

**weather warning**

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# weather warning

by [down](#)

## Summary

“It sounds like you’re not enjoying yourself very much. Maybe you’re using the wrong criteria to choose people?”

## Notes

This first part was posted as a stand-alone fic for fan\_flashworks challenges 'date', 'chemistry', 'exploration'.

## Curious boredom

oOo

They hadn't been able to get to Cephiro quite so regularly once they all started University - there were so many other new things, clubs and study groups and sometimes even university reading, which they had to fit in. One of the things Umi had tried was going on a few dates - she'd felt vaguely like she ought to. At least so she could say she had, and because she was curious. High school had been too busy. (High school and visiting Cephiro once a week certainly had.) But even when she'd enjoyed herself, it had been... like hanging out with a friend. There weren't any of the 'fireworks' people talked about.

In the meantime, she'd been grouching at Clef about the whole process, while he mostly ignored her and got on with his work. "It sounds like you're not enjoying yourself very much," he said. "Maybe you're using the wrong criteria to choose people?"

"Oh, how would you know?" Umi slumped lower in the chair she'd made him summon up for her. (There were a couple of visitor chairs buried under books and paperwork, but they weren't as comfortable as the summoned ones.) "It's not like anyone would want to date you. You look like a kid!"

He snorted. "Only for the last three centuries. It's voluntary, not a curse - it's not like I couldn't change if I wanted to."

"Huh." Umi stared at him. "...That just sounds so weird, 'I've only been a child for three hundred years!' You shouldn't be *alive* for three hundred years."

Reaching out, Clef bopped her gently on the head with his pen, not even looking up from his work. "This is Cephiro, not your Tokyo. I'm not a ghost yet. ...And I was actually a child at one point too, you know. By our reckoning, you still are."

"Meh." She flopped lower still in her chair, staring at the side of Clef's face, wondering idly what he would look like grown up. "Come on, then, what are your criteria for picking someone to date?"

"For someone to have a relationship with," he corrected, absently. "Your 'dating' sounds a bit like Cephiran courting. So I'd want someone who I didn't just like spending time with, but I wanted to spend *more* time with. Someone I wanted to share things with. And someone who gets under my skin, who distracts me. if there's no strong emotional interaction, it's not worth trying to work out if you want to let someone into your bed. It's always more awkward ending things after that, and without having a strong reaction to each other the sex is generally disappointing, anyway."

Umi flushed bright red, almost falling out of the chair as she shoved herself back upright. "You- what do you even know about sex?" she stammered, and the tips of Clef's ears were slightly red, but he was smirking, the *brat*.

“More than *you* do.”

“I- fine! From your description, I need to find someone who pisses me off as often as you!” She shoved out of the chair, and stomped out of the room, pretending she couldn’t hear him trying not to laugh.

“It’s better than being bored!” He called after her.

oOo

Only after that she hadn’t been able to stop wondering about it. What Clef *would* look like, if he was taller.

...No, being honest with herself - which she was trying to do, now she was admitting the whole dating thing was a flop - she was interested in the things that taller Clef would be interested in doing, with the person who met his ‘criteria’. If he’d have the same sharp focus on them, in his bed, as he did when he cast a spell. How he would touch them-

She thumped her head against her pillow, and turned over. She’d been curious about the whole sex thing, that was one of the reasons she’d given in and tried dating. Only now she’d given up on that as a bad plan, she didn’t have *any* plans, and it was... frustrating.

That was the only reason she was thinking about Clef so much. He’d put the idea in her head, and it was his fault she was wound up. Her dreams weren’t helping, charged impressions of touching someone she knew was him, kissing, hands sliding down over her hips - and never any idea what he’d looked like when she woke up, like even her dreams couldn’t decide.

Their next time in Cephro, she hesitated, but she always visited Clef. (And... when had that started? Back when they could only get here once a month? She’d started seeking him out about then, because she... missed him. Wanted to tell him what she’d been doing...)

(...Oh. ...Oh dear.)

She walked slowly up to his door, raised a hand to knock, and wavered. Maybe she should just say hi and leave? Clef shouldn’t have to put up with her being weird, just because she’d been thinking... things... all week.

The door swung open when she was still hesitating, and Clef was looking straight at her. Umi flushed; he looked just as he always did, and she felt like a creep. “Sorry!” she blurted, and flushed harder.

“...I don’t think I want to know,” he said, slowly. “Are you coming in?”

Umi sighed. “Yeah.”

Clef eyed her as he summoned a chair, without even being asked to. “I thought it was you, lurking out there. So... how are things?”

“I’ve given up on dating boring people?” She sat, and folded her hands in her lap, and looked down at her jeans.

It was awkward. When she glanced up, Clef was staring down at his papers just as intently as she had been looking at her knees, and neither of them said anything for a long moment - until both of them blurted 'I'm sorry!' at the same moment.

"I- why are you sorry?" She asked, confused, and the blush spread across Clef's cheeks.

"For teasing you, last time. I said too much, and made you uncomfortable. I didn't mean to." He looked at her, looking earnestly miserable. "I forget your culture isn't as comfortable with things like that."

"It's more that we're uncomfortably obsessed with it, I think," Umi muttered. "It's fine, Clef. I know you didn't mean..."

"Good! Good. Right." They stared at each other a moment, then Umi gave in and grinned, and Clef laughed back at her.

For a few minutes things were almost comfortable again, but Umi still couldn't stop wondering. "Why do you stay this way?" she asked, abruptly, and Clef froze. "I mean, if it was - keeping the princess company, I guess I understand that, but the whole Pillar system is gone. So you must have another reason."

"...It's a bother." He looked down, and Umi waited for him to say something more, but that was it. His ears were starting to go red again.

"*What's* a bother?"

"The whole thing! Sex, relationships - if I'm like this, at least there's one less way for you to get under my skin!" He stared at her, eyes wide, breathing hard. "...*People*. For people to get under my skin."

Umi stared back. "For me to-"

"I didn't mean to say that!"

"But is it *true*?" Her voice wavered, and she held onto her knees to keep from moving.

He took a breath, and then another. "If it was-" Clef stopped, and swallowed, then pushed himself away from the desk. His voice was rougher than usual when he next spoke. "...Were you curious, about what I'd be like, grown?"

The flush on her face grew hotter still, which was probably answer enough. Umi still managed to croak out a 'yes' about the edges of it.

"Well then." He closed his eyes, and as he stood, light started to wrap about him, too strong for Umi to see through - and it grew. Her heart started beating faster, and she stood even before the light started to fade away.

By the time Clef opened his eyes again - eyes which were on a level with hers, now, but just as blue, just as sharp - she was so close she had to take a step back to actually look at him. He'd managed to grow his clothes, too. (She hadn't even wondered about that until she

realised he had.) His robes were so enveloping that she got the faintest impression of a slimly built figure, but his hands were elegant, and his hair cascaded about a face which was more arresting than beautiful, sharp-boned and still flushed.

“*Umi*,” he whispered, and his voice... his voice was the same as before.

That, somehow, was the thing which had her moving. She stepped in, a hand reaching up to touch the line of his cheek, and he leaned in at the same time, his hands on her waist.

The first touch of their lips sent a chill over Umi’s head and down her spine. She shuddered and leaned in harder, and Clef wrapped his hands about her back as he opened his mouth, caught her lower lip between his.

Fireworks had nothing on the cascade of heat sparking through her, urging her closer. Clef seemed to have no objections to that as a plan, helping when she reached to fumble with the clasp of his robes. Distantly, she noticed a burst of rain against the windows, but however loud the noise, it wasn’t enough to distract her; Clef was managing that far better.

oOo

# Storm Warning

## Chapter Notes

Originally for the 2014 Umi week on tumblr. Yes, I am slow posting. Also yes, this was posted and written well before the first chapter. What is organisation?

A few things changed after the rebirth of Cephro. One was the effect that particularly powerful mages had on their surroundings, at moments of greater... emotion. No one particularly noticed, at first – it did take an excessive amount of power to create any tangible effect, after all. But several years later there came a sudden spate of short, sharp storms, in the middle of the warmer season.

The weather had developed a little – storms weren't quite so strange anymore, as without one person in control it turned out that plants actually needed watering sometimes. But they still weren't *usual*, so when a perfectly clear afternoon turned dark within half an hour, sudden deluge lit by flashes of lightning tearing through the sky, people noticed.

Another twenty minutes, and it was clear again. The deep heat of the morning softened with the thunder, into a gentler heat – rather pleasant, actually. So no one particularly complained. Only then it happened again, a few days later – and twice the next Sunday.

Over the next month, it became frequent enough that people began to watch the skies for signs of clouds massing swiftly overhead so they had enough time to duck under some shelter – but the rivers were starting to run dangerously high, about to overflow their banks and wander off for a holiday in the fields, and people began to get fed up with changing their clothing every time they got caught out at the wrong moment. The next meeting of the Council saw the Castle full of people exercising their right to attend, and almost all of them were there to demand what was happening with the weather.

Only when they asked, the Guru blinked at them, and turned to the man beside him. “The weather?” He asked, quietly, as the Soru agreed it should be looked into, and asked if anyone had particular information – dates, times.

Ferio covered his mouth with a hand, failing to hide the smirk which flashed over it. “Well, we were waiting for you to tell us before we pointed it out...”

“...Tell you?”

“Your new... how should I put it. State of affairs? With Umi...”

Clef started, and flushed. “What-“

“It took a week or two to notice that neither of you were about any time it happened. After that we decided we might as well wait and see how long it took for you to notice.” Ferio continued, blithfully, as the times being shouted out by the crowd began to register, and Clef hid his head in his hands. “But then, what with your being

*distracted* every time it happened... Actually, it’s rather impressive how often-“

“Ferio, *shut up. Please!*” Clef said, trying to drag some measure of composure together before he raised a hand and caught Soru Zafira’s attention. “I – think I might have some idea what is, um. Causing this. If the Council could give me, er-“

“Three days?” Ferio suggested, with a grin, and Clef did *not* turn and try to hit him, mostly because everyone was staring – but yes, the Knights were due to visit again in three days time.

In which case... “*Four* days, to investigate this and try to find a way of stopping it...”

(“Umi’s going to be irritated.” Ferio murmured. Clef thanked whichever god had them sat at the end of one of the benches, where no one else could hear his mutterings – or see Clef’s swift kick to Ferio’s leg, and the spark which made the Prince jolt upright.)

“Is there some problem we should know about?” Zafira asked, with a frown. “I could help with your investigations-“

“No!” Clef yelped, and Ferio gave in and hid his face to laugh quietly beside him. “I – that is, thank you for the offer, but it is not necessary. I don’t think this is... a problem, as such-“

“If you are sure? Well, then. I suggest that you report back at the next Council meeting, in two weeks time. All those here who wish to hear the report should return then.” Zafira declared, and Clef dropped back into his seat with another wince, trying not to think about how, precisely, he was going to be reporting back about this.

(...Also, quite how he was going to tell Umi that until they had worked out... what was causing their- *mutual activities* to translate into the weather, they should probably stop.)

He didn’t pay much attention to the rest of the meeting.



# The heart of the issue

## Chapter Notes

This was written for 'heart' on fan-flashworks. (And yes, it's bumped the number of sections of this up.)

"I wish they would get to the heart of the matter and stop waffling," Ferio muttered, shifting in his chair so he was close enough Presea could hear him.

Presea, who was sat properly upright and giving every impression of listening to the meeting in progress, didn't turn. But she did reply. "What do you think the heart of the matter actually *is*?" she asked,

"I've no idea, that's why I want them to hurry up and tell me." Slumping further into his chair, Ferio picked up the minutes from the table in front of him so he could hide his yawn from the three people who had been arguing with each other about the introduction of whatever bill this was for nearly twenty minutes.

He wasn't the only one struggling to pay attention - it was a full Council meeting, so there were more than twenty people in the room (though a few of the people who were meant to be here had sent a stand-in; Clef was notably absent this week), and he was fairly that a two of them at the back on the other side had started flicking balls of paper at each other ten minutes ago and were in the process of developing a whole new game with them. The Master Healer was on his other side and had been working steadily since the meeting began, on her Guild's accounts. Though Miura did that pretty regularly, unless there was something on the table that actually had a medical impact. He'd also seen the Soru nudge her when something important came up, but honestly she seemed to be good at keeping half an ear on what was going on while doing something else entirely.

Which thought was promptly proved when she glanced at him with a sigh. "The issue is that someone wants all the Guilds to document everything we do publically so we can be held accountable, but the wording is vague enough it would mean we have to tell everyone everything we do. Patient details. Discussions with Priests. Things like that. The original intent was for us to be financially accountable, so they're arguing about the wording of the introduction to try and make it actually sensible."

"Huh." Ferio looked at his minutes again. "I did *not* get that from the summary on the agenda."

"Hence the arguing," Miura agreed.

Presea leaned forwards a little so she could see the other woman. "You don't seem worried that it will pass?"

Miura grinned suddenly. "Not really. It would be illegal for my Guild to comply, which would rather scupper that law. Hopefully they'll sort it out and put something reasonable together - the current laws about financial undertakings are the most convoluted thing I've ever seen, I'm all for them getting tidied up with something nice and new and thought-through. But there's at least three of us who can block this one if they don't fix it - it'll take a while, though. Did you bring anything else to do?"

Shaking his head, Ferio started to grin. "No, but I think I know why Clef decided not to bother turning up today."

"I thought that was because he's meant to be reporting back on those random storms we're having and hasn't worked out a way to avoid saying 'sorry, I was having sex'?" Miura said, so no one else would hear, not even looking away from her accounts, and just grinning when Ferio burst out into laughter so loud it actually interrupted the meeting.

"Sorry!" he called out. "Unrelated thought, you can carry on." With some grumbling, the arguers got back to business, and Ferio tried to stop snickering. Mostly he failed. "Why would you think that?" he asked Miura, attempting to keep a straight face.

"Because I was looking straight at him when he realised what everyone was talking about, and I have never before seen the Guru flush so hard I worried he might pass out. Plus, it's not the least common thing to happen. It's just normally not on that scale." Miura grinned. "It was an educated guess, but I was pretty certain I was right. I could talk to Zafira actually, get her to help, uh. Generalise the issue? Once she's done taking on this piece of nonsense, anyway." She gestured at the floor, where Soru Zafira was standing and actually explaining in plain terms what the issue was with the bill, to the dawning horror of the people proposing it.

"That could be useful." Ferio looked between Miura and the Soru, and tilted his head. "So, you and Zafira are..."

"We don't have the same kind of problems with our relationship that the Guru's having." Miura looked up at him then, shaking her head. "We've been sharing quarters for over a year, and I know for a fact you're the one who authorised the expansion of my rooms - didn't you notice?"

"I try not to pay attention to that kind of thing? Congratulations, I guess."

"Thank you, I also guess,"

"But - if you could talk to Zafira, that might be helpful. If you can do it without her working out who the one with the problem is, even better."

Miura snorted. "I'll do my best, but that was a truly horrified face he made. Hopefully she wasn't looking."

"Well." Ferio sat back, and stretched his arms until his back clicked. "I think that makes this the most productive Council meeting I've ever had."

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