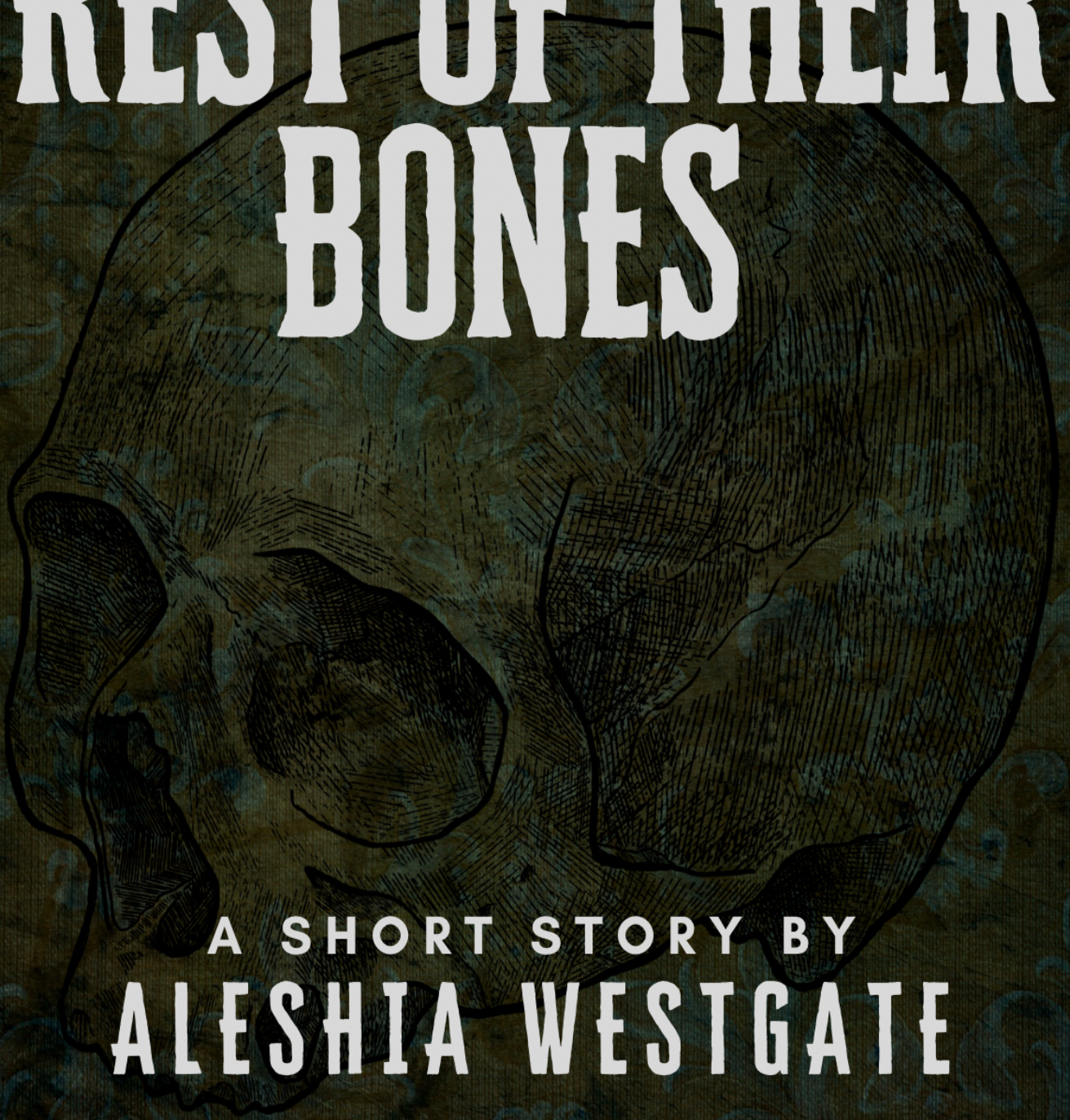


REST OF THEIR BONES



A SHORT STORY BY
ALESHIA WESTGATE

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Rest of Their Bones

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As I stood over the body, I recalled one of my fondest memories from my childhood. I had not yet been inducted into my mother's winter occupation—the dissection of human remains and their meticulous reproduction in wax—and so would prowl around our modest rooms in search of medical treasures while my mother was otherwise occupied.

My favourite item was the *Catoptrum Microcosmicum*. How my mother had obtained this wondrous work of medical discovery, so recently printed, was unknown to me. But it did not signify to me as I pored over the delicate illustrations for hours at a time. The human form, both male and female, laid out on display with layers of paper cut to the strata of skin, fat, muscle, veins, and my favourite at the time, the bones. I would remove the layers one by one until I reached them and then rebuild the little figure until it was fully formed, before starting the process again.

Like the little figures in my book, the man lying on my table did not have a name. The remains had been supplied to us from the Hospital of Death, but unlike our usual deliveries, he had not been a condemned man. Just a poor one. Much like during his life, he was not wanted in death either, and had not been selected for the following morning's dissection.

I was preparing to cut into the body under the flickering light of the candles which surrounded me when Niccolo, my only real friend at the University of Bologna's esteemed College of Medicine, appeared at the door to the body room.

"Francesca!" Nico came down the short steps from the entry way to the floor of the body room where I stood with my bodies. "Cortesi wants to know if you have any remains with signs of failed surgical intervention. He has a sudden interest in seeing such a thing."

We were accustomed to our shared mentor's vicissitudes. His attention span was famously short and he had, in the previous few days, developed a great interest in surgery, particularly when poorly performed.

"Not that I have observed." I answered, replacing my scalpel on the tray next to the preparation table. "But I would not expect to see any on our type of bodies." I answered. Surgery was costly and carried a high risk to the patient. Not something to waste on the condemned or those about to die.

Nico hopped up to sit on one of the spare tables.

"I do wish you would not sit there, Nico. It is most improper." I admonished my friend.

He nodded in fake solemnity. "Is this preferable?" He lay down and crossed his hands to the opposite side's shoulders in imitation of a corpse prepared for burial—a practice we never actually observed, as the remains in our care were cut, scraped of fat and released for burial in the pit under the Hospital of Death.

"Yes, Nico. That is exactly what I hoped for," I said in my most witheringly sarcastic tone. Although I did not wish to admit it to my friend, I had considered doing the same at various times while waiting through the night for late deliveries. The tables may be uncomfortable, but the nights could be long.

"Well, this is what happens when you require your students to do night work as well as study in the day. One must sleep at some point, although Cortesi does not seem to agree," he said from his supine repose, and I had to admit to myself that our mentor expected much from us.

Nico sat up on the table as though rising from the dead, before stretching and yawning.

"So what is this about, Francissima? Are we cutting this poor soul up?" Nico asked, suddenly bright and restored.

I nodded, and he hopped down from the spare preparation table and we began. We had developed a routine of secretly cutting up the unwanted

remains as a means to practice our skill with the scalpel, as time with remains was rare for students.

As we had been taught, Nico half-rolled the body onto its side and held it there, and I sliced a line across the man's lower back to allow for drainage. As his dark, putrid blood oozed out thickly, I kicked a small wooden bucket into place under the table to collect it.

"My turn!" Nico said, snatching the scalpel out of my hand. I raised my eyebrow at him to show my disagreement. "Oh come on, you had the first go. We shall take turns."

And with that, he began to cut into the chest. We performed a few cuts, taking turns, until satisfied that we had seen all we wished to see.

I kept the man's left kidney, which had a stone in it, for my mother's wax works, and we wrapped what was left of him for transfer back to the Hospital of Death.

"Nico... you were saying Cortesi wants a body with signs of surgery, were you not?" I asked, wiping my bloodied hands on my apron.

"Hmm? Oh! Yes. I was meant to get a message to him an hour ago. Oh well." Nico said, unbothered by his oversight. Favourite students could be careless like that, without worry.

An unwelcome idea began to form in my mind. "When does he want the body?"

Nico leant his elbows on the man's chest and rested his head in his hands like a cherub in a painting. He smiled innocently, completing the cherubic image. "He wants it as part of his Days of the Dead event. He said something about it being a '*show of the ongoing fight against the eternal*'... As though we want more work to do when we could be eating."

"And attending Mass, of course." I pretended sincerity.

“Oh of course. First thing I thought of.” Nico stood up and then hopped back up on the spare table, holding one of the candelabra. He flicked his fingers at the flames, presumably already bored with no body to continue cutting up, and I wiped down the preparation table with rags and a bucket of water I had ready for the purpose.

As I cleaned, my mind was whirring away at the notion of surgical evidence on remains, formulating something that I knew I would regret.

“Francissima! You have an idea.” Nico was gleeful as he observed me. “Tell me, Francesca! Whatever it is, I will do it with you.” He sounded eager. Whether he was trying to impress our mentor or was simply bored and in need of some excitement, I could not discern. “Oh, it is a good idea... I can tell. Oh, go on, Francesca! It has been an age since we did anything fun.”

He was not wrong on that account. Between our studies, frequent night work in the body room, and my evenings spent making wax models with my mother, there had been little time for jollity lately.

“We are not likely to happen upon the right corpse here.” I offered hesitantly. “But the physicians at the Hospital of Life sometimes perform surgeries. If it is not successful, or the incision becomes corrupted, the bodies go to the basement.”

“I’m listening...” Nico said, his eyes betraying his excitement.

“Those bodies unclaimed by families go into the burial pit, and those awaiting being claimed are wrapped and laid out.” I hoped Nico would see what I was suggesting.

“And what, we are to claim one before it goes in the pit?” Nico asked.

“It does not sound much of a plan when put like that. No, I thought we could simply sneak in and take one.”

“Francesca!” Nico said, pretending to be outraged.

"It is not as though they are wanted, Nico. It would have a use, if we could just obtain it." I said petulantly. "It is either that, or we try and remove the body of a rich type from his coffin before it is interred."

"Now that would be scandalous!" Nico laughed.

"I do happen to know of one such man. A recent unsuccessful surgery..." I said, allowing my voice to trail off.

"And how exactly might we happen to know this?" Nico asked, leaning forward.

"I sometimes have information of this sort." I was deliberately cryptic. Friend though he was, family secrets should be held tight.

"I knew it!" Niccolo said triumphantly. "Well, I did not, but I knew you were keeping secrets from me! You always know where the good bodies are! Is it for your waxworks? Do you obtain body parts through these means?"

I thought carefully before responding. "My mother is very resourceful. Anyway, the taking of any body is not without risk. We could be charged if caught."

Nico put the candelabra down and kicked his legs back and forth over the side of the table in the manner of a child. "But you never get caught, do you, Miss Francesca?"

It was true that I had a certain skill for extricating bodies, and for talking my way out of trouble when required.

"Tomorrow night." I said, answering his next question before it had been asked. "Come to my lodgings, around 9.00 o'clock."

We agreed to meet then, and Nico moved to leave the body room.

"Nico?" I asked. "Have you an iron crow?"

Nico laughed his infectious laugh as he left the room.

My mother, in fact, had an iron crow we might use to open the iron gates to the basement, but I thought that given I had already done all the planning and

would lead this body snatching raid, it was only fair that Nico contributed something.

“Actually, a shovel may be needed as well.” I added. It would not hurt to have options.

* * *

At home the next evening, I waited for Nico’s arrival. My mother was using a reading stone to magnify her minuscule handwriting by candlelight. She had always kept copious notes of her anatomical wax work innovations and discoveries, and had lately taken to reviewing and updating them.

I did not like to interrupt her revisions, which had of late become somewhat of a preoccupation. It did not take my education in medicine to know that she was not well. The signs were obvious. But it was clear that she did not wish to discuss it with me, and I had learnt not to ask certain questions.

“Mamma,” I said, kissing the side of her head. She inclined her head towards me and patted my arm as I wrapped it around her.

“The *pane dei morti* are on the table. They are flatter this year.” She gestured vaguely to our small table on the other side of the room, next to the fire. The *pane* were to be consumed during the upcoming All Saints’ and All Souls’ Days. “I got a good price for them,” she said with satisfaction. The famines and plagues of recent years had taken an obvious toll on Bologna’s trade and goods. Prices were up, quality was down. It was the age of the haggler, my mother would say.

“Mamma, I have to go out tonight, but I will be back tomorrow for the meal. Cortesi wants more bodies preparing.” I said, hoping to sound casual.

My mother turned to face me, her eyes narrowed. “We eat the *pane dei morti* to honour your father, Francesca.” She genuflected in remembrance of my late father. “Where are you really going?”

I knew I was caught. I was powerless against my mother's preternatural ability to know when I was lying.

I turned to face her head on—it was the only way from the point of capture, as I had learnt throughout my life.

The truth was the only way out now. "Cortesi wants a body that shows signs of surgery." I confessed bluntly.

"Hmm, well you will not find that at your Hospital of Death," she said with a hearty laugh.

"I thought we might get one from the Hospital of Life instead." I suggested casually, walking over to her working desk and taking a seat next to her.

"You could take Borghese... a botched lithotomy would be an interesting dissection," she offered.

"I think it unfair to call it 'botched'. His cuts became corrupted, Mamma, it does happen." I countered.

"That physician is a hack. This was not his first loss and it will not be his last." My mother dismissed my defence. "Anyone can be a surgeon now in Bologna. As with your college. They will let anyone direct the demonstrations." And with that, she went back to her notes.

It was a discussion we had had many times before. Although I did not wish to admit it to her, she was correct. The reputation of the college had indeed been harmed in recent years by successive lecturers appointed through connections, rather than skill. My mentor, of course, was not among these. Although he was proving to be more old fashioned as time went by.

"Mamma, who was the physician who attended to Signore Borghese?" I asked.

"Hmm? Oh, Pignatelli. Bologna's premier butcher," she said offhandedly. "The corpse will be in his private chapel now if you want it."

I was vaguely familiar with the name of the physician. I had managed to talk my way into assisting the Sisters at the Hospital of Life to learn about the treatments they gave, and their knack for dealing with the living. I preferred my time with the dead, but I wanted to be a healer and obtain a licence at the end of my education and would need everything on my side to win over the prickly *protomedicato* who decided such things. My mentor was on the council, but I would need to win over the remaining members to achieve my life's purpose.

My mother went back to her revisions, and I knew she would most likely sit there through the night. I busied myself around the room, and a little after the time appointed, Niccolo arrived.

"Oh! Why did I have to call in a favour to obtain an iron crow if you already had one?" Nico asked in irritation when I opened the door to our rooms, and he saw the implement perched against the entrance way wall.

"What could be better than one iron crow? Two iron crows, of course." I said, smiling. "Shall we?" I picked it up, and handed him the shovel behind the door, which he had predictably forgotten. Armed with our implements, we disappeared into the cool, dark night.

As we wove through the narrow alleys of Bologna on the way to the Hospital of Life, I told Nico about the Borghese corpse, which might be an opportune alternative if we could not get past the basement gates unnoticed.

In return, he told me that had met Dottore Pignatelli, albeit briefly, at the home of his benefactor a few weeks earlier.

"There is something... unearthly about him, I have to say." Nico said. "He was very quick to suggest a surgical procedure for Signore Bentivoglio's mother, where truly none was needed. Once he left, I was able to counsel away from the idea and prescribe her a tisane of Squill and other herbs. Truly it was just for some swelling. It was odd."

“Surgery is an extreme option to arrive at so quickly.” I said, although I was distracted by my own thoughts on how we might get to the bodies under the hospital when we arrived.

We turned the corner, emerging from a particularly narrow alleyway, and arrived at the grand Hospital of Life. The front of the hospital was adorned with an expansive and decorated colonnade, beyond which lay a large courtyard for Sisters to scurry across when their presence was required. Physicians tended to take the corridors to avoid dirtying their cloaks and shoes.

We entered through the small side entrance used by staff.

It was lit by a few torches, though not nearly enough for the length of corridor, and I took a small rush from my pocket bag and lit it so that we could find our way more easily. The hospital was quiet at this time of night, but even so, I held both iron crows beneath my apron to obscure them from view in case one of the Sisters happened upon us. Nico tried to hold the shovel by his side, but that was the best we could achieve.

We crept down to the basement, where the bodies of the recently deceased were stored until families claimed them, or did not. An iron gate prevented entry to the room, but with some slight persuasion with one of our iron crows, it popped free without a struggle.

As we entered, the rush I held hissed and grew brighter and I was careful to hold it away from my face. The burial pit was towards the back of the room, and was, in fact, more of a downward slope cut into the floor, beginning not far from the centre of the room and extending to the outer wall. A sort of ramp down to Hell, if one wished to consider that description. Bodies were generally thrown as far back as possible and left to decompose, but some were simply dumped at the top, moving down with the passage of time.

Nico and I were familiar with the smell, having assisted in the hospital from time to time. I had two scented pouches in my pocket bag to protect us from

the foul air. I gave one to Nico, and we put them around our necks in the vain hope that the smell of lavender, musk, cinnamon and civet would cover the smell of dozens of dead in their various stages of decomposition.

I had observed on previous visits to the basement that the conditions were not right for the swift decomposition of bodies, and that the layering of the dead was causing the buildup of gases. The room was far too damp, and I had made a point of mentioning this to the Sisters at the hospital. Water channels ran beneath the building, taking away sewerage and other waste. Difficult to remedy, I acknowledged, even in the unlikely event that my concerns had been passed on. The sound of popping and the occasional whoosh of air was enough to alert a living visitor to the poor conditions, if the smell had not done so already.

Bodies awaiting being claimed were wrapped in cloth and laid out on the floor in a neat little row extending from the entrance to the basement to the corner, and then stretching beyond towards the northern wall. Pinned to each body was a scrap of paper with the person's name (if known), estimated age, and the affliction which had claimed them.

We lay the two iron crows and shovel down and moved from body to body, reading the tags. I held the rush over the writing, and Nico smoothed the scraps out and tried to decipher them. All of the usual causes were there—childbed fever, cankers, phthisis, fever, scabies... but no references to surgery.

And then we reached the last body, the furthest from the pit. There was no tag to be found, which I found highly unusual in a meticulously organised institution such as the Hospital of Life.

“What are *you* doing here?”

We froze as a male voice called out to us. There was nowhere to hide in the room, and as I was holding a rush which illuminated us, there was little use in attempting to obscure ourselves now.

We stood up, craning to see who had found us.

Two figures approached us, out of the darkness.

“My god, it stinks down here!” A second male voice, familiar to me, said.

“It’s a burial pit, Marco, what did you expect?” The first voice hissed back, before speaking loudly and confidently, “Well, if it isn’t Cortesi’s two pets. The little orphans being taught medicine. Why would you be spending your night down here with the worm nests?”

I recognised the voices at that point. Ettore d’Este was a fellow student, and a particularly stupid young man, and Marco had even less to recommend him. I did not bother to note with Ettore that neither Nico nor myself was an orphan, and although it took even greater resolve, I did not point out that we had both earned our way into tutelage, unlike he and Marco, whose fathers had bought their seats.

“What are *you* doing here?” I asked defiantly in return.

“We heard that Cortesi wants a body with surgical markings...” Marco offered, and then stopped when elbowed by Ettore.

Nico stepped forward, “And you thought you’d come down and help yourselves?”

I rolled my eyes at Nico, as that was exactly what *we* were doing, which hardly afforded us the moral high ground in this situation.

“It is not as though anyone else is using them.” Ettore said smugly, and I chastised myself for having thought the exact same sentiment.

It is a very unpleasant realisation, that you and your most detested human have something in common.

He continued, “So, I suppose you’re both here for the same thing? Found anything good? Or is it just people dying from being poor wretches?”

I held my tongue at his heartlessness. I confess that it enraged me, from time to time, when I thought about how easily these wealthy young men would

obtain their licence and practise as physicians without any particular ability or calling. I pitied their future patients.

I looked at Nico, and in the dim light tried to communicate soundlessly through a shrug. He shrugged back. We had no choice, really, but to come clean. We were, after all, next to a burial pit we were not permitted to attend without hospital staff, and with iron crows and a shovel...

"Yes, we had the same idea," I said through gritted teeth. "None of these are surgery deaths, but this one has no tag. We were going to unwrap the body and have a look."

Ettore and Marco walked forward to look at the body.

"Big man for a place like this." Ettore observed, and I was irritated that I had not had the same thought. It was, in fact, unusual for a tall, large statured figure to be in a hospital for the poor.

Marco offered to pilfer a torch from the corridor, but before he could take a step, Nico and I both barked out the word 'stop'. Marco and Ettore assumed their most obnoxious facial expressions, and I sighed and explained.

"With this many bodies decomposing, if you bring a lit torch in here, it will ignite the gases. A rush is about as much as you can have." I told them. It was clear that they had never set foot in such a low place.

"Imagine having to know that." Ettore said haughtily, and he and Marco laughed.

I really did detest the pair of them.

I handed the rush to Nico and walked to the head of the remains. I began working to unwrap the body, and peeled back the layer of fabric from his face. Nico held the rush close and bent down to look. Marco and Ettore crowded around, too close, in my view.

Nico looked at the face and recoiled, causing him to overbalance and fall back to sit on the floor.

“What is it?” I asked.

“You need to look, Francesca.” Nico said. It was not like him to be taken aback by remains, and I took the rush and leant forward to see for myself.

The man’s skull had neat holes at intervals of the width of a few fingers, visible on his recently-shaved scalp. I leaned closer. One might be explained away, but there must have been half a dozen at least.

I had seen trepanation before, of course. As a student of medicine, I had made a habit of studying the history of surgery as widely as I could. It was the oldest form of surgery, in which holes would be drilled into the skull to relieve pressure with the aim of treating the most severe of headaches and various other ailments.

There would be no opportunity to survive such procedures conducted concurrently.

“Trepanation.” I said to Nico, who nodded.

“So many, Francesca.” Nico’s voice had lost its usual lightness. “That is not right.”

Ettore insisted on seeing, and so I handed the rush to him and helped Nico to stand while he and Marco crouched down next to the remains.

We lowered our voices, not keen to share our thoughts with the other two.

“Why would any surgeon perform multiple trepanations? And where is his tag?” I asked.

Nico shook his head but did not offer any answers.

Ettore and Marco were fighting over who got to hold the rush, and I admit that I did hope that they fell flat on their rears.

We heard footsteps and voices from the outer corridor, and my heart began to race. We could not be caught in the basement peering over bodies without a reason to be there and not jeopardise our education. And Bologna students had been charged in the past for this sort of activity.

Without time to formulate a way to talk all four of us out of this predicament, I ran and snatched the rush away from Ettore and stubbed it out with my boot heel before whisking the cloth back over the man's head. As we heard the voices come nearer, I gathered all my resolve and pushed Ettore and Marco forward, towards the slope of the burial pit.

"You have to lie down, like the bodies." I hissed at them. They stood before me, their backs to the pit, and looked at me as though I were a lunatic. I did not have time for an argument. I had received some instruction from my mother in the work of defending oneself, and so I simply took the heels of both palms and aimed at both of their sternums. They did not see my manoeuvre coming, and breathlessly toppled back onto the slope of the pit.

The gate defended us by stubbornly becoming stuck, but at that moment, I realised with dismay that our iron crows and shovel were by the body closest to the entry and would be a clear sign that an intrusion had occurred should they be noticed. They would have to remain in place, and all I could do was hope they would not be noticed in the dim light.

"I'm sorry Nico." I whispered simply, and he and I held hands and leapt down, partly on top of the others to keep them still.

Any threats to us presented by the two unknown men were, however, immediately overpowered by my senses. I do not recommend lying face down in a burial pit, even at the top of one.

The overriding unpleasantness of it relates to the smell. Dense and cloying, I would describe it as somewhere between rotting fruit and rotting meat, and with a particular thickness to the air I had not experienced before.

The second unpleasantness, and I do not wish to understate its impact by ranking it second, is the texture of the substance coating every surface of the pit. It was stickier than I had anticipated, and my skirts became almost affixed to the stone floor by the detritus of the dead. As I kept my weight partly on

Marco and partly on Ettore, I became aware that my hands were covered in a slimy substance, obviously the putrescence of the dead bodies who had been dumped at the top of the pit and gradually made their way down to the majority below us.

Comfortable as I was around the dead, I found that I did not wish to think about my situation any further.

“What do you think he does with them all?” A rough sounding voice came across to me, as I lay in the burial pit. I did not know it, other than recognising that it was a man’s voice.

“I don’t want to know. It’s not my business.” A second man replied.

“He’s a weird sort though, isn’t he?” The first man asked.

“Gives me the shivers. He’s asked me for more. I only just got him one from upstairs. Big man, complained of an aching head. Just what he wanted. And I had to move that toff for him, the one with the stone in his kidney,” the second man said.

He could not be discussing Borghese, surely not...

“Got the stone out,” the man continued, “quick as a flash, but then he couldn’t stop cutting. He cut that man to ribbons...” His voice broke and he trailed off.

I felt a sudden coldness throughout my body as the meaning of the words took hold within me. My limbs stiffened, my knees pressing sharply into whichever of Ettore or Marco I was lying on.

“He wants a priest seeing to him, that one. Monster.” The first man said with horror.

The Butcher of Bologna indeed.

“Anyway, where are we putting this one?” The first man continued. They must have begun searching for a position, because they paused speaking.

It was becoming more difficult to lie in the pit, not least because Marco was silently retching. Nico slapped him on the back of the neck.

The two men must have deposited their delivery, because I could hear footsteps, and the gate closing. The very instant they turned the corner, I rolled off whomever I was lying on and climbed out of the pit. The others followed suit, although Marco did pause to vomit. I could not fault his timing, and was simply grateful that he was able to wait.

The four of us were filthy, covered in foul, thick liquid.

“Time to call it a night, I think.” Nico wiped his hands behind him, on the only clean patch of his clothing.

I spat, before speaking. “Nico, we must see who they brought and what has been done.”

“On no account, Francesca. The night’s activities have concluded, and I am off to scrub myself clean with an entire bar of soap and never think about what has just occurred. Next time, we shall just find a tavern for a night’s entertainment.”

Nico was clearly unhappy with me, but he was even more unhappy when he reached the gates and found he could not open them.

Ettore and Marco appeared with us at the gates and were silent as they realised we were locked in the basement. I considered that it was the first time either of them had been silent when faced with any new information.

I took the opportunity, “We need to stop Pignatelli. He cannot be allowed to continue killing his patients in this way. We must take the bodies to Cortesi.”

Three faces looked at me, each one decidedly unimpressed and unenthused by my idea. I pressed on, “It is the right thing to do. We must set things right... before the Days of the Dead begin. We must honour them.” It was an ambitious claim, and I suspected that I had overdone the argument to act, but I hoped it might turn them towards agreeing with me.

Each of them simply looked around. We were surrounded by a line of wrapped bodies on the floor; the stinking burial pit behind us. Nico looked down at his clothing and hands, covered in the liquefied remains of the unwanted.

I took their silent point. What dead do we honour? Only the wanted.

Nico picked up the shovel and wordlessly used it with force to open the gates.

“Goodnight Francesca,” he called back as he walked out of the basement. Marco followed, still retching.

Ettore remained behind me. “We won’t be able to move them, but I could bring Cortesi here.” He surprised me. “I could use a bit of good favour with him.” That was less surprising, but would still allow me to do the right thing, and so would have to do.

Ettore disappeared to fetch Cortesi, and I sat down by the gates, next to the first of the wrapped bodies. I had an iron crow in my hands for protection, but all was still apart from the occasional pop and crackle of gases from the pit. I felt a tiredness wash over me as I sat and realised that it must be nearly dawn.

After what felt like an age, Ettore reappeared with Cortesi, who drew his cloak over his nose and mouth to keep the foul air out.

I stood up to speak to him, and he looked at my clothing and general appearance.

“I do not know what is worse, Francesca... That my students would attempt to steal a body, or that they would be so bad at it.” He admonished Ettore and myself, but I noted that he only looked at me when he said it. “The Borghese corpse is sitting in a coffin in a chapel. You could have just lifted the lid.”

I said nothing as I reeled from the chastisement.

“Where is it then? The trepanned corpse?” he asked, and Ettore led him over to the body. I trailed behind, feeling thoroughly disappointed in myself.

Ettore drew back the cloth, and Cortesi took in the shaved, drilled skull in the weak daylight coming in the clerestory windows above us.

“Pignatelli was always a madman. I shall inform the magistrate.” His voice was heavier than I had heard it before. “What a thing. This poor man.”

I began to recover myself at this, as whatever my ordeal had been tonight, I could console myself that I had done the right thing in seeking out my esteemed mentor, and that justice could now be sought for the dead. I was certain that he would see, after the shock of our circumstances wore off, that I had done what was right.

“Well done, d’Este. This was good work tonight.” Cortesi said, putting his hand onto Ettore’s shoulder.

Truly, sometimes I detested everyone.