

“... This can’t *possibly* be how you spend your spare time,” Roxana said, looking at the small mountain of bones next to her classmate, and the large hill of carved bones on his other side. “You know what that means, right? ‘Spare time’? Or does Professor Isabel delete it from your memories during your first class with her?”

Caede looked away, cheeks slightly pink. “I ... no, I was just running low on supplies, and I thought I’d spend the weekend stocking up,” he murmured.

“You mean spend the weekend holed up in a free lab carving bones,” she said, shaking her head. “Nope, you’re not doing this. Good thing Vaughn sent *me* to ask you - he’d have let you stay cooped up in here for who knows how long.” She walked towards him, and he pushed himself back a little - and accidentally sent some of the bones scattering over the open floor. “Well, I’m not about to let a friend - well, friend of a friend at least, do we even have any classes together? No, wait, Introduction to Chronomagy, right - anyways, you’re not shutting yourself away from everyone all-”

“Wait!” She stopped, and blinked. Had she ever heard Caede raise his voice before? He didn’t even bother standing up, just rushed over to her on hands and knees and grabbed the bone she’d just been about to step on. Whoops. She *really* needed to start watching where she was going. He turned it over several times, then finally let out a relieved breath. “It’s alright. Not damaged.” He glanced up at her. “Um. ... Sorry. I shouldn’t have yelled. What were you saying?”

“I was saying you’re not shutting yourself up here for the next few days,” she said, but any trace of heat had abandoned her voice as she peered down at the small bone in his hands. “Damn, that’s fine work. How do you even get the lines that small?”

He flushed again. “I’ve had lots of practice,” he said softly. “It takes getting used to, but it’s not so hard once you figure out the basics. These are still hard to get right, though.”

She crouched down, staring at the bone. “Figures, since it’s so small,” she said. “What is that, a finger bone?”

Caede nodded. “It is,” he confirmed. “I only have the basics down on this one, but if I’m not careful, that’s all the work I have room for, so I have to make sure I don’t waste any of the ones that come out well.”

She plucked the finger from his grasp and looked it over, though she was surprisingly gentle in handling it. “Huh... hey, I think I recognize this rune from Chronomagy. Is it -” she paused, then shook her head. “Wait, no, that’s not what I’m here for.” She carefully set the bone down where neither of them would step on it, then stood up, holding a hand down to Caede.

----- Time Cut-Off -----

“Alright, first, you’re coming with me. Vaughn said he wanted to see if you were free to meet the rest of us, and you are - don’t even start, you are - so we’re doing that first. Then, we’re coming back here and you’re going to explain to me what these all do.”

He looked up at her, started to say something, then slowly nodded. “Alright...” he said. He took her hand, and she hauled him to his feet. For a moment, it felt to him like she was going to hurl him into the ceiling - she was a lot stronger than she looked.

“Good. I really want to know how these work now, but more importantly, Vaughn’s been rambling about something you were doing for the last week, and he said you were actually testing it out yesterday. If he doesn’t find out how it worked, I swear, he’s going to blow something else up at this point, and *I’m* the only one who gets to cause more than three explosions in a we-”

“WAIT!” Roxana froze and looked down, and realized her foot was hovering right above a... femur? She felt like it was a femur. (Caede would later inform her it was an ulna.) She slowly took a step back, then looked at the space between her and the door, which was littered with bones. She barely held in a scream. It couldn’t have been more than six feet, but at the moment, it looked like a mile-long minefield. ... No, no, that was wrong. She had something she’d been meaning to try out in a minefield. This was much, much worse.