

Under Prison Tale

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Under Prison Tale

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Summary

Sixty years ago, Frisk broke the monsters out and to the surface. The few humans there are decent to them, and the monster kingdom prospers. However, there are several barrier entryways, dotting the Earth all over the place. Asgore sends in teams to retrieve the technology to create their own barrier to prevent future tragedy.

They find out the hard way just how dangerous the barrier humans are. Sold as slaves by their souls or killed for disobedience, Sans is the only one left of the team after four months. With his own luck running out, and believing he'd be meeting his own end soon, he senses something he hadn't sensed for sixty years.

Frisk.

A Hard Worker

"Are you sure you don't want to stay child?" Toriel asked Frisk.

She was funny. The whole Underground had been funny. It was such a different place than where she lived. It was sad, yet happy. Frisk liked it. She had to be careful though of strangers, her parents taught her about them. Still, she made good enough friends to tell them her name. She met a neat goat-lion-mommyish lady. She met another goat rammy thing that had been married to it. They were royalty but they weren't together anymore on account of soul stealing. Which wasn't nice.

While Frisk walked around to leave the barrier she also met other fun people. Undyne, she was mean at first, but she eventually eased up. Alphys. She was just looking for a friend, and so she lied, but Frisk forgave her. She had a friend at school she once lied to about owning a certain toy to impress them, and they forgave her, so she forgave to.

They were all so nice, and the skeleton Sans and Papyrus were the funnest. She stayed in touch with Papyrus on an old phone almost all the way through, and Sans was like this neat guy who was good at comedy. It was nice that they could leave the barrier altogether, but as fun as it had been, it wasn't her home. She had to go back to her home.

She waved excitedly toward Toriel. The big woman bent down and gave her a hug, whispering if she knew where she was going. That was easy. There were entrances all over. She saw three not even that far in the distance. She gave the goat a little kiss on the cheek and set out. It wouldn't take long. Hopefully the monsters of Underground stayed happier than the ones in her own world.

The longer the monsters stayed, the less time it took to understand their strange new world. They had found humans, but they were dotted across the surface. The terrain was too hard for most of humanity. There were more humans than monsters still, but not by a whole cool million anymore. Maybe like 10,000 total on Earth, in isolated spots.

Humans many decades ago had wiped out their own world a lot with nuclear weapons. There were only a few safe places for them to live. They were the only places with a great amount of greenery and vegetation. Animals had survived it all, but the humans there didn't act like Frisk. They didn't even seem to understand the difference between the Underground monsters from the regular ones. No one felt threatened over lacking a soul.

There were enough open areas as well to the monster/human ration that creating a new kingdom in a wild area filled with greenery and animals like Earth used to be before conflicts had been easy to accomplish. With everyone getting along, and a new home, the monsters were all set to have a lovely paradise forever. They would only expand outward now, and since things like radiation really didn't affect them as much as the regular humans, they would one day have just as many as humans if not more.

Yet, as they moved around, they also learned about a terrible thing. The humans that didn't get along with the monsters lived in their own barriers. Humans had sealed off areas of the Earth for their own selves to live, dwell in, and continue their existence. Great caution should be used if a human from the barrier areas ever came out.

Sixty Years Later

As decades went by, the Monster Kingdom had become greatly prosperous, but King Asgore couldn't ignore the underbelly of it all. In all of it, there was never more than a few hundred feet when something like an old fashioned telephone booth was seen. He was worried about what would happen when those humans did come out, but so far not one ever showed.

Then, a group of monsters that had gone out had been slaughtered by a human being spotted running to a barrier.

So, Asgore sent out a small team for reconnaissance. For their own future protection, King Asgore wanted to work on their own barrier like the humans.

If they could find the technology, they could take it. Barriers used magic, but to create a barrier that completely encompassed them? They would need to find out how it was done.

Undyne, chosen for defense if something happened. She took two of her closest Royal Guards along with Alphys, the Royal Scientist.

They were told not to take any unnecessary risks and return back in three days. They entered into a barrier entrance way. They were never back in three days. King Asgore sent another team to check on them, but Papyrus was worried about Undyne and insisted on going.

So, Sans went with him too.

And that? Was the end of the paradise they had all come to know.

UNDER PRISON TALE

Twinkle Paradise, Purest Imports . . .

It. Was. Weird. They hadn't shown up on just the outskirts of a giant barrier. They were in the middle of a shopping center. On one side of the store was a furniture place, specializing in lights. On the other was a random shopping place called Jeepers Peepers. Up ahead were the front doors and a few more random stores of clothes and makeup and bedding. But right in the center near where they were?

Monsters. Standing or sitting around a white gate area, like an attraction. Each one had their designation type on it.

"Whoah, Toto, I don't think we're in the Land of Oz no more," Sans said. That couldn't be good.

"Oh please forget it once?" The voice of a woman. She was in front of the white gate talking with a man, holding a little boy's hand who held a toy. The boy was probably only two or so. "He didn't mean to, honest. He's too young to understand."

"Rules are rules. If *your* two year old dusted a monster, then you must pay for it," the man argued back with her.

"It was a simple toy."

"They have simple souls. Fragile. He destroyed it, and as his mother, *you* must pay for it."

Damn. A two year old took out a monster with a toy? *Like Frisk could fight with the tiniest stick.*

"He was just wanting to play with it. He's a child, they have toys and they go up and down," his mother said. "He doesn't know the power of a soul yet. The monster was not trademarked to me, it's not right."

"It is too. You have the responsibility of watching your children here. Do you think you could go to Jeepers Peepers and let him smash a mirror and not pay? We only take payments in smaller cases of rentals, but since this is an accident, I will ask my manager about payments."

"Oh, thank you. That's all I'm asking for." She picked her little boy up and walked off with the guy.

Then, Sans felt a crushing weight on his skull! It made him feel so heavy. There was nothing but painful light surrounding him.

"Behind the gate. There's no escape, it's suicide."

Sans felt himself being herded into the gate. He couldn't even speak though. He felt the back of his skull banging so hard, probably what humans would call a migraine. He couldn't concentrate as he heard the gate snap behind him, along with a familiar call. He looked up enough to see them.

Alphys, Undyne, and the missing two royal guards.

After talking to team one, and through observing the surroundings, they all quickly learned about the fabled Twinkle Paradise. It was a dimension where monsters were enslaved, and humans were almost themselves immortal, like them.

Humans had found immortality like monsters. They lived in a city, a bright shining city with enough lights that they could turn it into day when they put them all on. They dimmed the amount of lights toward evening, with the less being on at night. It kept their circadian rhythm in sync.

Most of the monsters there didn't know about the surface world. Twinkle Paradise was a second dimension, like the Underground, except instead of a prison people chose to live there. The people who had the magic to create the barrier in the first place.

People of all kinds, different languages and different descents lived there. The humans who had gone on to make a new life there had also taken their original cultures. And while the original people were still there from it's conception, they also had children who grew up and came back. Overall, the Underground's population to Frisk's World, was like Frisk's World to Twinkle Paradise. People who didn't die, who kept growing.

And, since these humans had honed some kind of magic skills, it only became *bigger*.

They had found Alphys, Undyne, and her team, but it didn't matter. They needed help themselves. While not slaughtering them with their souls, the people of Twinkle Paradise knew how to hurt them so much that they couldn't think straight. It didn't matter how powerful the monster. Humans there were even more dangerous because they *knew* the power they wielded against monsters. They had no problem rounding up about a hundred of them like cattle in the gated area.

Sans just stood with everyone else as he watched some people approach. They looked different from the other humans around them with their clothing. They sat down some kind of device between them and one of the humans that were holding them.

"Hard worker." A strange accent came from the man's mouth. "Wife and I have restaurant. We need hard worker."

"Rent or buy?" The saler asked, able to understand the separate language like the monsters did. They weren't communicating telepathically, but the device between them was communicating their words perfectly to each other.

"Buy," the man's wife said. "We need a big, tall worker. We can't run our business by ourselves no more." She gestured out the door. "We travelled long distance to get here."

Yeah, that made sense. Different area altogether, just like Frisk's world. Different languages. Different interactions. It was like a whole world on top of a world.

"We filled out papers." The man handed the saler some papers. "We have food and shelter for it. We just need help."

"We don't deal with papers. Not that classy of a place," the saler said. He moved into the gates where Sans and the others were waiting.

Sans felt a seizing pain on his head again, as did the others. The fact the human was coming toward them in that huge mess of monsters didn't make him feel any better.

"You're a big one. Come on."

No! Sans held out his hand for Papyrus, but felt more pressure pushing down on him. He couldn't hang on.

He couldn't hang on! Undyne was even trying. They were all crumpling to the ground in agony. When the menace finally left far enough that the pain subsided, Sans could see out of his eye sockets again. The saler was putting some kind of band around Papyrus' waist.

"This will keep him binded to the owner's soul, being you." The saler shined a light on the man who'd been talking. "No one can accidentally hit it or damage it but *you* now. This store does not do exchanges."

"Oh, he's perfect! Hello!" The man said joyously to Papyrus. "Yes, he's perfect. Come. We have long way to travel. What's your name?"

"They usually don't have names," the saler said. "Just a barcode on the back of the skull."

A barcode on the back of the skull? Sans tried to touch the back of his skull. *Is that how they are keeping us down? Did they mark us that way?*

" . . . Papyrus." Papyrus' voice didn't sound half as strong as it usually did. He didn't even add 'The Great' before it. "I'm not supposed to be here."

"Don't worry, we treat you well. Come, come!" The woman said excitedly. "You like cooking?"

" . . . yes?"

"Good, we'll teach you cooking. Let's go, Papyrus."

"Sans?" Alphys weak voice was heard next to his. With a question she couldn't ask, but needed to know. Wanted to know. They all wanted to know it.

As much pain as he'd been in, and what he was recooperating from, Sans could tell. He put his all into it before they made it out the doors. Studied everything he could about them.

"They'll be good to him." *Papyrus. Gone. I'll find you again. We'll all get home. Everybody.*

Somehow.

Somehow.

Sans' New Owner

Four Months Later . . .

Sans scratched the back of his skull where his barcode was at. As another human approached, he moved towards the back of the herd of monsters. He'd been there long enough to know how to avoid selection. Some monsters were braver than others, some monsters were newer, and of course some monsters just wanted to be selected because there was a chance the owner could be nice.

And when the saler came by, they wouldn't feel massive pain on their souls when they were cooperative.

Sans tried to avoid any selection at all. He learned about the whole history of Twinkle Paradise and the monsters. Every little thing. He tended to come outside on occasion to get a breather, but a lot of monsters stayed inside the sheltered area. It wasn't very big, but humans couldn't make a selection from inside of there. It wasn't easy to see in there. There was no weather to worry about but 'having a hide house' was supposed to make them feel more safe and secure.

Screw the psychology behind it, as long as humans couldn't pick him, that was all that mattered.

Papyrus' owners had felt the best. He hoped that Papyrus was living a better life. He was at least at a restaurant. Maybe he got better at cooking? It was nice to think so. Alphys' wearing glasses was a dead giveaway she was apparently a smart monster too. When they had been taken in for 'dressing' so they all looked nice but unanimous to the humans, they knew Alphys was in the wrong spot. They actually took two seconds to speak with her.

It didn't equal freedom though, she was just distributed to some other store called Advanced Pure Imports. Boy, Undyne put up a fight for that one, along with all her loyal guards that came. They ended up killing her guards and hurting her soul so much to keep her down. Undyne barely survived.

Sans didn't know what happened to her after that. She never came back. She could be dead for all he knew anymore. It was just him now. It had only been him for months. He made it through by trying to joke and linger with the other monsters. Making them feel better made him feel better. But even his good streak couldn't last forever.

"I want a skeleton."

"We have many monsters for selection."

"I want a skeleton. I am only interested in a skeleton."

Sans looked at the customer. She had a deeper voice, and the look in her eyes didn't promise good things. Nor did the fact he was the only skeleton there right now. *Oh shit.* Why did he

stray so far away today? He was in the hide away shelter, but if she was adamant, they were coming in after him. He scooted as far as he could back to the shelter. There was only room for about twenty five, but maybe if he crouched down. If he could just hide. Maybe they would get inventory wrong?

After all they were selling rights to monsters that they had no rights to in the first place. They couldn't have their inventory right. *Just move, just move, just move.* He could hear them coming faster, they were rounding the gate from the outside.

"Rent or buy?"

"Buy, with rental tryout and approval."

Sans would do his best to fail that rental if he could. If it didn't end his life. Something inside of him still felt like, like if there was even a small chance to get out of it all, it was worth it not to give up. And this woman? He did *not* like her. At all. It wasn't just because she was trying to buy him with his soul.

"Has he been used before? Skeletons are interesting. They have no body, yet they can manifest so many things to keep life interesting."

Just move. Just move.

"I had another skeleton but I'm afraid I accidentally killed him last time. I got too excited."

Just hide. Just hide. Just make it out the back before they saw him.

Then.

"It'd help, I know it will. Trust me on this. Jeepers Peepers would make your room so alive. Come on, let's go before we have to hit work?"

Just a regular conversation between mall customers. Nothing special he'd take notice of, until he looked at *who* that mall customer had been talking to.

A human he wanted to catch the attention of soo bad. He hadn't seen it since it was just a tiny tyke, freeing them. If it hadn't been for him remembering the way the little human felt to his senses, he'd never recognize her. She wasn't a tiny tyke anymore, she was full grown. She wouldn't be anyhow. Heck, it was human, and it'd been what, a good sixty years since she freed them? Yet, she didn't look a day over maybe twenty three. The immortality of Twinkle Paradise at work. *Frisk.*

She was there. She was safe. Unlike him if that woman got her filthy digits on him. Should he call out? She'd been so small, she might not even remember him, and if he did call out, they'd notice. Monsters were pricey, and this woman was already interested in a rental for a sale.

"I know we have one skeleton. It's a shy one, hardly ever comes out of the shelter. There's a back way, it's probably coming out of there. Come on."

That was the end of that, she was his last hope! He waved at her, desperate to be seen. What'd he have to lose?

"That monsters waving at you, Frisk. Talk about weird."

Then, Frisk turned from staring ahead and walking to her destination, to seeing him. Instant recognition. He may not have his old coat and shirt anymore, forced to wear some pressed white shirt and tux with pants so he looked good. But, she still could tell it was him. *Help. Please help.*

"There it is!" The woman and the saler had spotted him. "That's the only one, huh? A little short for my taste. Would have liked it taller, but okay."

Sans tried to move away again, but he could already feel the pressure moving down on him. His ability to move was becoming constrained again. He turned to look back toward the lamp area of Jeepers Peepers, the only thing he could think of to feel better, but Frisk was gone.

Over. Not like she could do anything anyhow.

"Here, card." An older woman's voice, but sensing the voice waves, he could still hear it. "Buy, no experience, no rental. Charge it all." Hearing that, Sans lifted his skull some to see. He could make out the grown Frisk next to the saler and the insane woman.

"Hey!" The insane woman protested to the saler, "I was in the middle of-"

"She wanted renting with approval, I can see your papers," Frisk said. "I just want him, no approval, and the saler already has my card. It's mine."

The saler held Frisk's card. "Technically, she's right. It's already been charged." He handed it back.

"Preposterous, it was mine!" The insane woman complained.

Sans looked back down, and caved into the pain. He couldn't fight it anymore, and he shouldn't. Ending up with Frisk was at least going to be better than what the other one had planned for him. He felt himself being grabbed, but he didn't move against it. He could see the light of Frisk just beyond the gates. Next to her was the woman from before, pissed as all hell, but it didn't deter Frisk at all.

"Here you go, ma'am. I just need to attach this buckle."

Sans saw the buckle he had always dreaded around him. Now, it didn't seem like it would be nothing. He was brought out, next to Frisk, with his head finally clearing of the pain. He got a better look at her.

She was well. Healthy. Looked nothing like the seventy some year old she should have been. "Kid."

"Sans!" Frisk wrapped her arms around him. "What in the world are *you* doing here? You're supposed to be on the surface where it's safe."

Why? How did he end up in Twinkle Paradise? How could he even follow in there? His grip too. Her funny childhood friend, she could tell he'd been through the wringer. She wouldn't have even recognized him without his little jacket, except she always remembered his odd little eye sockets. So different than any others. It was still a risk but as soon as he called her 'kid', she knew there was no doubt. It was Sans the Skeleton. "Why aren't you safely on the surface?"

"Ya kiddin'?" He tried his best to seem alright. "Can't just leave monsters without knowing their fate. Used to half assing a job, but gotta make it at least fifty percent through, am I right?"

That. Didn't. Frisk sighed. Later. She needed to get Sans out of there and find out what was going on.

"Frisk, how come you keep talking to this monster? And buying one off the bat, what was that?" Jeanine asked. "Frisk?"

"I'm going home now, Jeanine," Frisk answered her. "Tell work I'm taking the day off. I will see you later." There would be no answers given right now. Straight home. For Sans.

Frisk's Home . . .

Frisk opened the door with her finger. It opened with her own fingerprint. "Come on in." She got him inside and locked it with her finger too. She took off her coat. "Take a seat on the couch. Do you want something to drink while you tell me what the hell you're doing here?" She popped off the lid on a wine bottle and poured herself a glass.

"Usually don't. But I watched my brother getting sold, monsters dusted, Undyne getting her ass kicked, and Alphys moving to another store. Not to mention I almost got bought by that woman standing beside you. So yeah. I'll take something stiff, Kid."

Hearing that, Frisk ducked down the wine rack and pulled out something else. Her family line's prized whiskey with a shotglass. After pouring it, she went to the couch and gave it to him. "You followed somehow."

"Yeah. Didn't know it'd lead us straight to the gates of hell." Sans slammed the whiskey like he used to do with catsup. "Monster Kingdom was going great. Asgore was worried the humans hiding in barriers might cause more problems later 'cause one showed up and took out a group of monsters. So, we were supposed to investigate to figure out how to make our own barrier to keep the loonies out. Couldn't have thrown out some warning monsters were enslaved in your world, Kid?" He moved the shotglass in his hand, looking at it. "Taking a guess you aren't surviving on a waitress job if you just bought me outright."

His voice. Even though he'd been through hell, it tried to sound normal. It was failing. "Sorry about that. I was just a little girl, I didn't even know how it worked except 'monsters were sad

in barrier' so the surface would make them happy." She took his shot glass. "Another?"

"Yeah. But a bigger glass if you catch my drift."

"You bet." Frisk went over and grabbed the whole bottle. Sans was a skeleton, he could handle a whole lot more than a mere human, and he needed it. She gave it to him. "Do you know the store Alphys was taken to?" Frisk touched her wall, bringing out a holographic tablet with a keypad. If she was still there, she could order her straight online before anyone else did.

"Advanced Pure Imports, but it was months ago. Like, almost four." Sans started to drink the whiskey straight up like he'd been running a marathon and needed water desperately. He went halfway on the bottle before he stopped.

Advanced Pure Imports. There was a good chance Frisk could get her then. She started to browse online for new monsters in there. *Found her.* She'd recognize that awkward look anywhere. "I can get her, but it's going to take time." She tried to make him feel better. "Sales are fewer, there are more rentals for monsters approved in Advance Pure Imports. They are typically set out for computer work. Buying them is rare."

"Can you get her?" Sans asked. "Not just rent? Is it possible?"

"No problem," Frisk said touching some of the holographic areas. "I'm required to sample her first through rental, which takes three days to approve. She's reserved though. No one can buy her." Now, the touchier ones. "Any information on Undyne, Papyrus or anyone else?" She watched him glug the whiskey again. Before they could talk about anything else, she wanted to get them reserved or bought. If they'd gone out for rentals? The world was cruel. Saving them even one extra rental because she was too slow would make her feel like a heel.

"The Great Papyrus." Sans looked lost for a moment. "Bro got bought by a restaurant couple right away. They said they came from far away. They seemed okay. That was good for him. Undyne? I got no clue. When Alphys was taken, she got beat down. Haven't seen her since. She could be dusted for all I know."

Months ago. *I'll find them. If it's the last thing I do.* She'd get them all somehow. She had to.

"So, can we schedule a trip back home any time soon with everyone or is that really just a fantasy?" Sans moved oddly, picking the bottle back up and drinking the rest down.

"I don't know how to leave," Frisk had to confess. "You're placed outside at certain times in your life, in different barriers with the purpose of letting you grow and mature, before being brought back in. It's law. My little group got attacked when I first went out. A rare occurrence, but that's how I ended up Underground."

"So even if we somehow find the others, we're still stuck no matter what." Sans scratched the barcode etched on his skull. He stopped scratching his barcode. "Monsters are just expensive objects here. Can you afford all this?" He looked around her place. "Maybe."

"It's fine, I can afford it," she said.

He waved the empty bottle in a circle. "You happy here?"

Frisk didn't know how to respond to that. "It was my life, Sans," she said. "My parents were here. My life was here. I couldn't stay out on that surface for too long, I'd die," she revealed. "A long time ago, there was a different war after the monsters. Not everyone agreed about how the monsters were handled. It went nuclear. There's nowhere else to stay." She looked toward him. "I'm sorry you ended up here. Monsters are the only thing out on the surface, even before you were freed."

"Shit calling a rainy day dry," Sans replied. "That's not true, there *are* humans out there in isolated spots."

Humans did survive out there? "Not many then." She knew that painful fact.

"Do you mind telling me something?" Sans asked. "What were you doing in that mall randomly? I know about destiny and crap, but I doubt it was that destined."

"I work there. I was on my way to work," Frisk said. "I never get that close to Pure Imports, but I saw the familiar lights of your eye sockets and took a chance."

"Heh. Great." Ugh. He could have been freed a long time ago if he'd just came out of the hiding hole more often. Then again, he could have just got bought. It was win/lose either way. "Nice digs for working in a mall."

"I like to make my own money. It's my right." Frisk took his empty bottle. "I will try and get everyone back here. I'll do what I can to figure out how to leave."

Sans was silent a bit. He started to look around and noticed there weren't many pictures. He got up and checked them out. Moving holograms against the wall was all she had. He didn't recognize anyone but Frisk, but that wasn't what he was looking at. Working at a mall, yet she afforded him outright. The others too. And the lavish place she lived? On mall money? Nah.

Frisk was opened with a warm smile with a certain set of humans. From their looks, probably her parents. She was open with some others too, but not in every picture. As he watched the pictures go round, he caught the fact that her open warmth was all over the place, just like Underground. Except, it disappeared whenever a certain man showed up in the pictures too.

He went back to sit on the couch, motionless. "Does he hurt you, Kid?"

Frisk got up and moved back to the wine rack. She tapped her fingers against the top. "I'm quite hungry. I bet you haven't eaten anything in awhile. Hang on." She moved toward the other side of the room to a big black refrigerator. "Snack fridge. Hated having to make monsters make meals all the time for me. I prefer quick meals at least a few times a week." She reached into the fridge.

Completely ignoring it. The little kid that saved the Underground, that just saved him, and that wanted to save the others? Was herself stuck.

"Chicken Fingers are tasty," Frisk answered. "Chicken fingers. Crunchy and fried. Is that okay for now? I can get you ketchup with them or barbecue sauce. Your choice."

"Guess that's my answer," Sans said. "Really didn't want that as the answer. You're too good for that kind of thing."

Frisk shut the fridge a little harder than she meant to. "Just give it a few minutes. You want something to actually drink like a pop or something?"

"I've eat Monster Food, akin to dog food for four months. Chicken fingers are good enough, Frisk."

"Good, that's good." Frisk brought them over when they were done. She sat down next to him.

"The little girl who thought she could." Sans picked up a chicken finger. "Became a woman that couldn't."

"No," Frisk said to him. "Not that it's any of your business, but no, he doesn't hurt me. I just don't feel comfortable around him, that's all."

"Sorry." It popped out of his mouth faster than he could stop it. "Been conditioned to act a certain way for owners. After all, you're the only one who can hurt me anymore. Owns me." Hmph. "Prize for best owner goes to Sans the Skeleton. Then what's the deal with the guy in the pictures you avoid? Who is he?"

He was about to get his answer as that same person walked through the door and went over toward Frisk. He glanced at Sans, then back at Frisk. "You bought a monster? That's new. I thought you were against that. Warming up to it finally?"

Sans felt the guy's jacket land in his lap. He'd known what that meant. He may not hurt her, but there was a feeling Frisk felt uncomfortable. He got up but didn't know what to do with it. He didn't want to get her into trouble.

"I got it." Frisk took the jacket from Sans. "Sorry. Maurice, Sans. Sans, Maurice. He was one of the monsters who helped me when I was stuck as a child." She hurried toward a closet and hung up the jacket. "He accidentally got stuck in the barrier."

"Oh. Well, that's terrible luck," Maurice said to Sans. "So from freedom to enslavement. How's that make you feel?"

Keep it together. "Been better."

"Been better. Good response." Maurice looked back to Frisk. "So you bought your little childhood friend that helped you out? Cute. Stupid but cute. What am I going to do with you, Frisk?"

Frisk didn't answer that. "I need to go outside, to get him back to the surface. Please?"

"Going outside, though, that's tricky. That's regulated. I have no persuasion for outside." Maurice looked toward Sans again. "It's your life, Frisk. We'll see what we can do. You still working the mall? Doing good?"

"Doing great at the mall," Frisk said. "Haven't missed a single day until today."

"Oh, Frisk." That smile. "You're a charmer. Benefit is on Friday, be ready for it."

"I will be," Frisk insisted.

He looked toward Sans. "Ugh, my granddaughter is a weird one." He gestured to Sans' neck. "Are you going to collar it? If you don't collar it, it's against the law. I don't care what little trick you plan on doing setting it free, but inside you need to follow the rules or your little pet will be taken away. It'd look bad enough on me already. Don't tell anyone anything that you're planning to do."

"I know, Maurice," Frisk said as he handed her some money for a fancy new collar. "No one will know."

"Anything else, Frisk?" He reached in his pocket for more.

"I want him to have the nicest clothes and food. Top notch," she said.

"I imagine so, he saved your life when you were little." Maurice pulled out a card that said Monster Express. "Anything monster accessory related can be bought on that card." Then he pulled something else out. A ring. "And here you go, something for you."

"No, no. I'm fine," Frisk insisted. Still, Maurice took something out and placed it on her finger. "I said I was fine."

"Well, I like *my* star to twinkle a little brighter than the rest," he said. "Better chances someone worthy will see you shine. Especially needed with the way you dress. Wear that on Friday. Make sure you get your monster collared. If that's it, I'll get going."

Just like that, he was out. Sans looked back to her.

"Sorry, he got confused." Frisk had closed herself off as soon as he went out the door, and she was still nervous. "Picture by picture if need be, we'll find them."

Sure. She didn't have the greatest confidence in her voice, and the way he'd been cattled with a hundred at a time? Sans wasn't stupid. He glanced at the ring she just got. "That's pretty. Can I see it?"

She sighed and raised her hand. On it, were initials. F. I. D.

"Pretty proud of your job at the mall, aren't you?" Sans asked her. "Tori liked you. She wanted to raise you. Can ya tell me one thing, Kid?"

"I am far from being a kid," Frisk said to him. "What do you want me to tell you?"

"Would Tori be happy about whatever's going on here?" Sans asked her. "You work at the mall, real proud of that, and you eat chicken fingers. You dressed down, and I'd never guess you'd live somewhere like here. And that guy, he walked in here like he owned the place. What's going on?"

"There is no promise here for you to keep," Frisk said to him. "Don't worry, 'the child' you promised to protect for her is fine. If I were outside the barrier, I'd probably be dead right now. I've been living my life over seventy five years."

Urg. "You saved the Underground, and you brought us up to the surface," Sans said. "It's not about a promise. It's about making sure that little kid is still okay because everything else in my life is absolute shit right now."

"Oh." Frisk moved around slightly. "Sorry. I get a little standish sometimes about it." She gestured toward the door. "That's Maurice. He's my grandfather."

"I picked that up," Sans said. "What's that got to do with anything."

"I don't like him," she openly admitted. "He can strut whenever he wants. He's got access. Eternal access, wherever I live." She took a deep breath. "I'm sorry. He's . . . he's one of them that threw the monsters in."

What?

"And . . . " Bigger breath.

"Enslaved monsters." Got it.

"I'm not like him. I couldn't help who I was born to," Frisk said in her defense. "I'm sorry." She moved away again. "I need a soda."

"And you told him about me and wanting to leave, 'cause what? He can read your mind?" Okay. A little sour, but Sans was never expecting that.

"If he thinks I'm not being faithful about something." Frisk turned around and lifted her hair. She had her own barcode on her neck. She turned back around. "I know the pain you fight when you don't cooperate. It's the same I feel when I don't." She opened up her beverage.

Shit. She was practically under his thumb. Family or not, she didn't have no say so either. "Can't help what you were born into. What's the mall for then?"

"He helps out. He gets the house, and anything else he wants for me. He doesn't like to look uncharitable," Frisk said. "He's a sort of. Well. Celebrity. I don't like to use his money for everything though so I keep my own job and money."

Huh. "S'alright." He had to quit the blame game. His feelings weren't about her anyway. "I don't care about family ties. Having troubles with stuff is all. Want you to be more honest. Chances we can find everyone? Forget the escape part, just getting them all?"

"Not. The best," Frisk admitted. "Not impossible, but it might take a very long time. It would take less time if I told Maurice the truth about more of you, but he thinks just a couple helped on the surface to save my life. I never told him about the Underground."

"Yeah, he don't need to know that," Sans agreed.

"I. I'm sorry. This feels like it's all my fault," she said.

"Nah. You kiddin'?" Sans tried to chuckle for her. "You gave us a good sixty years in a great place. That freedom is still out there for everybody that didn't get bamboozled in here. Nice life. That was 'cause of you. This stuff now, being enslaved? Asgore's fault for being scared of what might happen." Still. "It's okay, Frisk. I just wanted some honesty. In no way am I gonna blame you, even if I actually did. You're the best owner out there I could get. I'll do the best I can not to mess up, but I'm generally a screw up in life."

"Since we're being honest?" Frisk added. "I have a card full of money Maurice gave me. Monsters are expensive, you're right. I had enough for you, Alphys rental, and then I'll have just enough to purchase her. I'll have to work up a way to get more money."

More delay. "It's okay, I get it," Sans said. "Life's not perfect. Might not get everybody." Not to mention, Papyrus was already bought. "Tonight, I'm not standing in a hidey hole standing up catching sleep anymore, or eating dog food. I don't have to worry about any more pain on my skull, and I don't have to worry about some human using me against my will." Yeah. He nodded. "I can't ask for better than that, Frisk. Thanks a bunch, and if you manage to get Alphys? That'd be even more awesome." That's about what he was expecting now.

"As much as I don't like him," Frisk said softly, "without him I couldn't have gotten you. My grandfather takes care of me because I'm his only family now. That's why he cares about how bright I shine. My parents, they somehow found a way to sneak onto the surface after me. They didn't know what they were doing, they just wanted me back home. They didn't know I fell safely into the Underground."

And with the surface being the radiated thing it had been? Bad area. Humans on the surface never trusted the ones in the barriers either. Whatever way they went, they were gone.

"Um." Frisk gestured around the house. "It's just me living here. No one else has access except Maurice. He won't do anything to you. For one, he's happy that I was saved. For two, only I can bother your soul. Which. I won't."

Yeah. He knew that. "Food was good, beverage was good. If ya don't mind, I'd really like some sleep. In a bed preferably."

"Uh, yeah." Frisk led him to the back to her double bed. "This is my bed. I don't have a guest bed, it's just me." Sans reached out and grabbed her hand though as he went to bed. "What is it?"

"I'm not going to risk you not being able to afford Alphys 'cause you had to get a new bed," he said. "I'm a good monster. You wouldn't have to worry anyhow. You can hurt me, but I

can't hurt you." He let go of her and rolled into bed. "I've had months of hell. I just want some decent rest." He patted the bed next to him.

Frisk honored his request, lying down with him.

He couldn't help it though. She had all that junk about her family line up in her head, as well as her downfall in capabilities to save everybody, causing massive guilt. She needed to know. "I read that woman, the one that wanted to buy me. If I weren't in your bed right now, I'd be in that other woman's bed right now, Frisk. Whether I willingly was there or she was controlling me through pain. I'm not sad. I'm not blaming you," he said. "Thank you. Thank you a whole, *whole*, lot."

Her grip tightened back. "Humans are going to treat you differently out here, and I can't always correct them. I don't have power over them or their thoughts, but I'll do the best I can. I'll even let you pick out your collar tomorrow. I do have that money. The fancier it is, the nicer you'll be treated."

"Yep. Sounds good. Get a big old fancy one," Sans agreed. "Like a celebrity pet." Ooh. He realized what he said too late, but Frisk didn't correct him.

"I'll flip that huge buckle too, it can be converted into a ring. I'll try to make you as comfortable as I can. Just one caution," Frisk said. "When we are out, you need to-"

"Already know." Back down. Submissive. If he did anything unruly, Frisk paid for it. Either through a fine, or legally getting him taken away. She'd be released from controlling his soul and he'd be right back behind the gates. There was no way he'd mess that up. He caught the luckiest break in his life getting her as his owner.

No matter what. He wasn't losing her. When she was a kid, she saved him from the Underground. This time?

She was saving him from a hell that made the Underground look like monsters just playing hide and seek in the dark.

Blinding

Give it up to the Monster Card. Frisk took Sans to a place he never would have guessed for monsters. It was a giant palace full of clothes. Every shape and kind, with rooms dedicated to the most common kinds of monsters. Surprisingly, him.

"Anything and everything you want," Frisk said. "Just, we'll need a few nice outfits for special functions. If you want to go to those."

"Yeah, sure." Sans spotted what he wanted though. It was almost calling his name from across the store. After being trapped away from home for over four months, he knew exactly what he wanted. Frisk followed behind him as he started to look through the jackets.

Jean jackets. Coat jackets. Leather jackets. Jackets with rhinestones on the sides, along with some that were all rhinestones. Sans picked up a jacket that looked a lot like his older ones. Not real warm. Not real cold. Considering they were inside a barrier it made sense they wouldn't be getting weather. Would they? "Does T.P. get weather?"

Frisk smiled. Sans had such a hard time, that he almost missed his own accidental joke. Twinkle Paradise's initials was T.P. He held up the jacket. "Well, if the jacket fits." Heh.

"Weather is always the same. Even the stars above us, it's just one big illusion casted on the top so everyone feels like we are in the equivalent of a bright big city sky. Everywhere," Frisk said. "Wear whatever makes you feel comfortable, and buy as many or as much as you want. The cards unlimited." She showed it to him. "I can only buy accessories with it though. If I want to return anything, I can't get cash. It goes back on the card. It doesn't help much at all for what we need." She leaned a little closer. "So have fun, make it count. I've got storage. If you go over, I'll just say I demanded my monster pampered."

Ah? Understandable. Now Sans was getting what she wanted. *How much money can I waste?*

Four hours later

"Maybe this one?"

"This one would look nice on his arm."

"This one just came out today."

Sans got the hint. Frisk couldn't let him retaliate, and she had to be firm with what he could and couldn't do. But? Money talks and celebrities loved to pamper and deck out their monsters like pets. It became a status symbol. People were helping Sans left and right. When he thought he was pushing something he just glanced her way and she just winked a 'get it'.

More than half of the stuff he got, he'd never bother wearing probably. The jackets, he got all of them. Fifty total. He bought white shirts, black shirts, forty T-shirts, blue shirts, and red shirts. After the staff started noticing what they were picking up, they took them to a new area to start to help them.

Now he was getting his option of diamond apparel and other rare jewelry with choice custom outfits. He even had shoes, tons of shoes that he could put on his feet even though it wasn't his preference. He also had tons of sandals. That probably would be his preference.

Frisk in the meantime snapped some pictures here and there when they put the priciest things on him. It wasn't just vengeance though to her grandfather. If he saw how much Frisk adored him, and pampered him? If he knew any way to get to the surface, he would find a way to get Sans there. All she needed was to know the way. After that, she could get the others there. When she found them.

Her social was usually quiet. She didn't like to show off a whole lot but now it was blowing up and she was getting follows and shares like crazy. She just chuckled as she saw Sans in his latest wear.

He was moving all around. "I keep blinding myself and I don't even have eyes." He looked toward Frisk. "Got my collar though." It looked like a choker, encrusted with tons of diamonds. "Got this one too." He lifted a simpler choker with the label SANS. Leather and nice, but Frisk could barely see it with whatever wristwatch he had blinding her. "And about twenty more." He reached into his new suede leather jacket, fishing around for something. He pulled some sparkly things out, letting them fall to the ground. "I like this one best."

Translucent. Someone had to get up close to tell he had it on. Frisk nodded. Great choice.

All of the stuff was loaded up and Frisk sent more than half of it away. Sans real choices were a few jackets, some white shirts, some sandals, a couple nice outfits for outings he needed to dress nice, and just a couple of sparkly things for his wrists. He learned by watching the people's eyes as they fawned over him, if he didn't like the way someone was treating him, simply reaching up to scratch his skull wearing sparkly things blinded them. A nice way to say 'screw you' without being able to say it.

"Too bad they didn't include grub in accessories," Sans said as they sent most of the stuff to storage.

"No, but I can cover it. Where do you want to eat?" Frisk asked. "Well, that's rude. Sorry. What kind of food would you like to eat?"

"Grillby," he said softly. "Not choosy, Frisk." He put his hoodie up to cover most of his skull.

"Okay. Fast food or home-cooked?" Frisk asked.

"Home-cooked. Pasta trapped in ice was Papyrus' favorite. It's an acquired taste," Sans joked. "No one cooked like him. A burger wherever is fine."

Meyer's Fast food

Frisk ate her burger alongside Sans. It was a quiet place, no one there much right now. With the isolation, but the company, Sans was starting to share some about his home. Frisk was still young when she went there. Technically, she was more like fourteen but she seemed like six. She told him that too.

"It's weird," he admitted looking at his burger. "Kid, you should be an old grandma or dead. Seventy five. Your parents really kept you as a baby for five years?"

Frisk munched on her burger. "Well, the baby is born on the outside of the barrier. They are sent to a very close barrier called a nursery barrier. The baby is born and then it's brought back."

"Nine month old pregnant woman hitting the surface?" Sans asked.

"When I say close, I mean close. There is glass around the area she walks," Frisk said, "and less than a shoe of distance to the next entrance."

"Well, shoot." Sans snapped his fingers. "Thought you could find Mr. Right and get us out there." He saw his expression. "Joking. Wouldn't work."

Frisk shook her head. "I don't want to touch on that. My grandfather wants me to settle down so bad. 'Seventy five years is enough time to sew your oats, Frisk', he likes to say."

"So your mom and dad grabbed you as a new little infant and kept you over for five years? I've heard of wanting babies to stay babies, but five years? Geez. Then what happened." Sans finished off his burger, waiting for her to continue.

"I went back to the same nursery barrier. I grew there, playing with other kids, and developing social skills while my parents watched over me. Then they took me back around four years old," Frisk said. "For about ten years. That's the max you can keep a developing child out. After that, it's just abuse not letting them grow."

"You were six, but really fourteen. That explains a lot," Sans said. "Smart little kid for your age."

"Technically I still had the mind of a six year old," Frisk said, "but I also had fourteen years of experience with that mind."

Sans shook his head. "Then you fell. Guessing that one wasn't so foolproof when you went?"

"I had to go beyond the nursery barrier," Frisk said. "There is a small stretch of road. Not real big. It was glass covered, but it had been breaking and no one had noticed it yet. I didn't understand at first why everyone scattered away from me, or why the glass had actually cracked. I didn't understand why no one was following the path."

"Barrier humans are dangerous," Sans said to her. "Humans warn the kingdom a lot not to mess with them. Guessing they attacked."

"I don't know. I was just a little kid, and I fell in. I made it back up, and I got into the entrance pathway," Frisk said. "It's a forbidden pathway on the surface no one is supposed to use but people with special training and suits."

"That is how we came in," Sans said. "That, is how we got to get back out. If." He paused. "If everyone's gone, it's how I got to get out."

Frisk nodded. "More food?"

"Always," Sans chuckled. "After that you got to where you should have gone. Grew up finally. Went back home and what, now you all just bang around? No one dies in there? There's only so much space."

"Well. I don't know," Frisk said to him. "I know that Maurice doesn't reveal everything. I know that-"

"He's a good for nothing sack of crap?"

"That too," Frisk said. "I know that not all of the original folks are here. I suspect."

"That the laziest idiots that don't contribute nothing are tossed out to surface to be killed by radiation or natural humans?" Sans asked.

"And. I think." Frisk didn't move so fast with her opinion. "My parents found that way."

"Oh. That makes sense." Sans took a drink of his pop.

"What would monsters do?" Frisk asked as she stood up. "When there were great numbers of you, what did you do?"

"Wah, you kidding? What do we excel at?" Sans said. "Kill each other. Got mean streaks you wouldn't believe, Kid."

Frisk didn't remember that.

"Everybody fought you. Even the tiny cute little shit you were, everybody still fought you," He reminded her. "Only reason you survived was your soul. We stopped killing only cause our numbers were low. It's also why we got an official encountering system. Less death, but there was a chance to make some gold. Or get your anger out in some back and forth hitting." Sans started his second sandwich. "Now over the last sixty years we are 20,000 strong." He took a bite. "Monsters killing each other all the time again."

Oh. "How do you protect yourself?"

"There's the difference between here and there," he said. "Monsters only hurt and kill others who hurt them. Mild ones that don't hurt nobody are left alone. Strong or weak here, everybody's forced to be whatever or do whatever their human wants or? Pain and death. Unfair pain and death with no chance of fighting back on it." He placed his burger back down. "Rather fight the strongest monsters in a fair fight than be down here."

"Sorry," Frisk apologized.

"On the bright side, at least I found the kid who cared," Sans added.

"I am 75 Sans, are you going to keep calling me that?" Frisk asked.

"I knew you as a kid and now you should be an old granny for your kind," Sans said. "It makes it funny. There isn't a lot of funny out there anymore, Pal."

Oh. "Okay." Now that she understood. He could have his funny addressal. "You can call me Kid."

"I could call ya Granny Kid?"

"Kid is fine," Frisk agreed to quickly. "Try and stick with Frisk in more public though. If you forget, I'll try to cover."

"So who were you with yesterday?" Sans asked. "Good or bad?"

"Jeanine," Frisk said. "Good. Partly. Sort of? It." Frisk scratched her head. "It's hard to explain. She has a monster, but she doesn't treat it bad. But? That's not it." She took a deep breath. "She is in a mutually physical relationship with him, but they hide it. She used to work as a saler in her early teens. They are going on . . . 145 years now. There's more too, but I'll get to it later."

Sans whistled, which was pretty impressive for him. "So where was her Romeo yesterday?"

"At home," Frisk said finishing off her burger. "She doesn't want him around Pure Imports."

"Ah. She's respectful. That's good." Sans finished off the last of his fries.

"Some are, some aren't," Frisk said. "There's no telling who is who. A lot of girls like me with no fighting experience purely keep them as defenders too. It's not uncommon to get lost or hurt if you stray from your area."

"Fighting for the people enslaving you. Well. This world never stops amazing me." He scrunched up his meal paper. "Wish it would." He tossed it toward the garbage bin, but accidentally hit someone coming in.

"Hey, what the hell?" That guy went over to him and looked at Frisk. "Your monster needs checked. He just threw trash at me."

"You were standing in front of the trash can," Frisk said. She sipped on her soda.

"Bullshit, I was not," he complained. He pushed Sans. "Stupid monster."

"Sorry there." Sans took off his hoodie and rubbed his skull. "Didn't see you."

"Holy fuck, man. Look at that bling. I couldn't afford that on a year's salary," one of his friends answered, catching the look of Sans' sparkly wristwatch.

Meanwhile, the guy that complained was blinking, looking away. Sans had shined it just right in his eye. He took a second look at Frisk. He moved closer, taking an even deeper look at Frisk. "Aw damn, your Fae Iskra Darnier, Maurice Darnier's granddaughter! Yo, yo, yo it's Fae Spark!"

"Great," Frisk muttered. "Yes, I am," she said lightly. "I was having dinner with my monster friend. Do you mind?"

"Hell, naw. Naw, naw. Come on, guys. Yo. Best day ever." He pointed to her with pride. "Nice. You come on down to Earth in your spot from the heavens, huh?"

"Trying too hard, man. You just tried to diss her monster," his friend reminded him. "Ain't no one getting near that angel." Still, he winked. "Nice to meet you. Sorry about the confusion."

Sans looked toward Frisk. "Grampy Maurice isn't the only one with celebrity status, huh?"

"I'm just his granddaughter," Frisk said. "If you don't dress up, people never notice you until they associate money. Those guys think just 'cause I'm his granddaughter, I have his money. If I did, this wouldn't be as hard to pull off, getting you and everyone out." Frisk gestured to her face. "I always have a ton of make up on too when I'm at events. Helps keep recognition low when I'm out normally."

"Fae Iskra?" Sans asked.

"I prefer Frisk," Frisk said. "Fae is fairy. Iskra is like sparkle. I live in Twinkle Paradise."

"Really enhanced that name of yours here, didn't they?" Sans asked. "Not proud of it?"

"Reminder. Reminder of my legacy and pointless heritage," Frisk said. "Honestly, if something ever happened to Maurice, I inherit everything he owns including the rights to all the slavery of monsters," she said. "I'm the only descendant he has. Everyone's strict rule, even for him in Twinkle Paradise. One son or one daughter. His daughter grew up and married, and had a daughter. Me. They are gone. But? No one ever dies." She noticed his look. "Many monsters have tried to take him on in here. Maurice helped seal the monsters long ago. He's got more power than you can imagine somehow."

"Asgore could take him on," Sans said. "Get him out on that surface, good old fashioned brawling." He looked back at her. "I like Frisk better too. Fits ya, Kid. But it takes two to make a kid. Where'd your grandma go?"

"She was paid to have my mom. Enticed by money at the time," Frisk said. "She didn't love him, and he didn't love her. It was just beneficial, they wanted a kid. She moved on with her life though, signed papers to forgo any inheritance. She grew up a lot since then." She glanced toward Sans. "She's Jeanine."

Both Sans eyelids went down and he shook his head. "Friends with Grandma. Even good ol' grandma is here. I can understand this long life span, but humans have always been pretty evil. What happens to humans who kill each other?"

Frisk stood up too. "Banishment. Never heard from again. Don't know how. Pretty sure it has to do with the surface too." She walked out with him. "Socially, people have renamed me Fae Spark. If you hear Fae while we walk, try to be as quiet and still as you can. Media is hungry like wolves, if they see you doing something wrong, it's harder to stop them from spreading it." Frisk checked her social. "Nothing new." She closed it back up. "I was hoping Maurice saw it and realized it'll be cheaper to keep me happy by getting you back out to the surface. If he knew a way."

"Smart thinking," Sans said, "but I'm thinking from the way he just handed you an unlimited card, and that whole celebrity status you got, and you being his only grand daughter? Thinking he doesn't care about money at all, Frisk. Barking up the wrong tree with that guy. He's only gonna care if he finds out the Underground came up out of his little seal hole," he muttered. "No matter what happens, even if everyone's dead, don't try and change your story. Monster Kingdom is alive and proud out there. A few of us falling for the whole secret of the Monster Kingdom is nothing. Kay?"

"I know," Frisk said. "Still. I don't give up easily." She'd find a way. "I wish I had said more than a couple of monsters back then. I can cover one more with the lie." She looked toward Sans.

"Papyrus is bought," Sans said. "Chances I can get back to him are almost nil. Undyne, I don't even know her status. You know?" He looked away. "Alphys. Use it for Alphys. That way if you're short, you can get Maurice to help you out a little."

It must have hurt to say that last part, but Sans' pride wasn't letting Alphys go.

"In fact. Let him pay for her, Frisk. If anyone else is out there, you're gonna need your money stash," Sans said. "If Undyne is alive, we can't leave her. If Papyrus? I mean if there's a way. Just don't risk it."

Frisk nodded, understanding his point. "I don't know where to put Alphys. My place is a simple place for one person. I don't want to trigger the upgrade."

"Upgrade?" Sans asked. "What's in the upgrade?"

Frisk glanced at him and then away. She groaned. Then sighed. Then groaned again. "The upgrade is what Maurice already has bought for me. It's got one bedroom with a bed and a second bedroom with twin beds, and a third king sized bed. There's a lot more room."

"Then why so groany?" Sans asked. "Why so many beds for one person?"

"It's my upgrade," Frisk said again. "When I find someone, or more likely, he finds someone for me? Single bed for me, single bed for him. Eventually king sized bed when we're married. Then we'd give one of the singles to the little boy or girl."

"Oooh." Sans seemed to get it. "Going to the upgrade is going to make him want to find you someone worthy of his damn last name, huh?"

"He's only pushed slightly," Frisk said. "As long as I don't ask for the upgrade, he knows I'm not ready. There's no other reason I'd ask for it."

"Explains the sighs and groans," Sans said. "Alright, forget it. We'll figure out something later. For now if we get her, I'll take the couch. Just, get her. Don't put yourself in any kind of jeopardy for us, okay?"

"If we can find Undyne and Papyrus-"

"Every damn monster in TP is getting fucked by your gramps, there's no way you are getting it too, Frisk. No," Sans said firmly. "I don't care if we have to live in closets, you're not letting that creep get any closer to controlling your life. You? You already got a damn barcode on your neck, Frisk."

Wow. It sounded like Sans was breaking down. For her. *I don't want to make him feel anymore guilt.* "Okay," she agreed. "Maybe, I can move in with Jeanine. If I explain the situation."

"No, no Frisk," Sans said. "Now that I'm thinking about it, this whole thing won't work. That jerk goes everywhere in your life." Sans looked around. "Okay. How much money does your grammy have? Can she help out with getting some of them?"

"Jeanine? She has a big place," Frisk said. "She doesn't have as much as she did, that's why she works with me."

"Knew there was a reason her name didn't come up." Sans looked up high. "The view is a lot more beautiful of an illusion than Undergrounds. Sixty years, I still remember the little twinkles at the top. Your stuff is like a professional film verses a student film. I swear I'm *really* outside."

"It's supposed to be that way," Frisk said. "No claustrophobia. It feels open. It's supposed to be." She shrugged. "A paradise for humans."

"Yeah. For humans," Sans repeated. "Alphys gotta go stay with Jeanine. Anyone else we find too. If she's got room, your grandma can help us out. I'll stay with you."

"Hm?" Frisk didn't understand.

"Your grandpa knows about me," Sans said. "I'm here, I'm around you. No denying I'm your monster. Your grandpa comes in and out of your place whenever he wants. He sees more monsters in there, he'll figure it out. Even Alphys going in there, he's going to recommend that upgrade. Probably demand it to keep her. I'm not putting you through that. You went through *enough* in the past with all of the monsters trying to beat you as a little kid." He kicked a loose piece of cement on the sidewalk. "No way saving us is gonna hurt you anymore."

He was adamant. "What do you want to do then?"

"Buy Alphys. Save money or get Jeanine to help you if you need to, to buy her. Track down the others if we can. Hope or something we can get a price, and then find a way to get that money," Sans said. "It's not the best plan, or the fastest plan, but it's the safest. For them. For the kingdom. For you too, Kid. And you are coming with."

Hm? Frisk looked toward him. "What?"

"This place of road, sidewalk and malls as far as the eye can see. The fame, the celebrity status, the heritage. You don't want no part of that, it is clear on your face." He stopped. He came closer to Frisk and held her cheek. "You don't belong here."

Frisk blushed slightly. He was bending over along with her, touching her cheek. He figured out what he was doing rather quickly and let go.

"Sorry. Got that thing called emotional," Sans answered. He started to walk again.

"If I left, I'd die," Frisk reminded him as she started to walk again. "Humans don't have a long lifespan out of here. Aging stops in here."

"Welp? Not exactly, but. Uh, in your position." Sans shrugged. "You're right I guess. You'd grow old and leave the world like a regular human out there on the surface."

Frisk smirked. "The thought was sweet, Sans," she said. "Honestly. I wouldn't have my grandma there, or get a chance to really have children with someone I love. If I steer clear of any upgrades Maurice buys me, I'll be fine. I've been fine for all these years. That's no accident. He's not looking to entrap me, seriously. If I ever feel ready to move on-

"He'll control who it is," Sans warned her. "He's not letting you get that choice, Frisk, I'm warning ya. He's going to choose who gets his last name. Who gets the fame."

"I've kinda already guessed that by now," Frisk said. "If I get the urge to be with someone or have a child, that's still my choice. Otherwise? I'm fine working at the mall with Jeanine."

Sans chuckled. "Give it up for Grammy. Ancient Grammy."

"Just call her Jeanine, Sans," Frisk warned him. "Neither Maurice nor Jeanine like it when you refer to them that way."

"Probably not, or they wouldn't all look like twenty something's like you." Sans gestured around. "It's either kids or twenty something's everywhere. Ain't nobody proud of a wrinkle?"

"I don't see any wrinkles on you," Frisk said. "Did you ever meet Maurice before yesterday?"

"Nice way of nonchalantly asking if I saw the surface before you broke us out," Sans said. "Nah. I was a new thing still when you came. About eighteen or so." He looked back at her as he continued walking. "We're both close to the same age it seems. Heh. Eat your heart out statistical chances."

Frisk's Mad Acting Skills

Jeanine stared at Frisk. "You've got to be kidding."

Frisk held her ground with Sans sitting right next to her. They met at a mall without a Purest Imports or monster selling of any kind. They were both sitting down, enjoying lunch, when Frisk dropped what she needed. "No."

"Tell me again what you just said," Jeanine said, "because I can't believe it."

"I need you to house monsters for me, up to three, and I need you to help me to pay for hopefully two of them in the future," Frisk said again. "I know for sure one of them is bought, so it will be higher to get him."

Jeanine covered her face like she couldn't believe Frisk really repeated it. "You want me to house three monsters."

"One coming tomorrow," Frisk said to her. "Sans will stay with me."

"Then help you buy two other monsters?" Jeanine hit the table. "Frisk! I don't have that kind of money, or that kind of luxury. If I did, I wouldn't be working beside you at the mall."

"Really don't have that kind of money," her monster said from beside her. He looked at Sans. "Why bother asking? Who are these others?"

"They don't belong here," Sans tried to reason him. "Craig, right?"

"Right."

"I get that this world is not fair to monsters," Sans said to him. "but this world isn't our world. We need to go back to where we belong. On the surface."

"I don't have that kind of money," Jeanine said. "If you're really buying another monster, and I can't talk you out of that, I have space enough for it in my home."

"Take it," Sans said to Frisk. "There's no guarantee Undyne's alive or Papyrus will ever be an option. We do know that Alphys needs safety."

Frisk looked back at Jeanine. "If I can get the other two, can they stay with you? I'll take care of everything for them."

"For a little while," Jeanine agreed. "But not forever."

"Fine. I'll find a way to the surface and let them get out," Frisk insisted, "or I'll take them back."

"Oy." Sans had his own opinion on that.

"If I don't risk that, Sans, she isn't going to help." Frisk looked toward Jeanine. "Right?"

"Right. You're a good friend, Frisk. You're a good granddaughter I guess too," she added. "But I can't just let three monsters live with me forever. I just want one living with me forever."

"Right. The world is . . ." Craig stopped. He waited for someone to pass behind him. " . . . unfair and cruel. But *your* problems aren't our problems."

"Fair enough," Frisk said. She looked toward Sans.

"Like I get any choice?" He didn't like it, of course. Frisk wasn't supposed to risk having that many in her place, but without that they'd never get anywhere. "Fine. Fair enough."

The Next Day. . .

Alphys moved her way to the home she was being rented to. A human watcher was there to make sure she stayed on task and didn't go anywhere. Her soul was linked to hers. No other human could hurt her, just the woman watching her. Still, it was unsettling for every case.

When the door opened though, Alphys didn't know how to react. *The human*. She could feel it, it was definitely the little one that broke them free from the Underground. All grown up, yet not looking like her true age at all. *Frisk*.

"The computer is in here," Frisk said.

Alphys moved past her and saw Sans standing next to the computer. Now, almost all her nerves felt gone. She couldn't approach him or the human Frisk yet without permission. She was only allowed to touch the computer. *He's safe and with her though. She must have bought him. Good for him!*

Alphys looked at the computer. It was very old, needing extensions. She looked at the chord and followed the trail of it. First rule, if it has a plug, always make sure it's plugged in. It wasn't. *That's deliberate. They must have a plan.* She plugged it in, came over to the old computer and turned it on.

"I am impressed," Frisk said to the human who guided her over. "I like her skills. I want to buy her outright. Please charge my card." She pulled it out of her purse and handed it straight to her.

"The monster just plugged in the computer?" The woman seemed confused. "What skills did it show off that made you want to buy it?"

"I know what I like," Frisk said. "Charge the card. Don't you get ten percent commission on actual sales?" In no time at all, the card was charged. "Thank you. Let's go to the soul center and get her exchanged out right away."

"Yes, ma'am."

One hour later . . .

Free, I'm really free. Alphys couldn't believe it. She was on a couch, eating chicken fingers with Sans and Frisk. Eating *real* food, not approved food that only dogs would want to eat. Free, and yet? "I." She didn't really know how to respond to the human. She'd never met her so old before, just a tiny thing that she had deceived almost all the way through the Underground. And here she was. Spending vast amounts of money on her.

Alphys was an advanced monster and they weren't cheap. They were ten times the price of something deemed 'average', and those weren't cheap either. Only the elite could have afforded her. "Th-thanks. Chicken fingers. Real food."

"Real food is real good," Sans said. "Don't be scared, Alphys, Frisk is awesome. Treats us like equals."

"I'll be sure to get you out and about," Frisk said to her. "Especially for some new clothes, and some decent food. You'll have to live with a friend of mine-"

"Her grandma," Sans said. "Nobody ever uses that word."

". . . but I will get you some new accessories and some decent food," Frisk continued. "You'll be as comfortable as I can make you."

"What about Papyrus and Undyne?" Alphys asked. Then, she regretted it. Those looks. They didn't have them.

"Papyrus was bought before you left, remember? He's far away," Sans said. "It'll take time to get him. If we can. Undyne, uh?" Sans rubbed his barcode. "Later. Really should get some decent rest and food right now for you. You know. Freedom. Frisk isn't going to treat you like a slave. You are your own monster. So don't be afraid to, you know? Talk to her? Just be careful out in public."

"I know the public and how to act," Alphys said. "Y-you learn that right away. Frisk?" She looked toward her. "Y. You. Just, thank you."

"It's okay," Frisk said. "You should probably get some rest before the next step." She winked. "Accessorizing."

Purest Imports

After Alphys was safely in her new home with Jeanine, and Sans was taking a nap on the couch, Frisk did her own thing. She left a simple note for him that said 'Left, Frisk.' Nothing much more needed. This time before she left though, she didn't go out like she was going to her job.

She sparkled along with one of her newer dresses for events. Instead of one time and done, she liked to use them for her own needs. She was now waiting in Purest Imports for the saler. She had been asking about information for Papyrus and Undyne for some time. The problem?

They had no idea. The monsters should have been microchipped before they ever came to the import store, but Sans and the others ended up there accidentally. Meaning, they had to do it the hard way. Use their brains.

It was something they didn't want to do because it took time and they weren't paid for it, but this request wasn't just by some yahoo off the streets, and Frisk made sure they got the hint she wasn't playing around. Just like Underground, Frisk was a smart cookie. She knew what and when to do certain things to get her outcome. And a good ol' fashioned lie was working wonders.

"Miss Darnier," the saler greeted her.

"Fae Iskra Darnier," Frisk said harshly. "I hope you've done your due diligence *this* time? Maurice Darnier hates when he has to deal with such crude things, but the fact you can't track two simple monsters speaks very widely not only to your job, but the Purest Imports here." She scoffed. "I mean, how do you even know you have the rights in place to sell these monsters? Do you know how much trouble you would be in, if anyone found out you were selling monsters illegally?"

"It was a mix-up only," the saler said. "Somehow they just got delivered here first."

"How do you know that?" Frisk asked. She reached in her purse and pulled out a candy cad caddy. It was a tin box laced with gold and filled with supposedly sweet things that tasted really strange, but they were adored by the wealthy due to their exotic taste and cost. She tapped it in her palm firmly, using it in the place of the stick she used to threaten monsters with. "Do you have a lawyer on retainer? I heard the last one that messed up our family's name in such a terrible way nearly paid five million for his trial. And still lost. Do you know where he's at now?" Frisk dropped her voice low. "I don't think anybody does."

"No, really, it was an accident, I'm sure of it!" The saler said. "Please, Miss Fae Iskra Darnier, I have a wife and a child."

"Millions of people have wives and children. Am I supposed to be impressed you are exercising your rights?" she said coldly. "Information. Now."

"Okay, alright." The saler took a deep breath, showing her what little he had. "As you know, this isn't the greatest place to sell monsters so we don't track papers. But, um, the receipt has the person's full name who bought him."

Frisk grabbed the paper, crushing it in front of him. She uncrushed it to look at it briefly. "And the other?"

"The troublemaking one who refused to back down," the saler said, "she doesn't have a name or a barcode. I-I'm trying to talk to the saler that was on duty when it went down to find out if it's still alive."

Frisk crushed her paper again. She thonked the candy tin in her hand again. Once. Twice. Not a sound between them. She opened it up, popped it in her mouth and tried not to gag on the taste. *Chocolate melon liverish liquorish, some people are so weird!* Still, she gently chewed

it with her mouth closed. Once. Twice. The whole time she just stared at him with a dead stare like he was not even worth being in presence. Then? "I recommend you lawyer up before we talk any further."

That was it, he cracked. "No, no, wait!" He got on his phone. "I'll call him right away, right now, just wait! I promise, I will drag him out of bed to- Yo, Reggie!" He yelled into the phone. "The monster, man, the monster I asked you about! Man, I don't care if you are in the middle of lunch, I need that information right now, Fae Iskra Darnier is telling me to lawyer up. Man, please. Dude."

He was breaking down. Frisk could see tears in her eyes. There was no choice though. If she just came in as her nice self demanding details that were nearly impossible to get from that small shop, they would have turned her away. By the time they took it seriously, the information could have been gone. Even with all that threatening, she only got a piece of paper and one name for Papyrus.

"Okay, yeah." The saler started to write down quickly some information. "Okay. Okay." He hit end on his phone. "Okay, so he says he knows she left definitely alive." He was writing down an address. "This is the place she was shipped too. It's for rougher monsters that can't be tamed called Guard Monsters. They get set up usually guarding something so they don't interact with people 'cause, like, you know they don't even like their masters so they definitely won't let anyone-"

"Do I look like someone who doesn't know these things? It's a common chain name. Do you know four plus four?" Frisk interrupted him. "Address. Now." He stopped blubbering and gave her the address. She took it, but didn't crush it. She didn't know if it would smear. Instead she glazed her eyes over it. She put her candy tin away, put the tiny paper details away, and left without so much as a thank you.

It was a start.

Soul Connections

Frisk dangled it over Sans' skullhead while he slept. Barely tapping his skull. "Number. After work. He'll call you." She smiled seeing him slightly shift and almost brush the paper away. She left him alone thirty seconds and then brushed his skullhead. "After work. He'll call you."

"Uh? Hoowhat?" Sans opened his eyes. He glanced over what she had, and then grabbed it like a lifeline. "Frisk?"

"I found his owner," Frisk said. "I called him up and asked if he could at least let you talk to him, to hear his voice. He said Papyrus was busy during the days, but as soon as he was done, he'd call you tonight." Aww. Skeletons couldn't express anything but the lights in his eyes? He was ridiculously happy. He slid right out of his spot on the couch and then surprised her by grabbing her and whirling her around. "Sans!"

"You found Papyrus!" When he stopped, he hugged her. "Aw, thanks, Frisk! This means the world to me!" He let go and looked back at the paper.

"I didn't get him," Frisk said, hoping he didn't think that. "Just permission to talk to him."

"Kid, I told you in the beginning getting Alphys would be great," Sans said flapping the paper around. "This is above and beyond. This little number. Even if we never find a way to get him back, I can at least talk to him. I can hear how he's doing, and I can hear that he's okay." Sans started to wipe at his eye sockets. It left his sleeves a little wet. "How'd you find the owner?"

"I went to Pure Imports," Frisk said. "I went in as Fae Iskra Darnier and threaten lawyers over the missing monsters."

Sans waved the little paper around, probably by now knowing the number by heart. "Kind of wish I could have seen that. Get them the scare for once, but I don't think I really wanted to be near there again." He pocketed the number.

"I also found out Undyne is alive. She is for sale as a monster guard," Frisk said. "I don't have to tell you why."

"Dang, Frisk? Thanks," Sans insisted. "I get to talk to bro tonight."

"You can see him too. I've hooked up the address and it'll redirect from my phone to my Amavisualizen, so you can talk to him much bigger," Frisk said pointing to her wall. She went over to it for a brief second and placed her thumb on a thumbpad. A holographic tablet lit up with a bigger screen on it. "I'll give you access, just in case he calls early. When you want to call, a live stream will be set up instantly just between you two." She held up her fingers in a sign of peace and winked. "He can call every night he finishes his chores. You can also call Alphys this way if you want. It's like my second phone, only for home and big projection."

"He'll call every night then," Sans said. "Is night the same hours across this whole thing, or there different light zones?"

"With the sky?" Frisk asked, understanding what he was asking. "Morning hours for the brightest lights are 6 am to 8 pm. Those hours don't change across the landscapes." She tapped the paper in his hand slightly. "From the outcoded number in the beginning though, they are practically on the outskirts. It's going to take two days of advanced sky tunneling permissions, or sixteen days of travel to reach him. But if we do?" She smiled. "If we find the time, they'll let Papyrus see us for a little while. As long as his chores are done."

"Sixteen days." Still, the chance to see Papyrus. "Could. I mean that's a long time. Advanced tunneling permissions, what's that?"

"Something I don't have anymore," Frisk admitted. "Involves a two week training course," she said, "and a large fee. But, certain tunnels create a main access way over Twinkle Paradise." Frisk pointed upward. "They are above the illusion of the night sky, so there's no telling where they are. On it, an old fashioned car model object is hooked up and pulls them through. They'll meet and intersect with other above tunnels for the fastest travel to a chosen destination."

"Have you ever done it?" Sans asked.

Frisk shook her head. "No. I've only ever been down here beneath the illusion, or got trapped on the surface for a brief time then fell Underground. That's my extent," she said. "I've never really wanted or needed to travel that far. I prefer to stay close to home."

"I would too. It's hard to find in this huge smorgasbord of nothing but shops and shit," Sans added. "Can you sneak into the tunnels?"

"That'd be really hard," Frisk said. "We can't tell where they are, and you need to start at the beginning from the ground."

"What if you didn't have to?" Sans asked. "We should fly up there and see."

Frisk chuckled. "I don't have wings."

"I could," Sans said.

Um? "You can have wings?" Frisk said.

"I can have anything and everything." Sans said. "I manifest whatever the hell I want. See?" He manifested a blue aura of a long horn attached to his head. "Now I'm a skelecorn." It went away. "Except a long horn on me isn't half as cute as on a unicorn, and let's face it? The name couldn't be more corny."

Frisk smiled at his little joke. Day by day he was getting so much better. "So you can manifest wings?"

"Why not? Super easy. I mean, don't even really need them, could probably levitate," Sans said. Still, he manifested a pair of wings on his back. They were tiny and cute, about the size

of his sandals. "Little?"

Frisk suddenly was surrounded in a heapful of some kind of aura hitting her face. After the blast she looked around on the floor. Manifested blue feathers were everywhere. She looked ahead of herself.

"Or like big? Although, super cramped." Sans had a wing span that was actually bending his wings downward. They disappeared as quickly as they came. "Now if only I could get this stuff to not be transparent and look real. Do that kind of magic and my pelvis could get out of here somehow. Like." He made a beak form over his teeth. "See? Skelebirdie, but you can still see my teeth beneath. Defeats the whole purpose." He made the beak go away and bunny ears appeared on his head. "Skelebunny's at least better. Doesn't cover anything."

Frisk was covering her face. It was warm and she was trying not to laugh but she wasn't succeeding. And of course, he realized he was on a roll.

"Course nothing can really save a pair of dry, crusty bones like me into anything cute. Even a pair of bunny ears." Then a blue aura tail emerged on him with whiskers and little ears. "Except maybe a skelekitty."

He wiggled his ears and his tail and Frisk lost it. She started to laugh at him.

"Hey, I still got it." Sans didn't manifest his skelekitty appearance away yet. "Throw me into a place of slavery, steal my brother away, and enslave my closest friends, and I can still manage to make somebody laugh. Now that's real talent."

"Okay, okay." Frisk grasped at her chest. He still didn't transform back. "You can go back to normal now. Please."

Sans finally went back to normal. "Point being, I can be anything, but never really fool anyone. You know? So, that kind of sucks. Give me a picture. Tell me what it looks like." He glanced at her. "I could even do you if you wanted me to."

Do her? Frisk blinked. "Well, um. No? I mean." Maybe. "On top of clothes?" Then there was an odd silence between them. "Couldn't . . . see through clothes."

Then, Sans started cracking up. "Kidding, Frisk. Geez. I can't manifest you without seeing you." He shook his skull. "Odd human." He chuckled. "Like a monster'd ever even want to see a human. That's just. Weird. Your kind, you all suck."

. . . okay.

"I mean, not that? Uh." Sans was now the one getting flustered. "I didn't mean you-"

"Not a big deal." Frisk held her hands out. "Left sealed Underground and now enslaved in here. I get it." Still, weird. "I'm going to go out for a little while again, see how Alphys is doing and such. Papyrus should call in about an hour or so. See you." She headed to the door and went out.

" . . ." Sans stood there, staring at the door. " . . . fucking shit. Shit!" He cursed at himself. "Why the hell did I say that?" He rubbed his skull rapidly and started to pace. "Like a monster'd ever even want to see a human. Your kind, you all suck. The hell was I thinking?"

He stopped by the hologram pictures. "Frisk has been nothing but nice to me, why did I say that?" He leaned his hands against the wall. It was just joking, but his prejudice and experience slipped through, and he just made the one human who cared at all feel bad. He didn't have any right to do that. Paying for him. Taking care of him. Paying for Alphys. Getting Papyrus' number so he could talk to his own brother again. Even finding out Undyne was alive. Doing everything she could for them, and he basically said she was ugly to him.

He looked at the ground. *No way.* Dripping manifested tears? He wiped his eye sockets. He did that for Papyrus, that made sense. He was going to finally hear that his baby bro was gonna be okay. He was going to find out how he'd been. But this? Why was he so emotional over this? *I gotta apologize. A lot better than I did somehow.* He couldn't leave the house, he had no money for any kind of sorry present, and he had no idea what to do.

Except to call Craig. Even though he was an ass, he cared a lot for a human. He'd know what to do to apologize. I mean, he hurt Frisk, and that was almost like his granddaughter, right? Yeah, well, either way. Ol' Sans needed help for the hole he dug himself into.

He talked to Alphys for a couple of minutes. It was easy since Frisk connected them. Just another great thing the human did for him that he just treated like shit. It didn't take him long though to explain why he was calling, and Alphys seemed to understand.

"So? You're calling me?" Craig's voice came over the phone. "A monster you don't even know. You must have screwed up real bad."

"Yeah," Sans admitted. "I know we don't know each other real well yet? But, uh? Look, your not only one of the monsters I know in this Twinkle Hellhole, you're the only who is with a human. So. Yeah."

"Relationship advice?" Craig asked. "Seriously?"

"Well, less relationship advice. More, I kind of need help 'cause I fucked up really bad advice?" Sans said. "I didn't mean to. Frisk and I, it's not like a owner and slave monster kind of thing. We became pretty good pals. Palling around kind of . . ."

"What'd you say?"

"Eh. I was kidding around with my manifesting," Sans admitted. "She was laughing. Fun little time. Felt better," he admitted. "Then, I said I could manifest anything, including her, and she was like 'how do you manifest through clothes?' or some shit and I . . ." He leaned against the wall. "I said a monster would never want to see a human and her kind sucked."

"Boy. You did screw up."

"No shit. What do I do?" Sans asked. "I can't leave without Frisk into that world. I don't got any money. I got nothin' but words, and they don't work real well alone for this."

"Classic problem. Your feelings got twisted," Craig said. "You were getting too close to the human, so your mind backfired."

"Backfired?" Sans asked. "I know Frisk is good," he said. "Beyond good. Hell, my brother is going to call me in an hour because she got his number! She. So?"

"Okay, I don't know what the Underground was like," Craig said. "I can't pretend I do, but I've lived in this insane enslaved barrier with Jeanine all my life. Humans are terrible. Every damn one of them. Even the ones without slaves, cultures taught them how to treat us. The best we can hope for is getting treated like a cat or a doggy, but that's usually not the case. Were forced to work for nothing, obey our owners, or get dusted. That's the world, Sans the Skeleton. So? When your mind can't . . . hm. When your mind can't grip everything into that black and white, it just backfires. Hell, mine still does that sometimes with Jeanine."

"Because humans are terrible, I treated Frisk terrible?" Sans asked.

"No. It's because your mind can't wrap around what's going on with *how you feel* for a human. You shouldn't feel it, but you are. Are you getting me?"

"Hmm . . ."

"You don't really think she's ugly do you?"

"Not a bit," Sans confessed. "I can't do this though. She's here, I'm supposed to be out there, and she's not gonna go out there. Not that I'll be out there if we don't find a way out there. Things are way up in the air."

"Exactly. You don't like one single damn human here, and you don't *want* to like a single damn human. Even if she is good because she can't be with you that way."

"Frisk is the best thing ever. I don't care that she's human."

"Or, that she's the granddaughter of the guy who enslaved us?"

"Or that he was the one who helped seal the Underground," Sans added with a slight more of a hiss. "Fuck that guy."

"Exactly. Not expecting that to bubble up is dumb. All you can do afterwards is grovel on your knees, tell her she's the best thing that ever happened to you, bake her something, be romantic as possible and please her sexually in any way you can think of. I mean? That's what I do with Jeanine. I have no idea what you'd do with Frisk."

Sans turned on his side and drummed his fingers on the wall. "That wasn't fair to her." Damn. "It's just this environment."

"I'll have Jeanine talk to her," Craig said. "Frisk and Jeanine are really understanding people. I mean? I know it *looks* like we're throwing you under the train with the monster thing. But buying a monster is like buying a house. Most people aren't going to do it in one lump sum. Jeanine doesn't have that kind of money, and she can't support everybody you find to take home forever." Sans didn't answer back. "If you blow your lid and say humans suck, that's

one thing. Try to keep yourself from mentioning their actual bodies though. Because that's just a bad area to get into. Especially since it's, well. The opposite."

"Yeah." Sans had to admit that.

"*Especially* with Frisk," Craig said.

"Especially?" Why did he say that? "Why especially with Frisk?"

"Because," Craig said. "She can't be with anyone lest it jingles Maurice's 'not good enough' or 'let's marry you off' button. Jeanine almost had her convinced to buy a monster to be lovers with."

"Whuh?" The? "What?" Frisk? "You kidding?"

"No. Hell no, Frisk is seventy something, and still stuck under her grandpa's grasp. For being friends, you don't know-"

"Craig, hospital, now! Now!" Jeanine's voice came from behind the phone. Sans could see her moving around in the background of the call, grabbing her jacket and her keys. She dropped her keys, cursed, and picked them up. "Craig, it's Frisk, come on!"

Whoah. "Hey, what about Frisk?" Sans demanded. "Hey, hey, hey, I'm her monster, I need to know!"

Jeanine stopped long enough to talk to Craig. "You go grab her monster, I'm driving there with Alphys. Meet me at Last Chances Emergency Ward."

Last Chances Emergency Ward.

Sans waited in the visitor area with Craig and Jeanine. He watched as a doctor approached them. He wanted to ask what happened, but that would be too commanding of him. Even if he was Frisk's monster.

"I'm Fae Iskra Darnier's grandmother," Jeanine said toward the doctor. "How is she? What happened?"

The doctor held up her phone. "This will be given to the authorities after I am done with it. Being the smart and lovely woman Fae Iskra Darnier is known to be, she sensed something wrong, pulled out her video, and gave it away as she was chased down. I would say there's little means for a trial, we have their pictures."

Jeanine patted her nose and looked at the last video. Sans moved over.

Aw, shit. "I know them," Sans said coldly. "They figured out who Frisk had been when we were eating. Did they hurt her? How'd they hurt her?"

"Sorry," Jeanine patted Sans lap. "He's a little bewildered about his owner. Very spoiled. Um. Is Frisk okay, did they hurt her? I mean, Fae Iskra Darnier?"

"They probably would have done something to her. She ran away to the closest tunnel she could get to we believe. She opened the door to ask for help, but the um. The track was too close, and she was moving too fast. You can't run in those tunnels. She slipped and she was ran over."

No way. "Humans don't die here."

"Not easily, now hush," Jeanine answered him. She looked toward the doctor. "If she were outside the barrier, would she be dead?"

"Without a doubt. Most of her body could barely be recovered."

" . . . can her body be repaired?"

"Yes. Her determination was high enough. We've translated it into a physical shape, and it has patched her up physically," he said. "As in most cases, with something this severe though, the physical is not what matters."

"Oh no." Jeanine placed her hands on her head as she leaned into Craig. She hugged him but he didn't hug back. "Hug me." Now he hugged back, with all that he could.

Sans wanted to know more. It wasn't fair that he couldn't ask anything. If she was physically okay, then what was wrong?

"There is a high chance she'll recover," her doctor said. "Maybe even within a few months? Her memories are going to be . . ."

"Mush," Jeanine cried.

"Mushed, not mush," the doctor said. He moved his hands around. "There's no telling how things are going to end up in her head. Our best bet is to patch her neural networks with some of her soul energy, and try and make some connections."

Sans just leaned back in his chair. He'd been waiting for that hour. Papyrus would be calling. What would it matter though? He'd probably be sent back away. Without Frisk. He heard a slight sigh from Alphys. She'd been silent in the other corner the whole time, but she was probably thinking the same thing. But, even that. Even. *Frisk*. She tried. *Aw*, that human had tried so hard. *I'll never forget what ya did, Kid. I'm just sorry it ended this way. I never even really got to apologize right.* Regrets. His only friend in that terrible world. The only one he'd come to trust. The only one who ever cared.

"Come with me," the doctor said to them. "We need to patch what we can. The better everything connects, even if it's not right, the better our chances. Come."

Sans was taken into a strange room. It was radiating red on and off. In front of them, he could practically see Frisk, lying on a table covered with her soul being the source of the red. The doctor took them toward some kind of flowchart in a computer.

"Her soul will hook up to this," the doctor said. "Now, we used a lot of determination to rebuild her physical self, but her soul has a good amount of it. If it doesn't work, I suggest handing her to the proper channels, and letting her fall away to wherever she goes."

Nice way of saying they'd throw her out of the barrier. Remaining quiet. So hard right now. He watched the doctor go toward Frisk. He took her finger print and placed it on her phone. "Soul connection established via her media." He came back over. "I need the main events of her life," her doctor said. "She is going to have a greater connection chance the more it affected her. Small events will never connect, and we'd have to give up." He downloaded the videos and pictures to the computer. "Biggest events in her life?"

Jeanine turned off her phone but Sans heard her mutter 'Maurice'. "Yes, I know her biggest events. Her parents died when she was very young. She had gotten lost, and a couple of monsters helped her find her way home."

"Okay, the Darnier's, I know about that. I'll even insert some pictures and some of that video from searching names . . ." The doctor placed that in. "Queued to upload into the soul. Next, the name of the monsters?"

Sans whispered to Jeanine.

"Alphys and Sans," Jeanine said. "Alphys is right next to me."

"Pictures help," the doctor insisted. "Meaningful boyfriends?"

This time, Craig whispered to Jeanine. Jeanine whispered back to Craig. Craig whispered back again to Jeanine. "I would like to get this done as soon as possible, but I heard somewhere that it's better to give it time?"

"She'll need a day for her full body to heal," the doctor said. "It's easier getting the information queued and plugged in though."

"I would like that extra day," Jeanine said. She noticed Sans' look. "One day will be fine."

What Frisk Hides

Back at Jeanine's Home

"There are positives and negatives to everything," Jeanine said. "We have to make the strongest connections for the best results."

"And by results you mean, not killing Frisk," Sans said plainly. "Great. Tragedy finally has a role to play in life."

"Not every major event is a tragedy," Jeanine countered him. "The more she has though, the more her soul will connect into her mind, not just her body. And it's not dying? It's."

"It's something that's gonna make her vanish from Twinkle Paradise," Sans said knowingly. "Something that's not gonna be able to connect with others. I get that." He certainly didn't want that.

"At the same time, Frisk has secrets in her life that she wants kept secret," Craig said. "If she accidentally remembers and reveals them, things are going to get nasty."

"L-like being rescued by the Underground and not surface dwellers?" Alphys asked.

"For one," Jeanine said. "Frisk. Frisk hasn't always been the way she is now, or how you perceive her to be."

"Look, what are the chances Frisk is going to be okay?" Sans asked boldfaced.

"She's definitely got enough anchor points in her head," Craig answered him. "I think she'll be okay. This happens all the time, even the doctor isn't greatly concerned. The older a human is, the more stuff they've been through. It makes it easier to piece a life around them."

"I don't get these anchors," Alphys said. "Are you saying she won't remember anything except key events?"

"No, no, she'll remember all kinds of stuff," Jeanine said. "Here? Um. This is usually how it's explained." She got up and went to her wall, bringing up a small pad. After running through it, a bigger screen showed up with an almost complete puzzle. "Pretend a regular person's mind is like a puzzle." She went to the wall and started to play with the pieces until they were all in. "Life easily fits together. Big events to small details are there. Now, Frisk?" She cleared the board and put up a fresh puzzle, with only the border in place. She put in a few pieces and started to build around them. However, she had placed a sky piece into the ground, and a ground piece into the sky. "These are her anchors, her major events." She started to build not on the border part of the puzzle, but on the pieces themselves. "While she is under, this is happening. She is drawing parallels between these, creating links and connections that fit the surrounding anchors. As she does that, her mind has been working on the puzzle border behind her too."

Jeanine had picked a simple puzzle. It didn't take long to see what she was talking about. "When Frisk comes out, this will be her. Some pieces of the sky will be in the ground, but she eventually pieces up back to the sky. These gaps between?" She pointed to the three or four missing pieces between the anchor points and the puzzle that kept them from joining together. "These gaps are all that she is missing. As she gets better, her mind will start to rearrange the anchors correctly." She moved the anchor pieces around. "It will then fill in the gaps correctly." She placed in the missing pieces. "Now the puzzle was complete."

"A wrong puzzle with misplaced pieces," Alphys said. "Those annoying pieces that look like they fit. They mess up the puzzle."

"Yes, those hard pieces. Those are anchors," Craig said. "The puzzle will come together, but it takes more time when those pieces don't all fit right."

"The better they fit, the faster she gets better," Sans said. "But, if she gets everything right, she might slip?"

"While she's talking, she might slip," Craig confirmed. "Even with the hard pieces we can give her, the anchors won't fit perfectly. She could have identities mismatched with wrong names, hot dogs confused with the taste of tomatoes, and anything else. So?" He looked toward Jeanine. "Jeanine's got her fingerprint that also opens Frisk's doors. She's just always been way more polite."

"Her business is her business," Jeanine said. "But, it's better to get everyone on the right track. She's going to go digging in several holes to find truths. We *need* to make sure she's digging the right way, but not dangerously."

"I just got two things I need," Sans said. "Two. Not pushing for anything else besides Frisk surviving, and no one knowing about the Underground." Sans held his bony hands out, crossed them, and then uncrossed them. "That's it, finis on everything else, as long as Frisk gets better."

"As great as that sounds, that isn't usually how it works," Craig said. "For one, she won't remember the exact present. Her mind will be hooked into a major event."

"The doctor will guide us on our best options," Jeanine said. "We can already guess the best options though. Um. As long as Frisk's mind is open like this, the Underground isn't an easy sell. Meaning, the closest major event in Frisk's life is finding Sans."

"But if she can't remember the Underground, I can't be here," Sans said. "That's what you're saying?"

"We can . . . technically get you all safe," Craig said. "Not Papyrus. We could get your friend Undyne. Everybody could come here. Except that we can't afford all this forever."

"A few months," Alphys reminded them. "We won't eat much. I-I'll even go back to the kibble, i-if I can just stay."

"I can eat kibble. I don't even gotta taste if I don't want to," Sans said, "but Alphys don't get that luxury."

"Nobody is eating that crap," Craig warned them. "Hell no, not under our roof. Usually, it takes a few months. Now, we can't go much longer than that. Even when Frisk remembers though, she is still in trouble. Jeanine?"

Jeanine stood up. "We are going to Frisk's house. Sans, Frisk allowed you access to her Amavisualizer. Craig and I are going to have to show you and Alphys some personal entries."

"How personal?" Alphys asked.

"*Real* personal. She trusted Sans enough not to look into her things," Craig said, "but we are going to need it. You two need to see what could be coming up in this battle. You're going to have to see Frisk's real self."

Frisk's House

She had a lot of videos. Probably had that phone re-uploaded with old videos when she got new ones. Their tech was pretty outrageous, everything followed each other. Sans scrolled birthdays, holidays, a lot of videos flew by through his fingers. Pulling up the search bar, he typed in a date Craig told him to type in. He scrolled backwards from there and then found labels of personal journal entries Jeanine made him stop at.

"Indecision, Bunnythinking, deaddonarrival, knitterforever, regretbender and neveragain," Jeanine said naming the videos as she checked them putting them in a playlist. Then she started with the first one.

INDECISION

"I hate this so much." Frisk cleared her throat. "What do I say? Um. Well, Jeanine thinks that I should purchase a monster to be my lover. And, I don't want to. I can't do that, just purchase someone. Just, expect something? But now, like, Craig wants me to as well? And, why would a monster tell me to purchase another monster? And, and he said. That sometimes. Monsters left alone for a long time, also really want nothing but a relationship too. Even with a human. But, the way he said that? Even with a human?" She looked down. "I can't. I just, I can't. I don't want any of them, but I don't want to do that."

"Who was them?" Sans asked.

"We'll get to that," Jeanine said. "Anyhow, as you can see? Humans that live inside the barrier are a little different. While we can't truly die, our biological senses are changed," she admitted. "While in a certain time in their lives, humans are presented with a biological need to have children and love, it can wane. That need can lessen. While in the barrier? It doesn't and it grows stronger. You see, every human is allowed to have one child, because most? And I mean almost all, need to. It's like . . . breathing," Jeanine said. "Offers you'll regret later in life may even be undertaken," she said softly looking toward Craig. "Those without lovers, male or female, will make deals. It might even look win/win."

"No need to get deep into it," Craig said, stopping her. "Jeanine regrets what she did with Maurice, and she doesn't," he said to Sans and Alphys. "She had Frisk's mother. We can't ever have any. She had them with the wrong guy, but she still loved the hell out of her daughter and granddaughter."

"Oh." Alphys gestured to Jeanine. "Then, i-if we do find a way out, come with us. You can have a baby together if you want, and there's not this strange insatiable need for children I suppose?" She looked to Sans. "You?"

"Hell no, not here," Sans agreed. "Monsters do their own thing."

"Sure, yeah." Craig scoffed. "It sucks in here but a short life with Jeanine dying is not on my list of happy ever afters."

"Did all the old literature get tossed away in TP?" Sans asked. "Nah. You can both have long lives. Big old vampire thing of biting her throat and slashing your wrist, and drinking-"

"Sans gets weird during intense moments!" Alphys interrupted him. "Monsters can share their life force but there are two consequences. You both will die at the same time if one of you perish, because you are both tethered to each other," she said. "Also, you won't live forever. I think you have . . . 500 years or so? I haven't looked at the classics for a long time."

"But if you two been at it this long, think it'd be good," Sans said. "Way better than in here. Of course, it's all fantasy at this point."

"I'd do that," Craig said. He looked toward Jeanine. "We can't though. We have to stay for Frisk."

"Great, whatever." Sans said. "Now it's time to pick back up on the horrible reality we were trying to set aside for a second."

"You don't have to say it so loudly," Alphys said softly. "Okay," she admitted. "Go on."

Jeanine sighed. "Anyhow. Not fulfilling that need inside the barrier can lead to terrible consequences. The fact that Frisk had no family she cared for made it harder," she admitted. "Frisk lost her mom and her dad. She had Maurice. I wasn't here," Jeanine admitted. "I moved away with Craig to a place a little less strict with monster . . . associating," she admitted. "Frisk was always full of determination and I assumed she'd be fine. I talked to her on the phone. When I started to see things so south, I started to visit more often."

"Still, we weren't here," Craig admitted. "Which brings us to the next two videos. Bear with us, I know these three don't seem big, but they are. Climbing steps. If Frisk didn't falter, she might have been okay a little bit longer."

BUNNYTHINKING

"Jessie arrives in two days," Frisk said excitedly. "Uh. I know it's not what Jeanine wanted, or Craig, but maybe an animal will help me? Bunnies are cute. It could live forever with me and we could talk to each other? I mean, I can talk to it and it can chew

carrots." She laughed with a weird twitch. "Pets are the next best thing to a relationship or a family or real friends, or only wanting to be friends because you're related to the famous. Jessie won't care," Frisk said softly. "He'll be good friends with me."

DEADONARRIVAL

"So. Jessie didn't make it," Frisk said softly. "I opened his container and he was dead. I called to ask what happened, and they said during traveling through tunnels, animals don't always do well. They usually just get sick, but they could die. And, I . . . I am completely to blame. If he had an owner closer to him, than he would have made it." She wiped a tear from her eye. "They asked if I wanted a replacement, but I don't. I'd risk killing it. Pets just aren't in this area, Monsters are." She sighed. "So, well, that puts that idea out. No talking, while he eats carrots."

KNITTERFOREVER

"So. They went," Frisk said. "She said 'goodbye, Frisk, see you in four years!' and I went 'okay'." She chuckled. "I just said goodbye, and I couldn't even say good luck. What kind of friend am I?" Frisk rubbed some kind of stitching in her hand. "I didn't even give it to her. I made it, and I didn't even give it to her. I just felt so. They're all gone. They all move on, and all I do? Is get better at knitting the damn congrats clothes." She dropped the knitting to the ground. It was some kind of knitted clothes. She took off from the view of the phone. "Fuck my life!"

Wow. Frisk cursed. Did Frisk ever curse? If she did, not like that.

"Shortly after this next video, I convinced Craig to come with me back here," Jeanine said before starting the next one. "We put the last of our money to get back to her. Because. Well?" She clicked play.

Frisk was on screen. Staring at the phone. Her clothes looked terrible. Half sexy but dirty in need of a wash. Her hair was a mess, in all directions. Her eyes were heavy. "So. I went away for a few months," Frisk slurred into her phone. "I did some shit I probably shouldn't have done. Jeanine's not happy with me. Craig's not happy with me. But, I wanted something." She brought a bottle of whiskey into the view of the camera. "I don't want one of them, but I want someone. Maybe I could, but I can't put it through-" She groaned, not finishing her thought. "I'm a terrible person. My little experiments could have destroyed so much!" She grabbed her head and ducked it down as she cried. "I mean, what would I say about it's father when it asked? Oh, he was just some random guy from here to there on a 60 day vacationed tunnel trip. Had so much fun momma got herself a little banned! Honestly, I have no idea which one he was, but I bet you got his pretty hair or eyes. Fuck!"

She took a swig of the whiskey. "I just kept chanting 'no more barcode, no more running my life for him, freedom!' But. I don't have to worry about it though, there's no baby. Still, Jeanine's worried as shit now. She's afraid I'm going to try suicide, and ooohh in the barrier that'd be so bad. But I won't, I can't. I'd never do that," Frisk said. "I'm getting medical help for a little while, and. And I'm. Going to look into getting a monster." She put the bottle down. "I can't deny I want something. I'm fifty two, and I want something. Is

that really so wrong? Craig says he'll find someone who really wants somebody too. Then it'll be okay. It'll be okay."

Sans couldn't even say anything to that. Frisk was lonely as high hell, damn. *She went on a bender with a bunch of guys for two months to have a baby? Shit.* She was in her fifties, more than fifteen years ago. How did she handle that?

"The next one is in a Purest Imports," Jeanine said. "Craig found someone who wanted family too." She looked toward him. "Supposedly."

"I did what I could," Craig said. "It's hard to see what's going on. Everyone wants freed." He waved at the screen. "Take it away."

NEVERAGAIN

"I don't know why you're recording this," Frisk said to someone behind her phone.

"It's your big day?" Jeanine's voice. "Come on, it's exciting. You are going to have someone in your life, Frisk. Have love. Eventually have a baby. Get out from under your grandpas barcode. Everything. Life starts now."

"Where's Craig though?" Frisk asked.

"Sometimes he gets affected when he gets close," Jeanine admitted. "Throws up. It's not pain, it's-"

"Trauma. He shouldn't have done this for me," Frisk said.

"No, no, he knows how important this is too," Jeanine said. "Go ahead."

Frisk looked nervous as shit as she walked to the saler. "I'm Frisk. Reser . . ." she stopped.

"Reservation?" The saler said. "Hang on. I'll see if I can't find the one." He looked down his list. "It's hard to separate sometimes. They kind of cluster in like safety groups? I'll bring out the little group. Hang on."

Three monsters were brought forth. All seeming to be in pain.

"Which one?" the saler asked.

"Uh." Frisk looked back toward Jeanine. "Um? The one who talked to Craig? Did any of you. Are any of you."

"Back away from them," Jeanine's voice instructed the saler. "She wants to talk to them without them in pain." The saler backed off. "There, Frisk. Talk."

Frisk looked at the monsters. "Hello. I'm looking for one of you? Someone knows Craig?"

"I know Craig," A bat monster said.

"The monster Craig?" A lizard monster asked. "You know a monster personally?" He moved up closer and bent down to the floor. "That must mean you're a nice master. Human, I'll do whatever you want. Buy me, please."

"No, wait." The Skeleton in the group said. "She's for me. She wants sex and a baby." He looked back at Frisk. "See? I'm the one. I'm Jeremiah. I knew the role."

"No way, I would be better!" The one on the other side said. "I've been on rental, I know all kinds of positions! Squids are way better than skeletons or bats!"

"No way, get away!" The skeleton she was supposed to pick pushed him. "This is my chance to get out with a nice owner, screw you!" He beat his chest. "Me and Craig, we go all the way back. Sorry I didn't respond right away, that's some terrible pain for a bit. But hey, I'm the one. You and me, some sexytimes and a baby? It'll be great. Just get me out?"

Frisk covered her ears through most of the fussing. "This was a mistake." She shook her head and covered her face, starting to cry. "No, I can't do it! I won't do it!" She ran away, with Jeanine calling back to her.

"Frisk! You can take it slow!"

"They don't want me, they just want freed, I don't want to do that, I can't do that!" Frisk stopped and gave Jeanine her money. "Here, free him, but not for me."

"Frisk, he has to go to someone. I have Craig. I'm not buying anyone else," Jeanine said. "He'll just stay in there!"

Frisk didn't say anything else. She just ran away.

"Oh, hey, I forgot about that," Jeanine said. "I wasn't flat broke yet living off my job. I still had a little money so I forgot." She looked to Craig. "Records."

"Probably tried to pay her back," Craig said. "I bet he isn't there anymore. Bet they double sold him. Ooh?" He smiled. "Maybe we can get that money?"

"Hey, moochers!" Sans complained. What the hell were they concerned about money for? Did they even see that? Frisk was bad, in terrible despair. Depression, turmoil, it was all over in those videos.

"I-I think Sans is asking if she's all better?" Alphys said.

"Yeah, she's better for the most part," Craig admitted. "Still wants someone and a family, but she's actually got a therapist and she takes medication. We are down here now so she has family that cares. Anyhow, that was all like fifteen years ago. But, still-"

Sans left and started to look around the room he slept in with Frisk. Digging through the top drawers, he was finding the medication. "I don't know any of this crap. Is it good for her?" He cracked open the bottle and looked at them. "I want to know what's in this stuff." Simple looking pills. Simple shape. Could be anything, he wasn't from around there, he couldn't tell. He was pretty damn sharp, but without any knowledge of anything? Could be anything. He

took the pills to the next room and tossed them on the table. "What are these? What's inside? Does it affect her?"

"It affects some things. Pretty good as long as she doesn't have withdrawals." Craig shrugged. "Maurice didn't know of course. Frisk keeps all this hidden but this accident, it'll affect things."

"Yeah. Good. Uh. I guess, I didn't. I mean." Sans looked at the pills on the table. Imagined the always determined woman forking up money for therapy and those things. "I know how she felt. The Monster Kingdom, it was lonely Underground," he admitted. "Real lonely, but at like 18 it wasn't too bad. When we came up and repopulated, there was lots of choice. I mean? I had lots of girlfriends then. I wasn't no Saint."

"Yeah, Frisk clearly went 'round a couple times before therapy and meds," Craig admitted. He looked toward Jeanine. "This world, this Twinkle Paradise. It's terrible. Filled with regrets. I don't blame you or Frisk for anything though. Not now, and not in the future." Jeanine moved toward his side on the couch, hugging him. "Okay. So." Craig gulped. "Let's talk about that *them*."

Notes: Frisk gave Sans access when she allowed him to use her amavisualizer to talk to Papyrus. It's basically her phone, her tablets, like her cloud space to everything.

Them

Alphys and Sans both waited. Neither Craig nor Jeanine looked well.

"I know you wanted to get all of you out, and out to the surface, but there's a really goooood reason we were telling you to quit," Craig warned them. "Especially now with her feelings all bubbling up, and her being so out of sort she's repairing herself. This is a real bad time for this."

"A monster," Jeanine said slowly. "You two have a monster card, and you've had Frisk escort you to eat, and you've fixed things and seen numbers. But, I don't know if either of you really get what this is going to cost Frisk."

"If there's any way to help with money," Sans said, "we'd help. Now's really not the time for a guilt trip."

"We know we can't pay her back," Alphys said. "We know we can't do anything, and that were all depending on her. But."

"We just want to make sure you watch her. And prepare yourself," Jeanine said slowly. She folded her hands together. "Maurice blames our daughter's death on Frisk's father. He doesn't think he held on tight enough to her. And, the longer you stay in Twinkle Paradise, it's been shown. That."

"Jeanine's about 400," Craig said for her. "Maurice is 1200. That level for a human, they can get off-balanced. Kind of like that biological need. People when they get real old like that? Tend to disappear. Twinkle Paradise doesn't talk about them, like they never existed. Even Frisk's-"

"Don't," Jeanine warned him.

"-mom. You won't find her name easily. Funerals aren't even held, their identity is just erased and people go on like nothing happened. Anyhow, because he was the basic asshole that created this place, he's always here. And so?" Craig looked toward Jeanine, and then back to Sans and Alphys. "Are his friends."

"Frisk has been wearing that barcode since the week she lost her parents," Jeanine revealed. "He told her then who she'd marry, and that she would be safe and warm for all eternity with them." She held up her fingers. "His best friends. Hedge, Oscar, or Clement. All 1200 year old bastards too. Because his version of safe and warm for all eternity?"

"Is to give one of them the reigns to the family barcode," Craig said. "Look? Let's put it this way. Frisk wanted to move on so much, you can see everything she did. She can easily have someone and a baby by accepting this. That is how bad it is."

"I gotta know," Sans said. "I'm getting an idea, but I gotta hear it."

"Maurice wants the coldest and the most dominating to win her, so even with her determination? She'll be nothing but a frail wife," Jeanine said. "Left alone inside a home. Never leaving without a love tether." Her eyes met Sans. "Hardly used now, but the classics still consider it valid and smart to handle wives when they leave the house."

A love tether? "You mean like a chain?" Sans said.

"Oh, a lovely chain of leather and it looks almost like a pretty necklace round the neck," Craig said. "She'll go outside a few days a month, otherwise stay inside where it's safe. She'll live in her lovely upgraded house, and only get bothered when her husband comes home to see her in their master bedroom."

"The other two beds are for her eventual child, and for her. Because. In that upgraded house, Frisk isn't going to want to sleep in that master bedroom if she doesn't have to."

Alphys mouth was wide, but no words really came out. "If *we* trigger the upgrade?"

"You can be having a nice conversation with your friend, eating her favorite chicken nuggets and some soda," Craig said. "And then watch her get dragged to the master bedroom for a little while, ignore any sounds you hear because you won't be able to help, and before her guy disappears again she'll just come back out to finish her nuggets."

"Don't talk like that!" Sans said, losing his cool. Beyond losing it. He was past it already. "This speculation or this real? Chances it's gonna be like that?"

"They are all from the same family, the Hugos," Jeanine said. "And it's real. You can check for yourself their histories. One of the most famous, yet despised upon social. I tried to talk Maurice into letting it go, but the man? He's not there the same way anymore. He just sees 'won't leave the house'."

"So, worst case scenario," Craig told them. "Frisk already told us if there is a baby, she can't raise it with any of them. If you are there, maybe you can keep it out of the way of him? That would mean Frisk could keep it. At least keep seeing it."

"We can't. Oh, we can't. Oh, we really can't." Alphys twiddled her fingers before covering her mouth briefly. "We can't ever do it."

"We can never get the others." It hurt but Sans agreed. Frisk. "My little determined fool, didn't even-!" He stood up and walked around the room.

"If there is a way to get out, we'll find it," Jeanine said. "You both can come with us, until she at least remembers who Sans is, and we can set you up on what's called half-pay."

"It's like a job, except the money goes to the human. Only half pay for the same amount of work, keeps the abuse more on the down low," Craig said. "After Frisk gets better in a few months, we'll talk to her and get it figured out."

Sans sat back down and looked back over at Craig. "You're a way better grandfather to her." He looked toward Alphys. "I'm sorry, Alphys."

"W-well, Undyne's guarding. She likes guarding," Alphys said. "Papyrus is safe."

"I can talk to him. We're all cool." Still. Sans. "She's always stuck here, never moving. Never moving on or she'll trigger that shit. Why'd you get her a monster?" Sans asked curiously. "Why not try to sneak someone else to start getting to know her? Why not try to move away with her?"

"Barcode," Jeanine said. "Frisk can't go. When I had her mom, and I foolishly signed those papers saying I laid no claim to his fortune, then I laid no claim to her or Frisk either. Even being able to get into her personal home, Frisk gave it to me. Out of trust." She held her finger up. "A human man in her house would look tricky, and her grandfather can come over whenever he wants."

"Monster never looks weird," Craig said. "She could say she bought it out of loneliness for a friend. Then, when the inevitable happened with a baby? Frisk heads to social first tweeting the news before he even finds out."

"Once something hits social, it's investigated quickly," Jeanine said to them both. "Then? She'd upload Regretbender."

"She had the video. Scrape the date," Craig said. "Cut off the ending. Frisk puts that on social. She'd be hounded for awhile, but she'd be free. Her grandpa legally loses his hold."

Sans stayed on that couch with Alphys for some time.

"The good news is that all this reminiscing did remind us that Frisk has unused money. She bought a monster, but she never took him home," Jeanine said. "Not money grubbing. I'm saying you can get Undyne back with that. Then money would be really less tight until you find a way out."

"Or until you can maybe save enough you can live on the better parts of the barrier? Probably wouldn't call it if they saw three monsters living together kind of place," Craig said.

"It's a sort of future," Alphys said. "Undyne would be there." She looked toward Sans. "Maybe eventually we could get Papyrus?"

Sans wasn't concerned about that right now. "Peachy. Fun. Lots of exciting future things. Fuck it all, Frisk is still stuck in this shit! We're just supposed to move off and leave her here? Alone or eventually triggering an upgrade?"

"What do you want from us?" Jeanine criticized him. "We've done what we could for her! Even tried to get her a monster. Do you want us to try again to make her accept a monster, or do you want Undyne back? I know which one Alphys would want, and eventually so would Frisk." She gestured to Sans. "Besides which, she already has you. Even if you did both agree to get Frisk a lover monster, Maurice knows about Sans. Not another monster."

"It's not up for debate," Craig said. "We just had to let you know what could happen, and what has happened. When Frisk comes back, there's no telling what her mind is going to

connect. The doctor will create the anchor pieces using what we give him, but don't let Frisk start going down the wrong way."

"If she talks about seeing things you know were Underground, redirect her to something else," Jeanine warned them. "She just needs to focus on the anchors."

"Her parents death?" Alphys asked. "You put that in. She's gonna focus on that?"

"Bunny?" Sans mocked them. "Nah, Frisk, instead of a hot dog stand, let's talk about your dead parents or maybe a bunny rabbit that also died. In fact, hey, let's reminisce about that time you went on a total bender for two months and how bad you felt. Yeah, great subjects!"

"Is there a positive anchor to hold onto?" Alphys asked softly. "Anything?" Silent. "Nothing really positive in her life? That wasn't Underground?" Silent.

"She'll work most of it out herself," Jeanine said. "She'll meet you when she comes over. I'm going to try and get her to associate with you in positive ways. Changing subjects to anchors or things that don't relate will be best."

"Sure, yeah. W-we could talk about . . .?"

"Makeup. Jewelry. Shopping. Things fluttery, changing, not personal, like the weather or how old friends are doing," Craig said.

"Okay. Nonsense stuff Frisk won't care about, or depressing shit. See lots of conversations coming," Sans said bitterly. "The future of the one who saved us." He looked toward them. "If she triggered an upgrade, can't we just kill them? She controls our souls, and they can't hurt us."

"It'd be suicide," Alphys warned Sans.

"Worthwhile suicide," Sans said. "Getting her out of this shithole of a position."

"Take away them, he'd find someone else," Craig warned Sans. "And getting them all into one place to take them out would be hard. Plus, once one is selected, he'll share Frisk's property. All of it, including monsters. He'd even have the right to sell you off. Trust me?" He told Sans. "I've thought about it more than once."

"And Maurice, he owns us too, then, sort of?" Alphys asked hesitantly.

"Yep, but he won't touch because he loves his Frisk," Craig said bitterly. He looked toward Jeanine. "We should probably go home. Unwind. We'll figure out what to do exactly tomorrow."

Sans stayed at Frisk's place. She did so much. He could never do nothing. He had no power to do anything. She was putting herself in harm's way, doing everything she still could. Still trying to be that cute kiddo that helped to save the Underground. His rescuer. His provider, even now. Thoughts kept running through his head, constantly. More and more.

He started going through steps in his head, ways to get her out. If she didn't remember, she would eventually slip up. She was hiding a lot of things. A lot of feelings. A lot of events. But, even something as wild and dangerous as run away with her wouldn't work for too long. He'd been around her long enough to know, in just the right setting, at just a random moment, anyone could make the connection of her being Fae Iskra Darnier. Then it would be all over. Him and Alphys taken away and a triggered upgrade.

He just kept circling the conversation through his head. There had to be something he could do.

///"The good news is that all this reminiscing did remind us that Frisk has unused money. She bought a monster, but she never took him home."///

///Even if you did both agree to get Frisk a lover monster, Maurice knows about Sans. Not another monster."///

"Yeah, that'd never work," Sans had to agree. Maurice knew he was there. He'd really have to be off-kilter to not realize it was a different monster.

///"Is there a positive anchor to hold onto?" Alphys asked softly. "Anything?" Silent. "Nothing really positive in her life? That wasn't Underground?" Silent.///

///"Frisk wanted to move on so much, you can see everything she did. She can easily have someone and a baby by accepting this. That is how bad it is."///

///"I can't deny I want something. I'm fifty two, and I want something. Is that really so wrong? Craig says he'll find someone who really wants somebody too. Then it'll be okay. It'll be okay."///

"Nah, that wasn't wrong at all," Sans said out loud to himself. "Tiny baby to love and care for. That's all she wanted. No friends or family 'cept stupid Maurice, and Jeanine and Craig were nowhere around." He could never blame her for that. Loneliness was hard.

///"You can be having a nice conversation with your friend, eating her favorite chicken nuggets and some soda," Craig said. "And then watch her get dragged to the master bedroom for a little while, ignore any sounds you here because you won't be able to help, and before her guy disappears again she'll just come back out to finish her nuggets."///

"But there's no way she's going to want that either," Sans said out loud. "She'd still be lonely, it's not solution. He comes home, takes her like she's his, and just out the fuckin' door!" Sans stood up, pacing the ground. "Even if that crap gives her a baby, she can't keep it around him. And I mean? What's the most we can do for her?" He looked out the window. "That's right. After everything she did, the best we could do is keep it out of his site so Frisk could stay with it." He clapped his hands. "Bravo, great plan, real fitting for her."

No. There had to be something. And not just for now, something solid.

///"As great as that sounds, that isn't usually how it works," Craig said. "For one, she won't remember the exact present. Her mind will be hooked into a major event."///

///"There are positives and negatives to everything," Jeanine said. "We have to make the strongest connections for the best results."///

///She could have identities mismatched with wrong names, hot dogs confused with the taste of tomatoes, and anything else.///

///"No, wait." The Skeleton in the group said. "She's for me. She wants sex and a baby." He looked back at Frisk. "See? I'm the one. I'm Jeremiah. I knew the role."///

Then . . .

///"Here, card." An older woman's voice, but sensing the voice waves, he could still hear it. "Buy, no experience, no rental. Charge it all." Hearing that, Sans lifted his skull some to see. He could make out the grown Frisk next to the saler and the insane woman.

"Hey!" The insane woman protested to the saler, "I was in the middle of-

"She wanted renting with approval, I can see your papers," Frisk said. "I just want him, no approval, and the saler already has my card. It's mine."///

"Holy hell," Sans said looking at his own bony fingers.

///"No, wait." The Skeleton in the group said. "She's for me. She wants sex and a baby." He looked back at Frisk. "See? I'm the one. I'm Jeremiah. I knew the role."///

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Sans didn't say anything out loud for several minutes. Her mind would be hooked into a major event. That major event couldn't be Underground related. Her getting a monster that would eventually free her, in the same kind of place she got Sans.

He sat down, feeling a little weak. "Okay, what am I really thinking?" Sans rubbed his barcode.

///"Monster never looks weird," Craig said. "She could say she bought it out of loneliness for a friend. Then, when the inevitable happened with a baby? Frisk heads to social first tweeting the news before he even finds out."

"Once something hits social, it's investigated quickly," Jeanine said to them both. "Then? She'd upload Regretbender."

"She had the video. Scrape the date," Craig said. "Cut off the ending. Frisk puts that on social. She'd be hounded for awhile, but she'd be free. Her grandpa legally loses his hold."///

Sans rocked back and forth a little bit. "When he loses his hold," he muttered, "then he ain't got no power over us either. Tell him what happened for real, he couldn't do shit. He wouldn't be able to stop himself from showing us the way out." Then once they knew, Undyne and him could tagteam him hard enough to get him out of Twinkle Paradise and onto the surface. Onto a bad part of the surface with radiation and a hella mad Asgore and him and Undyne and anybody else!

"Kid wins Twinkle Paradise. No more slavery," Sans said. "Not to mention, she'd have the only damn thing she's ever requested. Tiny little thing." A baby.

On paper, it'd look good. In real life, it would be crap. Even as honorable and forgiving as Frisk had been as a little kid, he really doubted she would forgive him for what he had to do. "We gotta get out. She's gotta get away from him." It just had to be.

Jeanine's Home

"No way," Jeanine disagreed. "There's just no way." She couldn't believe it.

"I-I agree," Alphys said looking toward Sans. "This isn't good at all. Y-you know that it's wrong."

"Doc said it didn't matter *how* things hooked up, as long as she had tight connections," Sans told her. "Alphys. You just don't get it."

"This is wrong, this is wrong, this is wrong!" Jeanine insisted. "Alphys agrees too, this is too much."

"It's just enough," Craig disagreed with her. He looked toward Sans. "He's right. It would work and when Maurice finds out, off to the surface they go. Guaranteed."

"I can't be a part of this," Alphys said to Sans. "This is a huge, huge lie! Even Frisk? *Even* Frisk couldn't forgive this, Sans. You can't!"

"Frisk can't get the others. Jeanine and Craig can't hold all of us forever," Sans said to Alphys. "And even if they could, we'd never get out that way. Keep hoping but it'll never happen. Frisk can be stubborn and determined, but she don't know how to get out either. We need to trigger Maurice to get out, and Frisk has got to get out from beneath him. Plus? It's Frisk's, this whole damn monster slavery is Frisk's. It'll be the end of all the slavery."

"This is so bad. This is soooo bad." Alphys lowered her head.

"You and Undyne, you're guaranteed to be okay," Sans said. "I'll be okay. Papyrus, even he's gonna be okay." He looked toward Jeanine. "You have to go the Imports place, make sure the transaction is still there for that other monster so we can pull this off."

"Jeanine," Craig said softly. "I hate to say it, but he's right. He's thought this through. They *need* out, and Frisk will be so much happier."

Alphys was starting to cry in the corner.

"It'll be okay," Sans said to her. "You'll see."

"This is the cruelest thing to ever happen."

"Frisk saved the entire Underground," Sans said. "Without her, nothing would have happened. We'd still be under there, probably losing our minds. We got sixty years of blessed goodness thanks to her. And now, she's gone this far for us *again*. She'll go as far as she can. We. We owe her something." He tried to smile. "Not exactly new to this whole thing, either Frisk or I. We'll be fine."

"You're giving it up."

"It'll be okay here. Frisk wins, it'll be okay. It's not that I don't. Look." He shook his skull. "In the meantime, Frisk would be happy. Is that so bad?"

"And what about afterward?" Jeanine asked sharply. "When Frisk knows you duped her like that?"

"Well. If she hates me too much to see me," Sans answered. He nodded to Jeanine. "Then it's hers, I won't take it away." Sans heard Alphys leave the room. "She'll be trapped in her own house or kept practically on a leash or her barcode will burn. Trapped for *them*, to come home to and do with whatever, just to leave again."

Jeanine remained quiet.

"Live forever in a kind of hell," Sans said to Jeanine. "Not you, not Frisk, not anybody bothered to tell me about who the lucky guy was at all until Frisk got scrambled. She helps us by setting herself up for failure. And with more bastards like her grandpa? His besties? It's shit!" He banged his fist on the table. "We aren't going out like that. Let's do it."

"There is no guarantee that her mind will work that way," Jeanine warned him.

"The best we can do, is make it trigger that way," Sans said, "and we can do that. With you and Alphys' cooperation. Back at Purest Imports."

"Maurice comes over whenever he wants to when he's in town," Jeanine warned Sans. "If he catches you even once-"

"You risked another monster for this. There's no difference in danger level. Craig says Maurice travels around all the time. He's also real big on social," Sans said. "Follow his social, up to the minute, and we'll know where he is."

"I . . ." Jeanine didn't know what to say.

"I want everyone safe, and I want everyone out," Sans said one more time, "but I *don't* want her to doom herself in the process."

"Plus, he's got a thing for her anyway," Craig said. "Started to flirt with her earlier and tried to backtrack. His backtrack went too far because of it."

"A crush is one thing. This?" Jeanine sighed. "It's the only way to win it all, but still. It's going to hurt."

"I'll hurt as little as I can," Sans said to her. "Really. I don't want to hurt her any either. But it's this, or one day something will happen that will trigger an upgrade, and that shit is *not* flying."

Alphys slowly came back in. "Pretending. Pretending to be the monster she's supposed to be with. Then doing that and leaving her-"

"-You want to be responsible for her being stuck in her home 24/7, only to be some fuck pillow to a guy who controls her the same way *we* are controlled?!" Sans went off. "Because like it or not, if that upgrade is triggered, our home is her home. Best thing we can do at that point is to watch out for the eventual baby. So? You going to keep walking around like everything's fine when her new owner comes in and scoots her off to their master bedroom?"

She broke down again.

"Agree," Sans said simply. "Just agree. You win your freedom and Undyne and everything back, Alphys. She won't hate you. Most of it's on me. Please? Just agree."

"But. If you like her-"

"In a simple world I could just ask for a date and see how things go. This isn't a simple world, it's hell filled with fake stars. We've got two options. I fake this, and we get out of here. We destroy that guy, and free all these monsters in here. Or? We play babysitter at the worse times of Frisk's life." His teeth were gritting against each other. "What do you want, Alphys?"

"I know. But. When she knows, she'll never forgive you. That's beyond putting the pieces together, Sans," Alphys said. "You're really gonna . . . just give it up?"

"All Frisk wants is one. That's all, just one little baby. No ones ever been able to repay her for what she did Underground, and no one can repay her now. Us coming in has only made life more of a hell." If he hadn't triggered those hooligans from recognizing Frisk, she'd still be safe at home. "If Frisk can't forgive." No way could she ever. "Then, I'll know it's got a good momma. Why would I complain?"

Alphys finally managed to nod her head. "This. Okay. It's terrible, but? I." She fidgeted with her hands. "I want to go back home!"

"Everyone does," Sans said. "We're getting everyone out." He looked toward Jeanine. "How many months you think I got to get her pregnant? 'Cause I don't know the first thing about how that works here. Or, well, monster to human or anything."

"Anywhere from three to six months I'd say," Craig said for Jeanine who really didn't want to talk. "The worse the bang up, the longer it takes. Considering Frisk's case, I'd say fiveish? Frisk will have tech to tell you within six days or so of getting pregnant too."

"You don't want this though," Alphys said one more time. "That's a lot of months. Maybe."

"I don't think she's just gonna hop over on me," Sans said to her, making her feel better. "She was nervous as shit in that video. I'll have to be the one coming more onto her."

"But don't come on too strong," Jeanine said. "But don't come off too weak, or Frisk will just start initiating friendship. I know her. Also, don't jump yet the exact day she shares."

"Yes. But, take it a little slow?" Alphys asked.

"But make sure it's decently fast too," Craig added. "It does not happen the first time. Frisk was out there two months and it still didn't happen. And I imagine she was jumping around with-

"Ah, ah, I get it." Sans held his palm up. "We'll figure it out, okay? Geez." He dusted off his jacket. "So. Can I keep my name or is that gonna be tricky?"

"We'll see. She'll be a little cognitive before she's ready. In that state, we'll see if this will even work at all," Jeanine said. "For all we know. There's still a possible chance."

"Good positive thoughts," Craig said to her. "Good positive thoughts. And with all the crud around her, what could be more positive for Frisk than imagining a real future for herself?"

No Mercy From Frisk

Frisk looked up and saw Jeanine staring down at her. How did she get there? She felt hard . . . not concrete. It was too smooth.

"Frisk?" Jeanine called out lightly. "You conked out in the mall. A little nervous?"

Nervous. *Oh, that's right.* She agreed to get a monster to start a relationship with for Jeanine. After Frisk's two months of not good fun, she and Craig moved all the way back there. Even got her on medication and therapy, and they didn't say a word to Maurice. In exchange? She owed them this. It didn't make it any easier though. "Maybe it's a sign we should call it off?"

"No," Jeanine said. "Just nerves, but you'll get better. You'll have your whole life with someone."

"I don't know," Frisk said as she felt Jeanine starting to drag her to the Imports place. "I've been against buying monsters all my life. Ever since . . . ever since . . ."

"Two lovely monsters found you on the surface?" Jeanine asked. "Of course, Frisk, but this is different."

"Is it? I mean, how do I know they don't just want a good owner?" Frisk asked. "I don't like this Jeanine. I know a promise is a promise."

"And Frisk keeps her promises," Jeanine said. "Come on. Let's go. It's right up ahead. Can you tell which one Craig might have picked?"

Frisk looked at the monsters behind the gate. A skeleton, a lizard, a slimoid, some goats, and a ton more. "Is it a goat?"

"No." Jeanine motioned toward the skeleton monster to come a little closer. The skeleton strangely grabbed two other monsters with him. "They travel in groups for safety."

"Groups for safety." That rang a bell. Frisk looked at them. A lizard. A squid. A skeleton. Frisk looked toward the saler. He was way on the other side. Funny, usually they jumped at the chance that someone came over to make a sale. "Hello? Which one of you know a monster named Craig?"

"You know a monster?" The lizard asked. "Your friends with a monster?" He dashed up closer to Frisk. "Human, I'll do whatever you want, if your friends with a monster than-"

He was stopped though. The skeleton grabbed the excited monster by his white pressed shirt.

"No, wait." The Skeleton in the group said. "She's for me. She wants sex and a baby." He looked back at Frisk. "See? I'm the one. I'm Sans. I knew the role."

Hmm. *Sans.* Frisk watched as the squid got excited too.

"Relax there, fellas. You are going to scare off my human," Sans said. "It's tough to find a nice one who wants a relationship." He winked at her. "I'm all for that."

Okay? Um. Frisk looked at Jeanine. She clearly wasn't taking him against his will. But? "I don't know about that," Frisk confessed. "I mean. It. In time maybe?"

"Frisk, stop being so coy," Jeanine said.

"Look, I know I just . . ." Went on a serious two month crazy spree. But? "I. I don't know, I can't explain it. The new meds and the therapy, it . . ." She held her hands up. "This feels really weird, Jeanine."

"Craig all but promised you'd take him," Jeanine warned her. "You *have* to take him, Frisk."

Fine. Fine! Maybe having a friend around the house would help too. Frisk waved to the saler. "The um. Skeleton."

"Of course." He said that like he already knew? He went over and tied the usual belt around the skeleton but thankfully didn't hurt it for once in the process.

"Hi there." He waved like being bought by her wasn't that bad at all.

"Great. Hi." Frisk waved back. Now? "Jeanine, I'm gonna go home now."

"Okay." She smiled. "Enjoy your night, Frisk."

"Uh huh." Frisk walked away with Sans right beside her. "Okay? So, let's get one thing straight? You don't have to feel pressured to be anything more than a friend with me, okay? I didn't buy you for bad reasons." He seemed intrigued. "I'm not that kind of person. I promised that woman back there that I'd buy one 'cause . . . she helped me out. And I?" She shrugged.

"That makes a lot of a sense," he said. "So you purchased me for what reason then? A human don't just make that big of a purchase for nothing."

"Uh? I don't know," Frisk said. "Maybe I just want someone to talk to. I tried to buy a bunny, but pets have a harder time getting over here, and he died." Her face lit up. "Not that you are a pet!" She waved her hands at him in shame as she winced. "I'd never think of you as a pet. Even the pet wasn't a pet. I, I just."

"You're lonely," Sans said. Like he easily understood. "I get it. Don't worry about it."

Oh. Good. Frisk took a deep breath and put her hands back down. *Better footing.* Now she didn't have to feel awkward about it, and she saved a monster at the same time from maybe getting a bad owner in the future. But, he was trying to hold her hand?

"Loneliness does hurt, but physical loneliness hurts too," he said. "Being stuck behind a gate all my life, I kind of want to try everything at some point. Besides? I mean, if anything did happen, it'd be cool. Doctors could cover everything up, baby look human, and it'd be alright."

Frisk stiffened. *Baby?! Just what the hell did Craig tell him?* "Look, I, uh? I'm not, uh, forcing anything like that between us. I'm. You're here for my grandma. I mean, you're not *here* for my grandma sexually or anything, she's got Craig. Not that she just bought him for that reason either!" Oooh. Could she stop messing up already?

"Damn, Frisk, you are to the umpteenth degree of uncomfortable," Sans said.

How is it that he spoke so well to her? Like he knew her? Frisk scratched her head. "Okay, I'm guessing Craig told you a lot more about me than I thought." Craig must have really known him. She was afraid he'd just pick someone off the lot and say 'who wants to have relations with a human' or something like that.

"That you went on a not so successful two month spree for a baby?" Sans asked.

"That was. It was more. I just didn't want to be alone," Frisk said. "It wasn't so much a baby. It was. I? Craig and Jeanine, they are my family. They weren't here at first, until after the whole fiasco. And I feel." She groaned. "I feel terrible about it."

"The spree?" Sans asked.

"That, but I meant Jeanine and Craig," Frisk answered. "They had the nicest house ever. They were in the best location ever in the barrier for what they have. Which is? I mean, honestly, if it was allowed, they would probably have been married," she said. "They gave it all up for me."

"Well, couldn't you have gone to them?" Sans asked.

"No. It's complicated," Frisk said. "Jeanine's my grandma, but she doesn't really? Well, it's my grandfather that has control of everything. Technically, he's family, but? He's not like. He's."

"He's bad family," Sans answered. "I get it. Craig told me about that too."

"Yeah, so, I'm better now," she said. "So."

"So you bought me as a favor to your grandma," Sans said. "Noice. Very good granddaughter."

Good. It looked like they were both on the same track now.

"But I didn't get bought as a friend," Sans tried again. "Craig didn't come up to me and say 'hey, be a friend and this girl will buy ya'," he complained. "That wasn't the deal."

Gosh. For being stuck in Imports, he was stingy. "Sorry?" What did he want her to say?

"Nah, nah. Sorry. Yeh? I'm not upset you bought me at all." He seemed to flip his thinking. "I mean, I am freed from that place, and I got myself a nice owner. Can't ask for better." Still, something seemed wrong. "I mean, not every human is really gonna like a monster."

Uh oh. "It's not that," Frisk tried to backtrack. "I think you are very nice."

"Then don't pop me over in the friend bin just yet?" It sounded like almost a plea. "What Craig had with Jeanine was magical, and I think it'd be fantastic to have that too."

"That's several decades of love," Frisk said. "A century's worth."

"Then maybe not that, but having someone to hold at night would be nice. After a lot of nights alone," he mentioned softly. "You aren't the only one who's been lonely, Frisk. Why don't we at least try?"

Frisk looked around herself. She was getting close to home. "I don't *need* that." This monster was not getting it. "Look? Okay, maybe loneliness doesn't always mean what you think it means." She sighed and made her way up to her home. She opened the door and locked it. "Do you want something to eat? I have chicken fingers? Soda?" Man, this monster. There was something weird about him. Sure he wasn't going to get banged every night, but he was freed! Shouldn't he be yelling for happiness? Maybe he just didn't get it yet.

Then, there was a knock on her door. Frisk answered it. *Okay, he looks familiar?* "Hello?"

"Frisk." The man gave her a gentle hug. "You know, it took forever to find you."

It always did. Frisk looked at him. Attractive man. Where did she meet him?

"The mall?" He asked. "Do you remember me?"

The mall. "Oh yes!" What was his name? "Jeremiah?"

"No, Danson," he said. "Are you okay? I just met you a couple of days ago."

"Yes." Oh yes, she remembered. "You're the nice man who paid for my drink at the soda fountain in the mall's pizza area. Hi." Awwwww. She remembered him crystal clear now. "Great."

"Yeah, we were getting along nicely," he said. He looked behind her door, probably barely seeing her monster. "Can I come in?"

"No," Frisk said. She looked behind her at Sans. "Sorry. I'm not a perfect owner," she said. "You can't tell anybody about what you see. I'm not a strict owner, but that is a heavy rule. Understand?" He nodded, a little confused. "Okay." Frisk looked back toward Danson. "You were a sweet guy. We connected. I took you to the bathroom, we had sex, what else do you want?"

"Um? A date?" He tried. "Look, I know we moved really fast." He waved his arms between them. "But I know we had a connection. I wasn't looking for a one time thing, Frisk."

Frisk shrugged. "That's my life." She smiled. "Thanks for stopping by. Don't stop by again unless I call you." She closed the door casually and moved away. She looked back towards Sans. "So, chicken fingers?"

Sans was continually pointing to the door with both his pointing fingers. "Frisk, what the heck was that?!"

Frisk shrugged. "I don't need physical comfort," she said. "I just can't have a relationship with Maurice watching over me."

"Wait? So, you just go out and bang a guy in a bathroom because he bought you a soda?!"

Whoah. "Look," Frisk said. "Getting a monster wasn't *my* idea in the first place. I don't want to hurt anybody, I never would, but you don't get any right to judge me. Now, you can either accept it and be friends, or hang around my place and do nothing I guess. I don't know." She scratched her head. "Like I said, I was just looking for a friend, but you keep wanting more."

"Having sex with random strangers, wow, that is soo much better than just sticking with one monster at home." Sans sounded mad. "We could have something way, way better than some quickie at a soda fountain. It's not everything."

"I know it's not everything," Frisk said. "If it was." She shrugged. "I wouldn't have been lonely enough to try for a baby. For someone to just always be here with me? Okay?"

"Aw shit. You didn't want a baby or sex or nothing." Sans sighed. "You were lonely for a friend. Fuuuuuck."

Okay. What a lovely monster Craig had picked out. *There's no way I can ever be friends with this monster. What do I do with him?* She couldn't take him back, she promised Jeanine she'd take him. It was looking like it would be very hard to have a friendship with him though. What could she do with him? "Do you want some food, yes or no?"

"Yeah," he relented. Jeanine had it wrong. Frisk didn't stop the purchase because she felt like it was wrong to purchase a monster for sex or a baby. She needed a relationship. She was banging guys still, even when Sans had been there. Probably right before she came home with Papyrus' number. *If this shit didn't happen, I'd have been on a better track.* There he'd been, wondering if Frisk would even like him as a monster, and she was banging random guys around the barrier. She hid it though from him. They were friends beforehand, and she didn't want him to know about the whole thing. Good girl Frisk, that's how she wanted to appear.

That's all she needed from him. Her friend, Sans. Even now? That's all she really needed. A genuine friend. It would be easy to do that. Eat chicken fingers and just joke with her again. Have fun getting to know her all over again. But if he did that? There'd never be a way out. Twinkle Paradise would never change. But him, in that bed with her? She might eventually cave, but it wasn't what she needed. *Yeah. She's still looking for more than just a friend.* She was looking for someone special to share her life with. That's what she couldn't have.

He watched her come back in and set the chicken fingers down with some soda. "What do you know about monsters?" Sans asked her. He was getting a different idea.

"I know that I'm not getting with one tonight," she warned him.

Okay. He deserved that. She was pushing so hard for friendship though, he couldn't get friend-zoned that fast. Then, when that guy came to the front door? Okay, he was a little mad about that. "Do you know how lonely we get?" He held his hand out. "I don't mean sexually, Kid. Frisk." Shit! *Don't do that!*

"Kid?" Frisk asked. "Why would you call me . . . Kid?"

"I didn't call you kid," Sans backed up. "I said, uh, 'I don't mean sexually. Just, like a kid. Like a kid?'" There.

"You want a kid?" Frisk asked.

"Yeah." Saved. "Yeah, that's it. I want a kid. Someone to . . ." *Play with? No. Why do monsters even have kids?* "Someone to just have." lame, that was a terrible reason.

"Someone to share your life with?" Frisk asked.

"Yeah, there it is! There you go, that's the reasoning." Sans nodded. "That's. That's the reasoning."

Frisk gave him an odd look. "Oh. I didn't know monsters had their own biological clocks ticking. At least, not guy monsters. Well, I mean, you're going to be different though," Frisk said. "I can help you."

Yes! "Yeah," Sans agreed. "We could be friends, and try for a baby."

"N-no?" Frisk shook her head. "I have medication to help, and I have a therapist. I'm sure he could help you."

"Your therapist would actually help your monster?" Sans asked her. "Seriously?"

"Of course," Frisk said. "He might ask for sex or something in return, but I can manage it. If that's what you need to make you feel better."

Sex with the therapist that was supposed to be helping her?! "No. That's okay."

"Then I should at least share my meds," Frisk said. "I mean, after you're checked out, then you can get your own. They really help take the edge off of things."

Oy, oy, oy. "How about no?" Sans said softly. "You really did hide yourself."

That statement made Frisk uncomfortable. "I didn't hide anything from you. It's not like I go spurting out everything to Craig. I am who I am. If you can't accept me for me, then maybe you should go back and wait and find another owner."

"Whoah, whoah!" Sans waved his hands back and forth. "That's not what I meant, Ki-Frisk!" Damn it! "I." *I suck at this. Let's face it, she's never going to be into me. We'll never have a baby. I'll never get anyone out. We'll never get home. This is home. He looked around. Forever. Then, when Frisk can't afford it no more, we'll do that half pay thing. Leave her all*

alone. Nope, can't leave her alone. She couldn't have her baby then, and that's eventually gonna happen.

"Are you okay?" Frisk asked him. "You don't look very good at all. I was just trying to help, you don't have to do anything you don't want to, Sans the Skeleton. I?" Frisk paused. "Kid. You kept calling me Kid."

Well. This plan got busted. Even said his full name.

"Ohhh, my gosh." Frisk backed away slightly. "I know you." She rubbed her face. "I-I know you! You're? I helped you. Underground."

Shit. Dead. "Underground?" Why try to even hang on?

"Oh no." Frisk grabbed at her head. "Oh no. I'm sooo sorry. I'm so sorry!" Frisk started to pace back and forth. "I left. I left without knowing your fate. I half assed the job, I didn't even make it fifty percent through!"

Wait. That's what he said when he first met her?

"You've been trapped down here all these decades because of . . . I thought you'd be safe." She started to wipe tears from her eyes. "I'm so sorry." She patted her chest. "I'm Frisk, Sans. I'm the little girl you met Underground, that helped rescue it. I mean, I tried. I guess I didn't. People must have found you." She rubbed her temples. "You went from the darkness of Underground to the darkness of being a slave. I'm so sorry."

Oh. She had him, but she didn't have him. *Gotta go with it.* "Frisk," he said. "Little hot dog wearer. How many did you end up with on your head?"

Frisk laughed sadly. "A lot." She moved around slowly. "I remembered Alphys and Undyne and the surface. I really thought I was found on the surface." She gasped. "Oh, I can't let Maurice know about that. If he knows about the Underground, that would be bad." She looked toward Sans. "I'm so sorry." Then, her eyes went wide. "Oh my gosh, I bought you for sex! I mean, I didn't buy you for sex, but you thought I bought you for sex!" She covered her mouth. "Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit. Ah?" She stared at the door. "Oh. And the? Guy from the . . ." She went quiet. "I'm not the same little innocent girl. I'm sorry."

"Yeah, well. Things happen." At least she remembered the Underground at the right time, and didn't spurt anything to Maurice. Who knew Kid would be such a trigger word? Sans wasn't a trigger word, but Kid? Doctor said it might happen with a trigger word. Well? Back to square one.

"Why did you want to have a baby so much?" Frisk asked him. "Wait. A baby?"

"I didn't. You know?" Sans didn't know what to say. "I wanted you to be happy?" Yeah, she wasn't buying it. "And for you to put it on your social, along with your Regretbender video cut some, and trick Maurice into . . . you'd have the slavery, you could break it." Frisk just stared at him. "It was the best plan, Frisk. I wasn't gonna let you trigger an upgrade."

“I lived with Maurice interrupting my life for seventy five years, Sans!” Frisk went off on him. “And? And?” She grabbed her head. “And I do as I want in life. My choice! I can’t believe you really wanted to just make a baby and . . .” She just looked to the ground. “You were going to pretend you loved me, lure me into bed, give me a baby, and then what?”

“Take Maurice down, and let you free the monsters in the barrier,” Sans said softly.

“Well, there’s my answer right there!”

Sans touched his cheek bone. It didn’t hurt physically. It probably hurt her hand more than him, but emotionally? “Frisk.”

“Don’t!” She held her hand up. “I did what I could. It wasn’t my fault you guys fell in here.” She put her hand back down. “What happened to being thankful that I even purchased you? What happened to being thankful for saving Alphys? What about at least finding Papyrus’ number or trying to help?”

“Frisk, you were dead. You were practically as dead as you can be!” Sans warned her. “And your head was all frazzled. We couldn’t risk Maurice knowing about the Underground! There was no way of telling which way it would all go.”

“That excuse works,” Frisk said. “It does. It really hurts when you get that close to death and emotionally you get pulled into believing something else,” she warned him. “It hurts every time.”

Wait. “Did it happen before to you?”

“And it gets harder to put pieces together each time,” Frisk confessed. “And it often takes a lot of convincing with doctors and professionals and a loving family to see that it was needed.” Her eyes were so teary now. “But this wasn’t just to hide the Underground, you were going to use me to rescue all the monsters in Twinkle Paradise! That isn’t for my welfare, that’s for everyone else! And there’s no guarantee that plan would have ever worked in the first place! And if it had? If I did fall for you?” She wiped her tears. “You’d just saddle me with a baby and go. You’d just . . . use me.” She pointed to her own head. “But you’d tell your skull it was ‘okay’, because I wanted one. Well, I do want one,” she revealed. “But call me cynical, I wanted to choose who it was with.”

“Maurice and the upgrade-“

“Who cares about the upgrade!” Frisk yelled again. “Oh, poor baby Fwisk, her grandfather’s gonna get her married to mean people. Sure she’s lived this long without any problems, but da Kid, nah, she needs help,” she mocked him.

Sans didn’t know what to say. “What would you have done?”

“Haven’t you figured it out?” Frisk scoffed. “Jeanine and Craig want back to their normal lives away from watching me.” She gestured to the door. “That guy over there is one of several I not only try, but I’m keeping my eyes on. I watch them, I watch their careers, and I eventually meet them more often outside of here. Right now, yes, casual get togethering,”

Frisk said. “But I already have a few I have plans for. When things go that sour, I’ve got my own special few I was thinking about,” she admitted. “But you know what? That was my business. Telling you or Jeanine or anyone else about the guys I like or I see was my personal business.” She closed her eyes briefly and opened them. “And I see they *were* part of this. Did they know you were going to get me pregnant?”

Save someone. They didn’t have to go down with him. “You left a monster there before named Jeremiah. He was resold. Twice the money. Without bogging you down, they thought I could play Jeremiah’s role, while they took the extra money and rescued Undyne for us. They didn’t know about the whole thing.” A big lie, but they didn’t need to go down in flames with him. “For what it’s worth, I’m sorry, Frisk. I-I didn’t know you had your own plans.”

“Well, I do,” she said. “After choosing one, a nice one, maybe not one grandfather would approve, then I would have a baby with him. Then I would settle down. But I protected myself, until I knew which one was the right one. I even went out as ‘Frisk’, never Fae. No spotlight on my actions. Do I want a baby? Yeah, but I want it with the right one. That’s the only reason I regretted the two month go at it. I went a little too nuts with loneliness, but once I got help, I saw a much better way. A way I chose.” Frisk crossed her arms. “After that, the half pays with Alphys could have let them go back to their life. And you, if you wanted to go, you could have gone with her.” She turned away. “That was the worst case scenario, but even if it hadn’t? *Idiot*,” she said cruelly. “Maurice gives me an allowance just because. I don’t tell Jeanine or anything, I don’t tell anyone, and I usually don’t use it. But if I saved it up it would be, at most, two years, and we’d have everyone. Maybe not outside the barrier, but you’d have everyone.”

“I. I screwed up.”

“Yeah, you did.” Frisk pointed outside her apartment door. “I’m calling Craig. You are staying with them now. I will still help, but only because none of you belong here.” She reointed to the door. “Maybe one day I’ll find a way to inherit the slave monsters, but it won’t be that way. Get out and wait by the door.”

Sans didn’t even nod. He knew after the fact, Frisk would hate him. It wasn’t even after the fact, and Frisk already hated him. She already had her own plans. Her own ways. She didn’t tell anybody them, but he could see why. Saying ‘I find nice guys and sleep with them for company as well as choosing nice ones to maybe commit to one day’. It didn’t sound so great. Even he was mad when he met that guy at the door. *At least I didn’t screw up and give her a baby.* It was a good thing she remembered. *Never again! I’ll never assume Frisk don’t know shit. Always ask. Always find out. Always . . . heh, doesn’t matter now. All pointless now.* The almighty pacifist Kid. She finally found something she couldn’t show mercy to. Him.

Sans watched as Maurice walked up to the front door. Instead of ignoring him.

He just smiled.

It's Over

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Craig stirred in his sleep. 3:30 in the morning, he could hear knocking at the front door. He got up with a bat. Nobody good would be knocking at that time. He heard Jeanine's words of 'careful', but they were wasted. Nobody could hurt his soul, except her. He went to the front door and looked out the peephole. "Aw, fuck."

He still kept the bat as he opened the door slightly. "What do you want?"

"To tell Jeanine, that Frisk is mine," Maurice said. "I don't appreciate people messing around with the people in *my* life."

"What are you talking about?" Craig asked.

"I put a tracker in your house a long time ago," Maurice said. "I didn't want Frisk to find trouble in the same way Jeanine had done," he said. "You know? Getting down and dirty with monsters. Especially ones that are hiding the fact that the Underground is now *freed*."

Fuck! Craig opened the door, keeping his bat extra close. Maurice came in. "Okay, and why'd you bother coming all this way if you know the plans, huh?"

"To solve your problem for you." Maurice pulled out his draftbook. "His brother is Papyrus. Already located, found him too. This is about ten times what he originally cost. I'm sure the owners will sell." He pulled out another draft. "This is for the one they keep calling Undyne, got sent to Monster Guarding. She was easy. Here you go." He handed him another draft. "What else? Oh yes, how to get back to the surface." He wrote down a name. "This was a good, dear friend of mine. He should be able to help the three of them." He handed the name to Craig. "There. Now get your monsters, and your Underground, and all that other trouble *away* from Frisk." He closed his book. "You can't do anything with that money, it's drafted. When the right owners who need it call about it, I'll undraft it. I don't trust a monster with a card."

"Maurice," Jeanine said as she came down the stairs. "Why are you giving them everything they want?"

"Because Frisk's mind is a blank slate right now," he said. "Did you think I wouldn't find out?" He smiled. "She'll be happy. I'll make sure she's happy and safe."

"What? No she's not, she got better!"

"Not anymore," he said. "It's your fault I had to cause damage that would kill outside the barrier. You should have told me what happened to my own granddaughter. She's my family, not yours. You're just the whore who bared her momma for the right price."

“What? You bastard, you can’t do that so soon after an accident!” She yelled at him. “She may never remember herself!”

“You are not going to leave these poor monsters stuck in this hellwhole all their lives?” Maurice asked. “I command Frisk. You get them freed. Fair deal.”

“It’s not a fair deal,” Craig said, practically throttling his bat. “You said three and there are four.”

“Well, someone trying to get with Frisk doesn’t really need to be out there, easily coming back like a bad dream,” Maurice said.

“What? You can’t kill in Twinkle Paradise.”

“No, but I can send wild *beasts* to Wild Imports,” he said. “No problem. Everyone else goes free.”

“Wild Imports?!” Awww. *No one’s ever defeated him. No one’s ever gotten close.* His old age though? Maybe his magic wasn’t as strong. Maybe he was just hoping for a miracle. Craig slowly grew spikes from his back and on the back of his bat. On the outside, he looked quite human except for his eyes and a small horn on his head. But he still had magic on his side. He still had anger on his side. He still had millions of lost lives and centuries of slavery to settle on his side. *Take him out, Frisk gets it.* Wait, no, she didn’t. The policies were drafted up before Twinkle Paradise was discovered to have the side affect of immortality. She had to have knowledge of offspring at least or it would go to the next son of a bitch in line for Twinkle Paradise.

“Frisk wants them freed, but she doesn’t want the life you want her to have,” Jeanine warned Maurice. “She’s my granddaughter too! You can’t manipulate her like that.”

“And you have the right to?” Maurice came back on her. “At least I wouldn’t have stuck her with a monster. Of course, look who I’m talking too. You’d give up a whole life of luxury for one measly monster. Or would you?” Maurice asked. “Would you throw him back in his Import place if I took you? If I gave you a whole life of fame, of fortune, and a life to still see your granddaughter?”

“Screw you, Maurice, I would never do that!”

“I know.” He shot her square in the head and cleaned his weapon. He looked toward Craig. “Should be dead, but not dead. Boy, that hurts. I’ll have her disposed on the surface.” He held his gun toward Craig. “Now, your owner is technically dead though, your soul is free for any human to-“

How it happened. Craig didn’t know. His magic had somehow triumphed over Maurice. Why had he even bothered with a gun? “Jeanine.” He needed to get her to the hospital. She was about to have the same problem as Frisk, but her determination wasn’t as high. He’d be lucky if he could even get her to remember her own name, let alone him.

Craig kicked Maurice's body. "Dead technically." Not dead enough for Frisk to get Twinkle Paradise. And Sans? Damn. Wild Imports. "Nothing really matters anymore." He looked toward Jeanine. "She could remember me. Maybe our old home? Put it up for sale, get the hell out." Maurice. If there was a way to get to the surface, he could dispose of that body. Until then, what could he do with him? 'Manipulate his mind as much as I want, he'll remember who he is. Enough magic, old enough, he'd definitely remember in as little as a couple of months.' But? "Doctor can't help you if they can't find your soul, son of a bitch."

Craig would keep him warm. Maybe one day Frisk would find that someone special, have a baby, and he'd release him. Release him so Frisk would inherit everything. "Yeah, right. If he disappears more than a year, someone else will take his place." He shrugged. Well, at least Frisk was safe for a year? He couldn't do anything else for her anymore.

He had to worry about Jeanine. It would take longer for her to bounce back. Maurice, he'd take his ass to make sure he couldn't cause trouble. What else? Drafted money did no good, without Maurice's approval.

As Alphys came down scared, she definitely started to freak out. "Sorry," Craig said. "Maurice is dead. Right now. Jeanine is dead. Right now. Sans was taken to Wild Imports." He shrugged. "Jeanine's not Frisk, she doesn't have a massive amount of determination, okay? So." He sighed. "Come with us. I'm putting the house up, getting the money for it and we are leaving."

"Leaving?" Alphys asked. "W-without anyone?"

"I kind of killed Maurice right now," Craig said again. "If he comes back to life and remembers, Frisk's upgrade will be triggered. He already wanted to mess with her mind."

"Oh." Alphys started to panic. "Sans? What's Wildest Imports? What's the difference?"

"Um. I don't know, and nobody asks," Craig said. "They are different though. Their minds are wiped. Default."

"No!" Alphys started to run in a circle. "No, no, no! No, get it together, Alphys! We can do this. We can think things through. Okay. Okay." She breathed deeply and looked toward Craig. "What do we have on our side?"

"Nothing," Craig said. "We've got to go."

"But Undyne?"

"We aren't going to have that much room," Craig said, "and honestly we'll probably need that money 'til Jeanine gets a job. We might even have to get half jobs."

"Please?" Alphys begged. "Please tell me there is something else? Frisk puts everything together in a few months, right? No matter how messed up, that's what the doctor said."

"Maurice 'rekilled her', and it was way too close to her last tragedy. The doctor will help her as he can again," Craig said. "We need to get out of here, or the authorities will find Maurice

and wham, back to walking around and probably killing me for ruining his life. Probably do something to Jeanine because he's a fucking asshole."

"But?" Alphys didn't know what to say. "Frisk and Sans?"

"What about them? I can't do anything!" Craig groaned. He rubbed his head. "Look. Everybody is on their own. There is nothing I can do for them. Yes, hopefully Frisk is better in a few months, that'd be great. Sans? He's fucked. Even if Frisk remembers, eventually Maurice's disappearance means somebody else will own Frisk. Same thing. I don't know what you want from me? There's nothing left. All I can do is protect me and Jeanine. Sorry."

"You could take Frisk?"

"Nope, barcode, dead giveaway. You come or you stay and get yourself bought by somebody else again," he warned her.

"If he's dead, but doesn't that mean Frisk gets Twinkle Paradise?" Alphys asked confused.

"Not without a baby. It's old policies, made before they knew the extent of life the barrier could provide." Craig couldn't take it anymore. "Pack. We gotta go. As soon as I sell the house for the money, we are out."

"Will that take long?"

"Why would it? We just give it away for a short cash fee The person who bought it can sell it and make long cash."

"Oh." She didn't get it. "Sans is out there. Doesn't Frisk have his, I mean, can't she just-" "Oh yeah, that's right. Maurice could bother them too."

"Sold him. Sold. Sold to Wildest Imports," Craig said to her over again. "He isn't Frisk's. He's fucked. Okay?" He couldn't stand around anymore. Maurice's body. Jeanine's body. Getting house. Getting shit together. Got to get going.

Alphys waved her arms. "No, no, no. No, no, no." No. No! There had to be something she could do! "What happens if nobody is there to put in the pieces for Frisk?"

"Then the doctor finds the best he can," Craig says as he was already moving to his room with Jeanine's body. "If it isn't enough, she'll be unfinished and 'disappear', or she'll be left unfinished. Then he has no choice but to tell her who she is, he'll give her her phone, and then off she goes."

" . . . "

"We have to go," Craig insisted. "There's nothing we can do. It was a terrible plan in the first place. We have to go."

Alphys nodded slowly. She didn't want to admit it, but he was right.

It was all over. It was just all over.

Chapter End Notes

Tough Chapters, but Papyrus is finally getting his own POV in the next chapter.

Three Years of Papyrus

One Week Later . . .

“Ooh, and a dash of that.” Papyrus was perfecting his lobster dish when the phone rang. He ignored it until Drew called for him. Drew and Pipsy were his owners, but they were the most wonderful owners in the world. At first, they had him help out around the restaurant, but once it got it’s bearings, they put him on half pay. He now made some of his own money to spend on things if he wanted. The other part of the pay went to Drew and Pipsy, but they usually put it toward the area at the top of the restaurant they used to rent to make ends meet. He had a whole big room to himself. At least for now.

“Papyrus!” Drew came over with the phone. “I think it’s your brother finally.”

“Ooh, Sans!” Papyrus had been trying to get a hold of him. When he called no one answered the phone, or he was blocked for long distance problems. “Sans?” He answered the phone. He heard a very light ‘sup’ from his brother. “Oh, Sans! I’ve been waiting for your call. Drew says you were bought by someone named Frisk, he said we both knew her? It is really little Frisk, the one that rescued us?”

“I’m not with her anymore,” he revealed.

“Oh? What happened?” Papyrus asked.

“Uhh. Stuff. You know, life’s shitty. I’m uh, not in a good place right now? I just wanted to hear your voice. I can’t talk super long. I’m on, uh, rental for something,” he admitted. “And uh, I’m supposed to have my memory wiped, so finding out I’m calling my bro would be a no-no.”

“Mind wipe?” Papyrus asked.

“Yeah, it don’t work on me. Probably ‘cause of being from the outside. Maybe something to do with that. Anyhow, don’t need them knowing that, they might try something stronger.” His brother sounded like he was breaking down. “Just tell me you are good, Papyrus? I just, I need to hear you are doing good?”

“I’m excellent,” Papyrus answered. “Best ever. I, uh, I’m making my own money? Sort of? And I have a room, a lovely room. I have good owners. I’m learning lots of food. The restaurant grows, and I meet new people everyday.”

“Great, great, I gotta go now,” Sans said. “But damn, it’s great to hear your voice, Papyrus. I’ll find a way to talk to you again, count on it.”

“Uh? You too, Sans.” Yet, Sans already hung up.

Year One

“It’s looking very nice,” Papyrus nodded toward Mabel. She was his new assistant. Papyrus felt a ringing in his pocket. “Hello?”

“Papyrus, call from brother. I am running it through to your phone.”

“Oh, thank you.” Papyrus hummed as he put in a couple of spices. Mabel glared at him. “Just helping?”

“Papyrus?”

“Sans,” Papyrus greeted him. “Good to hear from you! I haven’t heard from you in, what, three months?”

“It’s hard to call. It’s hard to live, it’s hard to call. When I do a good job, that’s basically when I get privileges,” Sans said. “Plus, I gotta be running the right job to do this. Anyhow, how are you doing?”

“Fixing food,” Papyrus said. “That’s what I do. I have a new assistant. Her name is Mabel. She’s very sweet.” Hopefully, that put her on his good side. “She needs to fix her ingredients.” No, she was glaring at him again. “What work did you just finish?”

“Cooking.”

“Ah, you cooked too?” Papyrus asked. “What did you cook?”

“You don’t want to know,” Sans muttered. “I’m just given the task and I do it, okay? Anyhow, I found Undyne. She’s here with me now.”

“How is she doing?”

“She didn’t guard stuff quite right. Um. So, apparently she got upgraded to where I am,” Sans revealed. “But hey! Were both alive, so awesome. She gets really excited about some of these jobs too. More than once she tried to volunteer herself.”

Undyne volunteering herself there? “What missions does she like?”

“Oh. You know Undyne. The less, uh. Boring I guess, you want to say? Without, you know, going into detail,” he muttered so softly, Papyrus couldn’t hear him that well.

“Okay? Well, I’m happy Undyne is happy,” Papyrus said. “I wish you sounded happier.”

“Don’t really know if you call it happy. I mean. Yeah sure, whatever,” Sans said. “It’s something. It. Gets through the day. Okay, I gotta go, Pap. You take care, okay?”

Year Two

“Umm. If we just add a hint . . .” Papyrus looked toward Mabel. “No?”

“No, Papy,” she warned him. “I don’t want to. This tastes better this way.”

“Yes, but humans like a little bit more flavor. We’ve gone through this?” Papyrus sighed. He didn’t want to upset her. Mabel was a part squid, part skeleton. Mostly she looked like a skeleton but she had an extra pair of arms. Two on left, two on right. Other than that? She was so sweet. Except, when it came to certain things in cooking. She was not very good at walking though. The extra strength up top made it harder on her more petite legs and feet. Still? He didn’t mind her. He shared his room with her, and now they were both fairly in charge of the kitchen, depending on who was working. If they were both working, he was the head chef. If he wasn’t, then she was in charge. It seemed to work okay that way.

Still? “You know . . .” Papyrus looked toward his chili he was now fixing. “I don’t need as much flavor, personally. I think it’s perfect the way it is. You’re perfect the way you are.” He stirred his chili a little more.

Then his phone rang. “Papyrus,” he answered the phone. He stopped stirring a moment, before picking it back up. “Sans, hello. How are you and Undyne doing?”

“Undyne got transferred again. She’s guarding again. She likes it. She got your number, if she can get a chance, she’ll give you a call,” Sans said. “Yeah, she guards a junkyard. Any humans that approach the junkyard, she’s allowed to disembowel. It makes her super happy.”

“Ah?” Papyrus didn’t know what to say to that. “Yippee? Humans can’t die?”

“Nope, but they can go through a hell of a lot of pain!” It sounded like Sans said that a little too happily. “So, now, it’s just me and a bunch of guys around here. Not that it was any better with Undyne, but I mean, at least I knew her. Never got anywhere. Didn’t want to but.” He sighed. “Do you ever dream at night, Papyrus? Of you know, the outside?”

“I used to,” Papyrus admitted. He adjusted the heat on his stove. “After awhile, it just seems more like a troubling time to remember.” In all honesty? He was happier there, but he could never tell Sans that. Sans was miserable. Undyne was who knew what? Alphys was long gone. Frisk, Sans never mentioned her. But, in a world, where humans controlled monsters? He found happiness. He looked to his side.

He fixed food. He watched people eat his food and thank him as their chef. He talked to people and had his own small kind of life. Not only that, but he spent everyday fixing food to a very lovely skeleton. Even now, she was humming as she was adjusting her own heat and shouting out the order number.

“I dream of it,” Sans said. “I dream of grabbing King Asgore, throwing him in here, pushing him into the pot or placing a damn tracker on him and saying ‘three days, pain gets worse if you can’t get it done!’ Then he’d whine and say how could he do the job if he was in pain, and then they’d just smack upside his royal fuckin’ head.”

Papyrus stopped stirring. “That’s. Vivid.”

“He never sent anyone after us. You know? I mean, he sent two teams. I guess he didn’t want to lose anymore. I guess the barrier wasn’t important enough for them to figure out

something else. Nope. Just gonna go on living. Gaw damn royal mother fuckin cheapass leader.”

Whoah. “Uh? Sans, are you okay?” Papyrus asked. “You sound angry. Very, very angry. You need to look on the bright side of something, Brother. Isn’t there anything with a bright side?”

“Yeah,” Sans said softly. “Frisk is good.”

Well? It’s been awhile since he said her name. “Frisk is good? Have you talked to her?” Papyrus asked.

“No.”

“Then, how do you know she’s good?” Papyrus asked.

“Just, I look her up. She’s good. That’s. That’s good. I think Alphys is probably good. Undyne’s really good. You’re good too, I can hear it in your voice. And that’s good. I want everyone to be good.”

“I am good,” Papyrus said as he started to scoop out the chilli. “But I don’t think you are, Sans.” Worry was creeping more and more into his voice. “Don’t give up on me?”

“No. No, to give up would make you sad. I’m gonna last as long as I last. Love you, Papyrus. Yo? You know what today is?”

“Uh?” Papyrus tried to think. “No, should I?”

Sans chuckled. “Snowdin. Gifts under the tree.”

“Oh, it was gift giving day!” Wow, it had been forever since Papyrus had even thought about that. That tradition never followed to the surface. “It’s been sixty years since we did that.”

“Yeah. It has been.” Sans sounded like he was starting to lose it slightly. “Simple young days. Dumb teen back then.” He chuckled. “I’ll talk to you later, Pap.”

“Well, I-“ Papyrus didn’t get a chance to respond before Sans hung up.

“Papy?” Mabel asked, looking at him so worried. “Are you okay? You don’t look so good.” She stuck her finger up. “I know!” She dug into her own food. “You want a bite of my food?”

“No,” Papyrus said softly.

“Are you sure?” Mabel asked. “You always like my food.”

“No.” Papyrus put the phone down. “I feel awful.”

“Why do you feel awful?” Mabel asked. “You talked to your brother. You’ve missed him.”

“Because I am always deliriously happy here,” Papyrus admitted. “Life couldn’t be more perfect. It’s even more wonderful here than it was on the surface. But Sans, he’s sooo miserable! He’s in pain and I can’t. I can’t comfort him. I don’t even know what he’s going through.” Mabel slightly moved and hugged him.

“Your happiness is probably helping to keep him going,” Mabel said. “From what you’ve told me of him. Take care of yourself, Papyrus, and he will do the same.”

“But I feel so guilty.”

“Don’t,” she said, sliding back behind her own pot again. “He calls whenever he can for reassurance.” She laughed. “He wants to know his Papy is doing okay! So, cheer up! Okay?”

Papyrus nodded. She was right. Maybe one day, he could find a way to get Sans out of whatever predicament he was in. Maybe.

Year Three

“Papy! Table two!”

“Yessie, got it Mabel!” Papyrus said back as he moved toward table two. A nice woman and man were there looking at their menu. “Are you ready to order?” He took their simple orders. “Good choices.” Well, they were all good choices to him. If he wasn’t making it, Mabel was making it, and Mabel was wonderful at cooking. Almost as wonderful as him. He looked out the front and noted two more customers coming in. There were now eight patrons inside with two almost done. He would have to bust that table soon and then- “SAAAAANS?!”

And nothing mattered as he saw the one monster he wanted to see for so, so, so, so, so loooooonnnng! Sans sat down just as he joined him real quick. “Mabel, break!” Papyrus shouted toward the front.

“Okay, Papy!”

Papyrus gave him a quick hug before sitting back down. Sans had sat right next to the door so it was hard to hang onto him. “Sans. I haven’t heard from you in? Two months.”

Sans gave a light nod. “Not always easy to get to a phone. Depends on what I gotta do,” he said. “I don’t have long, Papyrus. I just? I had to come all this way, so I . . . I couldn’t risk *not* seeing you.”

“I’m so glad you came.” He really was! “You should meet everyone. Drew and Pipsy and, and Mabel’s in the back! She is wonderful. Fabulous at cooking. Not so good at walking,”

Papyrus admitted. "You really have to meet her, just two seconds? Please meet her?"

"Ah. I wish I could meet everybody taking care of you," Sans admitted. "I wish I could try your new cooking too." He smiled with a chuckle. "I don't have that much time. I gotta get back to Wildest Imports. I finished this mission early." He crossed his fingers. "Got another monster to help out before I pitched it. Make it another day."

"Sans." Papyrus could tell he wasn't doing well. He could hear it in his voice on the phone, but he never could talk long enough to explain anything else. He once supposedly had Frisk and Alphys with him, and then everything just quit. He had his number and kept it. He tried to call him once a month if he could, but he was a great distance away. Papyrus looked at his wrist. "What's that skull and bones on your wrist?"

"That?" Sans looked at his arm bone. "That's my fun little tracker. It's the reason I can't stay long. I just really wanted to see you." He stood up. "If I come back out, I'll see you again. If I get a chance, I'll talk to you again."

"But, I don't get it? You never explain," Papyrus said. "Please explain before you go, Sans?"

"I don't have time." Sans gestured to his watch. "Call it my owner if you want. You remember that hurting when we first came to Twinkle Paradise? When you were taken?" He tapped the watch. "It does *that* to me if I don't get back to my base in time. And after its inducing pain of five minutes, it'll go off with my location. That way someone can pick me up. Sometimes they don't come right away. So, I gotta go."

"That's terrible." Papyrus gave his brother another hug. "It used to be so much better for you."

"My mess up."

"Can't you take it off?"

"Sure, it'll just push the pain from a five to a ten," Sans warned him. "I gotta go, Pap. You? You enjoy your life. I'm proud of you." He patted his shoulder. "Bye."

"Two more minutes?" Papyrus called out as Sans left. He wasn't himself at all. In fact? He wondered. He went after him slightly. "Sans, are you in pain now?"

"Just a little," Sans admitted as he kept walking away. "Just a reminder to get back to base. I'll talk to you when I get a chance again, Papyrus. You be a good brother now. And don't worry." He waved behind him, but still didn't turn around. "Your brother Sans, he isn't half as lazy as he used to be."

"But? But, Sans?" Papyrus called out to him. "I'm gonna be a father!"

Sans stopped walking a second and looked back at him. "Mabel?"

Papyrus nodded. "Please come, two minutes? Please?"

Sans walked back. Almost, like a limping. “I already took two minutes too long.” He hugged Papyrus. “Tell me all about it on the next call, okay?”

“But, but, but!-“ No, no way. Papyrus finally got the chance, the first chance in three years to see Sans. He was not letting this go. He ran into the restaurant and ran to Drew and Pipsy. “Sans has to go, but he can’t even get a chance to see Mabel, and I think he’s already taken too long and they are going to put him in pain, and?”

“Papy, calm down,” Drew said. “What is it?”

“He needs a ride, please?”

Papyrus ran back outside and stopped Sans.

Sans was forced to stop but he wasn’t happy. “Papyrus, I-“

“Ride, I am getting you a ride,” Papyrus said. “Faster than walking. So now, will you come?”

Sans moved back through the restaurant getting dragged by Papyrus, into the kitchen, finally to see Mabel.

“See?” Papyrus presented her. Finally.

He watched Sans still hobble a little toward her. She turned to shake his hand but he didn’t accept it. Papyrus watched Sans eyes look down towards her stomach. “Boy or girl?”

“Girl,” Mabel said. “Papyrus has wanted us to meet for a long time.” She tried to take Sans hand to let him touch her dress where the bulge was at, but Sans stopped her.

“Nah, nah!” Sans backed up. “Sorry, nah. My trackers still got a little buzz. I don’t want to shock my own niece.” Sans looked back to Papyrus. “She practically my Sister-in-Law?”

Marriage for monsters was illegal, Sans must have known that too. Papyrus nodded.

“Makes sense now.” Sans bent down to her tummy. “Little manifested blue auras in a manifested tummy. Bet it looks weird,” he joked to Papyrus. “Cute in a dress.”

Mabel didn’t sound as pleased with that assessment, but Papyrus was used to it. He was always odd like that.

“Nice to see you’re doing great,” Sans said. “Wife and all. Deserve the world, Papyrus.” Sans shook his hand briefly, but Papyrus felt the small charge now too. He and Sans were no pushovers when it came to power, so if he was feeling it? It would have really zapped Mabel.

He really should get his brother out of there. “Thanks for the ride too. I’m never late anymore for anything, but I was glad to meet Mabel and see you. Worth it.” He let Papyrus’ hand go.

Papyrus escorted Sans to Drew’s car where he was waiting, ready with it already started. “I will see you again one day, Sans.”

“Yeah. Sure of it. Gotta see my actual niece one day.” He chuckled. “More reasons to live now.” He closed the door and Papyrus watched them take off.

Midnight Stroll

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Fae wait up,” Pat said as he tried to follow Fae. “Come on, can’t we talk this through?”

“No,” she insisted.

“But come on, we both want-“

“I am not my grandfather,” Fae said, turning around to glare at him. “Get that nonsense out of your head. If you don’t like me, then fine, you don’t like me.” She turned her big furry coat away from her ex-boyfriend. Courter. Whatever. “Leave me alone.”

“My training doubled me as a guard,” Pat reminded her. “You can’t just dismiss me when we are all the way out here. Why did you want to come out here for anyhow?”

“To reminisce when I new nicer people. Real people.” Fae kept walking. Whenever she turned off the showy star image that people expected from her, she was always met with criticism and dismissal. When she took off her boa and expensive designer dresses in exchange for something casual and fun, it ended. As soon as she stopped talking like she was a celebrity, it ended. Even Pat. A nice guy that had some bodyguard training. She swore he’d be okay with casual, he was casual. He knew how to get his feet dirty.

But then everytime instead of meeting acceptance, she met one of two things. ‘I never want to see you again’ or ‘let’s make a deal’. Just because Maurice Darnier had Fae’s mother with someone he paid to do the job, everyone else thought she could be coerced too. They all knew she wanted a baby. Heck, the age of men she dated usually wanted a baby themselves. Someone to take on the name, just in case they disappeared one day. Someone to call family, and to spread the family name.

Fae’s high heels hit the mud. “Shoot.” She’d rather take them off, but she knew she couldn’t. She kept going stubbornly in them.

“Too far away from him, ‘Frisk’,” Pat belittled her.

Fae turned back around. “If Josk hears you call me that, you’ll have more than one angry person on your hands.”

“It’s what you wanted to be called,” he mocked her.

“It is, but it is not what I am allowed to be called in public.” Fae started walking again.

“Maybe if you didn’t hide yourself in the beginning, this could work out. Something could have worked out.”

“I don’t do it on purpose,” Fae warned him. “Josk demands it. What do you want me to do, break his command? Have him sell me to the Hallots? I don’t think so, and if you were the one, you’d understand that.”

“I know,” Pat scoffed. “You make guys fall in love with an image of a star. Then you expect to be able to just turn it off when you get home and turn what you call normal. It’s like a beautiful woman coming forward to you on a dark night begging for love, and then revealing her teeth are fangs in disguise.”

“When I find the right one, then I don’t have to live my life as the beautiful woman coming forward in the dark,” Fae said. “I can have the fangs in . . . not that reference, the first reference. The turning off being a star and then being normal.”

“Let’s just get you home,” he said softly. “And maybe. We can still talk about this thing.”

“No,” Fae warned him. Again. “If you think that I’m going to put myself in that kind of jam, after all these years, you are mistaken. Josk doesn’t want anything from me except to shine, and so I shine. That simple.”

“You look like you shine. Even right now, with your diamond earrings swinging to and fro on your shoulders, Fae,” Pat said. “It’s hard to remember you’re nothing but shiny grease.”

“That’s it, stop following me now!” Fae demanded. She pointed away. “Get out of my sight before I call authorities and make you ‘disappear’!” This time, he listened. He turned away. “Calling me a faker! You’re a regular person too, that’s why I gave you a chance!” He just flipped her off as he kept walking. “Jerk!” She walked away and pulled out her social.

Why can’t I find a real man that understands the real me?

She sent out her social. In a matter of minutes she’d have a thousand worried fans, condolences, and even some guys that believed she’d give them a chance by trying to find their social information. As Fae continued to walk though, she almost forgot where she’d been. It wasn’t the safest place for someone like her to be walking around without a bodyguard. And in her appearance, she stood out like the shining star she was supposed to be. Not something that needed to be standing out right now. *Okay, Fae, relax. Let’s just find a place to get a good bodyguard.* Sure, yeah, ‘cause those were just standing around.

All Fae wanted to do, for that night, was just to come towards her old stomping grounds. Where she used to work. Where she used to have family that cared. Jeanine and Craig. Gone like the wind. It seemed they took Maurice with them too. There wasn’t even the smallest amount of fear of being given away now. While Maurice wanted her to go to a Hallot as a wife, he never had that in his will. He had never changed it since even her mother was born and ‘all future relatives I own, in my demise, will go to the creator of Twinkle Paradise.’

Fae was no longer a Darnier, the daughter to the one who enslaved monsters. She was inherited by Jay Josk, the creator of the barrier that sustained them all. Her mild celebrity status of being the daughter of Maurice was overturned by being the next Josk. Jay Josk never married nor ever had kids. When she was inherited, he gave her cards, cash, and the promise to give her and get her anything she wanted, as long as she never slumped.

Meaning, she couldn't be 'Frisk' anymore. Only behind closed doors. She was the beautiful girl, the beautiful star that everyone wanted to see and become. That everyone wanted to meet. The cherry on the top of an extravagant gold flaked cake. Which was good, she'd have to get one of those again soon. The only one she could ever show her true self to, would be the one she trusted forever. And while Josk didn't care how she lived, as long as it was large, he definitely did not shy away from her from finding someone to have a baby either. Marriage and baby. A one time thing. A one time opportunity in a life of forever.

It was the crème de la crème. More than a biological need, everyone talked about it. The next Josk. And unlike her grandfather who kept his slavery secret, Josk promised if she actually brought an heir to the table? He'd give her the secrets of the barrier. To be passed down from her to her child, and her child's child, and her grandchild's child. As long as the family line lasted, before the older members or accidental tragedies made them 'disappear'. In fact, he had even shared live in the media, he was increasing the barrier length again, and it would be opened only when his grandchild entered the world. It would be divided into three districts. The Fae Spark District, the name of her future husband, and the name of her future baby.

As if the need wasn't great enough as it had been. In the meantime, she doubled down on her pills and therapy, and she dated the best guys she could find. But, they all ended up wanting what she wasn't.

People used to love me for me. Not for who I pretend to be. Then she woke up after her stupid grandfather shot her, and it took about six months to remember everything that happened correctly. That everyone just up and left, leaving her as a slab on a table. She left with her phone, her social, and her new 'father', Josk. Nothing else.

Craig. Jeanine. Alphys. Gone. Papyrus? No need to call him. He'd called a couple of times apparently, but then he quit, and she had nothing to tell him. Because Sans? Gone, just gone. Even though he'd made her so mad, thinking he could just lure her to him and have a baby, it didn't really bother her as much now. Because everyone did that now.

She had to have her brain scrambled and rejiggered and months had to pass before she could see the simple truth. He just wanted him and his family to be free at any cost. In exchange? He was leaving his child behind for her. He hadn't lied, it was for her. He could have laid some sort of claim to it after all the monsters were freed, or even to her. She had no idea how the monsters would handle it. But he didn't. He had no plans to do that at all.

She had thought more than once about what happened to him. She had looked into every Purest Imports and Advanced Pure Imports, and even into Guarding Monsters Inc., for all of their chain stores. Searching for his picture day after day. She even thought about putting her 'old monster was lost, reward' on her social. Simple look alikes was what she'd find probably though, or if someone did know about him, they might put him in danger for that money.

As for anyone else, she didn't have pictures, and basing everything on a look was tough when Fae had an entire barrier world to explore, instead of one department like she had with Alphys. It was nicer to daydream that they all got out and they were on the surface. But then? Craig and Jeanine would have contacted her by now. They never did.

A cold spotlight of pretending, and not a real friend in sight. Not even a nice boyfriend. *Well, okay, he warned me, but he pushed too far.*

Still, Frisk kept walking. If she would just run into a Purest Imports, she could buy a strong monster and call it good. A little overkill, but better than getting herself into a bad situation. She already ended up in one of those once being found out 'Fae was Frisk'. Her chances of trouble increased dramatically. Even for someone to just come over and harass her for something. *I hate this. As Frisk I could have walked these streets without this paranoia mounting.* She looked to her left where she heard a sound. *Okay, maybe not this deep.*

Okay, problems. She would end up in trouble if she didn't find something. The brightest lights didn't come on for hours, they were all kept dim for sleeping hours right now. She also shouldn't be caught out there by a fan taking a picture or something. It would seem like she was doing something illegal or wrong, and then Jay Josk would go 'nope' and hand her to the hallots.

She studied her surroundings and found a Wildest Imports. *As Frisk, I would never be caught dead in there.* Everything was so expensive, Frisk would never buy the flashy stuff inside. She would have rather did things, like eat. Still? As Fae she had no choice, and she would be spending a bunch. Looking on her, she made sure she had her unlimiteds on her. She did. *Oh yeah, you would have been just fine out here. Pfft.*

Fae went in and saw a vast amount of beautiful trees and bushes and plants. Wow, where did those come from? Some even had beautiful fruit on it. *How pretty.* There really wasn't much in the way of foliage in Twinkle Paradise. She could imagine her lovely apartment covered in some of it. Flashy. Her social would love it, while it would just feel so open and inviting to her. She'd have to ask about the pricing after she found the poor monsters. *One night. No worries.* Wildest monsters weren't barcoded, they were often rejected due to brain damage or a birth defect from mainstream selling. She didn't know how dangerous they could be, so she better get the most delicate monster they had.

Fae moved toward the saler. "How much does your foliage cost?" Of course, he took a few seconds to connect the dots. "Yes, I'm Fae Iskra Josk. How much does your foliage cost? Not to rent, to buy." He stammered a few seconds before giving her the number. "Fair, but double the amount. It's beautiful in here, and I want my apartment to be just as nice. Do they need nutrients and water to live healthier and more beautiful?"

"Yes. Of course they don't die, but yes, they need some things to be at their best. That's included in uh. Um. Wow." He got out a booklet. "Here."

"Great. And I need a monster," she said. "I had a terrible boyfriend, left me on the wrong side," Fae said. "I will be in trouble if I don't get a monster."

"Yeah, definitely. Yeah," he stammered again.

"I'd like the most delicate you have," Fae asked. "Delicate enough to know not to hurt me, but can still take on anyone messing with me?"

“Whoah. Every single one of these guys are badasses,” the saler said. “I mean tough! I mean tough, but you don’t have to worry about anything. One snap could kill them instantly if you wanted. Don’t worry about it. We’ll also put a simple tracker on it, depending on how long you want it.”

“Twenty four hours,” Fae said. “I don’t want it to have to rush back within hours.” She looked into the monster’s area but couldn’t see them. They were all sealed off. “What kind do you have?”

“I’m sorry, I need to run your card first before I can even tell you that.” Fae gave him her card. “Types of monsters: Dinosaur, ape, one boss monster ram, one boss monster lion, one half-bred lion dragon, one half-bred dragon lizard, one dragon, one half-bred pyrope dragon, one-”

“Those all sound big,” Fae said. “I don’t want anything breaking the cement around me. Not looking for a declaration to mess with me. Don’t really need to make it visible?”

“Okay. Yeah, I know which one to get you. Wait here. I’ll also call someone for your foliage. That sections is almost closed, only the monsters are opened in the dimmer hours.”

Sans snored lightly on his little cot. He was still worn out with his extra trip so far away. He had to build a house. The owners were supposed to rent four monsters to get it done, but they didn’t. They rented two. They got away with it because the final dimensions were within five pounds of calling for four monsters. Technicality. Greedy people wanting to save money. The other monster he worked with ended up using all his magic too fast, and he had none to get the physical labor done. Sans used his magic and physical labor at the same time to get it done. Welp, when the other guy was on the brink of death, the humans decided to get two more.

But two more fresh ones, so it could get done faster. They canned Sans early, giving him a chance to use a tunnel to see Papyrus. He was just so close, he couldn’t help it. He beat feat back to Wildest Imports, but he was still a half hour late. At least having his partner almost die gave him a little reprieve from jobs. Overworking a monster would just kill them and getting Wild Monsters wasn’t that easy.

“Up!”

Sans felt himself being slung to the ground with his cot being lifted from him. He quickly stood up and held out his hands. Well, reprieve over. The saler tagged on his wristband.

“One day,” he said to Sans. “The woman out there just needs someone to walk her home. Just come back afterward.”

Ooh? *That’s easy!* No cooking, no tracking, no stealing, no construction, no nothing. Walking a girl home? He’d have time to even call Papyrus! He could talk more about the little niece he was about to have. He couldn’t believe he’d get a chance so soon. Easy peasy, just get it done. Maybe he even had time to look at Frisk’s social. She was good, always good, but it

was still nice to see her face. See her words. Even if they were nothing special, just keeping up appearances.

Sans walked out behind the saler and looked ahead of him. Ritzy looking woman, definitely needed an escort. She was wrapped in a big white coat with a furry boa and everything from her ears to the back ankles sparkled. She was filling out papers for something while foliage was being taken away. Well, nature lover. This job was probably the easiest he'd had in months.

He moved up behind her, giving her the standard introduction. "If you want more than what I was paid for, I'll do anything you want for twenty four hours," Sans answered her. "Clean your house, hurt your worst enemy, take care of someone you need to disappear for awhile, be your bodyguard, stand around and hold things, dictate things, personal shopper to name just a few. I can keep you company with casual talk, political talk, important updates only, or I can remain silent. You name it and I will do it." Ah? Oh shit. "I will also tend to your foliage or flora too." Crap. Most people who purchased monsters didn't get that as well. That was out of line of the introduction." Sans looked back at the saler. *Fuck.*

Now he'd have a half hour session of how to greet people right, and it wouldn't be with just words. He looked toward the lady, but she still hadn't turned around. Well, he'd wait. Then?

He heard it. He heard the voice of the one he'd dreamed of when he wasn't having nightmares. The voice of the one that saved him more than once before. The one he never imagined he would hear except through digital devices anymore, like millions of other people.

She turned around. Her face was so white. "Sans?"

Sans didn't do anything as she wrapped her arms around to hug him. He wanted to hug her back, but the saler would kill him if he did that. She seemed to understand that though.

"Sans! What the hell are you doing in here?!" Frisk demanded. Hopefully, it was rhetorical. He hadn't said the name out loud for so many years. She covered her mouth lightly, licking her lips. Her mouth must have been dry. "Maurice did it, didn't he?" She pushed her hand to her temple, seemingly blocking herself from crying. "Even if I had found out, I wouldn't have had the money to get you out. That bastard."

Sans still couldn't say anything major. Something small that the saler would accept a monster could say to a human. He could get away with one word besides his introduction and choices were selected. Apologize. "Sorry."

Frisk just stared at him. She lifted his wrist and looked at the tracker on his arm. "Saler!" She yelled. The saler came to her. "I want this off."

"It's standard," the saler said. "While he walks you home, to make sure he doesn't hurt you."

"He would never hurt me, you're the ones who hurt him," she called back on him. "I want to purchase him."

“Wild Monsters are for rent,” the Saler said. “Buying flashy foliage is one thing.”

“Give me the number it will take to make him come with me,” Frisk insisted. “Call up your manager. Call up your owner. Tell them Fae Iskra Josk is demanding a monster, and she won’t walk away without a price.” As the saler dialed them up, she yanked away the phone. “This is Fae Iskra Josk and I want a specific monster from Wildest Imports.” One minute passed. “Uh huh. Okay, I’ll tell you what?” she threatened him. “I’ll buy the property from beneath this place, this land in the barrier your store sits on, and I’ll jack up the rent, standards and structures so high, you won’t know what to do but build elsewhere! Oh, but guess what? Are you gifted with a wife and a child and a house? Hm? Well, I’m afraid I’m going to buy the land out from that too. It’s really not hard when you are the adopted daughter of the Jay Josk, the one who created the barrier. So if you want your house, and your company, without rebuilding and moving every few weeks for the rest of your damn life? Then you will give me a price on the skeleton monster. Uh huh.”

Frisk gave the saler back the phone. The saler didn’t say anything as he listened on the phone, said ‘yes sir’, and took her card and charged it.

Sans watched as the tracker was taken off of him. The control of his soul was also given to Frisk. He walked out of Wildest Imports, not knowing what to say. Frisk. Bought him. She didn’t just rent him. She didn’t just give him the chance to see her again. She bought him from Wildest Imports.

“I-I don’t know a way out yet,” Fae said to him as they walked out. “I don’t know where anyone is at. I don’t have any rights to knowing how the slavery works, Maurice disappeared and he lost control of me.” Sans didn’t answer right away, but as she watched the sidewalk in front of her, she saw traces of wet spots on the ground. She stopped and hugged him, this time feeling him hug her back. A lot. It was almost too much, but he must have sensed he needed to loosen up.

“I’m in a gaw damn dream,” Sans said as he held Fae. “I keep telling myself that, but I ain’t waking up. I have to be in one, there’s no way you could do that for me.”

“There is no way I would ever leave you in there,” Fae said to him. “I’m sorry I never found you! I just, I would never, as Frisk, I could never go there. Never even think to look. Even if I could, I’d never be able to get you out. Even as Fae Spark, I would never have gone in there if I didn’t get into a jam.”

“Decent people don’t,” Sans said softly.

He didn’t let go. They didn’t let go of each other for several minutes. When they finally did, Fae spoke first. “Things are different now. Not really a threat over my head? No one’s around though, everyone disappeared.” She walked beside him, her heels clicking against the cement. “I have to shine though, that’s what Josk wants. I can’t be Frisk, not on the outside. Still, I feel a lot better this way. Things could have gone much worse.”

“I’m. Glad you shine,” Sans said. “When you posted. I at least knew you were okay.”

Oh. He just? Sans was just in such a state. It was hard to even hear him. His jokes. His laughter. The first time she got him out, he'd been in four months. This time, he'd been in three years, and she had no idea what he'd gone through. "I'll try to help get anyone back that I can." It was all she could offer.

"No," Sans insisted. "No. You've done enough."

"But it would be easy now," Fae insisted. "Money's no object."

"People missing, are missing for reasons," Sans said. "Digging them up might do more harm than good. People not missing, they've got a life." He held her hand. "I'm the only one who needed saved. Thanks. Sorry. Thanks. I-I don't even know what to say anymore."

Fae smiled at him delicately. "I missed your jokes. Your laughter. Your smile that wasn't a smile because Skeletons can't smile." She jostled his shoulder. "I want you to stay with me, Sans. I mean, I could buy you a whole house if you wanted, but I'd rather be beside you? I don't have anyone."

"That's what you want, that's what you want," Sans answered as he tightened his grip slightly. "I'll be beside you in whatever way you want. You've always had a friend in Sans, Frisk. That never changed." He took his hand still locked with hers and started to swing it lightly as they continued their midnight stroll.

Chapter End Notes

Don't get confused, this story did not end with this chapter.

The Puddle's Drying Up

Under Prison Tale

Fae brought Sans into her apartment. She had a feeling it wasn't going to be like the last time, so she had already texted out. Maybe it was a bad idea, but either way, Sans should feel more confident. "Go ahead and have a seat if you want. This is my little area for me, so you can call me Frisk in here." She watched him sit down. "Do you want something to drink?"

"Water, I guess, if that's okay?" Sans asked.

Water. Last time he needed a whole whiskey bottle. Fae got him some water. "Do you want something to eat? Do you still eat the same thing they fed at the other place?"

" . . ." Sans paused. That was strange. "I Prefer Mofood. It's the dehydrated food in little pellets. I can wait a few days for you to get some if you want."

Pellets? The kibble. "I have something in my fridge," Fae said. "I even have frozen slider burgers with cheese. Let me pop some in the microwave."

"If I can, I'd rather not," Sans said.

Rather not have a burger. "How about just a quick thing of ketchup?" Fae asked. He shook his head too. *It's like I feared.* "I messed up last time," she said. "You getting taken and sold, that was my fault. Maurice had you too technically and, and even though you are safe? You don't really feel safe, do you?"

Sans didn't speak up at first. "Permission to speak my mind?"

"Always," Fae said. "I mean, around here, us two. Then you don't have to ask."

"Mofood was the best choice for eating," Sans said. "Wasn't a real big fan of uh, unknown meat product. It was humans that didn't die, but had to go." He cleared his throat. "They aren't thrown out, Frisk, humans are eaten. That's how they finally end. So? Mofood is okay."

Frisk tried not to react too deeply. *Eaten? The Wildest Import monsters eat humans?* "I-I see."

"I didn't," Sans confessed. "Not for about a week. So, yeah, no fast burgers. I don't trust boxes. Take uh, some uh, vegetables maybe?"

Did it traumatize him from all meat? "I have microwavable fries?" she offered. "What about food that you can see prepared?" No. *What am I saying?* Now wasn't the time to wonder about that. Vegetables. "Tomatoes. Cucumber. Pickles."

“Not pickles,” Sans said. “Fresh food or Mofood. You can buy a bag for like fifteen. Keeps me going a month.”

Not pickles. Fresh food. Great, now she had to ask. “You didn’t become a vegetarian? If you did, I can learn more about it, but you don’t like pickles?”

“Fresh food.” He didn’t sound annoyed at all. “Bad food comes in boxes and glass containers. I can’t eat out of boxes or glass containers anymore,” Sans said. “Plastic wrap is fine if I can see through it. I’m sorry I am being so picky. I can pick up a half pay job and help pay for my food.”

“No, no need to ever do that.” Wow. “Whatever you want is fine. So, plastic wrap?” She went to her fridge. She brought out raw hamburger in plastic wrap. *Please don’t trigger him.* She showed it to him. “Like this?” He nodded. “So hamburgers made in front of you out of plastic wrap is okay?” He nodded. “Good. Then, alcohol?” No glass containers. “A can of alcohol?” He just shook his head. “A soda?” He shook his head. “Just water.”

“Trust water. See-through,” he said. “Been here ten minutes and already regretting your purchase. I know how to take care of the foliage. When they come, I can set it up.”

“I don’t regret it,” Fae said, “and you never have to make excuses why you need to be here.”

“Yeah. Well, maybe not for you.”

There it was. Fae was waiting for it. “I won’t make the same mistake twice, Sans, I swear. Right now, because Jay Josk owns me, he owns you. So, I’ve asked him to come over.”

Sans gave a light nod. “For the best. Hiding stuff just delays the inevitable. Should get it all out there. It’s not like we are waiting to bust out. There is no ‘out’.” He glanced back toward her. “Speaking of getting things out. How are you?”

How was she? “Fine?”

“You sure?” He asked. “I tried to watch you as much as I could. Even when I didn’t have a lot of time, I saw highlights.”

Frisk covered her lips with her finger thoughtfully then rubbed them. “What do you know?”

“Rumors mostly. Heard Josk was naming the next boundary areas after a family you don’t even have,” he said. “Heard the meds went bad. Heard to have a kid it’s going to be tough and painful. Heard you had to trust the ‘right guy’ really well before you even want to attempt it.” He looked toward her fingers. “Heard all that from others talking about ‘Fae Spark’. How do you-”

“It’s all frustrating,” Frisk revealed. “Which, by the very definition of how the barrier works, means I am really not well.”

“What do you mean?”

"I lost everyone in my life. I still don't have a baby or someone special. I *should* be going absolutely bonkers. At the very least, I should be stubborn enough not to go back to the pills again." Frisk rubbed her cheek. "The need didn't go up. I really wanted a friend, but the whole baby thing? It's like everyone else in the world wants one now for me. Except me," she admitted. "I mean, if it suddenly happened, I'd be happy. I'd love it. But if it doesn't, I . . . I don't *feel* like it has to be that way anymore."

"Oh. That sounds okay," Sans said. "You don't have to need one. You don't have to need anything. You want to just be you, with a Sans on the side, more power to you."

He didn't get it. "I've had myself in situations where outside the safety of a barrier, I would have died," Frisk said. "The more it happens, the more likely something went wrong." She looked back toward Sans. "The barrier's biological needs, they don't simmer down, they're just supposed to get stronger in normal people. So." She shrugged. "If I hadn't become Josk's adopted daughter. I think we could have met sooner?"

Sans waited. "Nah. You wouldn't be on the menu."

"What about physical damage that doesn't repair?" Frisk felt inside her mouth. "I've lost two teeth in the past two months. They broke and never repaired themselves. My vision is getting bad. I'm supposed to start wearing glasses soon. It makes no sense, only people with the weakest determination has these problems."

"Take it from an expert, not every human that deviates from the norm is gonna be open for business in that way," Sans said. "It sounds like maybe something is different 'cause of everything that happened, but it's okay to be different. Probably be even better if you got off the pills all together? Could be the cause."

"I'm still on pills and therapy though," Frisk admitted. "If I come off of them, I think maybe that overwhelming urge will come back. I don't *want* it back," she confided in him.

"Nothing wrong with that," Sans said. "This barrier, it's not natural. It has an unnatural effect on everything." He reached out and touched her hand. "If anything happens to me when Josk comes? You just need to remember one thing: Humans weren't born to be inside this barrier. Go with your gut, not with what the crowd wants." She placed her other hand on top of his.

Until there was a knock on the door.

Sans heard the knock on the door and Fae answered it. He expected it to be the foliage but it was Jay Josk. He came in without much of a word looking down at his phone. Whether good or whether bad, it was for the best to get it over with.

"Fae, wait outside." Jay Josk didn't take his eyes off of his phone.

"Sans is--"

“A monster from Wildest Imports. He’s used to not being babied. Go outside or I won’t help.”

Sans nodded to her. He really didn’t need Frisk waiting around to hear them anyhow.

Josk set his phone down and looked toward Sans. And that’s when he saw it.

One on one. A sensed gift that just happened. Confused by his actions, but already understanding him far better than Frisk.

“So you are Sans the Skeleton,” Jay Josk said. “Maurice Darnier put you into Wildest Imports and hid that from Fae?”

Sans nodded. Careful was the word, no matter what he sensed. Jay felt spooked himself.

“Do you know why?” Jay asked. “I am sure you know to be honest.”

Yeah. Honesty didn’t always get you in the best, but lying always got you in the worst place with humans. Stay clean. “I wanted to have a baby with Fae Spark, Sir. There was a plan to get it on her social. He’d be mad enough, that he’d tell us the way out. Then, my friends and I would gang up on him, throwing him out so Fae could rule.”

“That would trigger him,” Jay said. “Do you like Fae?”

Honesty. It bit sometimes. “I’ve been in Wildest Imports for three years, Sir,” Sans said. “She’s rescued me three times. Third time, today. She’s the brightest light in my life. I don’t just like Fae, I’d give her my entire life if I had to.”

“You were doomed from the start,” Jay admitted. “Maurice probably suspected something. Fae’s grandmother, Jeanine, she is in a relationship with a monster. Even without your plan, he would have eventually done this.” He looked back toward Sans. “I can’t free you, but I won’t sell or hurt you as long as you perform your part.”

“My part, Sir?”

“When in public, be professional. Don’t call Fae ‘Frisk’. Act well, dress well, and you’ll be fine.” Jay looked back at his phone. “If you have a relationship with Fae, make sure you keep it under wraps. Relationships with monsters aren’t looked at fondly, for the famous or otherwise. If you have a baby with Fae, keep that under wraps too. I can set Fae up with a doctor that will direct its energy into the path of looking full human. Fae can simply say it was a one-night stand and the father disappeared and then you two can raise it in peace. If you are from Wildest Imports, you already know some truth about disappearances. Can you tell me what you know?”

“Yes, Sir.” Sans tried not to act shocked about everything the guy just said and how he felt. He couldn’t free him, but he would give him permission to be with Frisk if something happened? *Eyes on the prize, Sans. Figure this guy out.* “I know that humans can’t get out of the barrier. The little booths outside we went through, it was one way. Put there to gather humans all up a long time ago and push them into the barrier. I know that when certain

humans aren't welcomed in the barrier, teams or a team of monsters take care of the problem." He gulped. "Only way to kill a human in the barrier."

"I know Fae likes her privacy but hiring a personal chef would really be a better idea for you." Jay looked back at his phone. "Maybe rent out an apartment next to here for one." He looked up from his phone. "Nice to have met you."

He cared about Sans' eating problem? "Permission to ask something?" Sans asked. "Why don't you tell Fae how much you really care for her?"

Jay groaned and sat down. "You *are* a sensing monster." He sighed. "Well? The power that ran the barrier was originally straight from magic," Jay said. "Harnessed magic. I didn't want to rely on existence with magic forever. Overtime, I changed it almost completely from magic to tech. The barrier around us has a large pink glow though. There is less, but that magic still moves within it. The night sky is just a beautiful illusion so no one sees the pink glow all over. Humans immortality, it's because of it too. And?" He confessed. "The seals power over the Underground seeped power like a faucet to it. So I've known the Underground has been unsealed for several decades. Soon, the magic will be all used up. The barriers will remain, but not the immortality anymore."

"Whoah." Whoah. "Pardon, Sir. I'm." Surprised. "Almost gone?"

"The weakest may have already started to feel the effects." Jay gestured to his phone. "It would be better if I could stop a particular leak. There is one on the outskirts I am trying to locate and patch. Every time the crew goes out to find it, they can't locate it," he admitted. "Texting me nothing but problems. Every day more and more magic is seeping out. Ten years is what I started with two years ago. Five years is what it moved toward yesterday. If I don't find that leak, everyone will suffer much faster."

"Suffer what, Sir?" Sans asked.

"Life being back to normal," Jay said. "Humans will become their true age by the end of it all. Most of the population would be old, dying, and scared, and when the monsters can't be contained and start becoming freed, I predict terrible chaos. The only thing I can do, is divide the barrier into individualized bubbles with some kind of passport system. One for humans, one for monsters, and one that allows them to get along."

"So it was like building a big hole next to Waterfall," Sans reasoned, "and having the water and everything pour into your side, but still holding the monsters back themselves. But now, Waterfall got cut off. Your living on a puddle and it's almost dry."

"Yes, that is a better way to explain it," Jay said.

"Then when the magic runs out," Sans asked. "Will the barrier give out?"

"No. I can make the barrier bigger, but I can't break it," Jay said. "A barrier without magic can't hold back the radiation that will seep through. They are mostly gigantic domes with air holes that will be added at strategic sections when the magic is all gone." He shook his head. "I was hard on Fae, and I'm going to be hard on you," Jay said, "about keeping up a strong

image. Without a strong leader, humans go crazy. The Hallots are absolute fiends. Maurice was responsible for the enslavement of monsters and he's gone. Even if he was here, he wasn't the right figure for others to look upon. When the day comes that the big decisions have to be made, the person with the most respect, wins the public's trust."

Oooh. "You didn't fight. You just made the barrier for humans."

"I was the one who figured out what could happen with a seal that entrapped monsters within it. I used it like water to a starving man," he said. "Once I did that, others who knew my secret made use of it before they entered into the barrier. Now, most of the older ones have disappeared." He looked toward Sans. "Just take care of Fae. Friend or otherwise, but I suspect she has still been just as lonely. Can't hide from the spotlight. People need someone to look toward." He looked toward Sans one more time. "Tell Frisk what happens in Wild Imports. Otherwise, her imagination might lead her to believe anything."

"Yes, Sir."

"Just do a good job. Keep up the act. Don't tell Fae anything," he warned him, "if you appreciate your freedom."

"Yeah, I got it." He was the sound speaker for Jay to confide in. Another reason he didn't turn him loose. He probably couldn't tell anybody else about the end of most of their existence in five years. Sans just gave him much needed relief. Heck, even Frisk was 78. *Damn, Frisk.* "When the crack is found, will it reverse the damage it's causing?"

"It's already causing damage for a fact?" Jay asked. "Maybe I have less time than I thought. I need to find that crack." Without so much as a goodbye, he left.

Sans watched him leave and just sat on the couch. Jay Josk was a good human, a real good human under a heavy amount of stress. He just figured out how to use the barrier that blocked the monsters from coming out, to create his own. Others had discovered and used it, like Maurice. *Three years of hell but freedom for Frisk.* He watched as she came back inside. *My Kid, she isn't going to be around in about five years. Maybe less.* Good times tended to go by fast, while bad times took forever. His three years at Wildest Imports felt like 30 years. The years with Frisk would zoom by. Plus, she was already showing bad signs. He might not even have five years. *Nah. I can't let it end that way. I still need to make things up to her.*

"Do you feel better?" Frisk asked him. "Did he free you?"

"No, but I do feel better," Sans said. "There's no way to ever break the barrier." Even if he found a way, it wasn't safe. Who knew how the air or power passed through the barrier? Radiation could affect everything.

"Did he say he wouldn't free you?" she asked softly. "Are you sure he said that about the barrier too?"

"Aw, Frisk." Sans just stared at her eyes. "I judged him the moment he came in. That guy'd never hurt you. He'll never give you away, he's just puttin' on a show. Trying to keep the humans in line." He smiled. Lightly. "I kind of figured out pretty quick there wasn't a way

out. But, we're all good," he revealed. "Papyrus, yo?" He was starting to feel a lot better. "I saw him. He's doing great. Not only is he like living his dream, he done got himself someone special and I'm having a niece."

Frisk smiled. Oh what a smile. "Papyrus is gonna be a dad? Well, that's wonderful news. He has good owners?"

"Yeah, yeah. Probably keep it in the family line," Sans said. "And uh, Undyne? I should have told you. She's guarding a junkyard. Every time I talk to her, she's always happy." Frisk didn't need to know why. "No reason to ever move her. You can even talk and ask, but I doubt she'll go. She uses her skills." Then, he paused. "I mean, Alphys. Nobody knows about Alphys."

"Or Jeanine or Craig," Frisk said. "Or Maurice. They are all just gone."

"I'm sure she didn't disappear," Sans said. "If they all went and Maurice were here, I'd say something different. They left of their own will. She's got to be out there. I imagine happy. We can't go digging, Frisk. Disappearing when you really didn't disappear, it puts you on the uh . . . menu. Instantly."

Frisk nodded. "I get that now. I won't dig anymore. Still, they went away without a trace. Wherever they are, I hope they are happy." She sighed. "I guess? That means you're with me forever. Or, unless you want your own place later."

"Not just yet." Sans reached over and patted her hand. "My Ol' friendo clearly needs a friend again. Everybody 'round her is fake." *I can't just let this happen.*

Ah, an even brighter smile. "I love you, Sans." Then, she backtracked. "I mean, I love you like a friend for handling this so well?"

"I get it," Sans said. "I love you too, Frisk. You came out of the darkness and saved me again. For once, let me be a little light for you?" He stood up and pulled her up too. He wrapped his arms around her and hugged her. "I know I mess up, a lot. I know I messed around Underground, a lot. I won't do that. When we're here, I'll be da same Ol' Sans you remember. When were out there? I'll be as professional as ever. I've been taught how to act. No worries, okay? I won't put you in a rough spot."

"Thanks for understanding, Sans," Frisk said.

"And, Jay said I should probably tell you what happens in Wildest Imports," Sans said.

"I think I can guess," Frisk said.

"Maybe. Mainly, that wristband that I wore when I first saw you again. That holds power against me, like a timer. There's a little pain. A little more. As time gets closer it gets more intense, and when time is up, it's a lot of pain all at once thundering on your head and body. But, if you stick to it, it's usually okay. I took out targets that needed to disappear, but I never like took out really good ones? I mean. One really old one. Mainly humans that hurt other humans are the target. Then afterward, there's umm. Some solution, and some cooking 'cause

raw is not everyone's favorite." He kind of moaned a bit of gibberish. "It's either eat, cook or track. I usually tracked. Sometimes I cooked. Sometimes other jobs would come through too, I mean anybody could purchase? But nobody like that one woman," Sans said. "Nobody rented one of us for what they can buy a Monster for at Purest Imports to do, unless they got a real specific purpose. Like. Construction. Sucks. I think I liked killing people better the construction," he admitted. "I almost died a couple of times that way. Monsters work better and faster than people construction workers. Gotta combine magic with actual physical labor. Not easy."

"Three years of that. It wasn't right," Frisk said hugging him deeper. "I'm so sorry I couldn't find you."

"Hey? It was worth it," he said softly. "Maurice finding out about the plan may have sent me to Wildest Imports, but you? You got Jay Josk out of it, Frisk." He touched her cheek. Featherlight stroke against it. "If I knew now what I didn't know then? I'd still go through it all the same way if it meant you were freed." He broke the hug and looked into her face. "Hey, come on? The Underground was tough too. Stealing souls, yeah? I'm used to rough." She still grabbed him and held him longer. "Good news though, Jay thinks I should get a private chef. I agree."

"Anything." Frisk wiped her eyes. "Anything you want, Sans."

"Anything in *here*," Sans corrected her. *Really should do it. Aw, but if I do? Decisions. Consequences. Gotta do something.* He heard a secondary knock on the door. "I'll get that one for you, Miss Fae." He opened the door for the foliage team to come in with her stuff.

They dropped it off and Fae put them up, along with some guidance from Sans.

"Well, if you can't **leave**, then bring home to you," Sans said, admiring the foliage.

Fae sighed as she heard that. He made a pun. He probably hadn't done that in years. She felt his hand grip hers lightly. "I miss your puns."

"Yeah. I think I did too," he admitted. "Getting late though." He started to walk by her, but reached to grab her hand.

Frisk followed him into her bedroom. He easily moved onto the side he took three years prior. He patted the bed.

"I have a separate bed for you," Frisk pointed out.

"I liked it here. It's lonely alone," he almost drawled out. He watched her climb in. They both sat up in bed, their heads not hitting the pillow. *Monster side of a barrier. If he makes it in time, that guy is a thousand years old probably. How long 'til he drops? Will he get the whole eight years? What if they don't find that crack?*

"I shouldn't keep this arrangement, Sans," Frisk warned him. "I mean. One day I still have to find somebody who-"

"-no, you don't. Josk isn't making you. Only if you want to," he said. "If you decide to, fine, but I'm pretty sure that's not what you want right now either." He slide down in his spot in the bed. "Sans may be bones, but he can still keep you warm. At least 'til you actually find someone."

Frisk moved into the bed. "I'm not supposed to disappoint the public though. I need to find someone else who fits."

"Fine, but until you find the right one that fits, I claim my old spot," he teased her. *Do it, I have to do it. Ah, this is not a decision to take lightly. Don't.* He couldn't ask her though without letting on about Josk's secret. And he couldn't expose that secret, it was literally probably the only thing that would make him send Sans away. Sans gestured to Frisk's phone. He needed advice. "Used to have one of those back in the day."

Frisk looked to the nightstand next to her where she placed her phone. "Oh. I suppose you want to talk to Papyrus before bed?"

"Would be really groovy if he didn't have to worry about me," Sans said. She easily gave him permissions on her phone.

"There you go. I'll be sure to get us to visit him soon too for you. You should be able to see him as often as you can," she said.

"Thanks." Sans moved out of bed. "I'm just gonna take this out here for some privacy."

"Don't forget to call Undyne too," Frisk said. "I just, I want to make absolutely sure she's happy where she is at."

"Sure, sure."

Sans moved all the way to the other side of the main room. Even if Frisk overheard, she couldn't hear everything perfectly clear. Plus, her hearing might be going soon. *First, Undyne.* He dialed up her number. "Hey, Undyne."

"Who's this?"

"Sans? You know, used to be a guard? Underground?" Sans teased her. "So, how happy are you where you are at?"

"Better than you."

"Doubt that," Sans said. "Fae Iskra Josk just came to Wildest Imports and bought me for good."

"What?"

"I know, I'm not shittin' you. Small fortune, just up and at it. Tomorrow I gotta act like a top class Monster for her when she takes me out shopping," he rubbed it in. "She's got enough money she doesn't even care about what she did. So she was wondering if you are really happy where you are at?"

"Acting hoity toity isn't for me, Sans," Undyne answered. "I'd go if Alphys was there. I'd go anywhere Alphys went to. Any word on her?"

"Nope," Sans said, "sorry. Is that a no on a purchase?"

"Call me back each week. If anything starts to change, I'll consider it. Stay in contact though. Otherwise, I don't want to be some shiny thing next to a star. Sounds worse than Wildest Imports."

"Uh? Everyone's different," Sans said to that one.

"Any word on anything else? If you're with the punky grandma, she's got connections to Josk now. He created the barrier."

"Welp, I had a sit down with him," Sans said. "He is my other owner after all." He shook his head. "Never gonna happen, Undyne."

"Yeah. Figures. Well, at least I got the perfect job for someone like me. They upgraded me to letting me use spears! Anyone goes past the trespassing sign at the very top, they are *mine*."

"Good to hear. Better go then. Got more phone calls to make. Byesy." Sans hung up and dialed the real one he really needed right now. Papyrus.

Outskirts of the Barrier

Alphys reached home, breathing loudly. She'd been digging out several hours next to the position of her half pay job. Taking care of little monsters. "I'm home!" She announced as she came in. "Jeanine?"

Jeanine came into the room. "Hey, Alphys. Do you want some food? You got home pretty late."

"I'm getting closer," Alphys said. "I dug out where I sensed the monster nursery was being exposed. I can see pink. I think this rumor is right." Alphys sat her long white jacket down. "If we stay and I can keep this job, and get tunneling a little whenever I get the chance, I'm sure I can find the fracture."

"Are you sure it's there?" Jeanine asked.

"I can feel it. I can feel the outside wanting to come in," Alphys said. "Right over by the corner of the nursery. I have some wood over my digging area, and a rug completely covering it. I don't think anyone's going to notice right away. It might take a little while to get a chance to dig again. They watch the little monsters well in there. I can only sneak in there occasionally."

“Who cares how long it takes? That’s wonderful news!” Jeanine hugged Alphys. “The hardest part is over.”

“Yes, but it’s hard to pinpoint where it is,” Alphys said. “I know it’s in the corner, but the corner is huge. And when we find it, I don’t know if I have enough magic to break the crack open.”

“I’m still human,” Jeanine said. “Trust me. I can find ways to get it to crack.” She smiled. “Then we can throw out Maurice for good. I’m sure Craig is tired of separating it all the time every time it wants to rebuild itself. Souls are tough.”

“Good, then not long.” Alphys chuckled in absolute delight. The years. It was almost over! “The first thing I’ll do when we get out, is find King Asgore. He’ll find a way to rescue all the monsters! No more slavery. Sans. Papyrus. Everyone. Everyone will be safe again.”

Playing Mister Wrong

"Papyrus?" Sans could hear his brother excitedly at the other end. He'd been major worried about him last time. He tried to hide things from him, let him have his simple, nice job and nice owners. Nice life. Didn't want him to know what his brother had to do or go through. He couldn't hide the fact he was hurting though. An extra charge down his leg was making it impossible to even walk well at that time. "Yeah, it was good to hear from you too," he finally said. "Yeah, can't wait to meet my niece. I'll be seeing you again soon too. Frisk is gonna let me visit. Yep. Yep, she flat out bought me. I know, crazy lucky. Crazy, crazy, lucky."

Okay, deep breath. "Papyrus? So, I got some information that I can't tell Frisk. I can't tell anyone actually, or I'm heading back to Wildest Imports. But, uh, she needs it in order to . . . make a biiig decision." He made biding sounds with his mouth. "You know, I kind of liked her, and she's fantastic. Look at everything she accomplished in her life, you know? I'm thinking maybe I should tell her how I feel. I know it's been like three years. But she's still this amazing person."

"Absolutely!" Papyrus encouraged him. "You should, Sans. If she has any feelings for you, then she could express them with you! And if not, then at least you know and you can live out the rest of your days through the awkwardness of knowing. That didn't come out right."

Just, rest of the days might not be very long. Half that time in two years because of that crack. Even if they repair it she's got what at most? She's already showing signs of bad things. "She's something."

"Uh huh."

"But she's sort of . . . dying," Sans revealed. "Maybe slow, maybe not so slow."

"What?!"

"And I don't want to let her off the hook like that," Sans said as he moved back and forth across the room. "I can't. She did soo much for everyone. For the Underground. For me. Heck, she bought me twice. I owe her everything, but I can't get her everything if she dies on me."

"Sans. I don't think I like the way this conversation is heading," Papyrus warned him. "At all. Dating and going steady is one thing, but are you thinking of-?"

"If I share my life energy, I mean, 500 years between us is okay," Sans said shakily. "I mean, I've lived like 78 or so, it's not that bad."

"Sans? No," Papyrus warned him. "No, don't. I know you want to pay her back, I do. I know she sounds like she's in terrible trouble, I do. But there's no coming back from that."

"I wasn't exactly Mister Studly," Sans said, "and uh, not like I'm ever leaving anyhow. If I save her, then I'm protected too. I'll never end up in Wildest Imports again. Frisk would, you know, inherit everything. She could run the show."

"I don't like it," Papyrus repeated. "That's ancient. That's. Well, I mean, it's possible. Very possible. But you can't just . . . the strange barrier . . . no."

"It's not like I tell her this, and then tell her how I feel," Sans tried to argue with him. "If she says she feels the same way, then yip? Right?"

"If she says she feels the same way, no yip! You knew each other a few days Underground with her being a child, Sans!"

"I know."

"And a couple weeks, *at most*, in this barrier! I-If you have feelings, that's fine. That'd be wonderful for both of you. But it took two and a half years before I ever even chose to do something with Mabel! Two weeks, Sans."

"I know, Papyrus," Sans said, "but I ain't got nothing else to offer."

"You for life? Is not on offer. I absolutely forbid it! Tell her how you feel, take time to get to know each other, and maybe after awhile you both will know for sure. It's suck a risky thing, Sans. And if she doesn't have feelings in the first place?"

"A life of not really dying that fast sounds pretty tempting to stick to a monster?" Sans joked.

"Sans!"

"Sorry," he apologized. "Then I wouldn't even make the offer. I guess. I mean."

"Oh, now what are you thinking, Brother? Please tell me. It can't get much worse than this."

"I mean, I could just share my life span and be friends forever with her."

"Nevermind, it got worse than that. You want to be friends with someone you just admitted you liked? If she doesn't like you back, then that's twice as worse. She can't go on with others when she commits to such a thing. You two will be bonded. As in bonded. As in heavily bonded. If she dies, you die, and if you die, she dies! And only 500 years. It does sound like a lot, but not really. We're young for Monsters, Sans. Big young monster mistake you don't want to regret for 500 years."

"And I don't want to regret letting something so special just die either." Sans gritted his teeth as he touched his skull. "You just, you don't get how much she's done for me. How much she'll continue to do for me." No. "I can't just let her go, and she's going fast. Her biological need, it's diminished a lot."

"That's okay."

"She's broke two teeth with no repair."

"It happens?"

"She's going to be getting glasses soon."

"Extra pretty?"

"Pap!" Sans looked back toward Frisk's door, making sure he hadn't gotten too loud. "What if I don't get three years to find out if she's *my* Mabel?"

Papyrus didn't speak right away. "Sans, this barrier is very different than the one we'd been in, in the earlier years." He paused. "It might not work out the same way. What if it does nothing? What if it zaps all your strength instead of dividing it? Then what? If she's dying, and it ties you but doesn't work? Then you'll die too. It's just too risky."

"I know it hasn't been tried in here. I know everything's risky," Sans said moving closer to the kitchen. Everything was different in the barrier, there was no telling what would happen. *Magic is getting lower. It could help with any side affects.* "I gotta go, Papyrus. I got to make another phone call."

"When I see her next, she better not be sharing your power."

"No, she'll be happily carrying a crutch, if she's lucky."

"Sans. Humans only live so long. And the longest relationship you managed was less than a year. This is 499 years longer. So, if she reverts to her true age, what's wrong with that?"

"Bye, Papyrus." Sans hung up. Papyrus didn't help at all. Nothing new he hadn't already thought of, and not an ounce of support. *Maybe I can wait a little bit. See how she feels. Run a couple dates.* Then decide if he wanted to be with her for the next 500 years?

"Ow!"

Sans heard Frisk's yelp. "Frisk?" He left the phone and went to the bedroom to check on her. He climbed in bed. She was holding onto her mouth. "Frisk?" She didn't even know he was there? *I don't got time, I know I don't got time.* He snapped his fingers by her ears before touching her. "Frisk!" He yelled beside her. *Hearing too.* He touched her shoulder subtly.

Now Frisk looked toward him. She took her hand and put three middle fingers down, with her thumb and last finger sticking out. Unless she was wishing for some Rock N' Roll, she was asking for a phone.

Sans had her open her mouth instead. *Ouch.* She busted another tooth. Jagged and right in the corner of her mouth. It was probably going to make her inner cheek hurt. Well, there was something he could do for her. "Hold on, I'll help." He wasn't the best at healing magic, nothing near Tori. Even a few minutes of waiting though would be better. Once he got most of the pain away, he used his power to gently file the tooth down to at least a dullness that wouldn't hurt her. "Better?"

"Yeah." Frisk touched her cheek. "Thanks, Sans. That hurt a lot more than normal." She smiled. "Glad you were here."

"I want to help you out some." It wasn't 500 years, but he could still help her. At least slow down the process if not all out heal. "It'll either heal them all back up, or at least make your teeth stronger again, less prone to damage."

She smiled. "Aw, that'd be nice." She let go of her cheek. "How can you help?"

"Lie on your back, close your eyes, and open your mouth," Sans said. Frisk had absolute trust in him. She shifted herself to lying down, opened her mouth and closed her eyes. "It's going to feel a little strange, but you are going to feel a lot better." He laid down on top of her, staring at her face for a few seconds. "This isn't a kiss. Skeleton's can't really kiss without the whole kabob, you know? I'm just going to lightly touch your tongue with mine. Okay?" She just nodded casually. She had no problem with that.

Sans opened his mouth and touched his tongue gently toward the top of hers. The power of his magic in her mouth should dampen the speed she was changing. Or at least, he hoped so. Or at least? *Damn*. He was feeling tingles all through his bones as he deepened the touch in her mouth. She didn't rebel at all, and even seemed to be encouraging it, her own tongue joining in. *Why'd you have to be a human?* He had already helped take care of her problems. The teeth wouldn't heal back, but he had helped the rest of them become stronger. Skeleton monster stronger. If there was one thing skeleton monsters had strong parts for, it was teeth.

He should let go, but it wasn't like she was fighting to let go. He took his hand and placed it in hers, interlocking his fingers. She relaxed her fingers and interlocked them with him as well. *If I don't pull back now, I'm not going to want to.*

He forced himself to pull back from her. "Better?" His voice was a little off. Frisk just stared at him from her spot on the bed. She didn't look confused or stressed out with what he just did. "Frisk?"

"Do you want to go to an open sushi bar with me tomorrow?" Frisk asked him.

"A date?"

"Yes," she said. "You can feel free to say no, but-"

"I'd love to date you, Frisk!" Sans admitted that as fast as he could. "I want to date you. I want to be here with you. Three years is a long time."

"It is a long time," she said. "Honestly, I haven't really done anything, because I couldn't get away as Frisk. Nobody ever fit the bill on accepting me as Frisk, so I never . . ."

"Three years is a long, long wait," Sans agreed staring at her almost in the exact same fashion. He looked at their hands, still interlocked.

"Everybody needs someone."

"Hm." A slight mutter. It wasn't all out a declaration of love. Nowhere near that. In fact, Sans was pretty sure Frisk was just as lonely as him. Meaning, she'd agree to any relationship to anyone who understood her. Heck, Papyrus could be right where he was, and he'd be getting

the same deal. "I need someone. You need someone. Lonely together." He entered into her mouth once more, before she stopped him.

"No, wait," Frisk stopped. "This isn't right. I. It's been three years," Frisk said. "I just. I."

"Want to be held?" Sans pushed himself up, and pulled her toward him, holding her. "You hold me. I'll hold you."

"The world is watching me," Frisk warned him. "Constantly, Sans. If I stop dating, they'll take notice, and then--"

"Don't have to," he insisted. "Frisk. You keep doing what your doing out there. But, whenever you come back here? You can be with me?"

"I."

Please, don't. Let me do this for you. Let me do this for me. "Lonely people need each other." He continued to hold her.

"But? I'm really. Bad at this," Frisk confessed. "The few times I did like a guy years ago, I usually had sex and ran off, Sans. I can't run off here."

Okay, how was he supposed to answer that one? "Lonely is as lonely does. Gettin' it on isn't the worst thing in the world." Okay, that wasn't it. "Even if we did, I get why we'd be doing it. I wouldn't hold anything to ya, Frisk. A warm body to snuggle, and a friend to joke with, I get it."

"It feels so wrong," Frisk said softly.

Oh. If there was the slightest chance, it was gone now. *Too fast. Why didn't you just say night at the nice date request?* Dating a monster was one thing, but dating evolved. Even Frisk knew that. If she was uncomfortable with him being a monster, he couldn't just expect her to get used to it that fast.

"We'd be with each other, only because we're both lonely," Frisk said, adding onto her earlier statement, and giving Sans a glimmer of hope. "Who chooses that? Who chooses to be with someone only because of that?"

Ah. That's what she meant. "I don't know who does, Frisk. Probably more than we think we know," he admitted.

"You want someone in this barrier that you can never leave," Frisk said, cuddling closer to him. "You trust very few, and this world doesn't make for the easiest dating options."

"Yeah."

"And I'm just terrible at relationships. I can't hold onto anybody, not as myself. Not without an act." She looked toward him again. "Can you really stand to hold a human? You don't even like the way we look."

Ah. That line of his would one day come back to bite him in the pelvis. He knew it. "I got used to it," he said. He pulled her over closer to his side, snuggling her. "Nothing wrong with the way you look."

"Nothing wrong with you either." She glanced toward him steadily. "If you ever want to end this, if you do find someone else somehow, just give the word."

"Yeah. Same. If you find the Mister Right you need. Then don't feel bad about leaving Ol' Sans lonely. Much better than where he was at. Until then?" He cuddled with her one last time. "Just consider me your Mister Wrong."

It wasn't the best agreement. It wasn't love. He could be with Frisk though, and depending on how long she had, maybe it was better this way? If she just thought he was as lonely as her, and didn't actually have feelings for her. If she knew, there's no way she'd do this with him.

Frisk for 500 years. Frisk for a few years. If magic doesn't work right, death for the both of us. It's all a huge risk no matter what.

By the time Frisk knew what was going on, he'd have his decision made.

Summary: Sans called up Papyrus about his dilemma with Frisk, and his brother was completely against it in every way, except having a relationship with her. Meanwhile before he made his next call, Frisk broke another tooth. With her hearing also going (she doesn't know that yet, Sans just tested it) he knows she's in bad straits so he gives her a little something of his magic. Afterwards, Frisk moves to asking for a date. A strange back and forth emerges, and Sans hides his feelings for Frisk, letting her think he's just lonely too.

For now, no decision seems to be the best decision for him, plus he gets to be near Frisk, meaning he should be able to keep her okay healthwise.

Timer

Chapter Notes

My chapters aren't as long, and they don't come as often. Sorry about that. Life's turned me around a few times more than normal. I am doing what I can do.

Frisk wobbled. She'd felt unsteady all day. She didn't like or understand the feeling, but she pressed onward. *Definitely sick, I am definitely sick.* Not the way she wanted to spend the night. After another round of being Fae Spark and perfect looking for everyone, she was ready to relax at home with Sans. She opened the door, flung her purse to the side and went over to her wine rack.

She looked around at all the greenery, remembering when she got it all. Amazing day, finding Sans again. It was nice to have him back in her life. She kept her level steady against the wine rack.

Then she felt a stronger presence behind her. One that smelled of fresh hamburgers and fries. Even the slightest hint of ketchup. It was pressed up delicately against her.

"How you doing, Frisk?" His voice said, sounding more positive than she felt. Frisk turned around and looked at Sans. Never dressed to impress when he got to stay home, but he wore a striking jean jacket with no ketchup stains. "No Mister Right, yet?"

Frisk didn't honestly know what to do with him. "No Mister Right yet." Her whole body eased into his as she closed her eyes and let him have her way with her mouth with his tongue. She felt his arms exploring her tenderly, knowing where they were headed once again. A part of her could never wait to be able to get home and be with Sans. Some days, the thought of him only the night away soothed her troubled mind. At other times, it drove her crazy.

If she had been a monster. If they lived in a different place. A different time. Maybe they could have more than a secret relationship. Maybe they could have an actual relationship. She felt a calling to be with him.

"Left me at home all day, Frisk," he complained as he finally broke off their mouths from one another. "That's okay though." Frisk felt herself being pulled up into his arms in one swoop, bridal style. "You can make up for it now."

Frisk normally loved when he was so bold, but not today. Her body actually twitched from the on rush of the swoop.

"What's wrong?" He noticed it too. "Frisk?"

"Nothing," she lied. Okay, could she ever get away with lying? "I think I'm just a little sick, that's all."

"Huh. Well then, you need your daily dose of medicine." Sans opened their bedroom door. "Thinking lots of extra attention tonight. If you're up to it?"

In a different world. Their relationship was the strangest of all. They were either having friendly conversations, or friendly sex. There was no dating, no I love you, no security. Every night Sans asked if she found Mister Right. Of course she did. It was him. But, she could never say it. That would only make the situation so much worse.

If Sans had a choice between her and a monster to be with, he would no doubt pick monster. Look what her world had put him through. How could he ever want her for . . . her? From that point on, there would be nothing but touching and maybe some dirty talk, but not much. Everything was kept almost to a mute silence.

Afterwards, both of them always layed still, starting at the ceiling. The usual. No 'that was nice', or 'want to take a shower', or even a quick cuddle. Sans moved first as always and left the room. Frisk usually took a small nap and then came out herself.

Then he would be there with a smile and a glass of water, asking her about her day, talking about Papyrus, or anything else that drove away from what they just did.

I need to stop this. Frisk felt the comfortable bedding below her. *I can't stop this, Sans needs me. He can't have anyone and he's always lonely. He doesn't get a choice, it's me or no one.* Frisk used to believe that no one was a worse idea. Having someone to be with, how could that be bad? But she felt trapped in a circle that she could never break free of. Even though there was no one else, she felt like the woman on the side. She was no one special, just someone to hold to bypass the time.

"Frisk?" Sans held her hand. "Yo. Hey. Um?" He patted her hand tenderly. Oh no, he knew? "Frisk, I think that it might be getting to the point that-"

Forget what she was thinking, so she was just a substitute, at least she had something that- "Stop." She breathed a second. "What are we talking for? We shouldn't be talking."

"Uh." Sans stammered. "I can't. I can feel it from you. You've gotten your fill of me."

No, not like that. "I'm fine."

"No, you're not." Sans pulled her closer. "We're not, and that's okay?" He touched her hair tenderly. "When this started, I'd only wanted to reach a certain point before telling you something, but then I guess, reality sets in every time. Facts and figures invade my brain and I can't stop it. It's kind of who I am."

It was over. Somehow, he must have . . . someone must have . . . at one of her events maybe? Or. "As long as you aren't lonely anymore."

"Nah, not that," he said. "I'm saying. Humans are scum, absolute scum, and I can barely stand a single one of you. Your kind separated me from Papyrus, Alphys is who knows where, and Undyne is more into the killing spirit of humans than I've ever seen her before. Meanwhile, I'm stuck in pretty clothes and a collar. It sucks, it all sucks, but . . ." His grip on her hands tightened. "Not you, never you, and even though you are human. I."

Frisk clutched at her chest slightly. Heartburn? Acid reflux?

He was just staring at her.

Frisk blinked. Hearing those words. They'd been at a friend with benefit kind of relationship for a month now, and he . . . what? Why was he just staring at her? Her leg started to throb, so did her hand that was pressed against the bedding. "Please say something." Get it over with. Just stop staring.

She felt him pull her closer and he just hugged her. She tried to hold his hand back, but hers were shaking like crazy. "Sorry." Her voice sounded strange too.

Concern shone in his little light-guiders for her but he still didn't speak.

"I'm just sick." Her head felt dizzy. "I feel sick. I'm real weak." She looked at her trembling hand. She looked around the bed and then back at him. Why didn't he say anything?

"Ah, no, fuck me." Sans couldn't believe it. "Frisk?" He could *see* it. It was happening too fast, way too fast. At first he missed it, thought maybe she was sick, or maybe just a little extra something was all she needed, but she wasn't good at all. He pulled out his phone and was checking social media too. Here he was, finally confessing his feelings. *Should have done it earlier.* He just wanted to be extra sure she felt just as strong. What he had to do, it was a real big decision. He and she, they both needed to know how strong it had to be.

He had seen it in her eyes, a hundred percent. She was as tired as the 'I'm only lonely' game as he had been. He'd seen uncertainty in her eyes before, but there was always something more. It wasn't always easy to read someone real clearly. Her eyes were an open book tonight. It was the night.

Yep. Looking at his social, sickness was setting in for a lot of people. News was covering it. Shit, some humans in certain areas were even straight up dying. They didn't understand it.

He did. "Fucking crack!" That crack? It couldn't be just a crack. Even Frisk's hands, as he stared at them, he could see wrinkles starting to show. He just confessed his love to her, and she was far from cognizant of what that meant. Or she couldn't hear him anymore. Either way, Frisk was getting old, fast. Too fast.

It couldn't just be a crack. Somehow, someone shattered through the barrier. The magic was draining fast.

Decision time. He couldn't put it off any longer.

Monster Kingdom

"King Asgore! King Asgore!" Alphys yelled to the top of her voice. She did it, she was free! It had been many long nights, much investigating, and it took other trusting monsters to make it happen, but it had happened! She was free.

Running with Craig and Frisk's grandmother, she entered the kingdom. Monsters from all over watched them run. It didn't take long to find Asgore had found their way to them.

"Alphys?" He was quite surprised. "You are okay?" He smiled. "Welcome home."

"King Asgore." Alphys staggered toward him, tears shining deep in her eyes. Freedom. Home. "The humans have technology now. The monsters were never gone." She gestured behind her. "We've been enslaved to the humans."

"Enslaved?"

Arguments and fights broke out as Alphys tried to speak. Many still remembered how good Frisk had been, and she even told him that Frisk was taking care of Sans and had freed her. But many more were absolutely against the humans, especially as she went into details about being forced to wear collars and being obedient, and being in the shopping malls like property. Everything rushed out of her so fast, genuine relief about being able to spill it all flooded her.

She looked back toward Asgore with the relief, and realized his eyes were anything but friendly. "Asgore?"

"They sucked our magic, that's how they ever managed to seal us. They must still be using our magic," Asgore repeated. "We will find out how they are doing what they are doing, and we will stop them!" He roared. "We will free everyone, one by one!"

But even little Frisk couldn't be stopped. How did he plan on stopping them? "King Asgore? How?"

"We'll find out how it works," King Asgore said. "Someone in there knows, especially if humans have not died and perished away. The elder ones. I know them. We will find them." he muttered. "We will find them. We will get them."

"And we will kill them!" Everyone yelled in unison.

"Alphys," King Asgore implored her. "Tell me all about the technology, traffic and media that you know of. Who is in charge, and can we get them?"

The one in charge. "Josk. Jay Josk," Alphys said hoarsely. "Yes. I know how to get them."

The Population of Underground Was Smaller

"Frisk? Frisk?"

Frisk groaned and moved around slightly. She had no idea what was going on. She felt terrible. She could barely hear, it was coming in and out. Even her eyesight. She could see two blurry images above her. One she knew was Sans. She always knew Sans would be there, even if she couldn't make anything out about him. The other was coming in and out of her hearing. Blurry.

" . . . the . . . right here . . . take this and . . . but you need to . . ."

Frisk felt Sans' arms around her. She tried to look back up at him. She was getting a little better. Her vision was getting stronger and her hearing was coming back.

"Frisk? Am I Mister Wrong . . ."

Huh? What was he saying? *I can't hear properly. He's trying to communicate but I'm so lost . . .*

"Nevermind, I can't right now. I've got to do something," Sans warned her. "It's risky, it's got risks, and I ain't got time to cover all the risks. Things are getting outta hand. We're just gonna go with this. I can let you die here. I can try to save you, but it might not work. It might just be some pain. It might convert you to some half monster. You might live a long time like me. You might have a really short life."

He wanted to save her. Did he have some kind of magic he needed to hold back on? *If those are the risks he's telling me, then what is he not telling me?* "What about you?"

"I accept any and all, I just need an answer! You are running out of time!"

He was tense and anxious. It made sense, she could barely see him. She didn't know the risks. Only knew part of the equation. He wouldn't be offering something too risky to him though, if he didn't have reason. From his voice. From the way he held her. *He wants me to say yes.* She was running out of time. No time to think about it, so Frisk chose what she always ended up choosing. What would make someone happy. "Okay. I accept risks."

Yeah. Yeah . . .

Sans held her so tightly. He held the magic identifiers he'd just been given. Josk had made a barrier wide announcement on his phone. Frisk was hit worse because of how many times she'd technically been hurt enough to die and come back. Others weren't so lucky. Not many would be. Considering what he had learned about the world, including the only one child rule? Sans already knew what had been coming.

Karma was harsh and cruel. The barrier was broken open and the monsters were entering to free all the slaves. Their destruction was nothing though, it was nature taking a toll. All of the age and radiation protection was disappearing at a rate even faster than the monsters moved inside. It took days to cross the barrier in tunnels. It was taking hours for the humans to start dying.

Even Josk. He was lying on the floor next to him. Before he died, he gave Sans what he *didn't* want. Control. Although he also got Frisk which would make it easier to move and get things done, he didn't want what he'd just been given. Yet? There was no way King Asgore was going to try to live side by side after they had enslaved monsters and bogarted the magic of the Underground.

If he died attempting to save Frisk, there would be no one left to handle things. So. *It's up to fate*. If he survived, he'd do it. If he didn't, then the rest of mankind was about to go extinct. He placed his arms around Frisk and built all of the power that he could. He may have been useless when it came to hit points, but he had a decent amount of power. He just didn't know how it would affect her inside the barrier. It's magic was draining fast though, practically gone. In fact, the endless sky was now gone. It was just like looking through a gigantic big pink bubble.

When he had enough power radiating around him, enough that it was actually radiating the room a deep course of blue, he let it all go.

Frisk opened her eyes. She was on some kind of street. The ground was hard. She looked toward her hand that was in her eyesight. It had been back to normal again. *Sans?* She moved around slightly.

"Ah, she awakes." His voice was a little dull. "Yeah. It's kind of like someone wakin' ya up in the middle of a nap, huh?" Yet, he smiled at her. "So. Here we are."

Frisk propped herself up closer to him. He looked okay. Tired but okay. "Are you okay, Sans?"

"I. Yeah." She felt him wrap her arm closer around her. "It's worth it. The right thing to do. I think."

The right thing to do. Frisk looked around them. There were some humans and some monsters. The road below her felt new and there were only a few structures. Everything else looked like it was in the middle of being built.

"35000." Sans looked toward her. "That's with monsters too. Much better population than the Underground back then." Sans gestured to the humans. "This is the new area Josk had

planned on having when you had a kiddo. Remember? All kinds of doors opened for people to run into and then it was closed off. It's not finished, but we're safe. It's still better than what the monsters had before," he said like he was trying to look on the bright side. "You can see the sun through the huge pink bubble gum barrier."

Frisk was already noticing all the differences. Something bad happened. Real bad. "Sans?"

"It must be this way."

Asgore? Frisk turned and looked outside of the pink bubble. She saw Toriel and Asgore. Asgore was stern with arms crossed. Toriel seemed gentle but also concerned.

"We can't . . ." Toriel shook her head. "We didn't do anything. Much." She glared to Asgore. "You should have thought before having everyone trample into here."

"Our kind had been enslaved, and we were going to get them out," Asgore told her. "It was not going to be a peaceful resolution."

Frisk could see what happened now. She didn't understand it fully, but somehow the barrier had broke open and the radiation had hurt the humans. Her aging, it was probably triggered by something similar. No matter how big the barrier was, and how much mankind had expanded over it? "One child per person." And so many people weren't in there 20's. They were in their 80's. They were in their 200's. They were whichever age, but so many had been above being young. Add to that the radiation spreading.

She turned to look back at the others. 35000. Of all of the billions of people. Only 35000. She felt Sans hold tight to her hand as she looked back at him. She looked toward Asgore again.

"We are glad you made it," Asgore said straight to her. "You have grown, but you were good to Undyne and Sans. In a world where humans enslaved them, you helped them. It is the only reason we don't find a way to break in."

"Not to mention you helped to free the Underground," Toriel added. "So very, very important." She held her paw to the bubble gummy area. "You did wonderful things my child. I am sorry how this turned out."

Frisk couldn't do it at first. Thinking of the billions upon billions of humans dying of old age and radiation. Sickened. Hurting. Writhing probably in pain with no one to help them. She felt Sans hold her hand though and place it on the bubble gum barrier opposite of Toriel. *That's right. I can't.* She couldn't stay mad at them. Frisk didn't even know anything about how the power of the barrier worked or how it had all broken down. She had no right to blame. Mankind had stayed terrible after putting the monsters Underground. It was the only consistent thing. Although some were good, there were still so many that felt like monsters were theirs. Their property. Enslavement could not have continued if the number of humans against it were of a greater proportion.

She tried to hold back her tears. Her world, destroyed, within hours. Within hours. Frisk looked toward the sun. At the beginning of it's trek over the sky, it had all been normal. Not

even setting yet, and she couldn't even figure out the percentage of what the population was left.

"Because we know you. Because, we are all freed from your help," Asgore said toward her again. "Not to mention because you are now Sans' wife, we are giving you a chance."

What?

"Not mine," Sans corrected him. He looked toward Frisk. "Pshaw, don't worry about it. No big thing." Then, he gave her a light wink.

There. For that second, she felt so much better. Old Sans. Frisk moved her hand from the barrier and went toward Sans. "Thank you," she whispered. She hugged him tightly.

"Sans," King Asgore called to him. "You have an excellent memory. He was, according to media around here, Frisk's father. You lived with Frisk." He seemed impatient. "There are monsters over on your side that are still enslaved. If you know where he kept his own research-

"I don't remember," Sans interrupted almost on cue. "None at all. Nope."

Frisk just continued to hang on. Sans knew exactly where Josk lived. Why didn't he want them getting the research? Figuring out how to reverse what held the other monsters there?

"Surely we can find a way to open this up again without terminally damaging it forever?" Toriel asked. "Frisk. You are welcome to our Kingdom, once we can figure out how to get you out."

"We're good." Sans was curt. "Been good. Used to bubbly bubblegum barrier life."

Toriel looked down while Asgore stared ahead.

"Never gave a shit to come find us before, why start now?" Sans moved Frisk away from the front of the barrier. "So pick a spot, Frisk. Where do you want to live?"

Frisk looked back toward the barrier. Asgore, Toriel and the others were still waiting. She knew how Sans felt betrayed that no one ever tried to come back for them. But. "What about Papyrus?"

"Heh. Frisk." Sans looked her straight with his light-guiders. "Asgore? Yeah? I've seen him work." He shook his head. "If he figures out how to set all the monsters free in here, what makes you think he won't reverse it back on the humans? 'Cause revenge was kind of his motto in the old days. I don't think he changed that much." Sans looked forward. "Besides. We're all going to have to pull together to survive this. I mean. It's basically-

"The Underground." But bigger. Frisk knew that. She didn't know who of the humans was good or bad, who deserved this fate or not. Same for the monsters. Certainly not Sans, he deserved to be free. "If we don't find a way out, you'll be stuck in this barrier forever."

Sans seemed sketchy with that comment. Then, he gave another slight wink.

So, he did know a way out? *He's protecting the last of mankind.* "Did Josk . . ."

"We were building toward something," Sans told her. "I couldn't tell you only 'cause it was about the only thing Josk would send me away for. Other than that, he was good. He was working on creating a three way living system. One for monsters. One for humans. One for both." He shrugged. "Shit happens. He was kind of proof too though of a spot. And Papyrus' owners. Spots. There's . . . spots. Dots. In the hopelessness of humanity? That some . . . still got the power to change."

Oh. She understood now. "They can change."

"Either that or we all kill each other and it's just one messy bloody bubble," Sans teased darkly. "Asgore rules, Toriel helps. She's still got some power too. If everyone here can get along for a few years in this bubble." He nodded softly. "I'll open the emergency back door, but once it opens, there's no shuttin' it again. Humans and monsters have to be ready."

How in such a dark situation could he seem to keep the light inside? Frisk let go of him and held his hand, walking with him. "The population," she said. "It wasn't . . ." *Please don't say it was war. Please don't say all the monsters came in and . . .*

"It was both," Sans said honestly. "When they first arrived, there were telling reports monsters were going nuts, but mostly it was the permanent break in the crack opening up. It was old age and radiation."

It wasn't the perfect peace she wanted to hear, but it was the truth. Their barrier had been broken.

"Left one looks mostly done," Sans commented as he pointed to a small building. "A little small but I just need a bed and I'm good. Oh and my private chef. Shoot, I'll miss that," he said. "Still, pretty sure we aren't going to have a problem with processed foods." Sans held his hand out. "Sun penetrates. That's good. Without magic we'll have to grow crops."

Frisk looked at the ground. It wasn't the most fertile. "We need to survive better, Sans. Depending on some maybe crops isn't good enough."

"We let them in, we let in trouble," Sans warned her. "Josk still planned on the other barrier being mostly intact so monsters and humans could move in and out through the front entrance of this barrier. That's not the case no more, Frisk. I open that door, this thing goes kaboom."

"Jay Josk built this after knowing about something, didn't he?" Frisk asked. "If he did, then the back entrance wouldn't be in a heavy radiation area."

"Old Josk thought one day we might not need to have that separation no more," Sans told her. "That emergency back door is just that. Used for the final time. The barest of magic holds this up now." He pressed his hand against the barrier and radiated some magic to it. "Not much more than this. Monsters are going to have to chip in a little each day to make sure it don't fall. This wasn't ready yet, for his vision."

Frisk looked toward the ground. The monsters had once before survived in the darkness, but that was a different place. Even now, the monsters still belonged to the humans. They were all standing next to them in the same manner as before. The barrier magic hadn't broken the connection. *That's a good thing. One human frightened enough could have taken out all the monsters in here.* "We will have to work together to make this happen." She looked back toward the monsters on the outside of the barrier. They were loud, yelling and demanding justice. Yelling for all the monsters inside to be freed. Yelling at Sans that he was a traitor leading other monsters in there with the 'barbaric humans'.

"This won't be great, Frisk. You already know that I bet." Sans glanced toward her. "Some humans fright already killed some. The monster's souls connecting to just one is gonna be useful, but there's no way to say this won't get bad."

Frisk nodded, understanding that. Monsters could still kill others, everyone except their human. Humans could still kill the monster's soul they owned. It wouldn't be a paradise. To survive they would need the monsters to pitch in, especially with the food. And they needed the humans not to be afraid of the monsters.

"You are going to let them go!" Asgore yelled toward Sans. "This is bigger than you. Saving lives was a good thing you did, but this is not the way it can be. I will find a way to reverse this."

"Asgore," Toriel warned him. "At ease. The situation is dire enough, you don't need to add to it."

"If I get the magic flow reversed, the monsters will own the humans in there instead," Asgore called out to Sans. "Then we'll see if you open up."

"Asgore!" Toriel scolded him again. She looked back toward Frisk, Sans, and all the other souls trapped inside now. "Learn to love and trust each other. You must learn this, every one of you." Her eyes lingered on Sans. "Take care of your wife Frisk, Sans."

"Yo, hey? Bubble barrier, not part of the Monster Kingdom," Sans said defiantly. He looked back to Frisk. "That saving thing might have caused a bit of trouble."

"A lot of trouble!"

Frisk watched as Papyrus came almost next to barrier on the other side of them. He banged on it.

"Get out here, Brother!" Papyrus demanded. "This is the worse stunt you have ever pulled! Not only are you stopping monsters from being freed, you took on a wife!"

"Hang on a second, Frisk." Sans moved closer to the side toward Papyrus so he didn't have to yell. "I didn't take her on as a wife. Sorry, Pap. I wasn't going to let her die."

"She is your wife according to the laws of-!"

"Well, I'm not part of it," Sans said back to him. He got softer. "They left us, to fend for *ourselves*. You were lucky, Pap. Ended up with some good humans. Me? Nah. Only Frisk was here to save me. Twice," he reminded him. He glanced at Frisk, then back to Papyrus. "I denounce the Monster Kingdom." He took a step back and looked toward Toriel, saying it louder. "I denounce the Monster Kingdom so you can't enforce anything on us."

Sans. To save her, he was supposed to marry her? To share whatever magic saved her and made her young again? Frisk heard Papyrus yell painfully. Sans broke tradition, to save her life.

"Fine," Asgore sputtered. "It'd accepted. Don't be a part of my kingdom. Keep your own. Love live Sans the Skeleton. King to the *Humans*."

"King to the Humans! King to the Humans! King to the Humans!" All the monsters started to squawk at him.

"Brother?" Papyrus held his bony hand to the barrier.

Sans held up his own bony hand on his side of the barrier. "Where are the ones who took care of you, Papyrus?"

" . . . age." Papyrus looked down at his hand.

"If they hadn't been too old?" Sans asked him again. "What would you do now?" Sans tapped the barrier. "Spots of good. Frisk taught us that."

Papyrus lifted away his hand. "You could be free now. The Kingdom, everyone would accept Frisk."

"And if we left? Then what happens to the good spots?" Sans took away his hand. "You take care of your new fam, Pap. I'll be okay." He walked away toward Frisk with a sad smile, grabbed her gently but friendly by the shoulder and walked away from the sides of the barrier.

Frisk looked back. It wasn't until they were far enough away, Sans spoke to her.

"I hate this," Sans finally said. "Asgore's so tough to get around."

"You're doing the right thing." Frisk leaned into him. "Not every human is evil. They deserve a chance to live. We all do."

"Nah, I just think if I let everyone die I wouldn't get no nookie anymore," Sans said. "I live for that."

Not the time for a joke. Then again. It was Sans. There was no predicting him. "Did you really just marry me according to the Monster Kingdom?"

"I did something," Sans admitted. "It binded us. When I die, you die, and vice versa. Yeah. To tradition, yeah."

Live as long as him? Joint living. "That was bold."

"Only if I stayed with the Monster Kingdom," Sans said. "Screw them. Your life wasn't going to end because of a simple question of feelings."

Of course not. *They couldn't be reciprocated by him.* Even if they had been? They had a long way to go before she'd want to accept something like marriage.

"With you stuck in here with me though, I gotta ask," Sans said. "I always call myself Mister Wrong. Do you think I'm Mister Wrong?"

Oh. Well? After saving her. "I can cope," Frisk said softly. "No, but I know you don't like humans that way. We are two lonely-"

"I like you," Sans said quick. "I like you like you. I just? I wasn't ready to say gonna stay with you forever for life in matrimony, or make you do that either."

He did care? "I like you too." He was right though. "Marriage wasn't high in my books yet. I wanted a kid, but even that waned when the magic changed things."

"Have to do everything by rules. Whole life ran by it," Sans added. He brought her closer, squeezing her tight before giving her a noogie on the head. "You too. You ran your life by the rules hard too. We've always had to go by rules."

Frisk smiled at him. "Our own rules."

"It's not gonna be easy," Sans said again. "Also? Screw King, there is no way I am going to be king of the humans. I'm gonna be Man in the Dark of the Queen. That sounds good."

Queen? "Why do I have to be Queen?" Frisk complained.

"Technically, you were Josk's," Sans said. "Plus, there isn't another human being the Monster Kingdom will trust. Also, they kind of hate me-Oh!" He looked toward her. "Queen Banger. Can I be Queen Banger? That sounds good."

"That does not," Frisk laughed as she pushed him playfully. "You are terrible and wonderful."

"Thanks." Sans looked out toward the distance where most of the monsters and humans were huddling. In the streets. Half done, half not. "I'm sorry about it all, Frisk."

"Humans defied death," Frisk said. "The monsters didn't cause this. We wanted to live forever. We wanted to ignore the outside and live in a barrier for eternity. This is what happened. I can't change that."

"Nah," Sans agreed. "But 35,000 humans and monsters is a good start for something new. If you can keep them all from killing each other. I bet you can though." He winked at her. "Anyone else and I'd say it was a lost cause. It still might be, but knowing you? Pacifist kiddo."

Frisk looked out toward everyone.

They would learn to get along. Monsters and Humans. No matter how long it took.

Freedom or Frisk

“I bring you great tidings.” Papyrus came to the bubble barrier with the greasiest thing known to monsters, as well as Sans favorite food for hundreds of years. He held it up to the barrier. If there was any way to crack open that barrier, Sans would surely do it. It had been so long since they had been free to have one. “What do you think, Sans?” Sans had started to meet him on the side of the barrier for a certain amount of time every day, but so far Papyrus could not convince him to do anything. This had to change his mind.

Sans simply shook his head and put his bony hand up. “Pass. I don’t eat anything not prepared in front of me. Thanks.”

What? “You are turning down a Grillby burger?” Papyrus couldn’t believe it. “You would never turn down a Grillby burger.”

“Yeah before I tasted something I thought was burger but wasn’t,” Sans added a little quieter than he expected. “Not gonna work, Pap. When this tumbles, everyone’s gonna be ready. Not a day sooner.”

“Or everyone’s going to be dead,” Papyrus said. “Humans have shorter lives and more needs. You’re postponing the inevitable. Not one human will be alive if you wait for ‘peace’. It won’t happen.”

“Not going for peace,” Sans said. “Going for monsters and humans not killing each other. So far? We’re hanging in there.”

“An unlikely truce,” Papyrus said. He waved the burger around. “It won’t last long.”

“Nah. Got a secret weapon over here,” Sans reminded him. “I gotta thing called a Frisk. People like her. People knew her. All those extra things she ever did and being so great to everybody as some super celebrity is finally paying off. Even the monsters listen to her, and those that didn’t? Welp, I tell them about our exposure to Frisk.” He turned on his heel. “Then I remind them that she’s taken.”

“As your wife,” Papyrus said pitifully.

“Girlfriend,” Sans corrected him. “Girlfriend right now.”

Sans didn’t even pay an ounce of extra attention to Papyrus’ burger he held. “Sans. This isn’t fair. This isn’t right.”

“Neither me nor Frisk wants to jump any old forever gun, but we like each other. What’s wrong with that?” Sans asked him. “Sorry, Papyrus. I just can’t come back. You know Asgore isn’t just going to let all the humans go. Gotta save the spots of good.”

“Then find the spots of good! Find the spots of bad,” Papyrus suggested. “Then when you have all the spots figured out, good and bad, make a proposition to Asgore! Frisk helped him understand that some humans are good. We just have to find which ones are good. Then, we can get them to a safe area to live even. Their own lives. Like the other humans.” That was a good idea. “You should do that! Make them wear name tags!”

“ . . . I’ll see you tomorrow, Papyrus.”

“Again, tomorrow? Again?” Papyrus banged on the barrier. “How much longer?”

“Til all the stains are ironed out.” Sans winked and headed back away.

“Sans?” Frisk called for her boyfriend. She was trying to take care of another situation brewing, but it was easier when she worked with Sans and not just herself. It gave everyone two perspectives. She smiled as she saw him trotting in the distance toward her. In the misery of losing what felt like her world, seeing him in the distance felt like a beacon. She waved to him, renewed confidence this could be worked out. “Sans!”

“Whoah, whoah!” Sans turned his attention to trot faster as he came toward the trouble too. “No, let go!” Sans tried to help get the monster off of Frisk’s arm and his gnarled teeth out of the shrieking human’s arm. “What’s wrong with you? We aren’t working toward this. Shit like this is gonna keep us trapped in a bubble forever.”

The monster let go of the human’s arm. He wailed as he fell to the ground. “Oh.” It relaxed. “He made fun of Shell. My friend. My owner. My former owner. He made fun of her.”

“That wasn’t nice,” Frisk agreed with the monster, “but biting into a human’s arm wasn’t the answer.”

“Well?” Sans didn’t seem sure about that. “Human ran off. Fairly sure he got the point across.”

That wasn’t helping.

“Anyhow, no grabbing Frisk,” Sans said as he moved toward her. “Only I get to do that.”

Frisk felt him wrap his arm around her, making her smile. “Did you talk to Papyrus?”

“Yeah. We talked about spots and stains, and trying to figure out which is which,” Sans said.

“Everyone can learn. Everyone can change. They just need more time,” Frisk said. “We can get this.”

“Impossible little Pacifist,” Sans teased her. “Try not to get in the middle of a fight when I’m not here?”

Frisk nodded. She would do what she could. She wanted to save everyone. However? This wasn’t the Underground. This wasn’t one child who wouldn’t hurt monsters, and monsters

that didn't know the power of a human soul.

"Help! Help him, somebody help him!"

This was a world where humans had enslaved monsters all their lives. Not every monster was content still being there when a free kingdom was not far. Freedom for the first time.

"You didn't, how could you?! You killed your monster!"

"I didn't mean to!"

But humans still had the powerful and scared thing called a soul that wiped a monster out without even trying. She raced with Sans toward the scene that still had fighting involved since the other one they couldn't help with. She wanted peace. But she already knew.

One day. Something would have to give.

One month later . . .

"Hey." Sans gestured to the barrier. "Why are you causing problems? Put your hands on the barrier already. We need everybody's help to stabilize it. There's not enough of us to clown around on this."

The monster just stared at the barrier. "I don't want to. This is zapping me harder than you said it should. Freedom is on the other side. I don't want to die before I reach it."

"Yeah, it is, but it's not so bad here either," Sans said. He leaned in to read the name tag. His idea to keep the humans and monsters talking. They didn't have no battle system but a little sticker with their name. It helped more than anyone assumed. *Stratling on Bad, Brad*. "We all make sure no humans hurt monsters, and no monsters hurt humans. No one serves each other, we just help each other out."

"They only need us to survive," he told Sans. "My owner does not care. I am alive so that he can live. We are only alive, so they can live. We don't need them," he said between his gritted teeth. "They need us. Even he warned me."

Sans looked toward his previous owner. *Guilty, bad, all the way around. Dexter Prem*.

"Everybody needs everybody, Mister Rebel," Sans corrected him, making it look like he felt no pity for the statement. "Trust me. You don't want to get on my bad side. I'm real bad to the **bone**."

"Why? What do you do?" he asked.

"You won't need bone-noculars to figure it out."

"I? Are you punning? Is this funny to you, being stuck like this?"

“Hey, no **body** said anything about that,” Sans continued. “We’ve all got **skeletons** in our closets. Give the humans a chance. Have a **heart**, ‘cause I can’t have one.”

“That’s getting real annoying!”

“No two bones about it, Brad, gotta give a dog a bone every once in awhile.”

“Stop it!”

“No **skin** off my back.”

“Fine, I’ll help!” The monster put his arms against the barrier and pushed a little magic into it.

Meanwhile, Sans felt Frisk sneak a kiss on his cheekbone.

“Fighting with puns is always better than fighting with fists,” Frisk said to him. “You almost finished up?”

Aw. That smile. He’d do just about anything for that smile. *Gonna miss this when it’s gone.* There wasn’t a choice though. Deep inside, even she must have known it. “Not gonna stay out long. Got to help find some more stains from spots.”

“I. I wish you wouldn’t say that.” She backed off some. “Everyone can learn.”

“Sure.” Meanwhile, they were going to live in a bubble for years? Not even an option. Sans watched people pass behind Frisk. “Hello.” He waved politely, making them turn. *Good. Chester Clancy. Bad. Tom Pickin.* “Great day.”

He was getting closer. Sans was used to large calculations and figures, but he kept running it in his head. He’d almost got all 35,000 judged. Getting Frisk to agree to the name tagging only made it easier. Moving and mingling nicely each day, helping Frisk out with situations that arised, he’d almost greeted everyone. “Say, Frisk. Why don’t we go dine on the other side of this half finished place? Never been there before much.”

“Corn for two?” she teased him. “Pretty built for walking, aren’t we?”

“You’re pretty doing anything,” Sans added. “Let’s go.”

If she knew the answer. How close he’d been. She wasn’t going to like the results. *I have to tell her. She hates to be in the dark, but when I do.* Their little lunches would be over. Dinner. Bedtime. Might kick him out of their half unfinished little place. He caught her lovely smile looking back toward him. “Love ya, Babe.”

That made her tilt her head. “Love you too, Sans. What are you hiding?”

He shrugged. “Nice night. Why ruin it with talk?” Yeah, but that expression. “That is some great corn. Great thing about a barrier, everything is fresh. No need for a personal chef,

right?" Old news. Old joke. It had been over a month. "If anybody got potatoes I could slice 'em up and we could have fries. Yeah?"

"Sans." Frisk reached out her hand toward his over the sidewalk they ate on.

"What a neat sunset." He tried to distract her. "Real pretty through the bubblegum pink. Gotta love the sun."

It didn't work. "I can tell something's wrong."

Last chance. "I like this night, Frisk. Going back to our little half made shindig sounded kinda nice too. Waking up the next morning with you, that'd be nice. So, if I tell you?" Sans looked down at his corn. His little piece of corn. A skeleton eating corn. "I hate it here, Frisk, that's no secret. But I also got somethin' I like here. Makes it hard to want to leave."

"Something you like?" Frisk looked around at the dead roads, paved and dirt around them. "What is it?"

"You." Sans looked at his corn. "Gimme 'til morning? One more round of good ol' times with Sans?"

"One more?" Frisk let his hand go. "No. What are you trying to do?"

"I separated the spots from the stains, all but about 100," Sans said. He had no choice. "I judged between them. Good humans, Asgore is bound to spare. Toriel would make him, and monsters did learn tolerancy from you. They can live someplace safe."

"But the bad? The ones you judged as bad?" Frisk pushed her corn away. "He'll kill them."

"They are bad. Bad. As in bad, Frisk," Sans said trying in utter hopelessness. "No one innocent is gonna get roasted in the crossfire. It's a good deal, I know he'll take it to free the monsters in here." She stopped talking. "Frisk."

"Give them all name tags, Frisk, then we'll know each other's names faster," she mocked him. "It'll help when we assign duties. Camaraderie and Allies," Frisk grunted. "Bull! *You* wanted those so you could make your list!"

"Frisk, something's gotta give," Sans tried one more time. "This isn't the Underground. Not *every* human came in with a monster. There's really not enough of us to keep this place going forever. I hoped there had been, but there isn't. Not even close, and that's just the barrier problem. What about the food we can grow?" He gestured to the corner. "You and I both know humans can't live like this for long. People are gonna start dying in another month if things don't change."

"People are gonna start dying as soon as you say so," Frisk said as she glared at him.

"Humans did this to themselves." Pretty obvious his smiling Frisk wasn't coming back to his arms. Better be truthful. "It was *always* coming, it's a thing called Karma. We can't change it. We can either all die in the name of trying to make ultimate peace that'll never come, or we

can sacrifice the worst of it's kind to save the best of it's kind. Which is damn hard to even want to do, Frisk."

"Then how long do I have until you blow the whistle?" Frisk asked. "How long can we keep going?"

Sans shrugged. "With the monsters power, they are pushing more than they should. It leaves us all a little weaker. We rebuild the energy but not enough between. So if you don't count monsters who start dying off in a couple of months, and don't count the humans who start dying and get sick from the right nutrition they lack, and if we skip over the time where the dead monsters aren't producing food as much . . ." He just looked toward her corn. "I gotta really answer? You don't want to go through all that. I have to pull the plug."

"When?" Frisk asked.

"Frailer older ones are already kind of . . ." Sans just breathed.

"Two weeks. Give me two weeks," Frisk asked.

"To turn everyone around, all the bad humans and monsters that can't change?" Sans asked. "I'm counting them too. Monster Kingdom's got some civility. Not much, but some."

"Two weeks." Frisk held her fingers up. "Please?"

For her, he caved. For himself too. For that time, for that extra two week give, he could be with her again. He held onto each moment wishing she could do the impossible so it never ended. But? Life never worked that way.

Frisk tried. He even pointed out the ones that were considered bad, but he watched her around them as she tried to change them. He didn't just say bad lightly.

Two Weeks Later . . .

His impossible Frisk tried to do the impossible, but it didn't work.

She begged again. Over fries this time. Shaved potatoes. Begging for anything

He wanted to again. He almost did. The less healthy though? They were already on the verge. And? "Monster attacks and accidentally dying by the soul. It couldn't be prevented. No fault of nobodies." But? "I can't let little kids start dying and letting you feel responsible because you wanted ultimate peace. I've judged all of them."

"Not another week? Then a few days?"

"It's impossible, Frisk."

" . . . you are going to do it tomorrow." Frisk ducked her head. "Damn you, Sans."

"I told you. If you come up with something better, than I'm all ears." That joke wasn't going to register. "I tried, Kid. Babe, I really tried. Life is not perfect. It doesn't work out perfectly all the time." He even gave her a chance. But? "Besides, why wait? The only good thing in the bubble I had I'm pretty sure just popped." He drug his light-guiders up toward her. "Didn't it?"

She didn't answer at first. She just sat there, thinking. Then, without a word, she walked away.

Sans just stared at the corn. Yeah. He lost Frisk. *Tell her early, tell her late. Ended up doing the same thing. Gotta do it. Gotta do it.*

Tomorrow, he would finally be free.

Without Frisk in his life.

There was no way her little pacifist heart would stay with someone casting life and death on others.

"What do you call freedom without Frisk?" He looked at the sky now filled with stars. "Anything but freedom."

Leader or Sans?

What am I supposed to do? Frisk watched everyone slowly march out. Sans had never come back home last night, and he finally returned telling her the deal was done. That's it. No sorry, no nothing. Just, done. He led the way even farther than her. The monsters tended to move faster ahead, eager for their freedom. The humans had no idea what to expect. They were notably nervous and she couldn't help their nerves. Some of them were walking to their judgement. Sans would probably cast what he thought right when they came out. A monster might take them away. Or maybe even eat them right in front of the others. *Frisk, stop. You know the Underground.*

It had grown though and it had been so long since she'd been down there. She stole a glance ahead briefly. She could make out the silhouette of Sans. Her . . . *How can I? How can I just let this happen? This isn't what I do!* And how could she go back to Sans after he caused . . .

She waited. The Monster Kingdom was right on the other side, just watching. The monsters started to head out toward Sans first.

"Make a line," Sans instructed them. "Nobody run on out, this is a high stake situation. Walk slow and I'll tell the kingdom where to place you." He moved to the side of the barrier. Near it was some kind of weapon. "When this cuts the barrier open, we've got two hours tops, so keep the line moving. Everybody. You screw up and run ahead, you'll pay for it more than you know." He slammed his bony hand on the weapon and it did what Sans said it would do. It sliced through the barrier like butter.

There was no more gap between the monsters outside and them anymore. Frisk moved even slower.

The monsters moved slowly outward. As they did, she could see Sans holding his thumb up in the air the whole time. Once they past him, they ran out of the barrier for their freedom, joining the others.

Then, Sans turned his thumb down as one in particular passed him. Before he even had a chance to speak, a few monsters outside grabbed him and held him, taking him away. *Bad and good monsters. Only one bad.* He was more lenient. *No, don't be like that. There weren't as many here.*

The monsters were out within half an hour in single file. The humans had all watched, including her.

"Form a line, humans," Sans instructed them.

None of them wanted to be brave enough to go. Terribly frightened, which was dangerous. How was Sans going to control human souls when they were unattached to a particular monster?

“Okay, you lot.” Sans called back over five monsters that just got freedom. “Closer.” He whispered to them. Frisk couldn’t make out what he was saying. “Good, yeah?” They all nodded. They stayed near the edge. “Kay? So, uh, this part is different.” Sans waved King Asgore away. Most of the monsters moved back away. “Your souls are strong and we don’t want nobody hurt. Go to the right from here, and stay in line. You’re going to be led to a safe place away from the monsters to live.”

Good. The Monster Kingdom had already been working out something. *A new place to live.* Frisk was welcome into the Monster Kingdom, but she was leader to her kind. Stay or go?

“You mess up though, and uh? Monsters that have their soul protected by all but their owner? Yeah, they can kill you. They won’t hesitate,” Sans warned them. “Head on out.” He held his thumb up. People walked in single file slowly. “Speed it up we got two hours before the barrier falls and crushes everybody under it.” People started to speed it up.

Frisk stayed in the back, wondering what she should do. *Just go past. Just follow. Right? Why mince words, he knows how I feel.* She watched though as someone came along the line. A monster brave enough to deal with the scared humans. With a warm smile. “Toriel.”

“Frisk?” She moved to her closer. “You’ve already been accepted. Any day. You should move up front.”

“It’s dangerous here,” Frisk warned her. “Someone might hurt you.”

“Oh, not with such a warm, powerful soul welcoming me inside.” Toriel moved right in front of her. “How are you my former child? You are almost free.”

“At a cost.” A high cost. “Everything’s . . .” Frisk just stared at her. Toriel. The first monster she ever trusted. The one who helped her, taught her to reason instead of fight. So long ago. That mothering feeling.

“I have been there,” Toriel said to her. “Rejected. Alone and scared, not knowing what will happen next. That was what I felt Underground. I don’t wish that same burden upon you.”

“I have to lead,” Frisk answered her. “They need someone to help them. I have to go.” She glanced toward Sans slightly, then back to her.

“You shouldn’t go,” Toriel disagreed. “You are with Sans.”

I can’t be. He’s . . . “Judge and jury, might as well be executioner.” Frisk looked back toward her. “No. I don’t care what your monster law says, even you got out.”

“Ah. I was afraid of that.” Toriel moved to her side, the humans scooting to give her room. “With his expression up there. With the choices being made. You don’t think you can be with him anymore?”

“You can’t judge me, you ran away and hid in the ruins from your husband!” Frisk covered her mouth. How could she get so angry like that? Yelling out at Toriel.

“Asgore was casting death upon every human child that fell,” Toriel said, not bothering about the yelling. “Sans is trying to save what he can. True, it isn’t perfect, but something had to be done. He is brave enough to make that choice.”

Frisk didn’t speak at first.

“In your eyes, he’s done wrong. In his eyes, he had no other choice,” Toriel told her. “In my eyes, he had no other choice. In his brother’s eyes. Even Asgore has seen fit to give him a second chance after denouncing the Kingdom.”

Frisk swallowed as she heard screams ahead. “Sentencing.”

“Bad are bad. Sans won’t send anyone away that has a chance,” Toriel warned her. “Bad humans can kill other humans. Hurt other humans. You have no prevention out here. You must be careful now. The bad have to go.”

Frisk looked toward her. She still seemed so motherly and wise, no matter how many years since they met.

“The time is getting closer,” Toriel said to her. “To us, Sans is doing what he can. To you, he didn’t create a perfect peace. Sometimes, Frisk,” she warned her. “There is no perfect peace, only perfect death without risk.” Frisk felt her touch the top of her head tenderly. “I can’t choose the choice or help you, but remember. You are Frisk. You are more than the perfect peacemaker.” She leaned down toward her head and kissed it. “You give everyone chances to do right.”

Frisk closed her eyes as she felt Toriel’s light kiss on her forehead. She felt tears threatening to fall, and another wail of a human ahead. *The humans will be lost without me. They are already scared and few in number. But? Sans.* “I don’t know what to do.”

“You’ll have to decide,” Toriel warned her. “I must go, but when you face the one you won’t accept as yours? You’ll have to deal with what you cast forever.”

Frisk watched her start to leave. Sans wasn’t very far away. *He gave me two extra weeks.* He gave what he could. But? *I don’t know. I just don’t know! How should I feel?* Last night was the first time she hadn’t had Sans by her side all night. That morning was the first morning. The afternoon was the first afternoon. None of them had been easy.

/// "Ya kiddin'?" He tried his best to seem alright. "Can't just leave monsters without knowing their fate. Used to half assing a job, but gotta make it at least fifty percent through, am I right?"///

They went through so much together since that night. He shared how terrible his life had been, and she couldn’t hide her own problems. Even though he was in such a bind, he cared about her problems. While they hadn’t stayed together for long, it felt like they had. *His trick.*

He tried to trick me. That was strike one. But then again, he promised never to do it again. Never choose how to run her life. Even now, he gave her extra time. He didn't just gather them all up and leave her in the dark to the last moment.

///If Sans had a choice between her and a monster to be with, he would no doubt pick monster. Look what her world had put him through. How could he ever want her for . . . her? From that point on, there would be nothing but touching and maybe some dirty talk, but not much. Everything was kept almost to a mute silence.///

He wanted to be with me. I never thought he'd choose me. I was the kind of his enemy, enslaving him. Yet, he saw past it. There could be thousands of girls out there for him now. He's free. She felt a rise in jealousy within her. She cared for him, and she was jealous of anyone trying to be with him. That little clown, he loves me, no one else. And she loved him. Frisk didn't know if he was doing wrong or right. She didn't know if Toriel was right and there was no perfect way to save everyone. But. I love him.

But was love enough? Did love prevent Toriel from leaving Asgore? Was Sans' wrong too great? Could people see what the monsters saw?

"You're staring at him?" a woman said from the other side. "You're queen. He was yours, but look at what he's doing."

"I never said was." Frisk said it without thinking.

"He's pointing thumbs down, he's getting them killed, you know it!" she whispered to Frisk. "I'm sure we'll follow you. Not *him*, you can't really be thinking of being with that-that thing?! He's killing us."

"He's giving us a chance," a woman said from the other side of Frisk. She pulled her boy closer to her. "He couldn't keep eating this way. Look at him."

Frisk looked toward the boy, remembering Sans words. He wouldn't let her feel responsible for losing a kid's life. *If we were all going to die, and he wasn't here. What would I have done?* She stared at the other woman. She was close.

"Pass. Barely." Sans' voice was low and hollow. He didn't move much.

Frisk moved up. He didn't even speak just gave his thumbs up.

"I give everyone the chance to do right," she said to him. He lifted his light-guiders toward her. "I hope you do too?"

Confused. He looked confused, but Frisk figured out what Toriel was saying. He wasn't the one who needed a second chance. She had been. She turned him away, she was thinking about leaving with the humans, she had a thousand thoughts in her head about the future and about the humans trusting her and not him, and everything else that didn't matter.

“I . . . don’t get ya,” Sans said, “but you are talking to me so I’ll take it.” He reached out his hand to her.

Frisk heard a lot of humans yelling. Many were upset. No one wanted to follow someone who assassinated a good third of them. Made them walk through a line of judgment. Frisk reached out her hand to him, and met his eyes back with hers. “I’m sorry.”

“Uh?” He still didn’t get it, but he moved her closer. “Still don’t get it, but taking that too. Forgive you for whatever.”

Now she was at a standstill. In Sans’ arms. “I don’t know whether I should go lead the humans, or go to the Monster Kingdom with you,” Frisk said to him. “I just know. I want to stay with you.” She hugged him tightly. “No matter what!” He had the hard decision. She didn’t. He kept her from making that hard decision. “I love you.” She felt his arms wrap around her tighter.

“I love you, Babe,” he agreed. “I don’t know where you wanna go, but I’ll tag along. No matter what, no matter where. Forever,” he said lightly next to her making it tickle. “Never getting rid of me now.”

“Then who will lead?” Humans started to ask.

“Frisk.”

Frisk looked away from Sans long enough to see her Grandma. “Jeanine. Craig.”

“We can handle it,” Craig assured her. “I’m still bound to Jeanine, so I’m safe.” He looked toward Sans. “Had a blast in your kingdom. Really great, but, not all the humans are bad.”

“Yep.” Sans held tight to Frisk but moved one of his hands to shake Craig’s. “Got a decent chance. I got the stains out of the spots.” After he was done shaking his hand, he wrapped his arms back around Frisk.

“Well, fine.”

Frisk looked upward. Papyrus. He still . . . didn’t look happy to see her.

“I still do not approve of any of this!” Papyrus said to Sans, his point made clear. “But? After all that, if the once pacifist child still can . . .” He crossed his arms. “I guess you are supposed to be together.” He pointed at Frisk, slightly tapping her nose. “You be careful with your life, human! You die, you take Sans now, and I won’t forgive you for that.”

Frisk nodded with a smile.

“Closest I’m getting to consent for a human girlfriend?” Sans complained. “Not like I’m married to her.”

“Technically-“ Papyrus tried to counter that.

“Got that in the deal,” Sans insisted. “Been through enough entrapment.” He looked toward Toriel. “Thanks for the help.”

“Considering we never sent anyone else after you, we owed you that.” Toriel came closer to Frisk. “It was too dangerous, it felt like sending more to their death, but we should have figured out another way.” She looked toward Frisk. “You too. You did so much for our kingdom and then just walked off. We owed you both everything.”

“Punk!”

It was a mini-reunion now.

“Sorry about the whole! I mean! I didn’t know, I just wanted to be free and to warn, I didn’t-!” Alphys started to go off, but Undyne silenced her.

“Everything turned out okay,” Undyne insisted.

“Billions of humans died, Undyne!”

“Humans shouldn’t live forever. *That* wasn’t the way to live,” Undyne said, like she’d said it a thousand times. “That place was a hell for everyone, they just didn’t get that.” She looked at Frisk. “Welcome to freedom, Punk.”

Frisk couldn’t say whether she agreed with that or not. The barrier had been home since before she could remember.

“More than happy you’re not mad at me, Frisk.” Sans pointed out as he sort of tugged her away fast. “But it doesn’t mean time stopped on that thing.” He moved a little faster with her. Frisk got the hint and moved herself along with the others.

There wasn’t even a loud crash to say goodbye too. Frisk looked back at the barrier. *The last of home*. She looked back toward Sans. Everything that had kept her sheltered and safe her entire life was now gone. No more endless stars in the sky. “No more bubblegum pink.” Her voice cracked but she felt Sans holding her again.

“Always got a home with me,” he whispered to her. She felt him lay his cheekbone against her cheek and rocked her back and forth. If she had held up her ridiculous impossible want of a dream against him? She would have lost him. She’d lost too much already. She clung to him as they left. “Craig and Jeanine.”

“Yep, your grandparents are gonna go watch that bunch of humans for ya,” Sans said. “After what happened, Toriel told me this morning it was an option. I just? I didn’t mention it ‘cause . . . I broke your little pacifist heart.”

That was true. It was hard to see through the pain. “Someone would have had to make the call,” Frisk told him. “If not you, then me later. That would have shattered me. You saved me from that decision. You even gave me an outlet to hate and blame it all on someone.” She looked him toward his light-guiders. “I don’t ever want to do that again.”

“Heh. Life of simplicity?” He teased her. “I got ya covered.” He draped his arm around her as they walked. “Gonna go home, watch TV, sleep, um. Watch some more TV. Eat at some point.”

“You still need to work, Sans. It’ll be good for you to get back in the spirit of the old life.”

“Papy. Give him a break.”

Frisk looked toward Mabel, Papyrus’ wife. She was now holding a little skeleton of her own. Lovely little family.

“Not gonna concentrate on much but pleasing my little human for now,” Sans said. “I don’t have much attention to give to anything. It’s got to go to her.”

That wasn’t true. Sans had learned and changed a lot since coming to her barrier world. He could concentrate on more than one thing. He was capable of so much. *He just doesn’t have to.* “Being your lazy wife sounds good.” She didn’t spot her mistake until after she said it. “I mean, lazy girlfriend.”

“You see! She did bond with you! You can’t prevent it,” Papyrus warned him. Then he patted his brother on the back. “You’re finally freed! Welcome home Brother! I suppose you could take a few days off before getting back to normal. It would be good to get to know your wife for us. Last I met her?” Papyrus looked at Frisk. “Things have certainly changed.”

“Hey. You have your own wife to gawk at, stop that,” Sans warned him.

Frisk just tried to hide a smile as Papyrus became as blue as could be in the cheeks.

“I wasn’t gawking like that! How dare you accuse me of that!” Papyrus gestured toward Mabel beside him. “See, I have my family right here, how could you say that?! Plus, not only is she nowhere near attractive to me, she apparently *is* my sister now.”

“Heh. Got you.” Sans looked toward Frisk. “Got you too?”

“Always and forever,” Frisk admitted.

“Must. I sent like a lot of humans judged to head to their death and you are still cozied up with me. Talk about real love or something.” He began to walk away toward the Kingdom. “Come on, Frisk. Let’s go fatten up my little wife.” He looked back toward her. “I mean girlfriend.”

Frisk jabbed at him playfully. Honestly, it didn’t matter what they were, or what the kingdom thought they were. It didn’t matter what they did or had in the future. It didn’t matter if her name was Spark or Mrs. Skeleton. As long as she had Sans next to her.

Life would be worth living.

THE END

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