

put your mask back on, child, the play's only just begun

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put your mask back on, child, the play's only just begun

by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

A beginning of a sort-of friendship from a time before everything went to shit.
(In which Flowey consents to become a Floweypot in a very roundabout way, Sans is a little creepy, and Frisk is doing their frisky business entirely offscreen.)

CAN BE READ AS A STAND-ALONE.

Notes

*Inspired (at least partially) by a conversation with the aforementioned GypsumLilac. Love you, dear!

*This is a canonical piece of the Original Timeline: the one Chara destroyed and erased when they possessed Frisk before hacking the universe and began DefectTale as it became.

*This is an event referenced at least once by Alphys. It's... pretty crucial-

*But only if you read the series.

*As stated in the summary, this can be read as a oneshot fic if you don't want to get into the main DefectTale series.

*The author hopes you comment/kudos if you like the fic!

"just try it," he says, like it's easy, like it's simple- like it's something you can accomplish.

"Fuck you." You're tired of hope. You're soulless. You don't need to hope.

"c'mon, bud. what could it hurt?" His eyesockets are empty. You feel the blackness of his stare like a brand. "we'll be the only ones to know if it fails. if it doesn't..."

"Stop it." You don't want to hope. Hope hurts. You are tired of hurting.

"it's new, isn't it? i'd know if it wasn't. come on. try."

"*Shut up.*"

"they'd want you to try. you know they would. they'd love for you to just try, even if you fail. they'd be *proud of you.*"

"*SHUT UP!*"

You spit bullets at him. The familiar skull protects him, bullets bursting into dust on impact with the ridges of ivory. Unlike most other times you've seen the things, this one doesn't open its mouth to spew death at you; it simply vanishes, back into wherever it was summoned from.

He stands, hands in his pockets, eyes hollow and still on you. His smile is as picture-perfect as ever.

You used to wonder if that smile had been carved into his face, back in the beginning, when your loops were new. Eventually you broke him, though; that was the ticket. His smile is as steady as a mountain, and as fragile as a shard of glass.

"you know i'm right."

You flinch. You can't help it.

"she misses you. he does too. frisk wants their brother."

"I'm not their brother. I'm not *him.*"

"you're not." His smile shifts a little, slanting to one side. "they don't have to know that."

You hunch down on yourself, letting the weight of your head sag down to the ground, letting your stem curve.

"you loved them, once," he continues, voice merciless in its gentility. "they love you, still. they miss you. why not give them what they want?"

He shrugs. "paps says giving makes the giver as happy as the receiver. considering how much he's given people, i trust his word."

"But it's a *lie*," you point out, squeezing your eyes shut. "It's not *real*. What's it worth if none of it is real?"

He steps closer to you, slippers rustling against the grass. You kind of want to bite his slippers, see if maybe he'll actually have a facial expression.

"were the old timelines real?" he asks suddenly. You blink.

"What?"

"the old timelines. the dead ones. the ones you rewrote, the ones frisk abandoned. were they real?"

"Of course," you reply, off-balance. What's he driving at?

"you loved your parents. your sibling. didn't you?"

"Of course!" That's all Asriel, your face shifting on instinct, all welling tears and vulnerable soul. You push him away, because he's *dead* and you are what's left. You bare your teeth at the dirt, hoping he didn't see your slip.

"was that real?"

"Why are you asking?" you demand, fed up with his dancing around the bush.

"it doesn't exist anymore. your love for them. the old timelines. but it was real, once. you remember it."

Yes. Of course you do. How could you forget?

"you've pretended before. i remember those times you tried to be a good person. you were a good actor. i think you even fell for your own act, once or twice."

You can't deny him.

You have lied so much, to so many people, but him-

You've never been able to fool him.

"why not try again, bud? one more time."

You are tired of hoping for impossible things.

Frisk will always beat you in the end; whether it ends in death or mercy is irrelevant, since it never sticks anyway.

Sans will always know the truth of your statements, even when you aren't sure what the truth is yourself.

You will always end up here, alone and soulless, in an empty cavern; your only company a silent golden garden, reflections of what you should never have risen from.

"our failures always get erased in the end. no need to worry about consequences."

Your voice, when it comes, is a surprise.

"But what if it does work?" Fuck, you sound like him, whimpering and watery and *weak*. "It never lasts. It always goes back. What if it works and then it's taken away again?"

Bony fingers slide under your petals, raise your head. Gold light slants down, casting his face into deeper shadows. Blue flares gently in both his eyesockets: for once, the color does not frighten you.

"it will still have happened," he says. His voice is still soft, still gentle- it cuts you like Frisk's knife, flaying you open and ripping out all your insides. "it will have been real. you'll remember."

"Remembering hurts."

"it's better than forgetting."

And that-

That-

Fuck.

Forgetting brings peace, you know that, you'd tried that- but living in darkness and hiding from the past only made the pain worse when it surged back in, cuttngly vibrant and achingly bright. The peace never lasts, and the pain is worse for the reprieve. You adjusted to the constancy, you'd had to or you'd have broken completely, and the rest made you weak again, vulnerable to the horrors when they returned.

"come on, bud." His fingers slide out from under your head, letting you hold yourself up on your own. "just once. that's all i'm asking." His smile is washed in gold. Yellow flickers in his eye. "besides, you're even worse than usual when you're bored."

You laugh. You don't mean to; it just happens, huffing out of you like steam rising from a thawing lake.

You're tired of hoping, but you're more tired of being empty.

"Fine. Once." You look up, past him, to the sky. "For them."

He blinks away, and back. You pull your eyes back down to earth and immediately recoil. "No. *No*. Fuck no, I did *not* agree to that-

His eyes are bright. His smile has lost the plastic-like shine it holds when he's smiling because he doesn't remember how to shape his face into anything else. The slope of his shoulders is easy, not forced. "c'mon, bud," he says, the trowel almost sliding from his loose grasp. "for them, right?"

You growl and avert your face. You don't fight him as he digs you out of the dirt and slides you into the pot.

"c'mon," he says. He looks up, and you can't help but follow his gaze. "don't you wanna see the surface again?"

"The last time I got up there, I died."

"frisk'll protect ya," he says. The funny thing is, you believe him.

The sun is shining. Cicadas are chirring. Sans is smiling.

*You are filled with hope.

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