our old jobs back too with higher pay. Pretty sweet, huh?”

Yeah, now she was really noticing something wrong. “That’s nice.”

“Yep. Asgore told me that just about an hour before your mom called you,” Sans said casually. “He also said that he wanted me to call and bring you back to the Monster Kingdom right before morning light. He said Toriel wanted to tell you something.”

“ . . . an hour before?”

“Yeah. Just an hour before.” He said it in a lower tone.

Frisk seemed to be reevaluating things again. “Instead, you left quietly with me disobeying the king, to some kind of strictly monster town.” Yeah, her eyes were starting to see it. “Would he really kill me?”

“Probably not,” Sans said, “but he’s not going to take ‘I refuse’ as an answer. He will press magic on you, marry you, and I hate to say it?” He really hated to say it. “You’re human, Frisk, and he’s an older monster. There’s no more heirs to the line.”

Frisk still seemed to be thinking about it. “Disobeying your king is treason, isn’t it? You’re risking treason.”

Oh yeah, she got it now.

“I don’t want to believe it, but if you are committing treason against Asgore. What about Papyrus?”

“I won’t be able to see him for a long time,” Sans admitted. “You won’t be able to see anyone you know either.”

Frisk nodded. “I believe you, Sans. I won’t trust Asgore for anything, only you. Thank you for getting me out and not delivering me to him.” She probably wanted to say more, but she fell asleep.

Sans felt exhausted too. It was just early morning, but they’d both been through so much already. Sans would have to slowly move Frisk around the world between monster towns without using his own magic. He would have to do that until Asgore himself passed on, or something broke that would keep Frisk from having to go to Asgore.

He honestly didn’t know what Asgore would choose. Most likely, he’d have a bunch of monsters hold her still and just marry her. It’s not like it was her life, and he could keep her quiet during the process. After it was over, hopefully, she should be able to divorce him easily. That would let them make a contract to rule together.

But? That same guy also just chose to wait to kill seven kids to break out. Tori’s solution wasn’t much better just killing one and walking out to take more from actual sinners to free everyone, but it was still better than killing six extra kids.

Without understanding what Asgore was thinking, Sans couldn’t risk it. *Asgore’s probably got forty or so years left, maybe less or more. There aren’t heirs. Yeah, I just can’t risk it.* Not with someone who liked George Carlin. Not with someone who cared from a young age about others more than themselves.

Not with Frisk. Treason or not, Sans wouldn’t abandon Frisk.

Peaches Perez

Frisk didn't know how Sans put up with her. She turned around slightly and saw pizza on an endtable. Food wasn't what she wanted right now, but hopefully Sans was eating. Right now, he was lying right beside her. He looked like he was staring up at the ceiling.

They'd been in that unmoving position for hours. It was nearing suppertime. That pizza was probably Sans' lunch. "Hey."

Sans' lightguiders turned toward her. "Hey there, Frisk. Hungry?"

Frisk shook her head.

"You want some more rest, or you want to hit the road?" he asked her.

Hitting the road sounded nicer. Frisk didn't want to just lie around a hotel for endless days. It felt like everything was stacking on her, staying in one place. "I'd like to move."

"Yeah, I figured so." Sans rolled out of bed. "I'm not going to be using my magic unless we get into real trouble. We've got a twelve hour drive to our next town. The next one is going to be a bigger town."

Whatever he thought was best. Just getting in a car and driving away another six hours seemed like a good idea. "Can we go now?"

Sans gestured to the suitcases. "You want anything different to wear or a shower?"

Frisk just shook her head.

"Yeah, I'm prone to wearing the same coat multiple days too. Forget it, let's book it then." He grabbed a suitcase. "Can you grab the other one?"

Right, Sans won't be using much magic. Frisk grabbed it and they headed out.

Back in the car, Frisk stared out the window, trying to grasp onto the present while thinking about the past. Then? "Fuck me, how's mom? Shit, I never even asked." Damn. She hardly ever cursed, but she just did and out loud.

"Your Ma Cindy will get to stay in the Monster Kingdom," Sans assured her. "She was married to a monster when her wife died. She legit will get whatever Tori could leave her in a will. I guarantee she got the house and probably plenty of money to keep on going without a job if she wanted."

Frisk nodded. "Sorry."

"If this situation didn't let you get away with some kind of fucking shit, then there's nothing on this Earth that would," Sans answered. "I ain't Papyrus. I get it."

Oh yeah. Sans was a little more understanding in that department. Frisk just watched ahead of her as the yellow lines ran down the front window in her vision. From lines, to small dots, to disappearing, and coming back as lines again.

Just riding. Time didn't seem to move much as she rode with Sans. The sun rose higher in the sky as Sans stopped in another town just for a quick bite to eat. He ended up ordering extra for her, just in case she got hungry.

Frisk still couldn't even think about food. She ignored it as they continued on. The sun's rays were getting dimmer until there was nothing but twilight ahead with the rest of the sky turned fully night.

Sans pulled into a town called Aville. Frisk didn't expect anything different as he visited the first place they saw again and got red passes like the last town.

She took it and followed him around to the car again. However, as they parked into a different area that looked a little more uncouth? Mounting garbage on the sides, graffiti on the fences, and rat traps were set around it. Frisk felt more like she was going into the underbelly of an underbelly. If the town itself was a secret, this felt like a secret within a secret. "Sans, what are you doing?"

"Trying to figure out the right disguise," he told her. "You know who will eventually come looking for us. If people from our kingdom pass by us, we need to blend in seamlessly somehow."

Sans moved around her. "You can still pull off the 'boy/girl' thing you did as a kid?"

Frisk. Tried to be nice. She didn't know how to be nice with her words, so she just put her hands up to breasts. "C's. No."

"It's a magic kind of thing that helps too," Sans added. "I didn't mean I couldn't tell anymore or anything."

"No, you can definitely tell," another monster that looked half related to a unicorn said. He stared at Frisk uncomfortably.

Sans snapped his bony fingers. "Hey, stop that. You aren't in this conversation, U-nicorn, so U can take a hike." He moved over closer in front of Frisk.

Yeah, Frisk kind of threw a target on herself with that comment. "I don't want to look like a boy unless I have to."

"That's fine, you don't have," Sans said to her. "I can change. You can change too. We just need to confuse the lot of them, that's all." He went over to the front desk. "I am about 200. I need a conversation to a human energy. The human behind me is a female about 20. Human. She needs a conversion to a monster energy."

What? Monster energy? Sans came over with little balls that looked like christmas black bulbs.

“Happy holidays.” He dropped one in her hand. “Carry that around with you. Monster energy will get confused with your human energy. It’ll work for those looking around with just energy sources. Now, when someone physically spots us, we’re still going to have some problems, so we’ll need to make another stop.”

Another Stop Later

“You’ve gotta be shittin’ me,” Sans’ voice came from the dressing room.

Frisk watched as out came a . . . interesting looking . . . “Sans?” Sans got a convertor that changed monster age and energy into a physical disguise for one hour at a time.

Sans came out with real short blue hair, a rebellious looking outfit that said ‘Freedom or a Nap’ on it, a button pinned onto him that said ‘Die Laughing’ and a weird silver chain. One eye was grey and one eye was blue. His coat and shoes were now lined with spikes on them. “This is crap, there’s no way this is a proper conversion.”

“It’s a proper conversion,” a monster insisted as she came up front towards him. “Your energy signifies that you are a 200 something rebel that’s lazy and disinterested in many things. Converted to human, you are a 20 something rebel and everything is the same.”

Sans looked at the shirt. “The Freedom or a Nap shirt is me.” He let go of it and touched the button. “This is me too, but there’s no way the rest of this is me. All these spikes and chains? I’m a simple coat and slipper affair kind of guy.”

“If you aren’t a rebel and your energy is spelling rebel and anarchy?” The maker of the resource concentrated on him. “Why is your energy spelling rebellion?”

“Aw, nevermind. Yeah, total joking Total rebel.” Sans looked at everything over again. “Nah, spikes are cool. It’s all cool.” He went over toward Frisk. “Shit, Frisk,” he whispered to her. “This is the best I’m gonna get, she’s picking up on me knowing that I’m committing treason.”

Hm. “At least it’s just an hour,” Frisk said trying to make him feel better.

Frisk was up next. What kind of conversion would happen with her? The magic was supposed to last only an hour, and it shouldn’t be real transparent that it was magic. Sans called it pocket magic, something a lot of people had so it wouldn’t be picked up on so easy.

Frisk held a small orb in her hand for five minutes while she answered some simple questions. The conversion lady took her orb and spoke to her.

Frisk closed her eyes. Whatever she became, along with whatever clothes went with the look, would stick with her for one hour of using it. Would it be similar to Sans? Different?

When Frisk opened her eyes, she looked in the mirror. What? She couldn’t see anything.

Nothing. She couldn't move either.

"Now try, Frisk."

She could hear. Try what?

"Try to open your eyes."

Frisk opened her eyes and looked at Sans. It looked like she'd been moved from the back toward him. She looked at herself.

Whoah. "Skeleton?"

"Yeah." Sans seemed kind of surprised by it too. "So? I'm just dishing you a small amount of magic. Nothing 'you-know-who' can sense," he said to her. Noticing the conversation lady still watching, he added, "that father of yours is such an A." That seemed to make her back off.

"Your magic? Is that how I can see?" Frisk lifted her arms around. She looked at a cute, frilly dress she was wearing. Strange. She also felt something on her head. Not hair. She touched it.

It was some kind of ornamental decoration?

"I sensed delicacy, justice and cowardism," the conversion lady offered.

Cowardism? *Running away. She senses that about me.* Frisk couldn't correct her.

"Redo," Sans stated to the conversion lady. "Just 'cause she's dealing with a dad thing don't make her a coward. She's brave, get it right, and make her a different monster this time."

Frisk expected a definite argument, but Sans whipped out a lot of cash.

"I'll repay to get it done right for my friend." Sans handed the money over. "Not skeleton. Not cowardly, but not like spikes and chains either."

You still want the first conversion ball?" the lady asked. "Price is still the same. You must pay for the balls."

"I'll pay for her two, and I'll pay for my one. Although it should be two." Sans chuckled. "Human jokes. That's a new one for Ol' Sans, right, Frisk?" He looked at her happily with his mismatched eyes, pleased with himself over his crude joke.

Wow. Seeing Sans as a twenty year old, making a rude joke that a twenty year old guy would make, but then hearing 'Ol Sans' made her head spin.

"Second attempt," Sans insisted to the lady. "Thanks. Sorry for the messup, I bet we'll get it right this time. Frisk?" He called out to her. "Remember this time, what you are fighting for and who you are. Not what you're doing."

Frisk nodded and headed away. She thought about the right to live and not having to marry Asgore or anything, but it also felt selfish. She didn't want to end up in a selfish conversion, so she tried to think of something pleasant. Why she did things in the past.

This time, when she opened her eyes?

Her hair was in a pony tail with a hat on her that said IDGAF. Her shoes were black and rugged. Her clothes were a regular T-shirt and pants but they were patterned with camouflage in colors of pink and a darker pink. She had a necklace around her neck that said MISS FUCKING DETERMINATION.

When she came out to see Sans, he wasn't graceful about it.

At first, he started to crack up laughing. "Yes! That is definitely you, Frisk." He came around her and even touched her necklace. "Got it right from head to toe. Only one thing wrong."

Ooh, now the conversion lady was glaring. "I gave you two shots! You want a third, you are paying for a third, and the extra ball too."

"I said monster," Sans corrected her. "She can't be human, she needs to be a monster."

"The only monster closeness I sensed was skeleton and . . ." She paused. "The kind whose only species left are of royal descent. They are not an option if you want to stay hidden."

Oh. Ooh.

The conversion lady grabbed Frisk's balls from her hand. "You can wear them both at once too, and sometimes you will be skeleton, and sometimes you will be human. Here." She threw Frisk some hot pink sunglasses. "Wear those to block your eyes if you want. You look nothing like the human that just came through here. A disguise is a disguise, and this screams conversion and disguise, which is what you *both want*."

Oh no. *She knows*. She had to know something. Frisk looked at Sans.

Sans groaned and rolled his eyes. He forked out more dough. "Fine. I guess my disguise should throw them off enough."

"Just don't use your own magic much higher than hiding her and yourself," the conversion lady said as she took the extra money. "That is how every other monster in the world is brought around to handle it, Monster Kingdom resident." She pocketed the money. "I won't tell. It's clear that the human is in danger with your kingdom and you are taking care of her. I feel that much. So, go, and remember to use your human disguises in human areas, and use Frisk's monster disguise in monster towns. I don't recommend using your true look Mister Skeleton, in even monster towns, unless you have to."

Sans twirled his ball on his fingers. "It lasts an hour, but I get the advice. Try to stay more hidden. How long do we have between recharges?"

"Six hours the first time," she stated, "and twelve hours the next ten times you use them. After that it will take forty eight hours to recharge them, so don't overuse them."

“Thanks for the hypocritical advice, I’m sure gonna need it,” Sans half teased and half criticized her. “Come on, Frisk, let’s go.”

Frisk looked out the window, noticing the mix of human and monster. “I see both.”

“Yeah, thanks you to you,” Sans stated as he drove with one hand and played with his ball with the other. “A combination of you bringing the Underground up when we had no disguises, and you actually being the daughter to a monster. Some are comfortable just being themselves. Just, hard to see it outside their own nations yet.”

Frisk agreed and looked at her chain. Her moms would explode to see her wearing such profanity. “The clothes. They really appear with the ball too?”

“Yep. Don’t mess with them or try to dismantle it. Might break the magic,” Sans warned her. “When it fades off, your original clothing and hair style or color or whatnot will be right there again.”

Frisk held up her ball. “I feel like I should have a catchphrase to transform like a magical girl.” The ball was just the right size for her hand. It had a nice feel to it, like a bouncy ball she used to play with as a kid. “What kind of conditions have to turn up before I’m safe to return to my own kind of life?”

“Someone who wants to know that, needs to be healthy enough to ask. Are you getting hungry?” He gestured to the extra burgers he bought. “I know they’re cold, but I can get you some warm burgers, just name a place.”

“We can’t just ride from place to place on nothing but car fumes. Your money won’t last forever, and you just spent a bundle on these disguises. Without magic to move around, then you are really limited in how we’re going to get around too.”

“Ah, you are feeling better.” Sans put his ball away. “Guess I should stop playing with my ball and come up with a real plan, huh?”

“Dumb, Frisk.”

“Smart.”

“Dumb.”

“Smart.”

“Super dumb.”

“It’s super smart!” Frisk yelled at Sans. “Undyne and Alphys are my friends in the Monster Kingdom. They can help. Asgore would never expect that you contact the royal guard herself.”

“Yeah, for a reason, she’s loyal to Asgore.” Sans wasn’t budging. “Frisk, this is some dangerous shit we are getting into. There’s no way Undyne is going to jeopardize her whole future to commit treason.”

“She eventually showed up when I was a child and fighting Asgore,” Frisk reminded him.

“Yeah, after your Ma Toriel. She wouldn’t dare do that crap if she didn’t show up,” Sans told her.

Hmph. “Fine, maybe she would be confused in her actions for a child she didn’t know, but I’ve known her for twelve years.”

“Which isn’t really much time to a monster,” Sans said again.

Damn it! “There is still a difference between two days and twelve years.” He was going to call, she would make him call. “We are a little closer than I was at eight. Right?”

Sans shrugged. “Guess, but that’s just ‘cause your more of a peer now to Ol’ Sans.”

Frisk rolled her eyes while he laughed. “What’s so funny?”

“I look like the age I actually am at monster, but when I use old you flip out. I did that all the time, but it’s only now you flip out,” Sans said. “You never saw me as your age.”

“Not when you used the phrase ‘Ol Sans’ or Ol’ Bag of Bones,” Frisk said. “You stopped using that phrase a long time ago.”

“Uh.” Sans shrugged. “Yeah, I tried not to put distinction between us so that I could get you to give up and marry me.” He just grinned. A big, wide grin that showed off his teeth before he looked away again. “Now that I don’t have to worry about that shit, it’s just fun to torture you with.”

The laugh he made after that. “You’re such an . . .”

“Asshole? Yeah, I am. Heh.” Sans gestured to her. “Still, I was way better about it than Asgore will be. Seriously, he’ll probably just command a bunch of monsters to hold you still for whatever he wants from you. You’re lucky I care.” He tapped the steering wheel with his fingers. “So no way, no Undyne or Alphys.”

Sans! “We need help from someone,” Frisk stated. “We are going to need money to keep going in a car and hiding for years on end. Or? Better yet, we might need to figure a way out of this situation.”

Sans chuckled. “Miss Fucking Determination.”

“Don’t tease me.”

Sans just winked and stuck his tongue out at her.

Frisk crossed her arms. “Then what’s your plan?”

“Rename you Febreeze so we can restart with a new identity association. Frisk is a dead giveaway and so is Sans.” Sans wiggled his nose. “This things weird. I feel like a bunny. That’s it. I’ll be Bunny and you can be Febreeze.”

He didn’t just rename us Bunny and Febreeze, did he? Frisk didn’t know how to take that. “I’m Febreeze and you are Bunny? Febreeze is a brand name for an air freshener. It’s not monster or human.”

“Naw, it’s perfect,” Sans tried to convince her. “Humans like weird exotic names.”

“No, I’ll think of my own name,” Frisk insisted. “Bunny won’t fit you either.”

“I wiggle my nose. It fits. I like it, deal with it,” Sans said. “Unless you know of something else? Ooh! Chillburdog.”

No. “Your favorite food?”

“Chillburdog. Yep. Any monster would think something that ridiculous was a human name.” Sans nodded his head. “I’ll shorten it for a short and last. First name is Chill. Middle is Burg. Last name is Dog. Actually, two g’s will make it more realistic. Chill Burg Dogg.”

Frisk couldn’t say anything against that. Chill sounded like a nickname a human might use if they dressed like Sans was right now. It even had a middle and last name. “Okay, but I’m not Febreeze.”

“Then come up with a first, middle and last name too,” Sans insisted. “How about Soda?”

“I don’t need help for a name,” Frisk insisted. *A name.*

“Wendy?”

“It’s an okay name.” At least Sans was thinking more. “It doesn’t really fit-?” Frisk groaned. “We just passed a Wendy’s.”

“How about Taco John’s?” Sans asked. “Taco as a first name? I like it.”

I miss Papyrus so much right now.

“Taco is a legitimate first name.”

“I am not naming myself Wendy or Taco John. No fast food joint.”

“Well, Sonic’s too good for you, it was taken by someone else,” he teased her.

A name. *Frisk Sweet Dreemur.* “I can’t have my name anymore at all. No more Dreemur. No more Frisk.”

“Aw, Frisk, good job,” Sans said to her. “You can have something of your name.”

“The only thing left is-” No. Sweet. Sans was going to say-

“Sour N Sweet,” Sans teased. “It’s perfect. Keep a part of you in it.”

“My name is not going to be Sour.” Frisk gave him some credit thought. “I do want Sweet still in my name. Sweet what?”

“Sweet Chocolate Rose?”

Sans just laughed as Frisk threw an empty cup his way. Why did Sans have to be so gross? *Oh yeah. He doesn’t have to show me any kind of nice side. He really is treating me like a friend.* Not the biggest fan of it, but at least she could see him being genuine. “Your gross, but genuine.”

Sans shrugged. “Get what you get. The name change will just be when we aren’t doing something official. If I get pulled over or something, we’ll have to reveal our names until we get some fake documentation. Which, yeah, I’ll get. I haven’t just hung around dilly dallying without any clue in the world, Frisk. Not just constant peace and quiet.”

“Peace.” That’s what Frisk always wanted between everyone.

“Peach? Perfect.”

“No, Peace,” Frisk insisted.

“Peach Sweet. Come on, it writes itself,” Sans told her. “Peace is too on the nose. Peach Sour Sweet.”

Frisk rubbed her head. “Not sour.” Mom. “Peach Candy Sweet.”

“Sure, because all of that sounds much more legit than Chocolate Rose,” Sans teased her again.

“It smells better, Sansy Honey,” Frisk upstaged him. “Peaches. Peaches Perez. That isn’t too close, is it?”

“Perez.” Sans looked like he was thinking. “Where did that come from?”

“It was Ma Cindy’s real last name,” Frisk told him. “She didn’t go by it anymore by the time I was born. Then, she took Dreemur as a last name.”

“I think that’s safe enough. As long as the first name isn’t Frisk,” Sans agreed. “Peaches Perez and Chill Dogg. Okay.”

Okay. “Then if we aren’t going to get help from Undyne. What are we going to do? We aren’t really going to just run forever? It’s no way to live.”

Sans seemed to pause. “If I tell you, I need you to accept this for awhile. Eventually, something will break, but until it does, then we have to follow this plan. Also? It might be more like . . .” He wiggled his fingers. “It might be a few years, or it might be a few decades. Your death might be how the whole thing breaks.”

Frisk hated to hear all of that. “What’s the plan?”

Sans seemed to chew on answering. “We got our disguises. These will also work on our ID’s.” He pulled out his driver’s license. “It still says Sans, but because the ball magic is working on me, it recognizes my ID as needing changed too, so I look like Chill.” He put it back in his pocket. “That’s step one. Step two is to reach a town that is actually a few days away from here. We’ll get some fake identity info. I have enough to make sure we each get taken care of.”

“Okay. Then?”

“That’s it,” Sans said. “We’ll join an actual Monster Nation.”

What? “But, how do we trust any of them? We don’t know them. Right, do you know which one to trust?”

“Nope, but we can take a few years, do some minimum wage crap to get by, and decide which one. When we do, we’ll have to trust them to tell them what’s going on.”

Frisk hated all the options. “The Monster Kingdom is technically mine too now. We shouldn’t be running.”

“Uh, yeah, we should?” Sans looked at her like she was crazy. “Duh. Hell, if anyone else marries you, then you got a real trio of rulers. That would cause war. That’s why we can’t just trust any monster nation, or anyone with our real identities.”

No. *Ma Toriel would never just want me to constantly run if this option ever presented itself.* There was a different solution that she must have wanted, but Frisk couldn’t see it clearly right now. “What would it take to challenge Asgore to take over without him? Legally, without fighting over it?”

Sans groaned. “You’re going to challenge Asgore for the kingdom? Legally?” Sans leaned his head back, barely keeping his eyes on the road. “Well?”

“Mom would leave me a way out, or she never would have left that loophole that let me have the kingdom like this,” Frisk stated.

“What, you really want it?” Sans asked. “Eh. Ruler. I’d hate it.” He burped. “Let’s see.”

“Excuse me,” Frisk said for him.

“For what?” Sans asked with a chuckle. “To challenge King Asgore in a head to head, you first have to have enough monsters to back you up. Considering your only going to live for a bit compared to them, that’ll be harder than you think. I mean, when you die, it’s just gonna go straight back to Asgore anyway.”

“These other Monster Nations, they aren’t known as kingdoms,” Frisk pointed out. “If I rule, then I’ll break the monarchy and help the monsters create a society so that they can become a nation too. Then when I pass on, my age or Asgore’s age wouldn’t matter anymore.”

Now, Sans looked intrigued. “Frisk? You’re fucking nuts.”

Well, she thought he looked intrigued. “What do you mean I’m nuts?”

“Not just nuts. You are out of your fucking sanity kind of nuts. The Monster Kingdom is the only one who reveals monsters and that works with humanity. If you go around and challenge Asgore to ‘bring the kingdom to a nation like other monsters’, then you are revealing just how many monsters have been hiding out.” Sans waved his finger. “Bad, bad. You’d go from challenging Asgore to bringing war from all those nations that want to keep hiding.”

“Then, I won’t broadcast it so loudly that it hits human ears,” she recommended. Oh. “I think I know how to get out of this now.”

“Mm?” Sans glanced at her. “How Peaches and Cream?”

“The same way I got out of the Underground,” Frisk said. “Meeting. We have to visit every monster nation.”

“Okay. We sailed off of fucking sanity kind of nuts to fullblown crazy ass fucking bat shit. All we need is one betrayer in the mix, Frisk. You are still hiding from those other nations. You know, that’s what disguises are for?” Sans was annoyed. “Your grief so strong you’re trying to commit suicide?”

Oh. Ow. Frisk looked away. “You’re cruel.”

“Yeah, that was a little too much sting to that point, sorry,” Sans apologized.

Frisk still refused to look at him.

“I’m really sorry,” Sans said again. “Okay, okay, I’ll bite and listen. What do you want to tell the nations?”

“Nothing,” Frisk answered. “We need to see how they run. We need to make friends out here. Your advice about joining another nation, it’s exactly what we need to do, but not really. We are going to pretend to be wanting to join another nation, that way we learn a lot and get to meet others. When we make friends in each nation, then we’ll keep texting and writing to them. Communication is important. By the time we challenge Asgore, others will be on our side to help the Monster Kingdom without humans being any more knowledgeable.”

Now Sans looked like he was starting to believe in her this time. “That’s not a half bad plan. Getting others on your side, it’s how you handled Asgore. Freed everyone Underground. As crazy as it sounds, it might work. The only problem is? There are a lot of monster nation’s, Frisk. To stay in each one long enough to make some friends? We are talking some time.”

“Yeah, I know. Ma Toriel told me one time there was over a hundred monster nations she knew, and she thought a hundred more she didn’t know.”

“There are roughly 500,” Sans told her directly. “Of them, I only know 150. You’ll have to really butter up some friends to get more places to look. Plus, let’s say we spend three days in each nation to make some real friends. That’s about 800 days. Take the fact that not all

nations are just a day away from each other, and tons are on other continents too? That's not gonna get solved in a weekend."

Frisk nodded. "I know. It's gonna take years, isn't it?"

"Yeah," Sans admitted. "Each nation we go to, we'll need to get temp jobs for a place to stay. It's a standard. That little red pass I use can also be used to get us free things if we plan on staying for a whole week. Not much, but it's a method to help monsters get established who left their own nation for some reason. It'll get us instant temp jobs, some shelter, and a tiny bit of food."

"Each nation has that?" Frisk asked.

"The majority of them should. It would be a good idea to watch our money just in case we run into a rich little nation that doesn't use the red passes," Sans warned her. "There's also some that are just too small. I know of a couple that have less than twenty monsters left in their nation. Monsters are free to roam to whatever nation they want, so there is no perfect number to expect."

"Okay." It was doable.

"Are you sure about this, Frisk? This is still risky," Sans warned her. "When you make friends, I'll judge them too to see if they are someone we might be able to trust one day, but even that isn't foolproof."

Frisk watched Sans' human appearance sort of blur away, leaving him with his skeleton appearance again. Frisk looked at her own necklace and watched it fade away. She was back in her original clothes. "I won't just run from Asgore for the rest of my life. I can't. I have to try."

"Okay," Sans agreed. "I'll stick to the human disguises while we pass heavier human cities while we travel. I'll also keep it handy if I get pulled over. Only use your own disguises if you think we are going in an area that might know who you are."

"Agreed," Frisk said. Okay. *Just a couple of years, maybe more. Maybe just enough friends that we could pose a challenge to Asgore. I can get through this.*

"Eesh," Sans commented. "That dang food ran right through me in Mehville. I'm going to have a whole bouquet of chocolate roses ready soon."

I can get through this. I know I can. It would be a lot easier though if Sans could be less gross! "Can you pretend to be nice and civil again?" Frisk asked him.

Sans just laughed at her, right before he did the strangest thing ever.

He stuck his tongue out at her. As a skeleton, he stuck out his tongue? It was blue too.

"You have a tongue?" Frisk had to ask. "Skeletons have tongues? What for?"

“Boy, you have one dirty mind, Frisk,” Sans told her. “Can’t you pretend to be nice and civil again?” He laughed. “Whatever teachings from Toriel you have in your mind, or whatever girlish thing you learned growing up? You can’t fool me, Frisk. You love George Carlin, your princessy cover is blown.”

Damn him. “Sans, you’re an ass.”

“Probably, and there’s a *hole* lot more of that coming over the next couple of years,” he teased her. “Of course, I could be a little less gross, if you are *actually* ready to pick something to eat this time?”

Oh? That’s right. Was that what Sans was doing? *He made me focus on something else besides losing everything I love, especially mom.* “Thanks.”

Sans just gave a brief nod and turned into the nearest local place. Funnily enough, it was called Peaches.

Sans' Roses

Four Years Later

Harold and Washpocket stared at the newcomers to their town. Hardly anyone from outside their town ever showed up in it. It wasn't even really on maps and magic kept it off the GPS system of humans.

They both tilted their head as they watched someone walk by. Their hair. Their IDGAF hat. Their determined look. "Dude, that human's hot."

"She is," Harold agreed.

"Nah, he is," Washpocket disagreed.

"No way, she had breasts and she's way too hot," Harold fought him on it.

"No way, they held themselves up way too confidently, more than you or me. Definitely a guy."

"Girl."

"Guy."

"Girl."

"Guy."

"Androgynous for both of you I guess."

Harold and Washpocket saw someone else right beside them.

"She's female, but you know? I'd really appreciate it if you didn't drool all over my friend as she walks by. She hates that kind of thing." This guy had a look that said rebel, but he didn't seem real threatening. More like it was a request.

"I don't care," Washpocket said. "I don't date girls."

"Where'd you guys come from? Is she your girlfriend or available?" Harold was interested.

The guy rubbed his blue hair oddly as it blurred away. Oh, it was a disguise.

"Oh you're a skeleton," Harold said. "Is that girl a skeleton, are you a thing?"

"One track mind." The guy tapped his bony knuckles together, like he was thinking. He put his hand in his leather jacket's pockets and brought out some shades.

Counterproductive, but okay?

“Listen? Me and my friend Peaches are new in town for about a week. We’re in between nations right now. We’ll be working in that sno cone shop just about a block from here. If you want a sno cone, grab a sno cone, but don’t oggle Peaches like you just did.”

Damn. “So you are her boyfriend?”

The skeleton took off the shades. Harold wanted to say that was less counterproductive, but even though the shades were off? It felt like he was staring into a black soul. An abyss without end and he felt a small shudder.

“Nah, but keep your fucking distance, you’re not going to be a friend.” He walked off, probably heading to the sno cone stand.

Frisk started moving around the flavorings in a better order she was used to. This wasn’t the first sno cone stand she had a temporary job in. It was a frequent one used, she’d done it maybe twenty times now? She and Sans had even purchased their own scrapers so they didn’t have to work as hard if the scrapers were dull.

While humanity did of course not have to make shaved ice the slow and harder way they had to, with actual ice, it was a starting business for would-be nationers for a reason.

Put in hard work. Put in long hours. No matter what simple job they were stuck with, there was always something difficult about it to prove that they were really ready to join a nation. Frisk and Sans were already used to the hard work and long hours now. Real used to it.

Frisk was 24 now. She knew when she decided to challenge Asgore that it would take a long time, but she didn’t think it would take four years. Four years, and still running. It became harder too. Sans and her had to upgrade their disguise times as time went on.

Making friends was more than just walking up and saying hello most times. Just like in Underground, it was the ones she ended up helping in some way that tended to stay in contact with her. Sometimes, she could make great friends with a group of people she helped out in a club, while most times, she just really reached one person.

Sadly, sometimes, she even made none. Her friends’ positions also held a certain weight too. A friend that had no job, no say so legally, and had no influences in the town wasn’t going to be real helpful. As where a friend that was charismatic, in the legal system, or on the upper class of making things happen were a better fit.

She had supportive friends. Casual friends. Legal friends. Upper class friends. Casual friends. Friends that just kind of stopped texting her. If everyone in the nations worked the same way it did Underground, she’d have at least 4,000 friends by now.

She had about 800-600, with a 200 wiggle of casual and not bothering texting in that mix. She watched Sans come through the door.

He used the most basic of his powers just to walk and talk. Everything else was still done by balls or physically by him. "Found some people not to be friends with."

Yeah, that was also important. Sans was right there, making sure he could judge too. Bad friends in the mix wouldn't help their cause. "You want to make a sno cone before we begin?"

"Don't I always?" Sans grabbed his own shaver for the block of ice. "It was easier just to sell fried snow a long time ago. With magic I mean. Heh." He got to work on the ice while Frisk worked on the other one. "Someone saw you before your magic faded off."

Frisk just smiled. Sans always said her disguise really looked like a disguise from her true self. Everything was still the same except the clothes and the size of her breasts. "I doubt it's a big deal."

"They saw mine too," Sans warned her. "If anyone asks you about it, keep it simple."

"We just finished getting back from visiting a human town." Pretty simple.

"Name of the town?"

"Don't remember."

"See? You said we just came back from visiting a human town, not passing through a random one," Sans called her out. "Come on, Peaches, get it together."

Oh yeah. That is why he rehearsed. He'd hear the wrong in the statements given before she did. "We just stopped at a random human town before coming here for some food." Food was always a good response, everyone needed food.

"Right. Random. Food. Good." Sans finished shaving his ice. "Which flavors today?" He grabbed caramel and sour apple. "You want the peach flavor?"

Frisk rolled her eyes. He always had to ask that each time they worked at a sno cone shop. "Strawberry." She started working on her shaved ice.

The first customers were usually the observers, to see if they were cheating. Frisk and Sans had never got in trouble with their own shavers, but buying a shaved ice machine would definitely be too far.

Today when Frisk opened up, the first people weren't the observers. Probably not. "Yeah?"

"See, I told you, girl," a guy said gesturing to Frisk.

"Yeah, I know already, I get it," the second one said. "Boobs, right there, got it."

The hell were these screwoffs? "Can I help you?" Frisk asked a little too roughly.

“Nah, Peaches, I can help them.” Sans moved in front of her. “You want sno cones? You must want to talk to me, right? What flavor? I’ve got Blood Red Ruby. Tiger’s Blood. Silver Apple. Apple Blood. Silver Bone. Jagged Teeth Grape Blood.”

“Those are a lot of blood flavors,” one of them noted.

“They are our own personal favorites, and we’ve been allowed to offer them for sale,” Sans told them. “We’re pioneers.”

“We also have normal flavors,” Frisk said, noting that Sans was purposely scaring the customers away. He didn’t like them, and neither did she, that was understable, but they were still customers.

“Grape.”

“Strawberry.”

Sans worked on one order, while she worked on the other.

Sans gave it to them. “Have a nice day.” He almost slammed the dang window. “Do we need this town, Frisk?”

“That bad?” Frisk asked.

“Readings aren’t good from one of them at all.”

“How bad?”

“I’m gonna kill someone before we leave.”

Damn. “Not one friend in this town made yet, Sans.”

“One town doesn’t matter too much, Frisk,” he reminded her. “Let’s up and just go. Next town is three days away. Head to the car and I’ll be back in a second.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I told you, I have to kill someone before we leave.”

Ugh. “If we leave, nothing will happen.”

“If we leave, nothing will happen to you,” Sans said specifically. “Car, Frisk. Won’t let your little ‘do no wrong’ self hang around.”

“I don’t get it,” Frisk said to him. “Your judging is only so accurate. How are you so sure someone needs to die?”

“That guy that pointed out your boobs like an ass?” Sans gestured out the window. “The girl he was with is Washpocket, the daughter of Washpo. A huge opponent against humans in

general. I used to have a folder on him in the past, and let's say out of all of my folders, he stayed that memorable. This must be his nation."

Oh. Frisk got the point now. "I'll go wait in the car." She wouldn't bother with saying something on their defense. Frisk wasn't eight anymore, she knew that while she would never hurt anyone? If Sans was going to do it, she wasn't going to block him. He didn't kill on a whim.

As she exited the Sno Cone Shop, she didn't notice a car starting up. It wasn't out of the ordinary. Just a car leaving to go somewhere. So not noticeable she just crossed towards the car. The car was just in the lot, not like she had to cross the street.

But the car that started up in the lot, Frisk glanced toward it as it suddenly took off so fast, it's tires squealed as they barreled toward her.

Sans heard the screeching and headed straight over to see a car speeding away off the curb of the lot.

And what it hit.

Sans moved as fast as he could to Frisk's side, pulling himself down next to her. She was covered in so much blood. He brought her in closer, holding her in his lap. He checked her wrist for a pulse. Faint.

He didn't care anymore about his display of magic and used it to check her heartbeat. It was getting slower. Her soul was weaker in connection to her body. She was bound to die.

So many times he joked with her about her lifespan. She wouldn't live long enough to make a difference in a monster's life. And now? He realized. "Frisk. Don't go."

He used more magic to help her hang on and stay connected. *Don't go. Don't go, don't go.* Her smile. Her sassiness. Her unbelievable determination. The way she talked. The way she moved. The way she did everything.

"Oh, poor thing." A monster came by with healing powers. "Just when I was going to get a Sno Cone."

"Sno Cone's on me if you save her," Sans said quickly.

She shrugged and bent down. She was an older monster, her power of healing would be much faster. "There you go. She shouldn't move much for a few hours. You'll need to clean up all this blood on her since she'll freak out when she sees it. Do you have Blue Raspberry flavor?"

Assigned Shelter

Sans stayed near Frisk. He was wiping the blood off of her exposed parts. The Sno Cone obsessed lady that saved her life helped him get her to their bedroom, for an extra Sno Cone.

He watched Frisk twitch slightly. *Even though it hasn't even been that long.* He cared about her. A lot. Four years had already flown by in the human's life since they had stayed together. *In another four, it'll be eight. In another 8 it'll be 16.*

Sans didn't expect her to have that profound of a role. He wanted to keep her from Asgore, and she was a friend of sorts. His responsibility, but she was so much more than that.

He just didn't want to see it. Every time they started to get closer, he tried to do something to push her away too. An insensitive joke, a rude gesture, or just something to make her mad. After all, humans didn't live real long.

He didn't want to get overattached. A friendly human friend. But now?

He knew what nations she preferred. What kind of snacks she'd like. He knew where she preferred to stop, as opposed to where she said they should stop at. He could look at a store and know exactly what kind of things she'd like, or what people would appeal to her while she was there.

He knew what she wanted to hear, and what she didn't want to hear. What she could handle, and what she couldn't. Her favorite music, her favorite instrument, and her favorite stories.

He knew it all without ever trying to know it. *I hate myself for this. This human. I should've met with Asgore first, what's wrong with me? I should have made sure he just married her and never planned on killing her.* But, Asgore would want heirs too. *He'd want those heirs with Frisk. Marriage equaled heirs. He had none left.*

He was just Sans though. As soon as Asgore knew where Sans came from, he'd know how to track Frisk. Even if he had left in the beginning though, Frisk was at the college. Asgore knew generally where the college had been. He would have found someone to go after her.

Sans would have had to risk leaving Frisk in the middle of a journey somewhere, leaving a great distance from her, and then going to see Asgore. It was too risky. He never even gave the thought to Frisk either, since she would be against it all anyhow.

Frisk wanted 1,000 friends from other nations to challenge Asgore. Writing a formal meeting and sending it to the Monster Kingdom. A declaration to talk it out, with all of her friends present.

Making friends wasn't easy, and from his own guessing, she was halfway through to that estimate of who would actually show up for her. She had another four years of this still, at least.

“Sans.” Frisk was starting to wake up. She smiled and looked at him. “I saw a car heading toward me.”

“Yeah. Ran over. We got help, so you’ll be fine. No problem now.” He couldn’t hide the concern in his voice though. “Here. I got you some roses.”

Frisk squinted her eyes. “Sans, I just barely made it out of getting runned over and . . . ?

Sans presented some real roses. He sat them down on top of her stomach as he grabbed the washrag and got some more blood he could see was hiding beneath the forehead of her hair. “You scared the everliving shit out of me, Frisk, don’t do that again.”

Frisk picked up the roses and smelled them. “I was really close to buying the farm, wasn’t I?”

“The cows and horses were getting bought and the contracts were all printed up. All that was needed was your signature.” Sans made it crystal clear.

“Sorry. I didn’t even think about someone running me over.” Frisk smelled the roses again. “I guess you were right, this nation is bad news. We should go. Are we still in it?”

Sans nodded. “Until you woke up and could take a shower yourself, we weren’t going to move.” She had been covered in so much blood. So many places Sans wouldn’t be able to touch or wash.

“I scared the crap out of you, didn’t I?” She could tell. “Guess you started to like the short lived human, huh?”

It was a joke. Should have been a joke, but he couldn’t laugh. “You’ve got another four years at least with me to make enough friends, Frisk. You’ll be 28. Are you sure you still want to do that?”

“If I didn’t, then where else would I go? Probably the same thing, just without a goal,” Frisk told him. “However long it takes.”

“You know, I could . . .” He should tell her. “I could talk to Asgore, and work out a contract on your behalf.” Yeah, she was confused. “Normally, it takes marriage, but I bet Asgore would skip that step for just some heirs.”

Yeah, from confusion to annoyance. “How is that any better?”

“We aren’t totally inept, we could have like invitro to give you a baby with Asgore. Then you could both rule, and you could be-”

“Pregnant with Asgore’s baby without any sex.” Frisk still didn’t sound good. “I should just give in and agree to a baby? Why?”

Because you almost bit the big one. “Someone knows about you, Frisk. There’s no way we can keep this up for another four or five years. They probably even saw our disguises. We were careless wearing them into town.”

Oh, she didn't look any better.

"Okay, how about this? You mobilize the 500 or so friends you did make in Monster Nations," Sans compromised. "Have them give their voice to your situation, and you can safely be there to make a new contract."

Frisk looked away.

"In that new contract, you know, you could demand Asgore share his life force too. That way, the monsters of the Monster Kingdom would feel much better following you because you'd live a longer life to rule." None of his words were reaching though. "You really want to do this same gig for another four or five years with me?"

"I. I don't mind it," Frisk said. "It all became my life. It's great not knowing what we'll do from week to week. Hanging out driving or flying or cruising from place to place." She smiled with a shrug. "I love this life with you."

"Yeah?" Sans couldn't help himself, she just threw his sour mood out the window with that look and her words. "Yeah, I do too." He could stay with her another four or five years easy. But? "Your life burns out fast, and you'll be like 28 or 29, Frisk."

"So? I don't mind spending my days with you," Frisk said. "You make life fun, no matter what happens, Sans. I didn't need to finish college and have a fancy career. I've told you that before."

Yeah, she did, more than once. "Then? I guess I better think about what to do here next. Washpo probably knows where we are at, but he's never risked getting caught before. We can't just get in our car and ride out safely this time."

"Maybe we should use some help from a few friends?" she suggested.

"I already asked some of them," Sans told her. "It's a six-day trip from the closest nation we visited. Washpo might give us a day or two, but no way will he give us six just to stay under radar." Sans glanced back at her. He just couldn't see her the same way anymore, not after so close of a call. "It's still kind of dangerous."

"Life's dangerous in general. I'll be fine," Frisk assured him. "It's okay, Sans."

"You know what you could do? You could go ahead and marry Asgore, stay under the radar, and let him be surprised when he finds out you were going to have a really long life instead? I could do it," Sans offered.

"As nice as it would be to bamboozle my mom's ex-husband, I don't think I want to marry him to get that to happen," Frisk told him. "If we just lay low a little while out of these towns, and get new disguises and new names?" Frisk tapped her bottom lip. "The hardest part is just getting out of here. We can do it though, I know we can."

Hey, Sans tried a different idea. "Okay, I get it. All of my plans were lame, but as fun as I am, you must miss your Ma Cindy." Instantly, he could see the answer in her eyes.

Frisk couldn't hide how fast her eyes swelled up with tears. She blinked and wiped her eyes. "Gaw, look at me. Just her name makes me tear up."

Yeah. Frisk missed her mom. "You really want to be gone another four or five years? You'll be nearly be out of your 20's before you see her again."

Frisk rubbed her jaw. "I do, but I can handle it."

"Okay." She knew all the positives, negatives, and thought about the consequences. Her life was her life, and Sans wouldn't pressure her to change it. "I'll go check out the area between here and the car. I'll check the safety of the car, and . . ." He winked and held his bony fingers up with just a little space between them "Gonna use a pinch of some heavier magic, but we'll be okay since we'll be lying super low for a little while."

"I trust you," Frisk said. "I'm ready when you are."

Sans went outside slowly, scanning around. He didn't feel any presence but killing didn't have to include magic. He made a move toward the car and used a pinch of magic to start it up a safe distance away.

No bomb or anything. *Maybe he doesn't know Frisk's identity, he just knows that she's human.* That could work in their favor. Sans watched the car purr for a few minutes.

Okay. He headed back inside and grabbed their things quickly, also using magic. "Be right back, Peaches. Next disguise I'm going to be Taco, so think about your new name."

He went back outside and loaded up the stuff. He turned the vehicle back on again. He went inside and helped her out of the bed. She was a little weak from almost dying, but that monster had powerful healing powers. She'd be okay.

He brought her outside and toward the car. He got in and started to take off a good distance before-

Frisk's Old College

- using the first shortcut he'd used in years. Right outside the window, was the front of Frisk's old dormitory. "It's been a long time since we've been here."

Frisk placed her hand on the window. "Home." She squeezed her fingers together more on the glass.

"Sorry. I had to make it here," Sans said. "Magic and all that. We won't stay long."

"Wrong!"

A voice he hadn't heard in years, and not one he wanted to hear now. "I knew it was risky." Sans looked at the spear that was stabbed into the front of the car. "Hey, cars can explode, Undyne."

Undyne made her way right through the top, stabbing through interior and bending it to sit in the back seat. "Frisk Dreemur, we need to talk."

Not Asgore's Type

“You tore through the top of our car to take a seat in the back, and you stabbed the hood,” Frisk told her. “I don’t have much of a choice, do I?”

“You need to stop running and accept Asgore already,” Undyne warned her. “There is constant tension in the Monster Kingdom.” She growled at Sans. “You didn’t help, you were supposed to send her back.”

“Frisk doesn’t want to marry Asgore,” Sans told Undyne. “I’m not forcing her to stay out of the Monster Kingdom. I’m just keeping an eye on her.”

Frisk almost broke into a snicker. “Yeah, his duty was always to protect me. I didn’t want to go home, so I dragged him around with me.”

“For the last four years? It’s not funny!” Undyne warned her and Sans. “Frisk has mutual command of the crown. Go marry Asgore, have the next line of heirs, and you’re golden, Punk.”

“I’m not marrying my mom’s ex,” Frisk said to Undyne. “That’s grosser than Sans’ chocolate roses.” She playfully pushed Sans. “Real roses are nicer from you.”

Undyne blinked. “Are you two flirting with a poop joke?”

“No. Real roses,” Frisk corrected. “No, I’m not flirting either.”

“Be a pal, Undyne?” Sans told her. “Pretend you didn’t track us. Frisk has her own plan for her future.”

“I have made around 700 reliable nation monster friends,” Frisk told her. “I need about 300 more. Then, I’m going to use their influence to make Asgore break the hold of the kingdom. It’ll become a nation.”

Undyne groaned. “Are you kidding? That’s the plan? Monster nations are nothing but towns that follow the human rules and pretend to be counted like humans.”

“It’d be the first monster nation that would reveal itself. It would not pretend to be humans,” Frisk insisted.

“I don’t want that,” Undyne insisted. “I like having a king that comes to visit everyone everyday and see how everyone is. I like my job, protecting my king and the kingdom.”

“You could be a cop, or a fireperson?” Frisk recommended. “They protect too.”

“Well, there’s a new problem, Frisk,” Sans said to her. “Maybe not every monster in the Monster Kingdom wants to be a nation. There’ll be an even greater divide.”

“Asgore would take the Monster Kingdom, and Frisk could go somewhere with whoever wants to abandon it,” Undyne suggested. “It’s an option you might be able to work out after you marry Asgore.”

“I’m not marrying Asgore.”

“Damn it, Punk, yes you are! Asgore doesn’t want to kill you, but only one rules the Monster Kingdom!”

“Look? Why don’t you tell Asgore that he can keep the damn kingdom and make some kind of contract so Frisk doesn’t get it?” Sans suggested.

Undyne just took her arms and pretended to rock a baby. “Heirs.”

“I’m not marrying fucking Asgore!” Frisk crossed her arms and was about ready to get out of the car.

“Yeah, your mom said you’d be like that,” Undyne said. “You need to talk to her.”

Mom. Ma Cindy. Frisk wanted to see her mother so much, but she would risk Asgore seizing her.

“I’ll take you straight to your mom. I won’t tell Asgore I found you yet, you can talk to her,” Undyne insisted. “You have to talk to her, this isn’t just about you. Cindy’s going to be doing something big if you don’t work it out.”

Frisk glanced to Sans.

“It’s the reason I was even desperately watching this area, Punk!” Undyne yelled at her again. “For your mom’s sake, go. See what I mean.”

“Go,” Sans agreed. “We should go, Frisk. Undyne sounds serious. Cindy isn’t you, she might not be making the best decision.”

Frisk nodded at Undyne.

Monster Kingdom

Frisk appeared right in front of her mother. “Mom? You look different.” She looked older. Wrinkly? No, looser skin?

“Course I do, Frisk,” her mom responded as she came over and hugged her. “I’m four years older than the last time I saw you.” She looked back toward Frisk, straight on. “Look how much you’ve grown.”

Yeah. Frisk did change her own look. Her hair was usually shorter, and she was more comfortable in skirts but attitude apparel. "Guess so."

"I'm glad Undyne got a chance to get you before the big day," her mom said. "Frisk? Your Momma Toriel, bless her soul, before she left. She said that if Sans was a good man. Monster." She shrugged. "Good monster man, then I wouldn't see you for a long time." She squeezed Frisk's shoulders lightly. "She was right."

"I'm not marrying Asgore," Frisk told her. "There's no big day coming, and whatever you are planning to do to change my mind, you can forget it."

"You're so much more like T," her mom said to her. "Strong-willed. Frisk, I was real lucky that T gave me a chance. She liked the feel of my soul, but what with my past, she could have kept it as Asgore being the guy I married. You know? I would have hated it, but for you, I would have done it. A better future and to be able to stay with you. I'd do anything for that. I'd do anything for you."

"I know," Frisk sighed, "and I know you are going to say that I'm letting everyone down not marrying Asgore."

"Nah, Frisk. You aren't his type." She gave her another hug. "I'm letting you have something else. All T and I ever wanted was two things. To grow older together, and to make sure you grew up well and happy. Well? We couldn't do the first too long, but I'm gonna do the second." She gave Frisk a kiss on her forehead. "I'm going to offer marriage to Asgore and heirs in a contract, to get you out of this."

What?

"This isn't your fault. This was a loose end T warned me about a long time ago. It didn't sound like a big deal because me and her, we were supposed to go near to each other. In, uh, relative terms, I think we still won't be too bad a distance," she joked.

What? "You can't marry Asgore."

"Yeah, I do. You're out there risking your lives, not knowing what Asgore or anyone else is gonna do to you. Disguises from one place to another I bet? Frisk." She held her hand. "It'll be okay. I'm gonna marry him, and I'm gonna give him kids for heirs."

Kids? Kids?! "You don't want that!"

"No," her mom said, some tears shining in her eyes. "No, but I've had it much worse in my life, Frisk. Much worse. Asgore don't . . . he's a lot better than what your momma did grow up with."

Frisk watched as Sans actually came closer.

Marrying Asgore. "When?"

"Soon 'cause I'm getting older and when I have more kids, I want to be able to see them grow up a little too," her mom said.

Frisk didn't know how to take it. *It's wrong!* Making momma marry Asgore in her place. *I didn't want this to happen. Never. I'd never wish it on momma.* Frisk stroked her chin.

"The kingdom is always on the edge of a nervous breakdown. Do you understand that?" Her momma said. "Signs for one side, following Asgore and tradition. Another sign to follow Frisk, the leader that led them out of the darkness and never hurt anyone. Another sign wanting to get out of the kingdom mentality all together and be able to join other nations. It's chaos, and it's getting worse. Something's gotta be done and quick."

Oh. Frisk had no idea there were factions about her even ruling or being a nation too. *All this bickering about leadership for four years. I just thought if I stayed away, it would be fine until I made my move. It's not right to do this to mom, not after everything she's been through!* "No," Frisk insisted to her mom. "Monsters should be free to follow who they see fit, and you should be free to marry only if you want to again." Hmm. "Change is necessary for this kingdom. We'll divide it."

"Asgore will put up a war if you try that," her mom said.

"I have made a lot of friends that I know I can count on." The question was, was it enough to make a difference though?

"Frisk? Ah, I've always loved them rose-colored glasses of yours." Her mom took a deep breath. "Even among monsters, if they realize there is a feeling of unfair treatment, the most casual of conversations will break into fighting for the freedom of the Monster Kingdom. All of the monster nations out there, believing something to be wrong here, will fight and take down this kingdom. That's how monsters are."

"It's not just a few, it's a lot," Frisk tried again. "Enough that Asgore will look at it and change his mind about being against it. There is strength in numbers. He'll step down, I know he will."

"Or he'll lead a suicidal charge to protect the kingdom," her mom said. "I've got to know him for four years. Monsters are proud."

"He wouldn't." Frisk glanced toward Sans, looking for confirmation. Sans wasn't giving it though? "Sans?"

"There's about 400 monsters in the kingdom," Sans told her, "and you've got about 500 reliable friends. Those are still decent odds if war was declared. Asgore needs to be overwhelmed by support, by like a thousand. Then fuzzy pushover will just freeze. Any less, and he might go for it. If he doesn't, any of those 500 reliable friends could get desperate and pull their own nation into a fight to up the chances. It's risky, no matter what. You know that."

But it was the riskiest right now. "600-800," Frisk corrected him.

"500 reliable ones, tops," Sans disagreed. "Another 4-5 years, Frisk."

“We can’t wait for much longer,” Frisk’s mom told her. “I am not. I just wanted to really tell you before we made the date.”

“Mom,” Frisk begged her. “It’s not right. Please?”

“Life isn’t always beautiful, Frisk, and there aren’t always lots of options. But, you got a couple.” She smiled. “I love you.”

“No.” Falling apart. Her whole plan was falling apart. She glanced at Sans. “I can’t.”

Sans nodded. “Wait it out like my original plan?”

Frisk nodded.

“Frisk, you can take time to think about whatever you are trying,” her mother urged her.

“No.” Frisk glanced at Sans again. “Will it be painful for you too?”

Sans nodded, but he still winked. “It’s a smart idea, Frisk.”

“Marrying Asgore is a smart idea for her?” her mother asked him. “Why?”

“No reason. Hey, I’m going to go see Papyrus now that we are back,” Sans stated to her. “I’ll be right back. You go ahead and spend some time with your mom.”

Sans loved Papyrus, but that wasn’t who he’d be wasting only five minutes with.

He saw Asgore just ahead in the castle. “So, Frisk is getting more convinced to get back,” he lied. Asgore turned around and he waved like he hadn’t been missing for four years. “I haven’t been getting paid for my job either, I’ve been delayed on my paychecks for four years. Someone needs to look into that.”

“Sans.” Asgore groaned. “Stop joking around. Where is Frisk?”

“Frisk is debating the future right now,” Sans replied.

“You got here with Undyne’s magic that I gave her. You need to make Frisk come here.”

“Naw, Frisk will be coming, but not yet. I need you to answer something for me. If Frisk or Cindy marries you, you’re just going to let them grow old, right?”

“They will age as they will?” Asgore seemed confused. “I’m not interested in Frisk. What is your question?”

Good sigh. "I mean, you know, if you marry them, then that's it. Like, kids would be in vitro and everything if they came." Sans watched him. "Because it's not like it's a real marriage. Can't force love or nothing, it's just an arrangement."

"I wouldn't rush anyone becoming a true Mrs. Asgore Dreemur," he said. "If in vitro got us heirs faster, then of course I would agree with that. I've told Cindy that."

Uhhh? "The humans will live for like, maybe forty or fifty years. Can't you just ignore them?" He just got an odd look for Asgore.

"I don't think I understand you," Asgore said. "What do you mean ignore them?"

He didn't get it? "Look, Cindy and Frisk don't want love in their life. Just, sign a contract that says you'll never, you know . . ." Sans didn't want to say it, but? "You can't pressure a relationship on them. Ever."

"Hm?"

"Ever," Sans said firmly again. "They could be like forever friends." He just watched Asgore roll his eyes and scratch his head. "What?"

"This is childish," Asgore said lightly. "I'm not going to be messing with Tori's beloved human. Even in death, I would never disrespect her."

"Awesome to hear," Sans said, "and now, if you could just say that about Frisk."

Asgore didn't say that about Frisk. "Cindy has had trauma, and she was Tori's. I would never bother Cindy, Tori's soul would never forgive that."

"Frisk wouldn't be in love with you. Just give the same damn contract." Sans was getting tired of him. This wasn't hard to say. "You don't want to be a king known for forcing himself on anyone, do you?"

Yeah, Asgore didn't like that. "I would never force myself on anyone like that."

"Then, no kissing, no hugging, affection or sexual contact unless the wife says so," Sans declared. "Unless the wife says so. Add that." He tried a different way. "Frisk is probably the one you want, right? You already know there's 0% chance of love with Cindy. Frisk, you don't know."

Asgore sighed. "If such a contract would work, then fine. It's not needed, but I will make it."

Win. All Frisk had to do now, was agree to a bit of a . . . pain.

Papyrus was furious when he heard what Sans had to say. "You're looney, Brother!"

Yeah. He wasn't in a good mood. The four year separation didn't help things. "Look? It's not a big deal. Nobody knows. It'll all be fine."

“No, it won’t. Asgore will want heirs,” Papyrus reminded him. “Eventually someone will find the truth.”

“No they won’t,” Sans insisted. “Frisk is gonna keep it a secret too.” Heirs though? Hm. “Heirs aren’t a big deal.”

“Aren’t a big deal?!” Papyrus was enraged again. “Not a big deal? In what possible way are they not a big deal?”

“Frisk is agreeing to marriage only. They didn’t mention anything about heirs, that is just for Cindy by a contract if she marries him in place of Frisk,” Sans said. “Hell, we can put that into the contract too. Frisk will feel better about that.”

“It’s in vitro. He would eventually convince her,” Papyrus stated. “Probably right before he died.”

“Ah no, that’s easy,” Sans insisted. “We can actually catch that with like a statement of saving his DNA right after he passes on. Foolproof.”

“It’s not foolproof, Sans, it’s proof that you are the fool,” Papyrus said. “Also, Toriel and Cindy have been doing something else for a very long time to keep Frisk-”

“I promise we’ll talk more, but I need to go collect Frisk.”

Cindy’s Home

When Sans came back, Frisk was wearing her disguise again. “I miss something?”

“Mom said to wear it,” Frisk said to Sans. She glanced back at her mom. “She said not to drop the ball unless I was ready that this was a disguise? I don’t get it.”

“You’ll see,” Cindy answered. “I’m not dealing with you at the height of your anger. Come back and see me when your feeling cheerful again.”

Back to Asgore

Frisk was dead set on changing this. There was no way her mom would go through because of her. “Asgore.” Firm yet resilient.

Asgore turned and looked at her. “We will make amends after the marriage to your mother.”

“No,” Frisk demanded. “I won’t let you use her like that.”

Asgore placed his paw on his head like he had a headache. “Young human, I’m sorry. There is no way I am dealing with you. If Sans didn’t make it clear, you are not my type of person. I am in no way attracted to you.”

Frisk looked at her disguise. Okay, so she always had a more rebellious set of clothes and hairstyle with it, but she was still attractive. Why did he say it like that? “You’re not attracted to my mother either, are you?”

“No, but there is a difference between you and your mother, Frisk,” Asgore stated. “I’m not looking for a husband, I am looking for a wife.”

What did he just say? Then Frisk heard protests outside coming.

“Frisk, Frisk, Frisk! The man for the job! Frisk, Frisk, Frisk! The man for the job!”

Oh no. “You have got to be shitting me,” Frisk glared at Asgore. “You think I’m-?”

Sans quickly covered her mouth. “Are a guy protecting his mom to the finest he can? Sure. Let’s have a quick meeting, Frisk.”

How Much He Loved Her

Out in the cold of Snowdin . . .

Frisk yelled. “Everyone thinks I’m a guy?!” No wonder her mom didn’t tell her. How? “How does everyone think I’m a guy?” She looked at herself. “I’m not, I am not a guy!”

“Easy, Frisk,” Sans said to her. “You just cursed in front of the king. Relax.”

“Relax? The Monster Kingdom, one I have visited several times, they all think I’m a guy?” Frisk had trouble holding back her tears. She felt very selfish right then. Her mother was doing so much for her, but she couldn’t get over the anger of what she felt.

“Yeah, some,” Sans said. “Some Frisk, not everyone.”

“I’ve got breasts!” Frisk grabbed her front. “Guys don’t have breasts!”

“Um?” Sans glowed a shade of blue on his cheeks. “You’ve got to understand something, Frisk. We are still near the Underground. We build life right next to the Underground. These monsters still aren’t aware of many humans. Human even sounds like man. Man is man. Man is also woman. Word associations, not much exposure? If you walked straight into the Underground as you are now back then, you’d still have most of us thinking you were a kid.”

Sans was trying to help, but it didn’t feel like it did. She touched the top of her IDGAF hat. “I have to set it right then.” Although, apparently, it wouldn’t make much difference. Frisk wiped her face. “Sorry, overwhelmed.”

“You’re not overwhelmed, I get it.” Sans came over closer. “It’s not that your so unattractive that monsters can’t tell. You kind of shine in a different way.”

Ugh. “You aren’t helping, and this isn’t helping me.” No, she had to stay determined. “I am who I am, and my objective doesn’t change.”

“Nuh uh, you aren’t marching back like that,” Sans said as he came over much closer. “Frisk. You’re not unattractive. You’re the opposite. You’ve got slick soft skin and nice eyes, you drip femininity. But, you’re also very firm, ambitious and-?” he placed his bony finger right under her MISS FUCKING DETERMINATION necklace. “Resilient. Monsters hadn’t been on the surface in years, and sorry, but human women acting like you was never stated in any books.”

“So I don’t look like . . .” Ugh, geez. *Selfish and pathetic*. “It’s my actions that make them think I’m a man?”

“Sort of,” he said. “Clothes too. I mean striped shirt equals kid is the way a lot in the Monster Kingdom still function. So, you know, your usual wear doesn’t help.”

“I don’t want to be thought of as a man,” Frisk told Sans. “There’s nothing wrong with it, I guess, but I don’t want to be that personally. I want to be . . .”

“Frisk is Frisk. Forget what monsters think,” Sans insisted. “I know you aren’t going to ask, but naw, you aren’t ugly. It’s the opposite, you’re over attractive.”

Over attractive? “What are you even talking about?”

“Remember when we were serving sno cones, and an idiot pointed at you and yelled about your boobs?” Sans reminded her. “He did that because he was fighting with his friend over whether you were a woman or not.”

“And this is supposed to make me feel better how?” Frisk growled. “Don’t tread on me right now, Sans. I know this isn’t a big matter in the grand scale, but don’t tease me.”

“They were fighting over which you were, because they both liked you,” Sans pointed out, getting to the point. “Boys and girls like you, Frisk. The way you stand, the way you move, and the way you talk. Combine that with your looks and . . . you appeal to men and women.”

“I appeal to both?” Was he lying?

“Nah. Like, uh, Link in that new Zelda game Breath of the Wild,” Sans said. “He looks good in a dress too. It’s androgyny sort of.”

“That game isn’t new, Sans,” she corrected him, “but yeah, I guess I could see that. Maybe.” Sans didn’t seem to be lying. “Why did mom want me in this disguise?”

“Unless you look at your necklace, it’s harder to tell whether you are man or woman,” Sans answered. “Your mom probably thought ‘Frisk is smart. Maybe she can do something with this.’ You are good at that kind of thing. And, uh? It’s new enough to me. It’s not even ten years old yet.”

Monster’s concept of time. “I can’t do anything with this. I wouldn’t want to. Asgore should know I am female.”

“I don’t think you just being male to him was what he only meant,” Sans pointed out. “He likes dainty. Sweet. Less uh? Less *you*, you know? Use some maybe charm or something when you show him? Take off your disguise and um . . . wear something super feminine.”

Hmm. “Like a nice, sexy red sequined dress or something?”

“No.” Sans didn’t like that for some reason. “Not in that direction. Not sexy, don’t show that.” He actually seemed irritated by her choice. “Maybe like a cotton pink long dress. Like a white dress. Dainty.”

Dainty wasn’t Frisk. Frisk wore dresses but they were never dainty. Sans never considered them dainty. When she wore them, he either said, ‘Uh, looks okay,’ or ‘The fuck you wearing?’

“Then when you got him convinced, you marry him, and then you take over when he dies,” Sans said once again. Like she didn’t already get the plan. “With a monster lifespan or that plan won’t work that well. It’ll take time for him to die, to get everything situated legally and such. Better not to be old for that part. Dying in the middle of it all-”

“I get it.” He was so headstrong about the life span. “Can you grab a dress for me real quick?”

Sans winked. “That’s Frisk, and that’s all the matters.”

Frisk shrugged. Sans wouldn’t take long to find the dress and then she’d put it on. She didn’t really care about the snow around her, they’d be heading out anyhow soon. She just wanted to get it done.

Sans came back with a dainty really long pink dress. Would that even fit? “Here.”

“That’s real long.” Frisk held it up to her. Okay, it would work. It just hid everything. She would have to lift it a little when she walked. She went behind a tree and took off her clothes.

Cold, but it would be fast. She threw the dress over her head and slid her shoes back on again. She came out and turned in front of Sans. “Zip.” Sans zipped it up and she turned back around. “Okay, this work?”

Sans always took a couple extra seconds to look her over in a dress. Frisk always wondered what he really thought, but he never shared. Instead he’d always say the same thing over and over.

She tapped her sneakers in the snow and adjusted her MISS FUCKING DETERMINATION necklace. She was still holding her hat and her clothes. She would need them on before the end of the disguise time or it would screw up her next session.

“Uuuhh . . .” Sans just looked at the ground a second and then back toward her. “Yeah. Looks okay.”

“Okay. Let’s go back and propose marriage.” Frisk adjusted the top more. “This dress is tight and so long.” It was never easy finding dresses for her. “It’ll work though, thanks. Let’s go propose marriage in mom’s place.”

“Just a second,” Sans held out his hand. “Let’s get the long lifespan thing over with first.”

“Fine.” A degree of pain and then they could go.

When Sans and Frisk first arrived to see Papi, there was celebration, and then continual scolding for not talking to him for four years. Sans apologized several times until Papi was hugging and forgiving him.

Papi was always so wonderful like that.

“So?” Sans started into the conversation. He had been delaying on it for quite some time. “I’m going to give Frisk a monster lifespan.”

Papi didn’t look so good. Frisk watched him just freeze and not do anything, until suddenly-

“Sans, are you crazy! Y-you can’t do that with a human!”

“It’ll be okay,” Sans told him, trying to calm him down. “It won’t be too bad. I promise.”

“Promise? Promise?! You are going to go through changing a human’s life span?! Why?!”

Sans didn’t seem so pleased by Papi. “It’s just a good idea for the future. Frisk wants to win this. She has to. We need to do this.”

“Frisk is a unique human,” Papi said to Sans. “Too unique to me. You can’t do this with her. Who knows what could happen?”

“Nothing,” Sans assured him. “Frisk is 24, and she’ll get this right. It’ll be fine.”

“I know it will be painful,” Frisk said to Papi. “I can take it.”

“Frisk, you don’t know what this will do,” Papi told her. “This is not a little cut on your human finger. It’s bad. It’s bad!” He glanced back at Sans. “You can’t, it’s too risky.”

“She’s 24. By the time she gets Asgore to die, she’d be too old,” Sans insisted. “She needs this, that simple. Gotta save the day, right?”

“If you are going to be like that, then why even bother with this? Have the Queen be alive again, and it would all unravel.”

“Mom?” What? “Ma Toriel?” She looked quickly at Sans. “Sans, what does he mean?”

“Aww.” Sans didn’t seem pleased with Papyrus. “There’s no way I can handle that one.”

“Well, I meant it with a great deal of sarcasm!” Papyrus said. “Sorry.”

“Mom?” Her mom could be back alive? Frisk stared at Sans. “Is it possible in any way to bring her back?”

Sans didn’t look so good. “It’s not a sure thing. You kind of . . .” He seemed hesitant. “The more you really want something with your determination, the more likely you’d get it.”

“I’ll throw every ounce of determination into anything,” Frisk pleaded with him. “Please?”

Sans really didn't look so good. "I . . . I don't know if it'll work . . . but we can try. For you, Frisk."

"I was being overconfident! Cocky even!" Papyrus was trying to backtrack. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean that. This is a much worse idea. You two have absolutely terrible ideas."

Sans scratched the side of his cheekbone. "If it works, everything around us would change except us. I'm sure one of us would remember. For the best bet. We can go back to when we almost got caught on the roof. If we get your Ma Cindy out, then Toriel wouldn't have excessively used her magic."

She'd be back alive. It was hard to believe. "I'll do anything to try," Frisk insisted. "Anything!"

"Messing with the past is never a good idea," Papyrus warned her. "Sans does sometimes when he's playing practical jokes, but it's never that far back, and it never revives a monster. Once again, this is a terrible idea!"

Mom would be back here. Ma Cindy wouldn't be alone anymore, or forced to marry Asgore. "Whatever it takes, I'd do it." Frisk wiped tears from her eyes. The thought of it even working. Remembering. "Momma Toriel."

"Close your eyes then, Frisk."

"This is a bad idea. A very bad idea, Sans! You *can't* take a human back in time or go back so far it revives monsters! We never do that!" Papyrus' voice once again tried to deter her.

Nothing would deter her. Frisk closed her eyes. Nothing would deter her.

"Frisk will be 24 in a world where she is supposed to be 18 if she remembers. Her future will be messed up. Nothing will work the same way, Sans. Don't do that!"

Frisk felt Sans' bony grip on hers. There was a light stinging sensation that was moving toward heat. *Determination. For moms.* The sting was hotter. *For Ma Toriel. For the future happiness of Ma Cindy.*

Frisk tried to hold back her scream. It felt like her hand was being forced onto a hot stove and had to lie there. *For my family, for all of us! For a wonderful future, I will not let go! I will never let go! Never!*

Sans, I can't believe you are doing this!

Sans could hear his brother telepathically. He wasn't going to be swayed by Papyrus though.

There will be one good thing about what you are doing, if this happens.

Sans couldn't answer back. He was radiating all of his magic into Frisk's hand. She was in heaps of pain, but her determination was hanging on. *I know her. We know her. At eight years*

old, she freed the Monster Kingdom. At 24 she had made 500 friends that would die for her. If there is anyone who can do this, it's her.

The good thing is, you will have the human you love.

Sans watched Papyrus hold his other hand. He was pouring his magic into Sans'. *Papyrus, this is risky.*

I won't let the woman you love lose you because of her wish. You know Frisk could never live with herself like that.

Will you stop saying I love her, why's it even matter? We might be dead soon.

You left with her for four years without pay. You were willing to risk your life to extend hers. You talked to Asgore about how he would treat her.

I didn't tell you that.

I was right though, wasn't I? And now, you are risking your life to only save her mother. There is no benefit to you! Sans. You don't really care if the kingdom is a kingdom or a nation! That isn't you, you don't care about that! This whole thing, you are giving your life for Frisk's happiness!

Let go, Papyrus! The pain was becoming more intense. He was shaking his hand involuntarily in Frisk's. His whole skull was shaking up and down.

Going back in time, just him and Papyrus. Easy. As long as it didn't involve lives. As long as it wasn't too far. Bringing someone along with him, going back years, and reviving the queen. If Papyrus didn't grab his hand and lend him some magic, he never would have made it.

He heard Frisk scream, but then after a flash of darkness.

One-Sided Feelings

Six Years Ago . . .

Toriel was enjoying a quiet evening at home when she got an interesting phone call. It was from Papyrus. “Hello.”

“Queen Toriel? This is Papyrus. I must warn you to get over to your family’s home and get them out of the house. It will be on fire in less than an hour. Oh, and I know this because Sans took Frisk back six years into the past to prevent it so his life is now cut in half! I am not. Happy. I will speak to you later happily. Good day.”

It was not nice to hear, but Toriel got the point enough. First, she headed to get C out, and then she waited.

Frisk was running down the block toward her. Yes, she didn’t have the same 18-year-old vibe. “Frisk.” She wanted to scold her for what she did, but she instead almost got knocked over by her daughter. “Frisk.”

“Stay out of the house, keep Ma Cindy out, keep everyone out, we have to leave,” Frisk insisted. “Please, let’s go, now.”

She did in fact go through time. Frisk was shedding tears making it clear that someone was lost in this fire. She held onto her so tightly, Toriel could hardly breathe. “Your Ma Cindy is safe, Frisk. I won’t go back into the house. I need to talk to you and Sans. He brought you back in time, didn’t he?”

Frisk looked up at her, wondering how she knew.

“What the heck is everyone talking about?” Sans showed up next to Frisk. “I don’t remember nothing like that,” he insisted. He looked closely at Frisk. “She is different though.” He took another step closer to look at her. “Yeah, I’m not getting good vibes about this. How old are you, Frisk?”

“Twenty-four. You don’t remember?” Frisk asked him.

“ . . . no way, I wouldn’t.” Sans just glanced at Toriel. “Seriously, what the hell? I’d never do that. Taking a human back in time with me would burn like half my life magic away.”

Toriel had to agree, it didn’t seem likely. Yet, Frisk looked at him as if he actually did it.

“Why would I do that? From the way you said it, I took you back six years? For what reason? Anything less than to save Papyrus, I’d never agree to it,” Sans insisted again.

“To save Ma Toriel.” Frisk looked back at her. “To prevent something awful from happening in the near future.”

Hm. “The stress was so great upon Sans, I’m afraid he has lost his memory of the time travel,” she explained to Frisk. “However, Papyrus did not, and he also came back. Sans, I assure you Papyrus will be visiting you soon. I am taking Cindy and Frisk for a little while under an emergency notice. I will be back.”

Yet, as Toriel took her daughter into her arms, she already knew. It wasn’t hard to see.

This would have repercussions, much worse than her trip in time had caused before.

Sans’ Home

Toriel was right. Sans didn’t have to go back to his house for long. “Heya.” Papyrus was right in the middle of it. “Sup?”

“Don’t even ‘sup’ me, Brother!” Papyrus was furious. “I can’t believe you did it, you really did it. You really brought her back all this way with you just to let Queen Toriel’s magic last longer.”

Hm? “So Toriel didn’t even die yet?”

“No, but she will give a great amount of energy to help her wife.” Papyrus pointed to a seat. “Sit down, Sans! You would not listen to me in the future, so you will listen to me now. I gave you part of my magic too, to ensure you survived. I have lost a quarter, so you would only lose a quarter. So, I am entitled to hear you listen to me!”

Hearing that, Sans sat down. This was all real hard to believe. “Sorry, I didn’t know you did that. I don’t get why I did any of this.” He wasn’t exactly a philanthropist that wanted to help the world.

“Oh.” Papyrus groaned. “At least amnesia means less magic was taken from you for your memory. At least for now. Maybe it will jog back later. Anyhow. It started with you wanting to give Frisk a longer lifespan so she wouldn’t be so elderly after Asgore died and the marriage was over.”

“Uh? I’ll take ‘Most Nonsense Phrases Ever Uttered’ for 200, Alec,” Sans replied. “I think I hit a daily double.”

“Oh, it’s a whole thing. Frisk would marry him to keep her Ma Cindy from marrying him and having his heirs. Before then, you two were out making lots of friends to turn the kingdom into a nation or some silly thing like that,” Papyrus said. “Point being, Frisk changed her mind when . . . oh, when I sarcastically sort of offered this option instead.”

“Oh. Cool move, Papyrus,” Sans teased him. “Much better. It’s better to burn out than to fade away.”

“Well, I didn’t mean to! I mean, I can’t believe you would even . . .” Papyrus didn’t know how to proceed. “Anyhow, what’s done is done. Cindy and Toriel will be moving to the actual kingdom. Frisk can’t go, of course. You will need to watch over her.”

Um? “I admit, I had an awesome birthday with Frisk. She got me sunglasses and new black slippers and everything,” Sans admitted. “But I highly doubt the ones that banned me from her in the first place will let me talk to her.”

Monster Kingdom

His life. He risked his life. Frisk knew that it would hurt to share the magic. She remembered the pain she had to endure, but no one ever said Sans could have died from it. *I made him use half of his magic life. Half. His life is cut in half because of me.*

Frisk crossed her leg over the other as both of her moms talked in the distance. *Why did he do that? Why did he risk dying just to save mom with me? He could have told me, I would have settled for a long-life span to outlive Asgore. Why didn’t he tell me?*

Frisk wanted her mother back so much, when she heard it as an option, all of her other senses went out the window. Including her logical thinking. *Sans could have died, just so I could have my mom back. Sans could have died just for my own selfish happiness.* It would have made her feel miserable.

Save her mother, but lose her Sans? Sans was her buddy. Her other half. He was with her everywhere she went for the last four years. He was always there. The one she talked to. The one she joked with and laughed with and . . .

The thought of losing him pierced her heart so much. He was her best friend. No, more than her best friend. *I don’t really see life without him anymore.* Sans. She was sitting there, right in front of both of her mothers, her one wish for so long.

And all she could think of was what could have happened to Sans. *Sans. I. I can’t lose him, I don’t want to lose him.* She never wanted to lose him.

“We have talked it over.” Her Ma Toriel came back over with her Ma Cindy. “Since you already know the choices that faced you, we don’t have to go over it in detail. We want you to live with Papyrus-”

“Prom.” It popped out of her head, remembering. “I go to Prom with Sans.”

“You probably did. It would give him the chance to explain everything,” her Ma Toriel said. “You already know everything.”

“I want to go to prom with Sans.” Frisk felt it surging in her heart. “He’s sweet and disgusting at the same time. He’s funny and lame. He waddles when he walks unless he’s serious. He’s got a bad temper when someone angers him. It takes a lot to anger him though, so he’s so chill all the time. He’s thoughtful and protective of me, even when I don’t need it. He is everything that no one else out there ever is. I’m? I’m in love with Sans, and I’m going to prom with him.”

Sans and Papyrus both were taken back to the Monster Kingdom by Toriel. He figured they would work on figuring out the next step in the plan. In fact?

Sans whispered to Toriel. “So, uh, now that she’s 18? She’s gonna have to live with someone.”

“She was going to live with Papyrus,” Tori told him.

Damn.

“But? After speaking to Frisk, and after everything you’ve done.” Toriel said it in a matter where he couldn’t tell whether it was an honor or a scolding. “She wants to talk about it more at prom.”

Prom? “What’s prom?”

“It’s a ritual for humans, a dance at the end of high school. She wants to go with you and talk this out.” Tori still didn’t look well.

Score! *If I get some alone time at a dance, this could work.* “So she knows all about why I wasn’t allowed to see her, right?”

“Yes. She knows.” Toriel still didn’t seem happy. “Just be nice.”

“I’m not going to overstep my bounds,” Sans assured her. *Although getting her to trust me extra close could close this marriage deal. Bye bye drunk bunny.* A mere fifty years or so, and then marriage would never bug him again. “So after this whole thing, who’s she staying with?”

“You can discuss it at the prom,” Tori answered. “I will see you in two nights. Come dressed in something for a dance like a tuxedo.”

Mm, he had one of those hiding out somewhere.

Prom Night in the Monster Kingdom

Frisk squeezed her fist nervously. For now, she had gotten emergency permission to stay. Her Ma Toriel gave Asgore a line about their lives being in danger. It would give Frisk time to figure out her next move. *Boys and girls think you're hot. He said something like that.* But what about him? *Sans hates romance. We didn't start to get to be real good friends until he had that marriage idea thrown out the window.*

Frisk looked at her dress. It wasn't a proper prom dress but she wasn't taking Papi for the shopping. She wanted to use the prom as a means to talk to him, but she wasn't self-conscious about what others would think of her clothes. She wore something between dainty and her usual wear. *I'm never dainty. Sans always said I was never dainty. Did he like dainty?* Maybe he wasn't dainty, but maybe he liked dainty? *Maybe he'd notice me as more than a friend if I were daintier.*

Less joking. Less teasing. Less honest. *No, it doesn't feel right.* She looked at her hand. *I can't change who I am just to appeal to him. Not completely. Is it wrong to try and be a little more pretty to catch a guy's eye who probably thought of you more as a fella?*

Or should she not go in that direction? Frisk looked at her dress in the mirror again as she heard a knock at the guest room's door. "Come in."

Her Ma Toriel came in. "Frisk. How are you doing?"

Frisk turned around. "Do you think he'll like me in this dress?"

Her mother sighed. "Frisk, he'd like you even if you were dripping in ketchup." She smiled with a chuckle.

Ooh.

"That isn't the look of an 18-year-old thinking nice thoughts," her mother criticized her.

Frisk tried to hide her own giggle. "Sorry. I hung out with him a lot."

"Yes. Your Ma Cindy is trying to adapt to this friendship of yours to him," her mother said.

"The fact that he brought so much good into a life turning bad for you and her, means she can see to giving him a chance at prom."

Frisk nodded.

"She still thinks it's way too soon to stay with him and Papyrus. I think as long as it is with Sans and Papyrus, you'll be fine." Her mom patted her shoulders. "Just, think before getting too reckless in matters."

"I won't put Sans through anything like that again," Frisk promised. "Just don't overuse your magic. Oh?" She pointed at her mom. "Tell the Monster Kingdom I am not just Frisk, I am your daughter Frisk, please?"

"Oh." Her mother hugged her. "Sorry, Frisk. Sometimes, secrets can help in the future."

“It didn’t.” Frisk hugged her back. “Sans said I’m attractive to both guys and girls. Do you think that’s true?”

“I don’t know, Dear, I’m not attracted to you,” her mother smiled. “It doesn’t matter. You are my wonderful Frisk.”

Is he really telling the truth, or was that a nice way of saying I wasn’t real attractive either way? Doubts and second thoughts were plaguing her mind now. No, I am going to get through this night. I have dealt with worse than this. I can do this.

“Frisk, Sans and Papyrus are here!”

I can’t do this! A small tremble. What was wrong with her? She had liked guys before. She had even liked some girls before. But Sans? Geez. He made her nerves want to burst out of her own body. “C-coming!”

She heard Sans laugh downstairs.

When she arrived, she saw Sans in a strange blue tuxedo outfit. It so fit him and his personality. “Ready?”

“Yep. Gotta get that ride from your ma real quick.” Sans gestured to her Ma Toriel. “Come get us in about three hours. That should be long enough to chillax with her.”

“Two hours,” her mother insisted, “and don’t push. C is getting used to this.”

“The prom is going to have a lot of security,” Frisk told her mom. “It takes two hours just to get into the prom. Three hours.”

“I am not a taxi, young lady. I will give you two and a half hours,” her mother said. “No longer. As for getting in, I will just take you in directly. No one will know.”

At the entrance to the prom.

“Yay for the bathroom pass,” Sans teased as they went into the prom room. “That line back there looks like it sucks. Okay, so hate to tell you, I can’t dance.”

Actually he could. She just never let him show her. “That’s okay. I can’t either.”

“I’m guessing you picked me for a reason?” Sans asked. “This whole burning lots of my magic life to make you happy impossible thing. I don’t suppose you got a good explanation of that? Your mom is still gonna burn out before you do. It’s natural, you can’t prevent it.”

“Yes, I know. I wanted her and Ma Cindy to stay together. It prevents things from happening.” Although, she would still have to figure out how to handle the kingdom concept.

“Okay? Look, just tell me. I know somehow this must have something to do with Papyrus.” Sans shuffled to the floor. “Even he was throwing in magic to make this work.”

Frisk couldn't answer as she tried to sort of shuffle in front of him, trying to miss his feet. A sort of dance. *Not one word about my outfit. My makeup. My jewelry. Nothing. Half dainty doesn't appeal at all.*

“Yeah, it did,” Sans answered. “You are super nervous to tell me about it. I get it. Something super huge, probably life ending. Then, you can keep the secret,” he agreed. “Do they have more than punch at these human event things?”

Frisk shrugged. “Did you want some punch? I could get us some punch.”

“Nah, not real interested.” Sans looked at her. Well, at her feet. “Well, at least we haven't crushed each other's feet yet.”

Frisk heard the song ending and a slow song start playing. Other dancers were starting to get closer to each other. Wrapping their arms around each other. Snuggling up more on the waists.

Then she felt herself getting bumped.

“Sorry, man,” he apologized as he kept dancing with his girlfriend.

Sorry man? *I look like a man still, in this outfit? No, wait, that's Kevin from Geometry. He calls everyone man. Right?*

“Frisk, you're still adjusting to your life, huh?” Sans asked her. “Look, if you want, you can live with me and Papyrus and continue to go onto your college. If you want. If you didn't do that last time in the last timeline? Heh.”

Frisk didn't know how to answer that.

“Or, you know? I mean.” Sans shuffled his bony feet around in a circle. “You could decide to take your life out of danger and need watching so much by staying in the Monster Kingdom with me?”

Frisk stared straight at him. *The marriage.* That's right. Asgore hadn't changed anything yet. Sans was still being careful around her. *I am rewriting time. What if now he does have to get married? To the drunk bunny? What if he has to, all because of me?*

“Either way-”

The bunny can't have him! Frisk grabbed onto Sans. What was she supposed to do? *I don't think he's attracted to me. He's my best friend. He helped me so much, and now, I have to help him.* Frisk held her phone out and texted her moms on it.

They should know first before she did it. She pulled away and tried to fix her hair. The hairstyle for the night probably got messed up. “Sorry.”

“Uh?” Sans seemed stumped. “Nah, it’s fine. Hug me anytime you want. I’m totally here for you.”

Frisk felt her phone vibrate. She turned around and looked real quick. Her Ma Toriel asked her if she was sure, and her Ma Cindy just put no in capital fonts. *I didn’t say we were discussing it. I just wanted you both to know first.* She put the phone back away before Sans could see.

When she turned around, he didn’t seem to care to look over her shoulder or anything. “Just moms.” It was so nice to say that word again.

“Figured.” Sans rubbed his neck bone. “So, like I was saying? Um. It’s not that . . . that I’m trying to force you to move in, it’s just that you’d have your moms, and we could be like-” Sans moved to look at his own phone and groaned. “One second there, Frisk. Moms are really bugging out tonight, aren’t they?” he teased to relax the moment. “Hey, why not go get some punch after all?”

Sans waited for her to leave before he called. He got a text message loud and clear that he didn’t like. Once he heard Toriel’s voice, he spoke. “What are you texting me about the marriage thing for? I haven’t said anything.” Well, yet. He was close.

“Do not ask her for marriage, Sans!” Toriel’s voice commanded. “Sans. Frisk wants love in a marriage. She doesn’t want a forever friend.”

“Oh.” Good thing he stopped then. “Tips then?”

“Sans, she will want everything a normal woman would. Smooching. Hugging. Dates. Eventually more.”

Uh. “I can do dates. I’m technically doing a date right now. We’re doing fine.” Hugging. Smooching. “I could do those, it isn’t hard.” More? “What more though?”

“Eventually she might want kids.”

Eh? “No way, no deal there,” Sans shook his skull. “I can’t do kids. You know why I agreed to wanting Frisk in the first place.”

“Even if she doesn’t want kids, she will want intimacy, Sans. Couples in love are often intimate.”

“Kissing and hugging.” More? “Eh, it’s still better than the drunk bunny. We’ll ease into it.” If even. *Man, they are making this marriage thing so complicated.* Maybe these were words more by the moms than of Frisk? Should he try the forever friend angle?

He watched her coming back. Her eyes lingered on a couple that passed by her. *Well, I mean right now she might be looking for romance.* From a skeleton though? She came back closer with the punch. “Sock it to me.” He took the punch and tried it. “I’ve had stronger.”

“So have I,” Frisk said to him.

Let's see. Romance. Romantic. Can't dance. What can I do? Hm. Frisk did look pretty in the dress. He didn't bother saying anything about it because why? It'd sound kind of lame. But, romantickey? Maybe that was romantic? “Your dress is nice on you.”

Frisk grew like 20 shades of red darker in her face. “Really? I mean, thank you!”

Hey, hey, regular Don Juan de Skeleton. “Yeah.” Let's see. What else could he say that was romantic? “Your hairstyle looks pretty too.”

Frisk touched her hair. “Oh.”

Sans noticed that her hairstyle had been falling out. It'd messed up when she hugged him to hide the fact she was dealing with her moms on her phone too. “I mean it was pretty before it got all tangled up. But hey, the hair is pretty in general.” Did he save it?

Frisk just sort of smiled. “Thanks.”

See? He did just fine with the romance thing. A couple of dates a month or so to Grillbys. Even each week, he always went there. Not much difference. A hug or smooch here and there. They'd be fine. “I didn't know if you knew this. Fun fact? Monsters waiting to get married can also stay in the Monster Kingdom until they do get married. So, if you wanted to stay bonding with your moms?” *Don't ask yet.* “You could say-.”

“We were considering marriage?” She was much faster on the ball. “Um. I.”

Yeah, now she didn't look so happy. “I mean, we could just use it for a little while. Set some dates to do marriage stuff. Just so you all adjust to not being near each other. Or, to see how you like living in the Monster Kingdom. Not like Asgore is gonna get all angry because we decided to cancel later.”

“You have to. Drunk bunny.” Frisk groaned.

Gah, what more could he say? He must be close to getting a yes to at least pretending to be near her moms. *Something. Come on. Think, Sans. Wait, romance!* “Yeah, and we could uh, have some more dates in the kingdom too.” *Let's see. Do I try and hug her?*

Sans reached over and hugged her. “What do you say?”

“I need to destroy the kingdom to be a free nation.”

That was a weird phrase. “Huh?”

“Everyone out here should have choice,” Frisk insisted. “I can't just worry about myself. Times have changed.”

Well, Frisk wasn't any good at romance either. That made him feel better.

“The monsters in the Monster Kingdom are still stuck in their thinking. In their ways. The king has made it too difficult to get outsiders in, or insiders out of the kingdom.” Frisk looked straight at him. “It’s like they are all still trapped Underground. The only difference is humanity knows about them. Humanity doesn’t know about all the rest of them hiding among them.”

Ugh, this fit her. “So I’m guessing staying in the Monster Kingdom isn’t what you want?” Well, this marriage thing was looking less like it could happen. She wouldn’t even fall in the trap of playing pretend to be near her moms. *Eh, at least with Drunk Bunny I get to stay in my own house. Drunk Bunny’s nice. Frisk is nice. Frisk’ll be dead, I’ll be stuck with Drunk Bunny for life. Frisk is gonna be a real pain though for this whole romance part. Maybe.*

Sans took his way of thinking back to business again. He didn’t rule Frisk out, but it wasn’t something he’d get a yes for soon. “Your Ma Toriel and Asgore run the kingdom. You need to ask them if you are wanting to make changes.”

“I could ask mom, but Asgore rules it harder. He wouldn’t say yes,” she said knowingly. “I need to regather friends again.”

“Regather friends?” Sans asked. “What do you mean?”

“Regather friends that I made in the future. I was halfway to my goal. A thousand people who would come and give support for a nation.”

Ah, smart. Asgore would buckle under that, and Toriel would probably have been convinced before that. “So, is that what you’re doing instead of college this time around, or is it after college? Your mom is still going to have us watch you, you know.” 18 or 24, no real matter, he was getting that extra time off before he had to figure out marriage.

Still? “I mean, watching is a lot easier when you aren’t putting yourself in a Tiger’s mouth. Visiting other monster nations isn’t a snap, Frisk. You should know that.”

“I’ll need a disguise, and so will you. Oh, and Papyrus.”

“Why are we getting disguises? We’re already monsters.”

“You can’t just watch me from rooftops.”

“Why not?” Sans could tell he was irritating her. “Sorry. As long as your Ma can pay the fees, we’ll bum around with you from place to place.” Bumming around was definitely his thing.

Toriel watched from not very far away. She had entered the school dance the same back way. She had been far enough, neither of them spotted her, but she had been communicating with them. However? She had heard Frisk’s voice from a little bug she had sewn into her daughter’s dress. *She wants to change the kingdom. Life is about change, I don’t mind giving it up, but Asgore would never do it.*

Frisk saved her or C. Frisk did something from her heart, and that was okay. However? Frisk remembering the future also impaired her present now. She did more than look 24, she was 24, traveling around with Sans to escape Asgore's eyes.

Yet there was so much more to that. *I wanted her to have an ordinary life. I have never been able to give her an ordinary life. Having Papyrus visit her, Sans watch her, it was for her protection. Now though, she wants to just hitchhike around in the world like she did in the future? No thought to her present, just ideas to . . . to change the world, but not hers.*

Not only that, but Frisk had clearly realized she was in love with Sans. Sans didn't want love. Sure, now Frisk could marry him, but she wouldn't get the love her heart had desired. *All wrong. So wrong. Frisk shouldn't have this kind of life! I wanted her safe, but I never wanted her doing this.*

She left the Prom searching for her own inner answer as what to do.

At The Monster Kingdom Again

"I don't know how to take all this," C said to her as she placed her hands on top of hers. "Either way Frisk chooses, this isn't good. You've always been a good leader, T."

"Being upon the surface, the monsters have been following their leader's wishes still," Toriel explained. "It's the same reason Sans even does this job with Papyrus. Forcing marriage. Forcing whatever we want with just a word. We have worked with nations to try and bring our thoughts into alignment, but we do work differently. Not all monsters are unhappy, but . . ."

"Sans the Skeleton would drop you in a second if it meant not being forced to marry," T said. "I get it. Some would leave and some would stay."

"Asgore would not allow that. His family has been in control of the crown for far too long. He'd only let go if he was overwhelmed." That's how he worked. "Frisk could do that. Going from place to place with Sans and Papyrus, gathering signatures for nearly eight years. Wasting even more of her precious life years."

"She should live her life to its fullest," C agreed. "Especially since she's older and wants to find love now. She won't find it with him."

"No. Sans isn't interested in love. He just wanted Frisk since she wouldn't live very long." It was sad to say that, but she couldn't change him. Sans was never interested, and that's why the idea of Frisk and him had been so appealing in the first place.

"She wasted her college years. She had everything taken away, and I couldn't even contact her, the way she talked about it to us." C shook her head. "I wanted her safe, T. I never

wanted this though. Her out there, roaming from place to place. No settling down, no college, no real life. All her days on the road. Meandering around.”

“True. Frisk wanted to be a vet.” Hm. “If we give Sans and Papyrus a permanent residence with all of the perks, do you think . . .?” Toriel felt almost cruel to say it. “That just watching for her would be enough? I think knowing the future is ruining hers. No one should know the future.”

“T?” C asked. “Can you make her forget the future?”

“Yes, but if I do this, then Sans and Papyrus’ watchful eye will have to stay hidden. For the rest of her life. I will have to erase them from her memories. In fact? I have to change myself too,” she insisted. “I have changed time before, just like Sans had done.”

“What?” C was shocked. “You?”

“Yes, and I don’t have enough magic to do this again. The only thing I have left it to erase it for Frisk. Erasing the future I don’t know is easy, but the memories she has gained after coming back will be harder. Anything reminding her of this could trigger her to remember again. So, I have to erase monsters from her.”

“But, T?” C shook her head. “You’re Frisk’s mom. There’s no way I raised her without you. What about Papi? He was there every day with her.”

“People don’t think or make excuses about what happened in the distant past. I can censor Frisk’s memories. Any monster presence will be wiped from her mind.” Toriel stood up. “She will continue on through college. I will get you the money to make sure she has a place to stay on her own.”

“Oh, T,” Cindy warned her. “Frisk just saved us somehow. This sounds like punishment for saving us.”

“Yes, and with time manipulation, there is a price to pay.” Toriel knew it wasn’t fair, but time wasn’t something to meddle with either for such a simple reason as saving one life. “I will still stay with you, C. You will have to make plans to seem like you go a far distance to see her. Also, her mind will be jumbled, missing many pieces.”

All the encounters with her. How her mother got out of her dangerous life. A lot will be missing. “If Frisk ever asks, tell her that she was in an accident when she was eight years old,” Toriel told her. “Tell her that she was too young to know the details but it affected her memories sometimes.”

“She’ll have way too many missing to just say ‘when you were eight,’ T,” C said. “Even tonight, she wouldn’t remember her prom night.”

“Yes. If something happened to her brain, then her memory for the rest of her life would be affected. That she may believe anyhow.” Toriel smiled. “She will forget her younger problems as she grows older again. College. Her career. This is a better answer for my human daughter.” She wiped a small tear that formed in her eye. It was better this way.

For years, Frisk would be bothered with the kingdom or by the kingdom. That was no life for her. She gave C a hug as she stood up. “Do you think this is right, C?”

“To give our daughter the life she always deserved? I never wanted anything else more than that,” C agreed. She kissed her delicately and wiped her eyes. “We’ll all be okay, T. No matter how long it’s been too, you know that Frisk’ll always love ya.”

Sans brushed a comb over his skull as he met with Toriel. She said she wanted to talk to him that night. “Yay, successful prom date? I was a good boy the whole night. Okay, so I offered a pretend marriage but she didn’t accept, but I never offered the real thing.”

“I want you and Papyrus to take turns watching Frisk each day. I will no longer be watching over her on the weekends,” she answered.

Hm. “Papyrus and I are supposed to be riding around with her.”

“No, you won’t. You and Papyrus are going to be erased from her memory. Everyone that was monster in her life will be, including me,” she told him.

Oh. Ooohh. “This is one of those mom things that I just don’t understand, isn’t it?” Great. “All those times we talked are all gone now?”

“She won’t even remember the Underground. Stay out of site no matter what. You and Papyrus will be living near her, but in another neighborhood.” Toriel wiped her eyes again. “Sorry. Frisk just, she can’t keep those memories. She needs to go to college and keep going with her own life. I’m sorry, Sans.”

“Sure, sure.” He shrugged. “I still get like forty years for no marriage, right?”

“Yes, and I will try to talk to Asgore to get the law changed as well,” she said softly. “I know things aren’t always fair in the kingdom. I know Frisk wanted to change it.”

Yep. “Ah, the moment when you love the enemy, huh?”

“It’s not funny,” Toriel warned him. “She isn’t the enemy. I just, I cannot let her waste her life to gain so many friends just to try and overthrow Asgore’s rule. She doesn’t have years upon years to just waste on something so frivolous. The monsters are not hurting, and we will all figure things out as we move on.”

Sans put his comb away. “Toriel. I’m pretty sure Frisk didn’t feel like it was a waste of time. If she wanted to come back in the past, and I actually risked wasting my whole self for her to do it? She probably knows things we don’t.”

“She won’t waste the years that she needs to reach her own career goals on this trivialty,” Toriel said again. “By the time she finishes, then gets her education, so much time will have slipped from her fingers. She needs to reach her career goals and excel before she can move on into settling down with a husband or kids now.”

Sans rubbed his nose hole, forgetting for a second that wasn't polite. "Sorry. Anyhow, uh? So now we went from getting her married and happy in the Monster Kingdom, to college and happy outside the Monster Kingdom, to college and forever happy never knowing about the Monster Kingdom. All her memories from the future and her past completely wiped out. Is that what we're doing now? We're all sure about this?"

Tori nodded.

Sans didn't say anything at first. "Well, you are Queen Toriel. Not like anyone has any extra say." He held his bony hands up. "Hang on, I know, I crossed the too rude for royalty line."

"I will increase your pay, as well as Papyrus'. You only need to watch her outside her home, unless you think something more is going on. Do not interact in any way. If you must, do it with some kind of disguise."

Eh. "I got this?" Sans pulled out a magic orb. "I had it on me shortly after Frisk showed up and said the future stuff. Probably a disguise but I don't know what kind. I'll check it out later." He put it back away. "Do Papyrus and I at least get a goodbye?"

"I don't leave decisions to be acted upon for long. C is taking care of things on Frisk's end right now."

Great. Just, great. "Thanks for letting us say goodbye." He and Papyrus would be spookily looking over her shoulder without her knowing, for the rest of her life. Nah, he knew Papyrus wouldn't stand for it for too long. It would mainly be him looking over her shoulder for the rest of her life. "Can I say something about this?"

"The decision is made," she told him. "There is one more detail. Do not play the sax around her or the roofs around her. Enjoy your instrument, but soundproof your home or play farther away."

"It made her feel better," Sans told her. "Hearing it at night made her feel better. She told me that. I like my sax, especially outside by the moon."

"Sans, this isn't easy for me to request. I know what is good for her, and it's not the direction she is trying to redirect herself to. Nothing is wrong, and I won't let her continue down the wrong path," Tori warned him. "I didn't say goodbye either. Cutting off will only increase her awareness to her memory. C will be living with me after we get things settled. Frisk will be fine until then."

Sans shrugged. "Be careful what you wish for. Glad me and Papyrus burned a quarter of our magic life for this. You know, she might have known why she had to change this night. Maybe you need to use your power in the future for something. Now we won't know." He winked. "Just kidding. Papyrus remembers."

"Unless it is detrimental to the kingdom itself, I shouldn't know," Toriel responded. "I hope even though this pulls us into a rougher patch, we can all remain friends."

“Yeah, sure. Especially since we all just lost the same one too.” Yeah, he pushed a little too hard. He just felt so irritated. He burned his life force away and for what? He didn’t know. He had no clue. “I’ll see you around, Queen Toriel.”

“I am sorry we have to lose our friend,” she said. “I know. Her light needs to shine on the world, not on our little Monster Kingdom.” She was trying to keep her tears in control. “This is best for Frisk. She will be happier. I just know it.”

Well? He couldn’t say much now. “Never know, Toriel. Maybe she will.” Still though? Toriel took way too much control like that. He dealt with a lot from her, but this one? This one just felt like the biggest sting of them all.

He hardly got to know Frisk. Five minutes every three months. Yet, he felt so irritated inside. Even with Toriel’s tears, he just didn’t feel like cheering up the one that took Frisk away again.

Front Tree Is Missing

Ten Years Later

Frisk checked her phone. It was Saturday and she'd already been on call for an emergency that day. What else was needed of her? Oh, it was her friend. Well, she'd talk when she got into her front door. She lowered her mask as she started to unlock it.

"Are you Frisk Perez?"

Frisk turned, expecting the mailperson, but instead seeing someone she didn't know. She put her mask back on. "Yes?"

"Hey. Jazzy told me about you," he started.

Oh great, it was a blind date from her friend. They were all supposed to go out together that night, she almost forgot. "Yeah, just, I worked all day on an emergency today. Could I take a rain check? I'm tired."

"Oh. Your work, right," he smiled. "Say, what are you?"

What was she? When she was younger, she thought she'd try for doctor. As she went through school, she thought vet fit her better. But in the end . . . "I'm still wearing my hat."

"Oh! Oh, sorry, I thought it was merchandise." He tried to smile. "So? Doing really well for yourself, good for you. I'm an insurance agent." He moved his hands weirdly. "Insurance agent and fast food chain cook. Pretty kooky pairing, but opposites attract."

She took off her fast food hat. "I'm not the cook and it's my part time job. I'm a teacher."

"A teacher? Then, why do you have another job?" he asked.

"Because I'm a teacher." Oh this guy. "Why don't we try again tomorrow night? You're really early anyhow, it wasn't for a couple of hours."

"Oh. Well, we decided to do a movie first before we went out to eat," he told her. "Jazzy said it's been awhile since she saw a movie and got tickets. I'm picking you up for the movie, then we'll all go somewhere afterward." He pointed at the hat in her hand. "Promise it won't be there. Wouldn't embarrass you."

"Just tell them I wasn't up for it," Frisk told him again. A movie too? That meant they already had tickets then. She didn't mind it, but she was too tired. "I've still got papers to grade."

"Yeah, but it's 6:00 on a Saturday?"

“Point?” Frisk just wanted to go inside already. Gaw. If only something could get rid of this guy. “Not tonight. Just tell them not tonight.” She turned to go in, when she felt him grab her arm.

“Oh, come on, Frisk. You’re not scared of going out to a movie theatre with me are you?”

No. “I was leaving because I was tired at first. Now that you grabbed my arm, I know for a fact you need to fuck off, or get out of here.” She yanked her arm away and went back into her house.

She closed the door behind her. A part wanted to slam it, but he wasn’t really worth damage to her door. She took off her hat, her mask and her phone. She texted her friend the night was off and the guy they tried to set her up with was a dick. Then, she thought better and erased dick for ‘not to her taste’ before sending it.

She heard a knock at her door again. She looked out the peephole but didn’t see anyone. Hm. She went back to her dividing thoughts. A shower, food, TV, or just call in fast food with a good movie on her tablet.

KRRRSSHTTTTBKKKKRRRRR

Frisk heard the sound of something like a tree branch cracking and falling. She opened the door and looked around. The tree on her front lawn was . . . missing? It didn’t fall, it was just outright missing? She started to come out, but felt a strong wind that blew her backward unexpectedly. When did the weather turn strong? Her own door closed.

She tried to open it again, but it seemed to be jammed.

Sometimes, weird things just happened to her. She could never explain it. Never saw anyone, but always had something weird happen that others wouldn’t believe. Tonight, it was losing her front tree and being thrown and captured inside by the wind.

Frisk got another text message from her friend asking if she wanted to come without the guy that wasn’t to her taste. *My front tree was uprooted from the ground and it’s missing, and the wind seems mad at me.* Yeah, she felt like having some company after all.

Usually, when someone else came around, the strange phenomenon would stop.

Later that Night

Frisk slept through some of the movie which gave her the chance to get some energy. They tried to dine in at a restaurant that had a lobby, but the line was so long, they ended up going around somewhere else and bringing it back to her friend’s house. Afterward, she was dropped off in front of her own house again.

“Frisk?” Jazzy asked her. “What the hell happened to your front tree?”

Frisk just shrugged. “Ran away. I’ll see you later.” She waved goodbye and went back to her door again. She messed around with her keys, trying to open it. The air felt chiller, and having her front tree abducted didn’t make her feel well.

She dropped her keys and stooped to pick them up. She tried to open it again and heard success. She went inside, ready to take a shower and head to sleep to prepare for tomorrow.

Sans and Papyrus’ Secondary House

Sans finally came through the door and looked at Papyrus. His brother was busy looking through the folders, trying to pin down who was bothering who and when and what it had to do with Frisk. “It’s time to call Toriel.”

“The Queen?” Papyrus asked. “I admit, this is getting harder. I don’t quite know what else to do.”

“Pap, I saved Frisk six times alone today, and barely managed it without her knowing,” Sans reminded him as he dropped on his own couch. “If I feel any magic presence nearby I gotta head over again, I don’t trust anything’s close to ending.” All he wanted to do was sleep too. “Oh yeah, her front tree is gone too.”

“Oh, you couldn’t get it back?” Papyrus asked. “That’s going to be harder on her.”

“At this rate, I don’t know if someone is going to kill Frisk, kidnap Frisk, or if she is going to go insane,” Sans admitted. “She’s probably gonna call up that damn therapist tomorrow, they might make her take stronger meds, and I don’t know how that’ll affect her jobs. So?”

“The queen,” Papyrus agreed. “She can tolerate weird things around her for so long, but it has been too aggressive. Losing her front tree won’t help her mind either.”

“Yeah, her friend pointed out it was missing, so Frisk knows that isn’t in her head,” Sans agreed. “I don’t think that helps her out though.”

Sans pulled out his cell. He knew Toriel would not want to hear this, but Frisk was just in too much danger. Too many things were changing in the Monster Kingdom, and something had to be done. “Hey, Tori, how’s it going? Listen. So, Papyrus and I have reached our limit here. Papyrus is looking at folders and pairing up ideas with them, he’s been making like great card house structures with them and turning them into placemats. He’s out of thoughts. Oh, and Frisk nearly got killed six times today and she’ll definitely be hitting heavier meds so? Different plan?”

“Six times?! Frisk almost got killed six times?!”

“Well, a couple were probably kidnapping more than outright killing, but a couple of others was killing with mutilation and torture being involved from their profiles,” Sans corrected himself. “So rounding it that way, it wasn’t a good day. I lost the tree in her front yard too.”

He scratched his head. "So now what? You can mess with her brain again, but it doesn't change all these things. This is too much for us."

"Why are they all coming after Frisk so hard now? Is it because of the Monster Kingdom's political noise?"

Political noise. Real nice words. "You've got monsters that are heading back to Underground, just to stake it as their nation. Undyne is their leader with her wife Alphys second in command. I think it's more than just some noise."

Monsters were restless. They had the sun, sky, and humans had the knowledge they existed, but they still stayed contained. Contained from human civilizations and contained from sharing that there were so many more monsters out there. They had to follow the other nations rules for certain matters, even though they couldn't join any.

Some wanted to follow Asgore and change nothing in the kingdom. Others wanted to break free of the Monster Kingdom and join another nation. Some wanted to stay in a secret area from humans, and others wanted to live among them.

Overall? He remembered what Frisk was saying, before her memory had been erased of so much. That human knew what would be unfolding. *Toriel should have just let her live her life.* "Toriel? What do you want us to do? I can't be gone too long, night's usually the prime time to attack."

"Oh. I just wanted Frisk to have her everyday normal life. Not to get messed up in the kingdom's problems," Toriel said softly.

"Well? Fact is even I can't prevent death much longer against Frisk. People know who she is, and where she's at," Sans reminded her. "Look, I don't want to hang up this job. I need it, you know that, but Frisk is about to bite the big one." Sans was heavily warning her as much as possible.

"Undyne will step down if Frisk becomes leader of the Kingdom. She said so," Toriel revealed to him. "Asgore will never step down, but if I do, then Frisk will get it. However, there will be so much tension between Asgore and her. Both will be on even footing, he'll try and kill her. I know him, so . . . I will have to kill him."

Oof. Toriel wouldn't want to do that. "Better idea. Make her marry a zero," Sans said. "Marry someone everybody knows wouldn't give a shit to bother with kingdom stuff. You got Undyne that promised she stepped down. A daughter who's got no idea which way is up. A brand new king that doesn't give one iota about changing anything. Plus, an Asgore that wouldn't feel threatened at all, 'cause he knows that new double king equal in power to him wouldn't do crap."

"I don't believe this. No, wait, of course I can. You want Frisk to marry you still?"

"Hey, at least I never went with Undyne to the Underground." If he wasn't watching out for Frisk, he would have. "Look? You know your daughter. She's the only one that figures out

the impossible stuff. Take out the threat of the next king taking over, and Frisk could work whatever magic she needs to this time.”

Yeah, he heard grumbles over the phone. “If I step down, Frisk is declared Queen. If you marry her, you become King. You would be higher than her, so Asgore would have more power than her. You would have Asgore’s power, but you . . .”

“Yeah.” He couldn’t give a shit about it. “I mean, I might raise Grillbys imports up higher in the structure but that’s it. Oh, and an eternal seat. I want a Sans eternal seat. Sometimes it’s crowded and I have to stand.”

“ . . . genius, Sans. This might work. However, Frisk would still be queen. She would still have some say-so.”

“She doesn’t know anything about monsters even existing right now,” Sans reminded her. “It’ll take time, so no new moves from her super fast. In fact? I mean, you could put her in the safety of Underground for a little bit. Only Monster Kingdom residents could see her behind a quick barrier kind of thing.”

Sans thought that was helping. It was just supposed to be a temporary thing until Frisk got herself under control. Instead, Toriel turned it into a whole other direction.

“Frisk could be told she was ambassador and she would have to deal with all of the troubles before she could get out. From the humans to the other monsters. Her strategic thinking hat would be on. Even if she didn’t come up with anything, she would be safe. Oh! You could kidnap her, Sans!”

Uh? “No, I get to marry her.” This sounded less like he wanted.

“No, listen, Sans. If you kidnap her, then everyone outside the kingdom will assume she has been kidnapped. We will take her back Underground, Undyne would never hurt her, we’d put up a barrier as you stated, and she’ll believe that we did it for the Monster Kingdom to gain freedom. She’ll be safe and sound behind a barrier.”

Uh? “You don’t want to even tell Asgore?” Shoot. He almost had her.

“I will put an unsealing crack on Frisk’s earliest memories of Underground. It won’t appear right away, the human mind can’t deal with a flood like that. After she remembers, she will get to do what she wanted, help the kingdom.”

Shoot. Lost the marriage again. “So, I kidnap Frisk and take her to Underground where Undyne is. You throw an unlock on her mind. She freaks out for a bit, and then fixes stuff. How are you going to keep monsters behind the barrier though? You can’t actually seal it up.”

“That’s easy. Keep Frisk from ever coming near the barrier where she would see others going in or out. Only in the beginning should she ever see it. Besides that, I will install a vow of silence about outside the barrier when others are around Frisk. I’m sure Undyne won’t rebel now that Frisk is there and could make things better.”

Oh. “Toriel. I’m sure in your mind, you’re a great mom, but you’re not.” Sans didn’t even care what she said afterward. “I tried to get her out legitly, and you are still trying to chain her up. Completely in a barrier this time.”

“She will get to do what she wanted, help the kingdom.”

“Safely from behind a barrier and behind lies. You don’t even care if she does figure out a way, you just care that no one will be shooting at her.” Sans sensed magic nearby. “Look, sorry, just think about it, I have to go.”

“It’s an order, Sans the Skeleton! You and Papyrus will bring her here so she remains safe!”

“Yes, Queen Toriel. Don’t want to get hit with treason,” Sans answered. “I better go save Frisk’s life now, bye.” He hung up. “This is such bullshit.” He didn’t have time to explain to Papyrus yet, he had to go and look into the magic power near Frisk’s place.

Monster Kingdom: Underground Area

After Sans came back, Papyrus was told about the new treacherous plan. Following Sans’ wishes, he headed home. Frisk now lived in a place much closer to the Monster Kingdom that they didn’t need help to reach it anymore.

Which was good because he wouldn’t want to have to be sent by the King or Queen to get this done. “Undyne?”

“Papyrus.” Undyne turned around, her old spear still in her hand. “You and Sans joining the cause?”

“Um? We are bringing Frisk here. Royalty said so,” Papyrus said. “We will all be living near her probably to watch and make sure she follows the rules. So, will I be able to get my Royal Guard training again?” He tried to end it on a bright note.

Didn’t work. “What do you mean Frisk is coming here?”

“Queen Toriel is sending her to figure out how to fix the kingdom’s problems.”

“Oh, good!” Undyne smiled. “We’ve needed that determination of hers.”

“Only, until she solves it, monsters must pledge a vow of silence about matters outside the barrier area. Oh, and there will be a barrier again, but it will be one that monsters can pass through freely.” Papyrus watched Undyne’s actions. “Also, Frisk will eventually remember us from her eight-year-old memories but not at first. Not at anything past that though.”

Undyne rolled her eyes. “I don’t believe this. Queen Toriel is confining Frisk Underground?”

“Her life is in a decent amount of danger,” Papyrus said to her. “This will fix the problems of the kingdom and keep her safe at the same time. It’s a good. Plan. It’s a good plan. By the queen. You also won’t be charged with treason or anything against the crown if you keep quiet and let Frisk just . . . just find her way and do what needs to be done.”

“In the meantime, the mission doesn’t change,” Undyne warned Papyrus. “We aren’t letting the kingdom rule us anymore. If Queen Toriel does this to Frisk, then she isn’t coming into visit with her either.” Undyne tapped the wall next to her. “Imagine. Not long ago, we all just wanted the sun. Now we’re staying in the darkness, to find our own kind of freedom.”

“I will let her know that she isn’t welcome,” Papyrus said softly. “You will keep it quiet?”

“I’m not going to do it for all of her life, just until Frisk figures out . . . something. Something to get out of this hell.” Undyne sighed. “Asgore should be fighting and kicking back on those nations, to make his way the only way! Then, then I wouldn’t be involved.”

“But others would still be unhappy. Coming to the surface, it brought more ideas and a deeper taste of freedom,” Papyrus said as he looked at his hands. “Instead, we are all still trying to live with the classic rules of our great ancestors just because royalty . . . oh, I shouldn’t say.”

“Don’t want to lose the power they show toward other nations. Gotta look strong. Gotta sound strong.” Still, Undyne wasn’t happy. “How’d your brother take the request before this whole thing happened?”

Papyrus shrugged. “He seemed okay with it. He won’t do anything until he has to though. He’s always hoping something will break with Frisk. A short-term wife means she never reaches 100, meaning no children and no lengthy marriage. It’s all he really wants, that he knows of.”

“That he knows of?” Undyne asked. “What do you mean?”

“Sans. He doesn’t remember the future anymore than Frisk does. No one does, except me.” He shook his head. “The reason Sans granted her what she wanted wasn’t a huge mystery, unlike Sans believes.”

“Really?”

“Yes, it started with the long-life span urge he had. He said he hadn’t stopped thinking about it for years. He wanted her to stay around long past Asgore, so that he would have a chance with her in the distant future.”

“Yeah, not much he could do at the time,” Undyne agreed. “Then the whole bring her mom back to life?”

“He didn’t care about the ramifications. Sans just wanted her to be happy.”

“Hm. Do you think he still has those feelings somehow? Is the memory fully gone?” Undyne asked. “If so, he will be doting on Frisk until she dies.”

“I think every once in awhile, he must feel some kind of reminder, but he never acts upon it. Quite hard when to her he is just an imaginary no one,” Papyrus told her. “Sorry.”

“Don’t be. Everything’s hard and unfair. You know, Asgore broke his own rules all the time Underground,” Undyne told him. “If Frisk never freed us Underground, any of us could have walked up to him and said ‘Hey, Asgore. Um? We need to talk about this law here. It’s too difficult for me to follow.’ You know? You’d talk it out. And now?” She hit her spear against the ground. “Now there is no talk, it’s just ‘you have to’ and ‘we must always be fair’ and ‘we cannot be wrong’!”

“Yes, they are very much trying to fight for the kingdom. If they mess up, there could be someone seeing weakness. That’s what Sans said. Show weakness and we’ll be invaded.”

“Invasion. Mutiny. We need Frisk,” Undyne said. “I hate the idea of lying to her, we were such good friends, but if anyone can do it, it’s Frisk. She may get the biggest lies, but the information from the enemies, allies, possible allies, and the kingdom’s problems will all be uncovered to her. However?” She pointed at Papyrus. “No one deserves to live a life in that kind of dark. She’s got a year, tops, before I tell her. I don’t care if I am tried for treason.”

“Undyne, the only reason they can even go easy on you is that the enemy does not know what you’ve done,” Papyrus reminded her. “Please don’t tempt anyone anymore?”

“Promise, Papyrus,” Undyne said. “We won’t do anything between any of us either until we see what Frisk can do though. I’m not exactly ecstatic to have you or Sans make Alphys and I have kids.”

“Yes, I can see how far you want to get away from that,” Papyrus said looking around one more time. “We all do need someone though for that requirement.”

“I really . . . don’t think I can stand that kind of . . . life,” Undyne warned Papyrus. “Not that I don’t want kids, but someone dictating how and when or . . . look? If anything happens to me, then you or Sans can take care of my Alphys. Got it?”

“Yes, we will,” Papyrus agreed. “We’ll get through this. Frisk will see a solution no one else saw. She had done it once before, and at a much younger age.”

“Whether she can or whether she can’t, she’s gonna be mad as hell when she figures out the truth,” Undyne said. “Even as forgiving as Frisk is, she’s gonna want to throw a punch or two at us.”

Frisk’s Home

Frisk tried to relax with some tea she found in the back of her cupboard. After her shower, her friend retexted her about her missing tree. *The doctor always said the things I saw were in*

my head, or I was responsible for doing something that I found later. How did that work when a whole front tree was missing? Frisk couldn't dig it up on her own and just throw it somewhere that no one could find it.

She watched the antics of George Carlin, but he wasn't making her feel much better tonight. She heard a screech coming from her bathroom. *In my head. Don't even bother.* That same screech came from the kitchen. *In my head? Maybe I should bother a little.* Frisk got up and moved slowly to her kitchen to peek into it.

Yeah, it was just the neighbor's cat. It had somehow snuck into her kitchen. Then, another cat must be sneaking into her bathroom at exactly the same time. "Su-!"

Frisk was hit all at once by incredible pain. It was over fast and hard that Frisk was panting, finding herself on the kitchen floor. Was it lightning? Getting struck by lightning? But in her house?

"Come on, Frisk Dreemur, get up." Frisk heard a voice behind her speak to her with a rude uncaring sound as she felt herself being pulled into a standing position.

Standing up hurt so much. What had they done to her? Frisk stared at the people around her. But? They weren't people. No, they were. They were probably cult members dressed up so no one could identify them. "Bastards."

"Aw, she'll be perfect for the boss," one of them said. "You can badmouth us, but not the boss. Feel honored, human."

What? Frisk felt someone grab onto her face. She couldn't see anything. *My face is not a handle!*

"Book it, we got to go with the prize before her lame protector figures it out. Back way. Mort, create a diversion up front to distract him."

Frisk felt the hand come off her face. She had no idea what they were talking about for a protector, but if they wanted to distract someone from helping her? She would try it.

She screamed as loud as she could, shocking the cult disguise members. It shocked her too, the action leaving her in paralyzing pain as she fell back to the ground.

"Damn, I didn't think she had enough strength to do that!"

"Just grab her and bail!"

"Touching her bare skin will keep the pain turning up."

"Who cares, she caused it."

Frisk screamed again as she felt a cold stab as someone grabbed her shoulder. Then, that same person let her go, and she hit the floor again. Then, the cycle begun again. She felt another stab against her neck.

“Sorry, sorry, sorry!”

This cult member seemed nicer about it. At least he didn’t seem to want to wear horns. Although, skeleton wasn’t much different. Then, she saw another cult member dressed like a . . . fish in armor? *The hell is going on?*

Frisk couldn’t see the action, but she heard her house probably getting torn apart. The view of her couch showed it getting tipped over. Her TV was also hurled across the room. Her hands jittered as the lightning pain seemed to seep out of her through her fingers.

As long as nobody touched her.

But, of course someone had to touch her. She screamed, feeling it all over again. This time, they kept holding her, rubbing across her. She felt herself get thrust into something.

Such unbelievable pain and another stabbing pain in her arm. Frisk could barely breathe. Her face was wet with tears and all she wanted to do was keep screaming forever.

The pain started to ease as she felt motion. She was in a car?

“It’s okay, Frisk, take a few years, Punk.”

Frisk found herself being able to concentrate. It was the strange fish in armor. Her body started to feel relaxed more. “Help.”

“I am,” it insisted. “I’m Undyne. Remember me?”

Frisk never knew any one of them. Her pain was ebbing away nicely though when she started to hear-

“Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, I can’t believe this!”

The skeleton she briefly saw looked in on her from driving. As unsafe as that sounded.

“You alright?” He sounded concerned. “Undyne, she doin’ okay?”

“Yeah, I’m not holding back on her,” the fish lady said to him. “Least I can do. Frisk isn’t in any pain now. If we keep her stable for a couple of hours, the pain should stop.”

Frisk moaned. The pain was subsiding, but now she felt really dizzy.

“That’s it. Even if you didn’t show up, Undyne, that’s it. I can’t do this anymore.” The skeleton paid attention back to the road. “I can’t work miracles.”

Frisk felt the fish lady move her sweaty hair out of her face. “Who are you? The costumes.”

“Friends,” the fish lady said. “We are friends to you, Punk.” She gripped her harder. “In fact, we used to be Besties. Remember?”

Ugh. Frisk just couldn’t stay awake any longer.

“Don’t worry about it. Get some rest, Frisk.”

It . . .

Chapter Summary

It . . .

Sans kept driving straight. He stopped for lights and obeyed the sign limits, but he didn't turn. He just kept it straight. The less Frisk moved, the less Frisk had her skin touched, the easier it would be to deal with the pain.

He had no idea what they used on her. They looked like they were emu monsters with one bat monster mixed between. "From the look of it, she'll survive. That magic is frying her humanity's level for pain though. You'll have to stay on her until it's completely out."

"Assholes," Undyne told Sans. "Straight-up assholes, they didn't have to gang up on her with magic, she's freakin' human for fuck's sake, she couldn't have done anything!" She growled. "It made her seize and paralyzed her. Just a human of all things. I can't believe they made it past you."

"Hey, I couldn't talk to her, couldn't see her, and I wasn't allowed inside of the actual house," Sans reminded her. "Toriel made that clear. No presence at all."

"Yeah, but if she spotted anything, it'd be bad on her to not know what's going on," Undyne said.

"Oh yeah, it was. It was getting worse every year. Frisk straight up thinks she's schizophrenic. She's got the whole nine yards of help, but there's nothing anyone can do when the delusions are actually real." The perfect ordinary life Toriel wanted was never gonna happen as long as others were after her.

"You did tell Queen Toriel the original plan first before this crazy stuff was recommended, right?" Undyne asked. "About just marrying Frisk? You're no threat to the knowledge of the kingdom."

"Yeah, I asked," Sans answered. "Doesn't matter much. Hey, before you bite the big one if Frisk doesn't find a way out, can I marry you?"

Undyne gritted her teeth. "I'm already married to Alphys."

"If you're gonna die, you can divorce her and marry me," Sans said back to her. "Please? What about like the day before? Papyrus and I will be taking care of the little skele-fish or skele-lizard with Alphys."

"No, I will never put Alphys through that."

Sans banged on the wheel softly. “Yeah, I know you wouldn’t. I had to try.”

“Take her.”

Hm? Sans looked back at Undyne. “Take who?”

“Frisk.” Undyne gestured back to her. “Take Frisk. The Queen all but promised you her fifteen years ago, Sans. Queen Toriel has made you watch over her whole family, and Frisk, while keeping silent in the background. It’s not fair, and a deal is a deal. Take Frisk as your wife.”

Boy oh boy. “Easier said than done, Undyne.”

“Nah. You can use your magic without worry again. When Frisk visited I learned a lot about the outside world, including Las Vegas. Before we pull the wool over Frisk’s eyes once, let’s pull the wool over the Queen’s eyes once.”

Heh. “Frisk doesn’t remember a thing about monsters,” Sans reminded her. “Doomed.”

“No. You have a specific magic just for that, Sans the Skeleton.” Undyne winked at him. “Take what you are owed.”

Specific magic? “Oh.” It took a second before Sans knew what she was talking about. “Temporary restore.” It wasn’t very useful. It could be used for a short amount of time. Nothing of it would exist afterward. It was used when he felt something messing around with the timeline. He could use a restore, remember, and write it down.

He was never able to retain it though, all he could do was write it down. “It’s fifteen minutes of really nothing, Undyne.” Especially with all the backwards stuff that flower had tried in the past.

“It’s enough time for her, to remember you, and understand the situation,” Undyne told him. “Fifteen minutes is all you need to get her to say yes. Tell her the truth.”

Well? “No shame in trying.” Hell, he did ask if he could marry Undyne right before she got herself killed. “Hold onto her tight, we’re gonna take a turn.”

“Hey, hey, language in our wedding place,” Sans teased as he opened the door for Frisk. “Head on in.”

Frisk wasn’t dumb, she knew things beyond her knowledge were happening and she probably wouldn’t get all the facts. Sans himself said it wouldn’t last long. *The drunk bunny is not*

ruining his life.

“I don’t know how much has been restored to you,” Undyne said, “but you once went to the future and caused things like someone to not get sick or die? I don’t know, but that very thing you were doing, we need to do it now. The kingdom is in trouble, but your Ma Toriel is going to use you to correct it.”

“I remember everything. I need 1,000 names for others who support the idea of a nation,” Frisk answered her. “Also, I’m keeping my last name, Sansy Honey.”

“Fine with me, I’ll change mine,” he said. “I want to be Sans Perez. Hey, that sounds cool. Ooh, romantic right? You like a little romance, I remember that.” He still just chuckled.

“He can’t get rid of ‘the Skeleton’ and you have to take his last name. It’s tradition,” Undyne told her. “One more thing we all hate.”

“Is it law or tradition?” Frisk asked.

“That’s one of the problems. Both are the same thing,” Undyne told her. “We aren’t going to be able to go over everything, just know? That we are going to lie to you. Your Ma Toriel is trying to make things better and keep you safe.”

“Just the basics then,” Frisk agreed as Sans went over to talk to someone.

“Your mind is going to go back to how it was before. You won’t remember any monsters,” Undyne told her. “Your Ma Toriel unleashed this small crack on your early memories at around 8 so that is what you eventually can access.”

Eight. “Underground?”

“Yeah, she wants to trap you Underground in a fake barrier. We are basically going to make up the cover story that Sans and I used all the Queen’s magic to escape it, to get you,” Undyne said to her. “You are going to be forced to figure out the problems of the kingdom, before we use the last of the power she gave us? To break the seal for everyone.”

Frisk sighed and rolled her eyes. “I am being tricked into doing the very thing I wanted to do in the first place. Why not just ask?”

“You don’t know monsters, and a lot of monsters have been after you,” Sans said. “Like, a lot. I saved your life like six times before they finally got you.”

“Yeah. That hurt.” Frisk gripped her shoulder. It still hurt. “Why did they do that?”

“Asses,” Undyne said. “Anyhow, let’s get you married. Sorry, it’s not gonna be that nice. Mine wasn’t either if it makes you feel better.”

“That’s okay, I don’t need anything fancy.” Frisk looked at the pajamas she was wearing. “Maybe regular clothes would have helped?”

“We had to get you and book it,” Sans said. “We’ll magically find something for you Underground. Come on, we don’t have long, and if I don’t marry you-”

“Drunk bunny.” Frisk knew.

“That or Alphys. Trying to get Papyrus to take Alphys. Would take Undyne, but if you fail, she’s just gonna get herself killed.”

“A little less honest, Sans,” Undyne told him.

Alphys? “She’s already married.” Frisk looked at Undyne. “You two are married.”

“We can’t have kids though, and when they reach 200, women have to have kids,” Undyne said. “No exceptions.”

“You mean, you and Alphys, have to bear kids?” Ridiculous!

“Yeah, so Undyne and Alphys are going to use your amnesia to their benefit,” Sans told her. “Nobody can enforce anything while they are around you ‘cause you can’t know the truth.” He chuckled. “That’s why she also tried seceding with some monsters to the Underground area of the kingdom no one goes to anymore. She turns 200 in four months and Alphys turns it in six months.”

“There’s no grace. It’s more than just becoming a nation, Frisk. I don’t completely blame your mom,” Undyne said wearily. “I . . . you better get married now.”

“Yeah.” It sounded like Frisk was headed to the brink of something new. No memories. “Will you tell me I got married?”

“Pbbt, we aren’t even telling the queen until you are out, and we aren’t even telling Asgore you are in the Underground,” Sans told Frisk. “Yeah. You’re going on a fun ride.” He grabbed her hand again. “Wedding dress need not apply to the situation. You’re cute in PJ’s.”

Frisk smiled. “Your perfect just as you are, Sansy Honey.” She took his hand. “Can you do this for you too though?” She looked toward him. “Can you remember too?”

Sans didn’t seem as thrilled. “You only have like a little future that’ll bug you in the restore, and the knowledge of monsters. Me? I’m . . . a flower kind of put a little . . . i just know it’s not so good. Do I have to?”

“Oh.” Frisk shook her head. *It would have been nice to have him remember. I wanted to find out, if he did all of that, because . . .* “I would appreciate it?”

Sans shrugged. “It’s gonna shorten the time you got to remember,” he warned her. Frisk didn’t change her mind. “Fine.” He closed both his eyelids.

Sans. Did you . . .? Frisk watched him open his bony eyelids back up. “Sansy Honey?”

“Frisk Sweet?”

Frisk felt Sans grab her right away in a hug.

“Aw, shit, oh memory wipe.” He pulled away slightly. “Um. Hate this part. Can’t waste time saying sorry or what’s up? Um.”

“Did you love me?” Frisk knew what he meant. There wasn’t any time to play coy. “I didn’t see it at first, I was too involved in everything, but you gave away soo much to bring me back in time to save mom. There was nothing you personally gained.”

“Heh. Dang.” Sans grabbed her hand. “Uh?”

No time. “I love you,” she told him. “Whether or not you loved me, I just wanted you to know.” *I don’t want to lose this. All these memories. The knowledge of all of my friends. It’s not fair.*

“I love you.” Sans said it back. “That’s kind of why I really wanted to just give you a long monster life, so when Asgore kicked off, I’d have a chance but nah. You just had to get way too excited about your mom.” He gently knocked her playfully on the chin. “Sucker me just wanted you happy more.”

I knew it! She hugged him. “I know that I won’t be able to remember, but at least you’re not going to marry anyone else.”

“Yeah. Sorry you don’t have a pretty dress on your big day,” he said as he hugged her back. “Didn’t think I’d get to this point for at least forty years.”

“Hey, I need your paper.”

“Here ya go, Pal.”

“Thanks.”

Frisk just enjoyed her hug with Sans. It was her only romantic hug she’d ever had with him, that they ever mutually could enjoy. “I wish I could have remembered.”

“Gosh what a nice scene.”

Frisk looked at two people she didn’t know. They were dressed in nice dresses.

“Filled with love and absolutely nothing else. That’s what my husband always wished for too,” another one added to the first.

Frisk didn’t know who they were and she didn’t really care. “Did you really learn to dance?”

“We won’t even get to the end of it,” Sans said. “It’s okay. I’m bound to learn again. As long as I stay around you long enough- ooh!” Sans pulled her closer. “Frisk, shit! I don’t want you to die in a mere forty years, I’ve got to extend your life.” He looked toward Undyne. “Make sure it gets done. I don’t care by who, but make it happen. I’ll eventually figure it out and she better not be 40 before I smarten up or something.”

“Fine, I’ll figure it out,” Undyne promised him as she looked through her phone. “This is gonna be one freaky marriage video. Hope you two don’t ask to see it.”

“Tell her that I married her too,” Sans added. Frisk was going to question why, but she felt his gentle hand moving through her hair and didn’t care much. “I don’t want Frisk to do anything with anyone else when she’s official with me. She’s a wicked hottie, everybody goes for her.”

At least now she knew what Sans thought. *I’m a wicked hottie to him? Fuck yes, I am!* She squeezed him tighter. She knew a part of her should be talking to him, chatting about how he felt, especially when he had bad memories that he also had in his head . . .

All they did though was hold each other. Like there wasn’t anything else more important in the world. As they did that, she heard the sounds of the standard wedding words happening. *Oh no. Rings.*

“To us, you’re all idiots.”

Frisk watched as a ton of her supportive friends were coming through the chapel doors. Odd. “What’s going on?”

“We aren’t strangers to time magic,” one of her earliest friends said. The one that gave her her magic balls of disguise. She put two of them in her hands. “The reason everything is getting out of control, is because many nations remember you now. It’s the benefit of living in free nations, magic is spread out among nations, it isn’t as individualized.”

“Whoah.” Sans looked at Frisk, then back again. “Can you spill some of that our way?”

“No, we have to do the opposite,” another friend said. “We are going to put you all back in the barrier, with Peaches as well. I mean, Frisk.”

What? “What would that even accomplish?” Frisk asked. “If you lend your support instead to defeating Asgore, the Monster Kingdom can-”

“Your monarchy rules and traditions, they need fixed. King Asgore and Queen Toriel already signed many documents. Unless you kill them, you can’t do that, and no one wants to wait fifty years to see if it works or not,” another friend warned her. “The best thing to do is wrap the Monster Kingdom in complete amnesia. You’ll never know anything.”

“We already had that idea with Frisk,” Sans said, “but uh, we don’t need that for everybody.”

“Yes we do. King Asgore lied about things he signed off on, we know he did!” Another friend told Frisk. “He’ll never confess openly, but to a human walking through his land? Maybe he’d slip up. The information would then be void.”

“Then just put the whammy on Frisk and the King,” Sans said. “Come on, let’s not play with an entire kingdom of memories? Cause. I mean, falling into the Underground for a little while is okay. Living there . . .”

“You can’t take away everyone’s memories of their time on the surface.” Frisk knew what Sans meant. “They want sun and freedom.”

“After you correct some of the things wrong that Asgore and your mom screwed up on,” Another friend informed her, “then we will have a much better deal ready to be signed.”

“The problem when you came up, is that no one knew you were coming up. There was no paper or deal with anyone, and then the first ones you introduced yourself to were humans.” One of her friends just shook their head. “We hide from humans, by our choice. If they want to be friendly with them, okay, but working with us first is the only way to maintain peace.”

“You had the right idea, Peaches,” another friend smiled at her. “Really, you were looking for support, and you got it. It’s just that nobody wants to wait half a decade between seeing if they both die first or you die.”

“Look, there is no guarantee anything will flow that smooth!” Sans yelled. Sans hardly ever yelled. Really, hardly ever. “Monsters down there *hated* humanity, just like you don’t like it up here. Even I didn’t care if I killed her at first. Frisk’s life was in danger all the time, she was lucky!”

“She made it somehow,” one of her friends said. “If she did it once, she can do it again.”

“Probably some leniency for her age, but she’s not even a kid!” Sans still protested. “I get what you want to do, a new beginning sounds nice, but it’s a bad idea. It’s a real bad idea.”

“Monster Kingdom doesn’t even know humans that well, they won’t be able to tell her age. We’ll put her in a striped shirt.”

“There are a lot more that can tell the difference between a child and an adult than you think. It’s a bad idea, a bad idea!” Sans was very against it. “She’ll get killed.”

“Then? We’ll try again,” another friend said. “We are in control of the barrier. In control of the flow of time.”

“Take the power you have, Sans Ol’ Pal,” another friend addressed Sans, “and take that by like 10,000. In times of emergency, we all share powers that a king would normally possess. All 500 of us are hogging a lot of the time power right now.”

“But we totally got permission, Peaches!” Another friend added. “It took months to get it from all the nations, but we got it. The barrier we put up will be in our control, and even if you are about to die, we’ll be able to give you another chance. As many as you need. Everything will be fine.”

“Everything will not be fine!”

Frisk felt Sans grab onto her tightly.

“You can’t just play with heavy power like that!” Undyne held out his spear. “Especially for a human.”

“If we ensure that the Monster Kingdom will be ready to sign our proposal at the end when we let down the barrier,” another friend said, “then it’s allowed.”

“You can’t have do overs millions of times,” Undyne called them out. “Even someone like Sans knows you can only play around with time a little. You can’t get everything perfect. Time will kill any amount of power after so long.”

“Well, we worked that out too. You’re right, that’s not something we can infinitely do,” one of her taller monsters friends said as even more started coming through the doors. “We can give up to twenty short time changes before she reaches the barrier. If someone commits an action against her, we can take time back five minutes.”

“If she dies and she ran out of the short time changes, then she will reach the beginning of the cycle again,” another one said.

“If she runs out of short time changes, and messes up things in the meantime, then when she reaches the barrier, she will reach the beginning of the cycle again,” another friend finished.

Sans was still holding onto her very tightly. He burned out part of his magic life to bring her back, and they were talking about power like it was a game. “Sans?”

“Even if you share power, time has a price,” Sans warned them.

“We won’t let anything happen to Peaches,” another one said. “We still remember our friendship. This is what she wanted, a way to make peace. To let the monsters decide.”

“We know that you just attempted to marry Frisk,” another one said to Sans. “That’s how we’ve all been following you. Your plan isn’t good enough, that’s only good for you, but who else?”

Plan? “Wait, so you knew?”

“That’s how they are here, they knew we’d be here. They went back in time to intercept us.” Sans didn’t let go of Frisk. “Minds of monsters and humans alike are tender. Especially sensitive monsters.”

“It’s true, you might remember some of it,” the friend that gave her her magic balls back again agreed. “It won’t be a beautiful paradise, but eventually some memories will be restored at the end of the barrier. There might be some slight restoration along the way at points, but it won’t be too bad.”

“I know you monsters, you’re too new to the classics. You know, to tradition,” Sans warned them. “Say what you like about humans, you all live just like them compared to how monsters used to live. So, I’m gonna say a word and I want to see how many of you recognize it. LV.”

No one moved.

“How about EXP?”

No one said anything again.

“Do any of you know that LOVE isn’t always a nice word? No? Then stop what you’re doing, you’ll destroy Frisk!”

Destroy?

“Frisk is strong and has everlasting determination,” another friend said. “It’ll be okay, Sans. We are granting her fondest wish. We believe in Frisk.”

“Yeah, and no matter what, she’ll either get the freedom she wants for your kingdom, or she’ll live a nice quiet life without anyone trying to assassinate her from day to day anymore.”

“You don’t know fucking shit about Underground!” Sans was really going off the deep end. His lightguiders were looking in all directions. “Her saving grace was being a kid, and Toriel thinking she was one. This is going to be endless hell if you do this to her, and you promised you wouldn’t take her out until she gets her goal? Really? You better start drafting up an emergency response for if that doesn’t happen, Buddies.”

“It will. We all believe in her.” Another friend came closer to Frisk. “You didn’t lose the support of the last four years of the life you lost. This is what it was all for. Just for you, Peaches. We want to help.”

“When it’s all over, you’ll have all the memories too,” another friend smiled. “You two can remember your love for each other. It will all be okay. Just, sleep.”

They didn’t get it. Sans couldn’t even put up a fight when he heard the word ‘sleep’. Sharing that awesome power of every monster in a nation, it was intense. He thought telling them some words they didn’t understand would slow them down. It’s like they were all so gung-ho about it though, he could feel it wasn’t going to get reversed in their minds.

They even turned back time to do this. *Frisk*. As Sans hit the floor, he was only a little awake still. Frisk was knocked out. The next time she saw him, things wouldn’t be the same. This would get bad. He tried to hold her hand.

“Oh yeah, those.”

He barely watched as he saw the ring he gave Frisk being taken off her hand. The ring on his finger rolled off when he hit the floor. The same ‘friend’ collected it.

“You’ll get them back.” She smiled. “Geez, Sans, I can’t believe you are still awake. From only having individual power, you sure are strong. Get some rest. This’ll be over before you know it. Just make Frisk get Asgore to tell the truth.”

Truth.

“Just destroy the lies, and it’ll be over,” she urged him. “Just make him admit it.”

“Admit what?” The last of his energy, just to try and get the answer they should have given a long time ago.

“Just, I can’t say but. . .” She was debating. “Humans don’t have magic, so they never could have made a barrier to seal monsters inside. Monsters not familiar with humans would never know that, would they?”

Chara watched Sans fade off. Frisk was almost unconscious herself. “Let’s get this over with. I hated the way he looked.” She really did. In fact? “Does anyone know about that LV and EXP thing he was mentioning?” She started to pick up Frisk. “Is that going to harm our plan?”

“No, but it was like millions of years ago probably,” another friend of Frisk’s had said. “Kingdom related. It can’t be important.”

“Sans was really worried.” Chara passed Frisk onto a stronger person as they headed away.

“This won’t take long, Chara,” one of Frisk’s other friends said to her. “Seriously, probably a week. Frisk is perfect for this part. It’ll all be okay. Frisk will definitely . . .”

Chara and the others stopped as they saw Queen Toriel right there in the parking lot. That was pretty brave of her. “Back off.” Her stance said she was ready to pick a fight. Her eyes were screaming something different.

“Are you the one really trying to take them?” Toriel stared at Frisk’s friends. She was not very far behind, having the same suspicions someone might try something with her. Good suspicions, two did. Sans and Frisk’s so-called nation friends.

The nations. Nations. Whatever they wanted to label themselves, they were all demeaning! Except? Right in front of her. She couldn’t miss it. Someone who died so long ago, and yet, there they had been.

Chara. How did the nations ever get Chara?! *Someone must have taken her soul and done something to it.* That wasn’t right! But, Chara wasn’t in any pain. Her outfit was nice, she was even wearing a lovely dress. She looked healthy. *She doesn’t recognize me.*

She didn’t remember her. The nations. She did not want to hurt Chara to get to Frisk and Sans. Undyne was indisposed with the nations magic easily. “Get away from them.”

She couldn’t hurt her daughter. She couldn’t leave Frisk and Sans to the devices of the nations though! One more time. She would not remember it, but she would take the world back one more time.

One more chance.

“Don’t do that.” Chara and the others seemed to recognize what she was doing. “It’s pointless. We’ll remember, and we’ll be right here to collect them again. You can’t stop the nations.”

One more chance. Not so far back, just enough. Not eight. Maybe sixteen. Seventeen year old Frisk. Just a little more time.

“You are wasting your-”

Frisk’s home, Seventeen years old.

Hm. Toriel stared out her daughter’s window. There was a chill that moved through her. A dangerous chill. *I didn’t, did I?* It was a familiar chill, like the first time she had traveled back in time. Had she . . .?

No. Impossible, of course. *I don’t have nearly enough magic to do that again.* Not unless she lost her memory in the process.

The outside was cold after all. Almost Christmas. Cindy would be on her way to work soon, and Sans would be at his own home, or maybe in the kingdom with Papyrus. Frisk was safely relaxing in her own room with the sounds of her television.

Good. She made it a habit to keep track of those she cared for. There was too much of an uproar in her own kingdom. All of the rules her and Asgore had to make to keep the nations happy. They were backfiring. Hurting too many monsters that a mutiny was getting started.

Such a shame. There was nothing Toriel could do to protect the kingdom, she simply left it mostly in Asgore’s hands. Soon, she would have to watch out for Cindy if she decided to take her home.

Toriel sat down in her chair. *If Frisk marries a monster, they would be able to help protect her. I know Sans wants out of this mess. He never sided with anyone on the rebelling side, nor messed with the nations. Perhaps if I talk to Cindy, we could create a future with Sans and Frisk after all.*

She reached for some of her cocoa, waiting for her beloved to return home. She heard Frisk talking back to her television, getting into the spirit of the programming. *I’ll feel much better when C comes back to me.* She felt more than chilled tonight. She felt anxious. Nervous. Maybe it would be a good idea to call Sans too?

Sans’ Home

Sans was putting up his Christmas tree. Not many days left before he'd get some time off to hang with Papyrus. He hummed as he decorated his tree. Skeleton ducks were the ornaments of choice. "Papyrus is gonna love this tree," he chuckled as he hung another ornament.

Then, he felt a chill. A strange chill he knew pretty well. "Time travel?" No, it was different. He felt an altogether different kind of chill. He looked at his bony hand holding the skeleton duck ornament. It was trembling?

Something nasty was happening. Sans moved away from his tree. Maybe he should call up Papyrus? Nah, bad idea. He might be over on the mutiny side going on right now. It'd be a bad idea, might get Pap in trouble.

Still, he could feel a deadly sort of chill in the air. As he moved, he almost swore he felt kind of slow.

This was major. Sans started to pull up the bigger profile folders to find the most concerning. So far, Durian was the one butting into things. He looked at the profile. He'd found Frisk's fathers identity, and who he used to be. Durian actually tried to buy him off, to kidnap Frisk for him.

No way, Sans told on him right away to Toriel. *He is making the most waves. Could be him. Damn.* It was more than the regular chill. It felt like something was happening to time. Something big.

Something new.

Something . . . "bad." Oh yeah, something bad was coming. He called up Toriel to get her view on things.

"Sans."

"Hey, good guess," he teased. "I'm not feeling so chill right now. I mean, I am, which is why I'm not feeling so chill right now."

"Yes. I have a similar feeling," she agreed. "Is there any way you think that someone messed with time?"

Hmm. "Monsters do that all the time, but it don't affect me unless it's about me," Sans told her. "You?"

"Same. Someone changed something."

"Something good or something bad. Something changed," he agreed. "Then again? This chill is even less chill. Real stress vibing through. Not the typical deja vu thing, Toriel." Ugh. Okay. "Are you hiding anything from me, Queen Toriel?"

"Are you hiding anything from me?" she came back on him.

“Yeah, but I’ll only tell you about it if you are hiding something back on me.” Poor tree was only half finished in skeleton ducks so far.

“I . . . am hiding something,” she revealed. “You first.”

When it came to time, it was best not to fool around with it. Not with this feeling. “Frisk eventually found out about me. I try not to see her very often.”

“Do you like her? Are you asking to marry her again?”

“Again?” Well. “You are hiding something.”

“Are you asking her in marriage?”

“We’ve just been seeing each other a little bit, just on the roof. A couple times a month maybe,” he shared. “I haven’t asked or revealed anything to her, I’m waiting for you for that.”

“ . . . again. You know Frisk again. Time is not backing down from this.”

“Your turn.” Sans was especially eager to hear what she had to say. It sounded like she had rewound time back on him too.

“You were once the one who took Papyrus’ place,” Toriel said. “You were very close, and Frisk knew from a very young age that you could be her forever roommate.”

Ooooooh. “A happy ever after you squashed, why?”

“You were too familiar with her world, and you wanted not just her, but the world. You wanted to live on her campus and go to classes.”

Man. *To be free like that.* Sans didn’t quite know what to say.

“I know you wanted it, Sans, but it was dangerous. Too dangerous. I turned back time to when Frisk was eight again, just so that couldn’t happen. When you first showed signs of wanting leeway, I took you away to be the spy instead.”

Just words. *Fine. Keep it together. So what if you had a way better life the other way around?* “You owe me,” he said. “I want time with her, without being undercover. I was supposed to get her.”

“You won’t try to integrate into the world with her as an excuse?”

“That dream sailed a long time ago.” *Because of her. Changing my time like that.* It wasn’t funny. That was a lot of time shaved off just because she didn’t like how he acted.

“We’ll see, but that isn’t the issue right now. You called because of the feeling we are both experiencing. Other strong monsters must be feeling it too.”

“Maybe even non-strong monsters, this feeling is really weird.” Sans almost felt a sense of dizziness. “Why’d you stop it? Specifically, it wasn’t just to make me miserable, Queen Toriel. What was so dangerous about it?”

“I didn’t say it then, why would I say it now?”

“Because maybe whatever you really feared about me learning, it could be causing whatever is happening right now.” Sans’ lightguiders saw a strange motion in front of them. “World is starting to look different.”

“Yes. I’ll call up Asgore, but I haven’t seen anything dangerous happening with them.”

A them, so there was a them involved? “What would you do if you did?”

“The people I don’t need you knowing about are not to be trifled with. I would turn time back to keep it safe.”

Keep it safe. “They want to do something to it?”

“I have to go, Sans. I’m going to go check on Frisk.”

She hung up. No more explanation. Sans clicked off on his cell and looked ahead out the window. *I had a way out, and way more.* That hurt. That wasn’t fair.

He didn’t even feel like fixing the ducks. He had no idea what was going on, but he didn’t care about much of anything. Depressed was an understatement. She said it so casually too, like it wasn’t a big deal at all!

Why’d she have to do that? He could have dealt with whatever he learned! This feeling too. Maybe it was time being looped around more than once. After all, if she didn’t want him to get Frisk or freedom, maybe she kept turning it back? She couldn’t hold the power to do that and remember forever. She’d never know after awhile.

Not until her magic expired.

So not fair. “Screw it, I’m taking Frisk to her prom.” Frisk hadn’t even wanted to go with anyone, but without her moms going, it was the perfect chance to talk to her one on one. He definitely didn’t want to play fair now either.

So he wouldn’t be the greatest son-in-law. So he didn’t know shit about running a kingdom. So he’d be terrible at royalty. Who cared? It’s not like he’d ever need to know anything anyhow. He just- he wanted what he was owed!

What he was promised. What he was probably promised in more than one time.

Frisk.

Not fair.

It just was not fair.

It just was not . . .

It just was . . .

It just . . .

It . . .

. . .

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