GHOSTS OF THE SHADOW MARKET #7

THE LAND I LOST

CASSANDRA CLARE

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New York, 2012
The sky was soft gray with evening, stars not yet out. Alec Lightwood was napping because he and his parabatai had been out fighting Croucher demons all last night, and Jace Herondale, famed among the Nephilim as a master strategist, apparently thought “about a dozen demons” was a fair estimate for “definitely thirty-seven demons.” Alec had gone around counting them out of spite.

“Give yourself a break, Should-Be-Sleeping Beauty,” Magnus had told him. “I need to make a potion, and Max is scheduled for his evening temptation.”

Alec woke in a nest of lavender and green silk sheets. Under the door of the bedroom, eerie silver lights played. There was a smell of sulfur, and the hiss of a demon, and the sound of beloved voices. Alec smiled against his pillow.

Just as he was about to roll out of bed, letters of fire appeared on the wall.

Alec, we need your help. For years we have searched for a family in peril, and the truth behind why they are in danger. We believe we have found a lead in the Shadow Market of Buenos Aires.

But there is unrest between the Shadowhunters and Downworlders of this city. This Shadow Market is guarded like a throne room, run by a werewolf known as the Queen of the Market. She says her doors are closed to every soul associated with the Nephilim. Every soul, except for Alexander Lightwood, who she says she has need of. We need to enter the Shadow Market. Lives are at stake.

Will you open the doors for us? Will you come?

Jem and Tessa.

Alec stared at the letter for a long moment. Then he sighed, fished a sweater up from the floor, and weaved his way out of their bedroom, still half asleep.

In their main room, Magnus stood with one elbow casually propped against their mantel, decanting a vial of turquoise liquid into a jar of black powder. His green-gold eyes were narrowed with focus. The dark worn floorboards and the woven silk rug alike were littered with their son Max’s toys. Max himself was sitting on the rug, wearing a sailor suit with elaborate navy ribbons to match his hair, tightly embracing Chairman Meow.

“You are my meow friend,” he told the Chairman solemnly, squeezing him.

“Meow,” Chairman Meow protested. He’d lived a life of torment since Max learned to walk.

The pentagram had been drawn a safe distance away from the rug. Silvery light and mist rose from within the pentagram, shrouding its inhabitant in shimmering fog. The demon’s long, writhing shadow fell dark against their green wallpaper and family pictures.

Magnus raised an eyebrow. “Ease up,” he suggested to the pentagram. “It’s like someone loaned overly enthusiastic kids a dry-ice machine for their high-school production of Demon Oklahoma! in here.”

Alec grinned. The silvery mist dissipated enough to see the demon Elyaas in the pentagram, his tentacles drooping in a sulky fashion.

“Child,” he hissed to Max. “You know not of what dark lineage you come. You are naturally inclined to evil. Join me, infernal foundling, in my revels—”
“My bapa is Ultra Magnus,” Max announced proudly. “And Daddy is a Shadowhunter.”
Alec thought Max had got the name Ultra Magnus from one of his toys. Magnus seemed to like it.

“Don’t interrupt me when I’m promising you dark demonic delights,” the demon Elyaas said fussily. “Why are you always interrupting me?”
Max brightened at the word “demonic.”

“Uncle Jace says we will kill all the demins,” he reported with joy. “All the demins!”
“Well, have you considered that your uncle Jace is a hurtful person?” said the demon. “Always rudely stabbing everyone, and sarcastic.”
Max scowled. “Love Uncle Jace. Hate demins.”

With his free hand, Magnus picked up a marker and drew another blueberry on the whiteboard to show Max had successfully resisted today’s demonic wiles. Ten blueberries, and Max got a reward of his choosing.

Alec crossed the floor to where Magnus stood considering the whiteboard. Carefully, since Magnus was still holding a bubbling jar, Alec slid his arms around Magnus’s waist, linking his hands together over the embossed buckle of Magnus’s belt. The T-shirt Magnus was wearing had a dramatic scoop neckline, so Alec put his face down in the smooth bare expanse of skin and breathed in the smell of sandalwood and spell ingredients.

“Hi,” he mumbled.

Magnus reached back with his free hand, and Alec felt the slight sweet pull of rings in his hair. “Hi, yourself. Couldn’t sleep?”

“I slept,” Alec protested. “Listen, I have some news.”

He filled Magnus in on the message Jem Carstairs and Tessa Gray had sent: the family they were searching for, the Shadow Market they could not enter without his help. As Alec spoke, Magnus gave a little sigh and leaned against him, one of the small unconscious gestures that meant the most to Alec. It reminded him of the first day he’d ever touched Magnus, drawn close to and kissed another man, someone even taller than he was, his body lean and lithe and right against Alec’s. At the time, he’d thought he felt dizzy with relief and joy because he was finally touching someone he wanted to be touched by, when he’d thought he might never have that. Now he thought he’d felt that way because it was Magnus: that even then, he’d known. Now the gesture spoke of all the days since the first.

When he felt Magnus relax against him, he felt like he could relax too.

Whatever this strange task Jem and Tessa needed him for, he could do it. Then he would come home.

As Alec fell silent, Chairman Meow made a break for freedom from Max’s loving stranglehold, streaking across the floor through the door Alec had left open and into Alec and Magnus’s bedroom, where Alec suspected he would be hiding under the bed for the rest of the night. Max stared sadly after the cat, then looked up and grinned, his teeth tiny pearls. He launched himself at Alec as if he had not seen him for several weeks. Alec always got the same enthusiastic greeting, whether he was back from a trip, back from patrolling, or had simply been in the other room for five minutes.

“Hey, Daddy!”
Alec took a knee and opened his arms to scoop Max up. “Hey, my baby.”

He stood with Max curled against his chest, a warm soft bundle of ribbons and round limbs, Max’s gurgling laughter in his ears. When Max was tiny, Alec used to marvel at how neatly his little body fit into the crook of Alec’s arm. He’d scarcely been able to imagine Max getting bigger. Alec needn’t have worried. Whatever size his kid was, he was always a perfect fit for Alec to hold.

Alec tugged at the front of Max’s sailor suit. “That’s a lot of ribbons there, buddy.” Max nodded sadly. “Too much ribbons.”

“What happened to your sweater?”

“That’s a fine question, Alexander. Allow me to unfold to you the tale. Max rolled his sweater in the cat litter,” Magnus related. “So he could ‘look like Daddy.’ Thus he must wear the sailor suit of shame. I don’t make the rules. Oh, wait, yes, I do.”

He waved a reproving finger at Max, who laughed again and tried to grab for the glitter of rings.

“It’s really inspiring to see you crazy kids making it work,” chimed in Elyaas the tentacle demon. “I don’t have much luck with romance. Everyone I meet is treacherous and heartless. Well, we are demons. Comes with the territory.”

Magnus had insisted warlocks needed to know what summoning demons entailed. He said that the more comfortable Max was with them, the less likely he was to be tricked or terrified when he summoned his first. Hence the temptation lessons. Elyaas was not so bad, as demons went, which meant he was still terrible. As Max had passed the pentagram, Alec had seen the wicked silver curve of one tentacle moving hungrily close to the edge lest Max make a false move.

Alec looked at Elyaas with narrowed eyes.

“Don’t imagine I ever forget what you are,” Alec said grimly. “I’m watching you.”

Elyaas held up all his tentacles in surrender, scooting to the other side of the pentagram. “It was a reflex! I didn’t mean anything by it.”

“Demins,” said Max darkly.

Magnus banished Elyaas with a snap of his fingers and a murmur, then turned back to Alec.

“So, they’re asking for you in Buenos Aires,” said Magnus.

“Yeah,” said Alec. “I don’t know why anyone at the Market wants me specifically, as opposed to any other Shadowhunter.”

Magnus laughed. “I can see why someone might.”

“Okay, other than that.” Alec grinned. “I don’t speak Spanish.”

Magnus could speak Spanish. Alec wished that Magnus could go with him, but one of them always tried to stay home with Max. Once, when Max was still a baby, there had been a terrible time when they were both forced to leave him. Neither of them wanted to repeat it.

Alec was trying to learn Spanish, as well as several other languages. The Speak in Tongues rune didn’t last, and seemed like cheating. Downworlders from all over the world came to New York to consult with them these days, and Alec wanted to be able to talk with them properly. First on the list of languages he was trying to learn was Indonesian,
Unfortunately, Alec wasn’t great at languages. He was able to read them, but when he was talking he found words difficult, no matter the tongue. Max had picked up more words in various languages than Alec.

“It’s fine,” Magnus had commented once. “I never knew any Lightwood but one who was good at languages.”

“Which one?” Alec had asked.

“His name was Thomas,” Magnus said. “Tall as a tree. Very shy.”

“Not a green-eyed monster like the other Lightwoods you’ve mentioned?”

“Oh,” said Magnus. “There was a bit of the monster in him.”

Magnus had elbowed him, and laughed. Alec remembered a time when Magnus never talked about the past, when Alec thought it meant he was doing something wrong, or Magnus didn’t care. Now he understood it was only that Magnus had been hurt before, and afraid Alec would hurt him too.

“I thought I might bring Lily,” he told Magnus. “She can speak Spanish. And I thought it might cheer her up. She likes Jem.”

Nobody at any Market would question Lily’s presence. Everybody had heard of the Downworlder and Shadowhunter Alliance by now, and it was well known that members of the Alliance helped each other out.

Magnus raised his eyebrows. “Oh, I know Lily likes Jem. I’ve heard the nicknames.”

Max looked back and forth at their expressions, his face bright.

“Bring back brother orra sister?”

They had talked with Max about the idea of another kid, as they had talked to each other. Neither of them had expected Max would take to the idea so much. Max asked about the brother or the sister every time one of them left the house: last Tuesday Magnus had forestalled the question by yelling “Not getting a baby, going to Sephora. There are no babies at Sephora!” and bolting. One day at the park, Max had seized a pram with a mundane baby in it. Luckily he’d been glamoured at the time, and the mundane mother thought it was a rogue gust of wind rather than Alec’s little rogue.

It would be nice for Max to have someone to grow up with. It would be nice to have another baby, with Magnus. Still, Alec remembered when he’d first held Max, how the world and Alec’s heart had gone quiet and certain. Alec was waiting to be sure again.

Alec’s pause left Max obviously thinking there was room for negotiation here.

“Bring back brother anna sister anna dinosaur?” asked Max. Alec blamed Max’s attitude on his aunt Isabelle, who kept telling him his bedtime was never.

They were saved by Jace’s signal, a faerie-leaf folded plane striking the glass of the window.

Alec gave Max a little kiss, in the midst of his curls but avoiding his horns. “No, I’m going on a mission.”

“I come with you,” Max proposed. “I be a Shadowhunter.”

Max said that a lot too, for which Alec blamed Max’s uncle Jace. Alec looked appealingly at Magnus over Max’s head.

“Come to Papa, bluebottle,” said Magnus, and Max went unsuspectingly to his open
“Go get Lily,” said Magnus. “I’ll have a Portal set up for you.”
Max shrieked his outrage. “Down!”
Magnus put him down gently. Alec paused at the door to catch one last glimpse of them. Magnus glanced up at him, touched his own heart with his ringed hand, and made a little flicking gesture. Alec grinned and opened his own hand to see the tiny blue spark of magic burning briefly there.
“Hate you, Daddy,” Max sulked.
“That’s a shame,” said Alec. “I love you both,” he added quickly, and closed the door on his own embarrassment.
The words were seldom easy for him to say, but he tried to say them whenever he was going on a mission. Just in case they were the last words.
Jace was waiting for him on the sidewalk, leaning against a sad-looking city tree, flipping a knife from palm to palm.
As Alec reached the sidewalk, there was a sound from above. Alec looked up to see Magnus, but instead he saw Max’s round face. Alec assumed Max wanted to get a glimpse of his magnificent uncle Jace. Then he saw Max was looking at him, big blue eyes mournful. He put his hand on the front of his sailor suit, then gestured to Alec the same way Magnus had, as if Max could do magic already.
Alec pretended to see a magic spark in his hand and put the magic kiss in his pocket. Then he gave Max a last wave as he and Jace headed down the street.
“What was that about?” Jace asked.
“He wanted to come patrolling.”
Jace’s face softened. “My good boy! He should—”
“No!” said Alec. “And nobody will let you have your own kid until you stop putting other people’s kids in bags meant for axes and trying to smuggle them out on patrol.”
“I almost got away with it, due to my supernatural speed and unmatched cunning,” Jace claimed.
“No, you didn’t,” said Alec. “That bag was wriggling.”
Jace shrugged philosophically. “Ready for another round of heroically defending the world from evil? Or if it’s a slow night, pranking Simon?”
“Actually, I can’t,” said Alec, and explained the message from Jem and Tessa.
“I’ll come with you,” Jace offered instantly.
“And leave Clary to run the Institute alone?” asked Alec. “A week before her exhibition?”
Jace looked shaken by the force of this argument.
“You’re not letting Clary down. Lily and I can deal with whatever’s going on,” said Alec.
“Besides, it’s not like Jem and Tessa can’t handle themselves. We’ll be a team.”
“Fine,” said Jace reluctantly. “I guess three other fighters are an acceptable substitute for me.”
Alec thumped him swiftly on the shoulder with a fist, and Jace smiled.
“Well,” he said. “To the Hotel Dumort.”
From the outside the hotel’s façade was grimy, the graffitied sign the dark brown of old blood.

Lily had redecorated on the inside. Alec and Jace opened splintered double doors on a shining hall. The flight of stairs and the balcony above them had a glittering rail, gilt-painted iron fretwork depicting snakes and roses. Lily liked things to look like the 1920s, which she said was the best decade. The décor wasn’t the only thing that had changed; now there were hipsters in the know, and though Alec didn’t understand the allure himself, there was a waiting list to be a party victim.

A pair of legs was sticking out from under the curving flight of stairs. Alec strode over and peered into the shadowy alcove, seeing a man wearing suspenders, a blood-smudged shirt, and a grin.

“Hi,” Alec said. “Just checking. Is this a voluntary situation?”

The man blinked. “Oh yes. I signed the consent form!”

“There’s a consent form now?” Jace murmured.

“I told them they didn’t have to do that,” Alec murmured back.

“My fabulous fanged lady friend said I should sign it, otherwise the Clave would get stern with her. Are you the Clave?”

“No,” said Alec.

“But Hetty said that if I didn’t sign the consent form, the Clave would look at her with those disappointed blue eyes. Your eyes are very blue.”

“And very disappointed,” said Alec sternly.

“Are you bothering Alec?” demanded a vampire girl, running out of the double doors that led to the parlor. “Don’t bother Alec.”

“Oh dear,” said the man, in delighted tones. “Is my mortal soul doomed? Are you about to visit your undead wrath upon me?”

Hetty snarled, and dived under the stairs with a giggle. Alec averted his eyes and headed for the parlor, Jace falling in behind him. Jace let Alec take point when it came to the vampires. As Head of the New York Institute, Jace reprimanding a vampire might sound like a threat. Jace and Alec had talked over how to make the city welcoming to all Downworlders, now that New York was a refuge in the times of the Cold Peace.

Through the parlor doors came the sound of music: not Lily’s usual jazz, but a pounding mix that sounded like rap and jazz combined. Inside the parlor were tufted chairs, a gleaming piano, and an elaborate set of turntables and wires. Bat Velasquez the werewolf DJ was sitting cross-legged on a plush velvet sofa, fiddling with dials.

In other cities, vampires and werewolves didn’t get along. Things were different in New York.

Elliott, second-in-command of the vampire clan, was dancing around in a happy circle by himself. His arms and dreadlocks waved to the beat like plants underwater.

“Is Lily up?” asked Alec.

Elliott suddenly looked hunted. “Not yet. We had a bit of a late morning yesterday. There was an incident. Well, more a disaster.”

“What caused this disaster?”

“Well,” Elliott said. “Me, like usual. But this time it really wasn’t my fault! It was a total
and complete accident that could have happened to anyone. You see, I have this regular selkie Thursday night booty call.”

Selkies were water faeries who shed their seal skins to assume human form. They were fairly rare.

Alec subjected him to a judgmental stare. “So this disaster could have happened to anyone with a regular selkie booty call.”

“Yes, exactly,” said Elliott. “Or, like, regular booty calls with two different selkies. One of them found the other’s sealskin in my wardrobe. There was a scene. You know how it is with selkies.”

Alec, Jace, and Bat shook their heads.

“Only one tiny wall fell down, but now Lily’s all mad.”

Lily had made Elliott her second-in-command because they were friends, not because Elliott had any aptitude for leadership. Sometimes Alec worried about the New York vampire clan.

Bat said, “This guy. Why do you have to suggest threesomes to everybody? Why are vampires like this?”

Elliott shrugged. “Vampires love threesomes. Live long, get decadent. We aren’t all the same, of course.” His face brightened with a pleasant memory. “The boss used to get very cross about decadence. But really, I’m ready to settle down, I think you and I and Maia—”

“My abuela wouldn’t like you,” Bat said firmly. “My abuela loves Maia. Maia’s learning Spanish for her.”

Bat’s slightly raspy voice went low and warm whenever he talked about Maia, the leader of the werewolves, and his girlfriend. Alec couldn’t blame him. Alec never worried about the werewolves. Maia always had everything under control.

“Speaking of Spanish,” Alec said, “I’m going to Buenos Aires, and I’m asking Lily to come with me, since she’s fluent. By the time Lily gets back, she’ll have cooled off.”

Elliott nodded. “A trip would be good for her,” he said, his voice unusually serious. “She hasn’t been doing well lately. She misses the boss. Well, we all do, but it’s different for Lily. It takes us like this sometimes.” He glanced at Alec and clarified: “Immortals. We’re used to seeing each other off and on through the centuries. Years go by, then someone’s back, and it’s just the way it was before. Because we stay the same, though the world doesn’t. When someone dies, it takes us a while to process. You think to yourself: I wonder when I’ll see him again. Then you remember, and it’s a shock every time. You have to keep reminding yourself, until you believe it: I’ll never see him again.”

There was an achingly sad note in Elliott’s voice. Alec nodded. He knew how it would be, one day, when Magnus had to think “never again” about him.

He knew how strong someone had to be, to withstand the loneliness of immortality.

“Also honestly Lily could use some help with the clan.”

“You could help her,” said Alec. “If you were just a bit more responsible—”

Elliott shook his head. “Not gonna happen. Hey, mister Head of the Institute, you’re a leader! How about it? I make you a vampire, you help lead the clan, you stay gorgeous forever.”
“That would be a gift to future generations,” Jace remarked thoughtfully. “But no.”

“Elliott!” Alec snapped. “Stop offering to make people immortal! We have spoken about this!”

Elliott nodded, looking abashed but smiling a tiny smile. From outside and above, a voice drifted down.

“I hear someone bossing people around! Alec?”

One of the most worrying things about the vampire clan was that speaking to them reasonably didn’t work at all, but they were delighted to be told off. Raphael Santiago had really left a mark on these people.

Alec walked over and peered out of the open doors. Lily was standing on the balcony, wearing rumpled pink pajamas with drawings of snakes and the words RISE AND STRIKE on them. She looked tired.

“Yeah,” he said. “Hey. Jem asked me to come to Buenos Aires and help him out. Do you want to come with?”

Lily lit up. “Do I want to come on a bro road trip with you, rushing to the aid of gorgeous damsel in distress, Jem I’d-love-to-climb-’em Carstairs?”

“So, yes.”

Lily’s smile was wide enough to show fangs. “Hell yes.”

She darted away from the balcony. Alec noted the door she went through, and climbed the stairs. He waited a bit, leaning against the rail, then tapped on the door.

“Come in!”

He didn’t come in, but he opened the door. The room inside was narrow as a cell, with stripped floorboards and walls bare except for a cross on a hook. This was the only room in the Hotel Dumort Lily hadn’t redecorated. Lily was sleeping in Raphael’s room again.

Lily was wearing a leather jacket that had been Raphael’s too. Alec watched as she fluffed her hot-pink-streaked hair, then kissed the cross for luck and headed out. Christian vampires were burned by a cross, but Lily was a Buddhist. The cross meant nothing to her, except that it had been Raphael’s.

“What do you . . .” Alec coughed. “Do you want to talk?”

Lily tipped her head back to stare all the way up at him. “About feelings? Do we do that?”

“Preferably not,” said Alec, which made her smile. “But we could.”

“Nah,” Lily answered. “Let’s go on a road trip and see hotties instead! Where’s that idiot Elliott?”

She ran lightly down the stairs to the parlor, and Alec followed her.

“Elliott, I’m leaving you in charge of the clan!” said Lily. “Bat, I’m stealing your girl!”

Bat shook his head. “Why are vampires like this?” he murmured again.

Lily grinned. “For administrative purposes. Maia’s running the Shadowhunter and Downworlder Alliance until we get back.”

“I don’t want to be in charge of the clan,” Elliott wailed. “Please be a vampire and lead us, Jace! Please!”

“I used to walk in here and have to fight for my life as the place fell down around me,” Jace mused. “Now it’s all velvet cushions and insistent offers of immortal beauty.”
“It’s just one tiny bite,” Elliott coaxed him. “You’ll like it.”

“Nobody likes getting all their blood sucked out, Elliott,” Alec said severely. Both the vampires in the room smiled because he was telling them off, then looked upset because of what he was saying.

“You only think that because Simon did it wrong,” Lily argued. “I’ve pointed out to him many times that he messed up everything for all of us.”

“Simon did fine,” Jace muttered.

“I didn’t like it,” said Alec. “I won’t talk about this again. Let’s get going.”

“Ah yes,” Lily brightened. “I’m very curious to see how the hottest Shadowhunter in the world is doing.”

“I’m great,” said Jace.

Lily tapped her foot. “Nobody’s talking about you, Jason. Have you heard the phrase ‘tall, dark, and handsome’?”

“Sounds like an old-fashioned saying,” said Jace. “Sounds like something people used to say before I was born.”

He grinned at Lily, who grinned back at him. Jace didn’t just pull the pigtails of people he had crushes on. He pulled the pigtails of everyone in the world he liked. This was something Simon still had not figured out over the years.

“There are a lot of hot Shadowhunters,” said Elliott. “That’s the point of them, isn’t it?”

“No,” said Alec. “We fight demons.”

“Oh,” said Elliott. “Right.”

“I don’t mean to brag. I’m just saying that if they made a book of hot Shadowhunters, my illustration would be on every page,” Jace said serenely.

“Nope,” said Lily. “It would be filled with pictures of the Carstairs family.”

Alec said: “Are you talking about Emma?”

Lily frowned. “Who’s Emma?”

“Emma Carstairs,” said Jace helpfully. “She’s Clary’s penpal who lives in LA. Sometimes I write postscripts to Clary’s letters and tell Emma handy knife tricks. Emma’s very good.”

Emma was a single-minded force of destruction, which of course Jace liked. Jace fished out his phone and showed Lily a recent picture of Emma that Emma had sent Clary. Emma was holding her sword on a beach and laughing.

Lily breathed: “Cortana.”

Alec glanced at her sharply.

“I don’t know Emma,” Lily said. “But I’d like to. I don’t normally go for blonds, but she’s hot. Bless the Come-And-Stare family. They never fail me. On that note, I’m off to admire the views in Buenos Aires.”

“Jem is married, you know,” said Alec.

“Don’t leave me in charge!” Elliot begged. “You can’t trust me! It’s a terrible mistake!”

Lily ignored them both, but she caught Alec studying her as they left the hotel.

“Don’t look so worried,” she said. “Elliott probably won’t burn the city down. When I get back, everybody will be so grateful that they’ll do everything I say. Leaving that fool in charge is part of my leadership strategy.”

Alec nodded, and didn’t say that he was worried about her.
There had been a time when Alec was unsettled by vampires, but Lily had always so clearly needed someone, and Alec had wanted to be there for her. They’d been teammates running the Alliance with Maia for long enough now that Lily felt like Aline Penhallow, a friend close enough to be family.

The thought of Aline sent a familiar pang through Alec. Aline had gone into exile on Wrangel Island to be with her wife, Helen. They had lived in that stony wasteland for years, just because Helen had faerie blood.

Whenever Alec thought of Helen and Aline, he wanted to change everything about the way the Clave worked, and bring them home.

It wasn’t only Aline and Helen. He felt that way about all the warlocks and vampires and werewolves and faeries who streamed to New York to talk to the Alliance because they couldn’t go to their Institutes. Every day, he felt the same urge he’d felt on his first mission, when he saw Jace and Isabelle charge into a fight. Protect them, he’d thought desperately, and lunged for his bow.

Alec squared his shoulders. Worrying wouldn’t help anyone. He couldn’t save everybody, but he could help people, and now he intended to help Jem and Tessa.
Brother Zachariah walked through the Silent City, down corridors lined with bones. The ground was marked with the relentless passage of the Silent Brothers’ feet, of his own feet, moving in their accustomed path day after silent day, year after dark endless year. He could not get out. Soon he would forget how it had ever been to live and love in the light. Every skull grinning at him from the wall was a thing more human than he. 

Until the darkness he’d thought inescapable was obliterated by consuming fire. The silver fire of yin fen had burned in him once, the worst burning the world had to offer, but this golden fire was remorseless as heaven. He felt as if he were being torn apart, every burning atom of him weighed in the balance by a cruel god, and every piece found wanting.

Even in the midst of agony, there was some small measure of relief. This is the end, he told himself desperately, and was desperately thankful. At last this is the end, after all that misery and darkness. He would die before his humanity was entirely crushed out. Finally, there might be rest. He might see his parabatai again.

Except with the thought of Will came the thought of another. He thought of soft cool air drifting from the river, and her sweet serious face, unchanging as his own heart. With the thought of Will, he knew what Will would say. He could hear him, as if even the veil of death were burning between them and Will was shouting in his ear. Jem, Jem. James Carstairs. You can’t leave Tessa on her own. I know you better than you know yourself. I always did. I know you would never give up. Jem, hold on.

He would not dishonor love by letting go. In the end, he chose to endure any pain rather than do that. Through the fire, as through the darkness, he held on.

And impossibly, through fire and darkness and time, he survived.

Jem woke gasping. He was in a warm bed, with his wife in his arms.

Tessa was still sleeping, on white sheets in the small whitewashed room they were renting in the small lodging house. She murmured as Jem watched her, a soft string of incomprehensible words. She talked in her sleep, and every sound was a comfort. More than a century ago, he’d wondered how it would be to wake up with Tessa. He’d dreamed of it.

Now he knew.

Jem listened to her sweet sleepy murmurs, and watched the rise and fall of the white sheet with her breathing, and his body eased.

Tessa’s curling lashes stirred on her cheeks.

“Jem?” she asked, and her hand found his arm, palm sliding down his skin.

“I’m sorry,” Jem said. “I didn’t mean to disturb you.”

“Don’t be sorry.” Tessa smiled sleepily.

Jem leaned over to the pillow beside his, and kissed his wife’s eyes closed, then watched them open again, clear and cool as river water. He kissed her cheek, the eloquent curve of her mouth, her chin, and trailed his open mouth hungrily down the line of her throat.


I want you.

Tessa said: “Yes.”
Jem lifted the sheet and kissed the line of her collarbone, loving the taste of her soft sleep-warm skin, loving every atom of her. He laid a trail of kisses for himself to follow all the way down her body. When he drew his mouth down the tender skin of her stomach, her hands slipped into his hair and fastened tightly there, anchoring him, encouraging him on. Her voice, no longer soft, made the walls ring with his name.

She was all around him. All horror and pain was washed away.

As night fell, Jem and Tessa lay facing one another on the bed, their hands entwined, their voices hushed. They could whisper and laugh all night together, and often had: it was one of Jem’s great joys, just to lie with Tessa and talk for hours.

But that required quiet and peace, which was not to be had tonight. Light exploded through their dim room, and Jem bolted upright, shielding Tessa from any possible threat.

Words of shimmering blue and silver had appeared on the wall. Tessa sat up, tucking the sheet around her. “Message from Magnus,” she said, twisting her hair up into a knot at the back of her head.

The message said that Alec and Lily Chen were on their way to help. Once they had stowed their belongings at the Buenos Aires Institute, they would meet Tessa and Jem outside the walls of the Shadow Market.

Jem met Tessa’s gaze, and read his own alarm in her eyes.

“Oh no,” said Tessa. Jem was already scrambling off the bed, searching for their clothes. “We have to find them. We have to stop them. They can’t go to the Institute.”
The Buenos Aires Institute was located in the town of San Andres de Giles. To mundane eyes, the Institute looked like a large crypt standing in an abandoned cemetery, in a profusion of ghost-pale wildflowers.

To Alec’s eyes, it looked worse. It was a tall edifice, painted a dull rust color, but one wing of the building was a charred ruin. Alec had known the Institute was damaged during the Dark War, but he’d thought it would have been repaired long before.

Lily sniffed the air. “They mixed blood in the paint.”

The Institute looked abandoned, except for the fact there was a guard at the door. Even that made Alec’s eyes narrow. Shadowhunters didn’t typically keep watch on their own Institutes, unless it was a time of war.

He nodded to Lily, and they moved forward to meet the Shadowhunters of Buenos Aires. The guard at the door looked a few years younger than Alec. His face was hard, his black eyebrows drawn sharply together, and he was squinting at them suspiciously.

“Um,” said Alec. “Ola? Wait, that’s Portuguese.”

Lily smiled a sunny fanged smile at the guard. “Let me handle this.”

“I can speak English,” the guard told Alec hastily.

“Great,” said Alec. “I’m from the New York Institute. My name is—”

The guard’s dark eyes went wide. “You’re Alexander Lightwood!”

Alec blinked. “That’s me.”

“I was in the Inquisitor’s office once,” the guard confided shyly. “He has a tapestry of you hanging up in there.”

“Yeah,” said Alec. “I know.”

“That’s how I know what you look like. I’m so thrilled to meet you. I mean, it’s such an honor. Oh no, what am I doing? I’m Joaquín Acosta Romero. It’s a pleasure.”

Joaquín held out his hand for Alec to shake. When Alec shook his hand, he felt the younger man vibrating slightly with excitement. He cast a panicked glance toward Lily, who grinned and mouthed “Cute” at him.

“This is Lily, who is no help,” said Alec.

“Oh yes, oh, pleased to meet you too,” said Joaquín. “Wow, come in.”

Lily smiled sweetly, showing her fangs. “I can’t.”

“Oh, right! I’m sorry. I’ll show you around to the back entrance. There’s a door to the Sanctuary there.”

Magnus had enchanted the New York Institute so Downworlders could walk in certain places there, but most Institutes still kept them out of all but the Sanctuary rooms. Alec was pleased to see Joaquín flash a smile at Lily that seemed genuine and welcoming.

“Thanks,” said Alec. “We’re meeting friends on a mission, but I hoped we could stow our bags now so we can come back to sleep later. We can set up cots in the Sanctuary.”

Joaquín led them down a dark cobwebbed alley. Alec thought of the wing that was rubble. Possibly this Institute wouldn’t have cots.

“Um, will your friend—will she need a coffin?” asked Joaquín. “I don’t think we have coffins. I mean, I’m sure I could find one somewhere! The head of our Institute is, um, very careful about visitors, but I’m certain he can’t object to a guest who is coming with Alec Lightwood.”
“I don’t need a coffin,” said Lily. “Just a windowless room. It’s no problem.”
“You can address her when you’re talking about her,” said Alec, mildly.
Joaquín cast an anxious look at Alec, then an even more anxious look at Lily. “Of course! I’m sorry. I don’t have much experience talking to—”
“Vampires?” asked Lily sweetly.
“Women,” said Joaquín.
“It’s true I’m five fabulous foot of pure woman,” Lily mused.
Joaquín coughed. “Well, I don’t know any vampires either. My mother died in the Dark War. A lot of us did. And afterward, most of the women left. Mr Breakspear says that women aren’t suited to the rigor of a tightly run Institute.”
He peered anxiously at Alec, as if checking in on Alec’s opinion on this.
“Clary Fairchild is one of the heads of my Institute,” said Alec curtly. “Jia Penhallow is the leader of all Shadowhunters. Anyone who says women are weak is afraid they’re too strong.”
Joaquín nodded several times in rapid succession, though Alec wasn’t sure if it was agreement or pure nerves.
“I haven’t been to any other Institutes. When I turned eighteen, I was hoping I could go to one on my travel year, maybe even meet someone, but the head of our Institute said I couldn’t be spared. Not when the Downworlders in our Shadow Market are so dangerous.”
Joaquín hung his head. Alec was trying to phrase a question that wouldn’t shock the boy further, about why this was such a harsh posting. About what exactly was going on with the Buenos Aires Institute. But before he could, they reached the end of the alley and the battered door to the Sanctuary of the Institute. It looked like the inside of a church that had suffered a blast, the long windows boarded up, the floor blackened.
There was a man in the center of the charred floor, holding forth to a group of silent Shadowhunter men. He looked about forty, his fair hair already turning silver, and he was the only one in the room wearing gear that was not patched or worn.
“That’s Clive Breakspear, the head of our Institute,” said Joaquín. “Sir, we have a visitor. It’s Alexander Lightwood.”
He said something in Spanish, which judging by the repetition of Alec’s name Alec thought was the same thing, then glanced around as if expecting an enthusiastic response. He didn’t receive one. Several of the men in the circle seemed immediately wary.
Clive Breakspear did not look wary at all.
“So you’re Alec Lightwood,” said the head of the Buenos Aires Institute slowly. “Then this must be your Downworlder whore.”
There was a terrible silence.
It was broken by Lily, who blinked and said: “Excuse me? Have you been living in a hole? Are you not aware Alec is dating famous warlock Magnus Bane and is not interested in ladies of any persuasion?”
There was a rush of whispers. Alec didn’t think everyone was stunned by this information. They were stunned that Lily would say it, as if they expected him to be
ashamed.

"Let’s be clear on this matter. This is my friend Lily, the head of the New York vampire clan." Alec put his hand on his seraph blade, and the whispers hushed. “Think very carefully,” said Alec, “about how you wish to speak of her. Or of Magnus Bane.”

He almost said my fiancé, but it was an awkward word. Once he’d said “my betrothed” and felt like a total idiot. He longed sometimes, with an almost physical ache, just to say my husband, and have it be true.

“I’m here on a mission,” Alec continued. “I thought I could rely on the hospitality of the Institute and my fellow Shadowhunters. I see I was wrong.”

He cast a look around the room. Several of the men could not meet his eyes.


“One which requires discretion.”

Alec regarded him steadily, until Clive Breakspear flushed and looked away.

“You can stay here,” he agreed grudgingly. “The Downworlder cannot.”

“Like I want to,” Lily sneered. “I don’t stay in places where the décor isn’t ten out of ten, and this place is a minus fourteen thousand. OK, Alec, let’s make a plan for where we will meet up after I find a nice windowless hotel room. Do you want to—”

“What are you talking about?” Alec demanded.

“If they won’t have you, I won’t stay here. The hell with this place. I’m going with you.”

Lily’s face went soft, for the space of time it took to blink. Then she patted his arm and said: “Of course you are.”

She sniffed disdainfully and spun on her heel. Clive Breakspear barreled toward her.

“I have some questions for you, Downworlder.”

Alec caught his arm and stepped in front of Lily. “Are you sure about that?”

They were outnumbered, but Alec was the Inquisitor’s son, Jace Herondale’s parabatai. He was protected in a way many others were not. That meant he had to use whatever he had, for those who had no protection.

After a long moment, Breakspear stepped back.

Alec wished he could’ve thought of a really scathing exit line, but those weren’t his specialty. He and Lily just left, Joaquín chasing after them.

“By the Angel,” Joaquín said. “I didn’t expect that—I didn’t think—I’m so sorry.”

“It’s not the first Institute I haven’t been welcome in,” said Alec.

Especially if he was with Magnus. It didn’t happen often, but a couple of Institutes before now had tried to separate them or made clear they shouldn’t have come together. Alec always made clear what he thought of that.

“I’m so sorry,” Joaquín repeated helplessly.

Alec nodded to him; then Alec and Lily went out into the night. Alec stood with the blasted building at their backs, and breathed in one long, deep breath.

“Shadowhunters are trash,” Lily announced.

Alec gave her a look.

“Present company excepted. And Jem,” said Lily. “I’m having a terrible time in Buenos Aires, and I don’t eat, but I’m in the mood for a delicious bowl of Jembalaya.”

“He’s married!” Alec pointed out once again.
“Please stop reminding me. She smells like books. I may be immortal, but life is too short to spend reading.” Lily paused for an instant, then added quietly: “Raphael liked her. She and Ragnor Fell and Raphael used to have little meetings and tell each other secrets.”

Alec understood the tension in her voice now. Lily was slightly wary of Magnus too: of anyone not in her clan whom she thought Raphael Santiago might have loved.

“I told Jem we’d meet him outside the Shadow Market,” said Alec, effectively distracting Lily. “We can just carry our bags until we find a place to stay. For now, let’s see about this place which has the Buenos Aires Institute running scared, where only I can go.”
Alec went to the New York Shadow Market on Canal Street with Magnus and Max often, but the first time at a new Shadow Market as a Shadowhunter could be tricky.

The Buenos Aires Shadow Market looked more than tricky. Barbed wire was hung on every plank. The smooth sun-bleached wood and snarled loops of barbed wire were an impenetrable stretch of silver. There was a large metal door in front of them, more suited to a prison than a market, and a werewolf’s eyes shone behind a metal grille. He snapped something at them.

“He said ‘No Shadowhunters,’” Lily interpreted cheerfully.

There was a line of Downworlders behind them, staring and murmuring. Alec felt a shadow of the old discomfort at being the focus of attention, and a sudden doubt about the information Jem had provided.

“I’m Alec Lightwood,” he said. “I hear that I’m allowed in.”

There was a stir behind his back, a brief silence, and then a rush of different-sounding whispers, like listening to a tide turn.

“You could just be another lying Nephilim,” the werewolf snarled, switching to English. “Can you prove you’re Alec Lightwood?”

Alec said: “I can.”

He took his hands out of his pockets and held up the right one to the grille so the werewolf could see it plainly: scarred skin, calluses from his bow, the dark lines of his Voyance rune, and moonlight striking and holding on the bright band of his family ring with its etched pattern of flames.

Another set of eyes appeared at the grille, this pair a faerie’s, pupil-less and green as woodland lakes fathoms deep. She said something soft in Spanish.

“She says the magic in your ring is very strong,” Lily reported at his shoulder. “Too strong. She says that kind of power comes from the very heart of hell.”

Alec knew that was true. There was not only one charm in this ring, but spell after spell: magic for protection and deflection, magic to guide his arrows and blades, all the power at Magnus’s command poured into the metal. There was everything Magnus had been able to think of, to act as Alec’s armor, and ensure Alec would return home safe to him. Most important, there was the look on Magnus’s face when he gave the enchanted ring to Alec and said he believed they would be married one day.

“I know where this kind of power comes from.” Alec raised his voice so that the whole murmuring crowd could hear. “I’m Alec Lightwood. Magnus Bane made this ring for me.”

The werewolf guard held open the door to the Shadow Market.

Alec and Lily walked into a barbed-wire tunnel. Alec could hear the sounds and glimpse the lights of a Market, but the tunnel split off in two directions. The guard took them to the left, away from light and sound, into a shed lined with wards and metal. Broken weapons were fixed on the walls, and there was a roughly hewn circular platform in the center of the room, and on that platform a huge chair. There were crossed axes on the back of that chair, and a row of glittering spikes ran along the top. A slender faerie girl, with wispy hair and a wistful face, was sitting cross-legged at the foot of the throne.

Upon the throne was a young woman who looked about Alec’s age. She was wearing jeans and a flannel shirt, her legs swung carelessly over the throne’s arm, the row of...
spikes glinting above her light hair. This must be the woman Jem had written about, the werewolf Queen of the Market.

She saw Alec and her face went blank. Then she started to smile, and said in English, but with a distinct French accent: “Alec! It’s really you. I can’t believe it!”

This was very awkward.

“Sorry,” said Alec. “Have we met?”

The werewolf swung her legs to the floor, leaning forward. “I’m Juliette.”

“I’m not Romeo,” said Lily. “But you are cute, so tell us more about yourself in your sexy accent.”

“Um, who are you?” asked Juliette.

“Lily Chen,” said Lily.

“Head of the New York vampire clan,” added Alec.

“Oh, of course,” said Juliette. “From the Alliance! Thank you for coming with Alec to help us. It’s a real privilege to meet you.”

Lily beamed. “I know, right?”

Juliette’s eyes went back to Alec. The way she was looking at him, wide-eyed and startled, did ring a faint bell.

“And this is my daughter Rose,” said Juliette the werewolf, her hands firm on the young faerie’s shoulders.

Alec didn’t recognize the woman, but he recognized that tone of voice. He knew how it was to lay claim to what you loved, all the more insistently because people doubted the love that belonged to you. Alec wasn’t sure what to say, so he did one of his favorite things. He produced his phone and found a really good picture, walked up to the dais, and showed it to them both.

“This is my son, Max.”

Juliette and Rose leaned forward. Alec saw the werewolf’s eyes flicker, saw the moment where it registered with Juliette that Max was a warlock.

“Oh.” Juliette’s voice was soft. “He’s beautiful.”

“I think so,” said Alec shyly, and showed them a few more pictures. Alec found it difficult to select the best pictures. So many of them were great. It was hard to take a bad picture of Max.

Juliette gave the adolescent faerie a push between the shoulder blades.

“Go get your brother and sister,” she urged. “Quick.”

Rose sprang to her feet, faerie light, cast a last shy sidelong glance at Alec, and ran out.

“You know me,” said Alec. “How?”

“You saved my life,” Juliette said. “Five years ago, when demons attacked the Orient Express.”

“Oh,” said Alec.

His and Magnus’s first vacation. He tried not to think of the less pleasant aspects of that trip, but he remembered the train, the warm falling water and the shine of demon’s eyes, the screaming wind and the abyss below. He’d been terrified for Magnus that night.

“You fought demons on the Orient Express?” Lily asked with interest.
“I fight demons in lots of places,” said Alec. “It was all very normal.”

“I’d never seen anything like it in my life,” Juliette told Lily enthusiastically. “There were so many demons! They broke the windows. I thought I was about to be killed. Then Alec took out every demon he saw. He was soaking wet, and he wasn’t wearing a shirt.”

Alec didn’t see how that was relevant.

“Very normal,” Alec repeated. “Except normally I wear a shirt.”

Lily’s eyes were dancing with glee. “What a wild time you seem to have on holiday, Alec.”

“I had a totally standard and boring time,” Alec told her.

“Sounds like it.”

“And I was at that party in Venice,” Juliette continued. “When the mansion collapsed.”

“I was there too!” said Lily. “Raphael was super sad to be at a party; it was hilarious. I made out with so many people, it was a personal record. I think one of them was a hot blonde! Was it you?”

Juliette blinked. “Er, no. I don’t really . . . make out with girls.”

Lily shrugged. “Sorry you’re wasting your life.”

“I don’t either,” Alec commented mildly.

Juliette nodded. “I remember Magnus at that party too. He was trying to help.”

Alec heard his own voice go low and tender, entirely out of his control. “He always does.”

There was a clatter of feet behind them. Rose the faerie girl had returned. There were two more kids hand in hand with her now, another faerie girl with the sturdy build of a goblin, and a dark-skinned warlock boy with a fox tail. They ran up to the chair and clustered about Juliette. The girl looked about ten, and the boy no more than six.

“Kids,” said Juliette, “this is Alec Lightwood, whom I’ve told you about. Alec, these are my kids.”

“Hi,” said Alec.

The kids stared.

“When you saved me on the Orient Express,” said Juliette, “I asked how I could repay you, and you said you’d seen a faerie child alone in the Paris Shadow Market. You asked me if I could look out for her. I’d never spoken to a Shadowhunter before. I didn’t think they were like you. I was—surprised you asked me that. So when I got back to Paris, I went looking for her. My Rosey and I have been together ever since.”

She ruffled Rose’s wispy hair around Rose’s crown of horns. Rose flushed green.

“Maman. Do not embarrass me in front of Alec Lightwood!”

The Paris Shadow Market Alec and Magnus had visited on their first vacation together had been Alec’s first Market ever. The Downworlders hadn’t been used to him then, and he hadn’t been used to them. He did recall the faerie child he’d seen there: how skinny she’d been, and how sorry he’d been for her.

She’d been the same age as his baby brother, whom Max was named for. Unlike his brother, she had lived to be older.

“Rose,” Alec said. “How grown up you are now.”

Rose beamed.
“We were happy together in Paris, you and I, weren’t we, ma petite?” Juliette asked Rose, sounding wistful. “I thought the end of the war with Valentine would be an end to all wars. But then there was another war, and so many Shadowhunters died, and so many faeries too. And the Cold Peace began.”

She fixed her eyes on Alec. The light above the throne caught her eyes, like headlights catching the eyes of a wolf.

“I heard about you and Magnus, and the Shadowhunter and Downworlder Alliance you’d set up. You were both helping people. I wanted to do that too. I heard about people hunting faeries in Belgium, and I got my youngest girl out.”

Rose’s hands closed on the goblin girl’s shoulders. Alec recognized that gesture too: the constant worry of the oldest in the family, the knowledge that you were responsible for the younger ones.

“Then I heard about Buenos Aires,” said Juliette. “The Institute here was crushed in the Dark War. Downworlders who fled to Europe told dark stories of what had risen from the wreckage. I came to see if there was anything I could do.”

The little boy lifted his arms to her, and Juliette picked him up, cuddling him on her knee. The boy watched Alec, sucking thoughtfully on the tip of his fox tail.

“There were a lot of children orphaned in the war,” said Juliette. “The Shadow Market here became a refuge for unwanted children. A haphazard kind of orphanage, among the stalls and lights and magic. The Market became a community, because we needed one, a Market that never ceased. People live inside these walls. My baby was left here, because he manifested his warlock mark so young.”

“So did Max,” said Alec.

“There are so many kids.” Juliette closed her eyes.

“What’s wrong with this Institute?” Alec asked. “Why hasn’t someone reached out to the Clave?”

“We did,” Juliette returned. “It was useless. Breakspear has powerful friends. He made sure the message went right to a man called Horace Dearborn. Do you know him?”

Alec’s eyes narrowed. “I know him.”

The aftereffects of too many wars and the constant pressure of the Cold Peace provided opportunities for a certain kind of person. Horace Dearborn was one of the type who flourished on unrest and fear.

“After the Institute was destroyed by the Endarkened,” said Juliette, “Clive Breakspear arrived here with that man Dearborn’s name behind him, like a vulture glutting himself on the remains. The word is, his Shadowhunters take missions for money. Like—if someone wanted a rival dead, Breakspear’s Shadowhunters would see it done. They don’t hunt demons. They don’t hunt Downworlders who break the Law. They hunt us all.”

Alec’s stomach turned. “They’re mercenaries.”

“The decent Shadowhunters left, when they couldn’t make any difference to the way things were done,” said Juliette. “I don’t think they talked. I think they were ashamed. This Market, with all the kids in it—the Market wasn’t safe. It seemed like the leaders were being picked off, so people would be more vulnerable. They didn’t try for me. I’ve got friends in Paris and in Brussels who would raise a howl if I disappeared. So I ordered
wards and fences put up. I let people call me a queen. I tried to seem as strong as I could, so they wouldn’t come at us. But things are getting worse, not better. Female werewolves are disappearing.”

“Killed?” asked Alec.

“I don’t know,” said Juliette. “We thought they were running at first, but there are too many. Mothers who wouldn’t have left their families. Girls as young as my Rosey. Some people say they’ve seen a strange warlock about. I have no idea what’s happening to those women, but I knew I couldn’t trust anyone at the Institute to find out. I won’t risk trusting any Shadowhunter. Except you. I put out the word I wanted you. I wasn’t sure you would come, but here you are.”

She lifted her face imploringly to Alec’s. The Queen of the Shadow Market looked, in that moment, as young as the kids clustered around her.

“Will you help me? One more time?”

“As many times as you need me,” said Alec. “I’ll find those women. I’ll find out who’s doing this. I’ll stop them. You have my word.”

He hesitated, remembering Jem and Tessa’s mission.

“I have friends here, besides Lily. A warlock woman, and a man who used to be a Silent Brother, with a silver streak in his hair. Can they enter the Market? I swear to you they can be trusted.”

“I think I know who you mean,” Juliette said. “They were asking for admittance a few nights back, weren’t they? I heard the man was handsome.”

“Boy, did you hear right,” said Lily.

Juliette’s smile spread. “There really are some very handsome Nephilim around.”

“Uh, I guess,” said Alec. “I don’t really think about Jem that way.”

“How can you be good at archery, when you’re so blind?” Lily demanded.

Alec rolled his eyes. “Thanks, Juliette. I’ll let you know, as soon as I find something out.”

Juliette said, softly: “I’m glad you’re here.”

“I won’t leave until I’ve helped you,” said Alec, then glanced at the kids, who were still staring. “Um. Bye, kids. It was very nice to meet you.”

He nodded to them awkwardly, then made his way back toward the lights and music of the Market.

“OK,” he told Lily as they walked. “Let’s take a quick look around the Market, ask some questions before we meet Jem and Tessa.”

“Let’s drop by the faerie fruit gin stall!” Lily suggested.

Alec said: “No.”

“We can’t be all business all the time,” said Lily, who was seldom all business for five minutes. “So, who do you think is hot?” When Alec stared at her, she said: “We’re on a bro road trip! We’re meant to share secrets. You said not Jem. So who?”

Alec shook his head at a faerie trying to sell them charmed bracelets, though she insisted they were real charms and really charming. When Alec asked about the disappearances, the faerie’s eyes widened, but she didn’t know any more than Juliette.

“Magnus is hot,” Alec said finally, as they went on their way.
Lily rolled her eyes. “Wow, you and Monogamous Bane make me tired. He’s even dumber than you are.”
“He’s not dumb.”
“An immortal who sets his soft heart on one person?” Lily bit her lip, fangs pressing down too hard. “That’s dumb.”
“Lily,” said Alec, but Lily was shaking her head and proceeding, her voice firmly light. “Leaving aside your destined honey lamb and all, I know there was Jace. Is it just guys with golden eyes?” asked Lily. “That is a very particular taste you have there, friend. It really narrows the playing field. So no other crushes besides Jace? Even a teeny tiny one when you were young?”
“Why are you leering like you know something I don’t?” Alec asked warily.
Lily giggled.
There was a lot of noise happening behind one of the stalls. Alec turned his head toward it automatically, but also because he didn’t know how to explain that specific crushes hadn’t been the problem. It had been a relief, in a way, to pretend even to himself that a crush on Jace was the thing that was making him miserable.
Even when he was a kid, he’d found his attention caught by posters of mundane men in the streets of New York, or found himself drawn to guys visiting the Institute, listening from behind his vase to their stories of demon-hunting and thinking they were cool. He’d had unfocused childish daydreams, created hazy bright dreamlands featuring boys, and then he’d lost the dream with his childhood. He’d been too young to understand himself, and then he hadn’t been. He heard the way Shadowhunter visitors sneered, how his dad hinted at the subject as if it was too awful even to be said outright, when saying things outright was the only way Alec knew how to say them. Alec felt guilty every time he had to pull his eyes off another boy, even just a curious look, and then there had been Magnus, and he hadn’t been able to look away from him at all.
The noise from behind the stalls was growing closer.
A lot of noise, very close to the ground.
The orphans of the Buenos Aires Shadow Market exploded from behind a stall where a werewolf was selling stew. There were kids everywhere, Downworlders of every kind, and all of them seemed to be trying to get his attention, shouting out names, requests, jokes. The main language was Spanish, but Alec heard a few others, and was immediately confused about which words belonged to which language. Multi-colored lights swung on dozens of faces. He turned his head, overwhelmed, not able to make out any face or voice in the chaos.
“Hey,” he said, stooping over the kids and pulling food out of his duffel bag. “Hey, is anybody hungry? Take these.”
“Gross, are those energy bars?” Lily demanded. “Way to pile misery on orphans!”
Alec took out his wallet and began to give the kids money. Magnus was always magically making cash appear there, in case of emergencies. Alec wouldn’t spend it on himself.
Lily was laughing. She liked kids, though sometimes she pretended she didn’t. Then she froze. For a moment her bright black eyes went flat and dead. Alec stood up straight.
“You, kid.” Lily’s voice was trembling. “What did you say your name was?”
She shook her head and repeated the question in Spanish. Alec followed her line of
sight to one particular child in the crowd.

The other children were jostling each other, pressed up against each other and the
stalls, but there was a small circle of space around this boy. Now he had their attention,
he wasn’t shouting. His curly head was tipped back so he could study them, and he was
doing so with narrowed, very dark eyes. His extremely critical air had to be Alec's
imagination. The kid looked about six years old.

The boy answered Lily, his voice calm: “Rafael.”

“Rafael,” Lily whispered. “Right.”

Rafael’s face was one of the youngest in that crowd of heartbreakingly young faces,
but there was a chilling air of self-possession about him. He advanced, and Alec wasn’t
surprised to see the other kids move out of his path. He carried distance with him.

Alec’s own eyes narrowed. He couldn’t tell what kind of Downworlder this kid was, but
there was something about the way he moved.

Rafael said something else in Spanish. From the imperious tilt at the end of the
sentence, it was a question or a demand. Alec looked helplessly at Lily. She nodded,
visibly gathering her composure.

“‘The kid said . . .’” She cleared her throat. “‘Are you a Shadowhunter? Not like
the ones at the Institute. Are you a real Shadowhunter?’”

Alec blinked. Rafael’s eyes were fixed on his face.

Alec knelt on the ground amid the bright riot of the Shadow Market, so he could look
into those dark intent eyes.

“Yes,” said Alec. “I’m a Shadowhunter. Tell me how I can help you.”

Lily translated. Rafael shook his curly head, expression even cooler, as if Alec had
failed some sort of test. He snapped out several more lines of Spanish.

“He says he doesn’t want help,” said Lily. “He says he overheard you asking around the
Market about the women who vanished.”

“So the kid can understand some English?” asked Alec, hopeful.

Rafael rolled his eyes and said something else in Spanish.

Lily grinned. “He says no, not at all. He has information, but he doesn’t want to talk
here.”

Alec frowned. “Boludo,” he repeated. “He said that. What does that word mean?”

Lily grinned. “It means he thinks you’re a nice man!”

It hadn’t sounded nice. Alec squinted at Rafael. Rafael gave him a blank stare back.

“All right,” Alec said slowly. “Who’s taking care of you? Let’s go to them, and we can
talk together.”

The night was dark, especially under the awning of a stall, but Alec was pretty sure
Rafael rolled his eyes. He transferred his attention from Alec, whom he clearly found to
be hopeless, and looked to Lily.

“He says that he takes care of himself,” said Lily.

“But he’s six!” said Alec.

“He says he’s five,” Lily said, her brows knit as she listened and translated slowly. “His
parents died in the Dark War, when the Institute fell, and then there was a werewolf woman who looked after a bunch of kids. But she’s gone now. He says nobody else wants him.”

She must be one of the women who had disappeared, Alec thought grimly. That thought was lost in the rush of horror when he realized what Lily was saying.

“His parents died when the Institute fell?” Alec repeated. Every cell in his body sparked with shock. “Is this boy a Shadowhunter?”

“Would it be worse to find a Shadowhunter child like this?” Lily asked, her voice cold. “Yes,” Alec snarled back. “Not because Downworlder kids deserve this. My kid’s a Downworlder. No kid deserves this. But you heard Juliette. Everybody’s doing the best they can. Shadowhunters fall in battle every day, and homes are found for orphans. There is a system in place for Shadowhunter children. The Shadowhunters should be doing better than this. The Law is meant to protect the most helpless among us. What is wrong with this Institute?”

“As you’re using your stern voice, I guess we’re going to find out,” Lily remarked, sounding chipper again.

Alec was still looking at Rafael with dismay so profound it felt almost like despair. He saw now that Rafael looked dirtier, and less cared for, than any other child in the crowd. Alec had learned the Law at his mother’s knee, at his father’s, from his tutor and every book in the library at the Institute back home. It had made sense to him when he was young, when very little made sense to him. The Shadowhunters’ sacred duty, for all time: to stand unseen against the darkness, to defend at any cost.

Now he was older, and he knew how complicated the world could be. It still hurt like an unexpected blow when he saw that shining ideal tarnished. If he were in charge of it all—

But they didn’t live in that world.

“Come with me for now,” Alec told the Nephilim child. “I’ll take care of you.”

If Rafael really was alone, Alec could take Rafael to the New York Institute, or to Alicante. He wasn’t going to leave him here where he looked so friendless and neglected. He reached out, arms open, to pick Rafael up and carry him away.

Rafael bolted backward with the speed of a wild animal. He gave Alec a filthy look, as if he might bite if Alec tried that again.

Alec drew his arms back and lifted his hands in a gesture of surrender. “All right,” he said. “Sorry. But will you come with us? We want to hear your information. We want to help.”

Lily translated. Rafael, still watching Alec warily, nodded. Alec rose and offered Rafael his hand. Rafael eyed the hand with disbelief, shaking his head and muttering something. Alec was almost sure it was that word again. He looked Rafael over. The kid’s clothes were stained and torn, he was much too thin, and he was barefoot. There were dark circles of exhaustion under his eyes. Alec didn’t even know where they were going to sleep.

“OK,” he said at last. “We have to buy him some shoes.”

He walked out of the throng of kids, with Lily at his side and Rafael orbiting them like a
“Maybe I can help you, Shadowhunter,” called out a faerie woman with dandelion hair from a stall.

Alec started forward, then stopped. Lily had caught his arm in a grip like iron. “Don’t go near that woman,” she whispered. “I’ll explain later.”

Alec nodded, and went on, despite the call of the faerie woman to come buy. Juliette had been right: this Market was a community, with huts and wagons surrounding the stalls. It was the biggest Market Alec had ever seen.

Alec found a faerie cobbler who seemed nice enough, though even the smallest pair of boots he had were too big. Alec took them anyway. He asked the cobbler, who spoke English, if anyone was taking care of Rafael. Surely, no matter what the kid said, someone must care.

After a moment, the cobbler shook his head. “When the werewolf woman who looked after the orphans vanished, the other kids were given homes by my people. But, no offense meant, faeries won’t take in a Shadowhunter.”

Not with the Cold Peace breeding hatred between Shadowhunters and faeries. The laws were all wrong, and children were paying the price.

“Also that child hates everybody,” said the faerie cobbler. “Watch out. He bites.”

They were almost at the wire tunnel leading to the exit of the Shadow Market now. This far out from the center of the Market there were fallen walls, more signs of a place crushed by war and then left to decay.

“Hey,” Alec told Rafael. “Come here a second. Mach dir keine—”

“You’re telling him not to worry in German,” Lily reported gleefully.

Alec sighed and knelt in the gray dust, among the rubble, gesturing Rafael to sit on a piece of the fallen wall. The child eyed Alec and the boots in his hand with an air of extreme mistrust. Then he plunked himself down and let Alec slip his feet into the too-large boots.

The kid’s feet were small, his soles black with filth. Alec swallowed, and drew the laces on Rafael’s boots as tight as he could, so they would stay on and Rafael could walk properly.

Rafael stood as soon as Alec was done tying his laces. Alec stood as well. “Come on,” he said.

Rafael’s dark, measuring gaze was on Alec again. He stood perfectly still, for a long moment.

Then he lifted both his arms in a commanding gesture. Alec was so used to that gesture from Max that he moved without even thinking and scooped Rafael up in his arms.

It was nothing like carrying Max, small and plump, always laughing and cuddling. Rafael was tall for his age, and much too thin. Alec could feel the knobbly bones of his back. Rafael held himself very stiffly, as though he was undergoing an unpleasant ordeal. It was like holding a small statue, if you felt desperately sorry for the statue and unsure what to do.

“Carrying you means the boots are pointless,” murmured Alec. “But that’s all right. I’m
glad you’re coming with us. You’re safe now. I have you.”

“No te entiendo,” said Rafael’s small clear voice in his ear, then after a thoughtful pause: “Boludo.”

Alec was sure of two things: that word was not a nice word, and this kid didn’t like Alec at all.
Jem and Tessa were standing at the gates of the Shadow Market when they saw him. They’d hoped to catch Alec and Lily before they reached the Buenos Aires Institute. Finding no sign of them, they’d worried Breakspear had detained them, but a warlock acquaintance of Tessa’s had sent word a Shadowhunter had been let into the Market. Now they were worried the Queen of the Market had detained them. Jem was conferring with Tessa when the gates opened. Against barbed wire and starlight they saw a tall man, his black head bowed and his tender blue eyes fixed on the child in his arms. Will, thought Jem, and grasped Tessa’s hand tight. Whatever he felt, it was worse for her. Alec looked up and said, sounding relieved: “Tessa.”

“What a handsome end to a long night,” Lily said delightedly. “If it isn’t the former Brother Snackariah.”

“Lily!” Alec exclaimed.

But Tessa, still holding Jem’s hand, gave Jem a highly amused look and smiled her gradual, beautiful smile. “It’s Raphael’s Lily,” she said. “How nice to see you. Forgive me, I feel like I know you better than I do. He talked about you often.” Lily’s grin fractured as if someone had dropped a mirror. “What did he say about me?” she asked in a small voice.

“He said you were more efficient and intelligent than most of the clan, who were morons.” It sounded very cold to Jem, but that had been Raphael’s way. Lily’s smile returned, warm as a flame held between cupped hands. It reminded Jem of the way she’d looked when they first met. He had not known, then, that Tessa had sent Raphael to him for help. He’d done his best then, and now Lily was a friend.

“Thank you both for coming to help us,” said Jem. “Who is the child?” Alec explained the events of the night—being turned away from the Buenos Aires Institute, learning of the disappearances, and the discovery of Rafael, the child the Institute had abandoned.

“I’m sorry you went to the Institute at all,” Jem said. “We should have warned you, but I haven’t been a Shadowhunter in a long time. I didn’t realize that your first instinct would be to go there. Our lodging house has rooms available, and at least one of them is windowless. Come with us.” Alec carried the child with the ease of long habit. One hand remained free to grab a weapon, and he walked easily through the streets with the small precious weight. Jem, long out of practice, wouldn’t have been able to do it himself. He’d held Tessa’s children, James and Lucie, when they were little, but that had been more than a century ago. Not many people wanted a Silent Brother near their child, unless that child was near death.

They walked through the streets, past houses painted in flamboyant hues, flame scarlet, sea blue, crocodile green, the streets lined with jacaranda and olive trees. At last they reached their lodgings, the low whitewashed building turned blue by the first signs of dawn. Jem pushed open the circular red door and requested more rooms from their landlady, one without a window.

Jem and Tessa had already secured the use of the little courtyard at the center of the lodging house, a group of small stone pillars open to the sky, circled with the soft violet-
blue of bougainvillea. They gathered there, Alec placing Rafael carefully down on the stone bench beside him. Rafael scooted to the other edge of the bench. He hung his head and was silent when Tessa spoke to him softly in Spanish, asking him for any information about the missing women. Jem hadn’t heard about them before, but now that he knew, it was clear they had to help. Rosemary Herondale might be in danger, but so were these werewolf women. Jem wanted to do whatever he could for them.

Returning to speech had been strange for Jem, but Tessa had learned many languages and taught him everything she could. Jem tried asking Rafael too, but Rafael shook his head sullenly.

Lily was sitting cross-legged on the ground, one elbow propped on Alec’s knee, to be near the child. She tilted her head toward Rafael and asked him if he would please get on with it, because the sun was rising and she’d have to go to bed soon.

Rafael reached out and patted the bright pink streak in Lily’s hair.

“Bonita,” he said, face still solemn.

The poor child didn’t smile much, Jem thought. Of course, nor did Alec, who was looking miserable and determined about the missing women.

Lily, who smiled very easily, did so now. “Aw, cute baby,” she said in Spanish. “Do you want to call me Aunt Lily?”

Rafael shook his head. Lily looked undaunted.

“I have a trick,” she offered, and snapped her fangs in Rafael’s direction.

Rafael looked absolutely appalled.

“What are you guys saying?” asked Alec worriedly. “Why is he looking like that? Why did you do that?”

“Max loves it when I do that!” said Lily, and added in Spanish: “I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“Wasn’t scared,” Rafael responded in Spanish. “That was stupid.”

“What did he say?” Alec asked.

“He said that was an awesome trick and he really enjoyed it,” Lily reported.

Alec raised a skeptical eyebrow in her direction. Rafael pressed close to Alec. Tessa joined Lily on the ground. Tessa talked to Rafael gently, and Lily teased him, and together they got the full story, Lily translating for Alec as they went. Alec’s face went more and more grim as he heard the story.

“Rafael knows he’s a Shadowhunter, and he’s trying to learn—”

Rafael, who Jem thought understood more English than he was letting on, interrupted to correct Lily.

“Excuse me,” Lily said. “He’s trying to train. He spies on the other Shadowhunters, so he knows what to do. He’s small, and he makes sure they don’t see him. While he was spying on them, he saw a Shadowhunter creeping off down a lane. He met a warlock at the door of a big house. He got as close as he could, and he heard women inside.”

“Can you describe the Shadowhunter you saw?” asked Alec, and Jem translated for him.

“I think you can do it,” Jem added to the child encouragingly. “You see so much.”

Rafael gave Jem a dark look, as though he disliked praise. He spent a few more
moments in furious thought, kicking his too-big boots over the edge of the stone bench, then reached into the pocket of his tattered trousers and placed a slim wallet in Alec’s hands.

“Oh.” Alec looked startled. “You stole this from the Shadowhunter you saw?”

Rafael nodded.

“That’s great. I mean . . .” Alec paused. “It’s good that you’re helping us, but it’s very bad to steal wallets generally. Don’t do it again.”

“No te entiendo,” Rafael announced firmly.

He said that he didn’t understand Alec, and his tone suggested that he wasn’t planning to understand Alec on this topic anytime soon.

“Don’t say the other word,” Alec said quickly.

“What other word?” Jem asked.

“Don’t ask,” said Alec, and opened the wallet.

Shadowhunters did not carry mundane forms of identification like passports or ID cards, but they carried other things. Alec took out a weapons requisition document marked with the Breakspear family symbol.

“Clive Breakspear,” Alec said slowly. “The head of the Institute. Juliette said that these Shadowhunters acted as mercenaries. What if this warlock hired them?”

“We have to find out what’s happening,” said Jem. “And stop it.”

Alec set his jaw.

“Rafael can show us the house after he gets some rest. Tomorrow night we’ll go back to the Shadow Market. We’ll try to find the information you’re looking for, and tell the Queen of the Market what, if anything, we’ve discovered.”

Rafael nodded, then held his hand out for the wallet. Alec shook his head.

“What is this secret you want to know about?” Lily asked Jem.

“Lily, it’s a secret,” Alec said reprovingly.

There were crickets chirping in an odd beautiful melody beyond the walls.

“I trust you both,” Jem said slowly. “You came here to help us. I trust this will go no further. I’m looking for someone who needs my help. There’s a hidden line of Shadowhunters I became aware of in the 1930s.”

Lily shook her head. “The 1930s were such a disappointment. Every year, they insisted on not being the 1920s.”

Will had died in the 1930s, and Tessa had been in agony. Jem had not liked the 1930s much either.

“This family has been hunted for decades,” said Jem. “I don’t know why. I learned how they split off from the Nephilim, but I still didn’t know why faeries are hunting them. I met one of them, but she refused my help and ran away. Since then, I have looked for them, and friends I trust have asked discreetly around the Shadow Market. The year I met you there, Lily, I was searching for Ragnor Fell, to find out what he could tell me. I want to know why they are being hunted, so that I can help them. Whoever their enemies are, they are mine too.”

Because the Carstairs owe the Herondales.

“I asked in the Spiral Labyrinth as well,” said Tessa. “There was never any word. Until
suddenly we heard that someone was telling stories to the children of this Market, stories of love and revenge and misery. We heard a whisper of the name Herondale."

She said the name that had once been hers very softly. Alec jumped as if someone had shouted it in his ear.

Neither Jem nor Tessa mentioned Catarina Loss, who had carried the first lost Herondale child over the seas and raised him on strange shores. That wasn’t their secret. Jem trusted Alec, but he was still a Shadowhunter, and his father was the Inquisitor. Jem and Tessa were both well aware of the sentence the Law would pass on Catarina for her act of love and mercy.

"I’ll ask Juliette," said Alec. "I’ll find out whatever I can. I won’t go home until I’ve helped you."

"Thank you," Jem said.

"Now Rafael has to go to bed," said Alec.

"We have a nice little room for you," Tessa told Rafael in Spanish, her voice soft and encouraging. Rafael shook his head. "Do you not want to be alone?" Tessa asked. "That’s fine too. You can sleep with me and Jem."

When Tessa reached out her hands, Rafael turned his face into Alec’s bicep and screamed. Tessa drew back at the long mutinous howl. Alec automatically put his arm around the child.

"Lily’s vulnerable during the day," Alec said. "I’d rather stay with her. Will you be all right in the windowless room, Rafael?"

Lily translated. Rafael nodded emphatically.

Jem showed them the way. At the door, he caught Alec’s arm before he could follow Lily and Rafael.

"I appreciate this," said Jem. "I truly do. Please don’t tell Jace yet."

Jem still thought about Jace, that fierce helpless child he’d met on a dark sea, and the young man burning with heavenly fire. He’d imagined a hundred scenarios where he did better by Jace. If he’d been the Silent Brother who cared for Jace after his father left him, if he’d spent more time with Jace, if Jace had been just slightly older, the age Will had been when Jem first met him . . . maybe Jem would have known.

But what could he have done for Jace, even if he had known?

"I don’t want Jace to think he has family somewhere he won’t get to know," said Jem. "Blood is not love, but it offers a chance for love. He never had the chance to know Céline Montclaire or Stephen Herondale. I don’t want him to feel he is missing another chance."

Jace was happy in New York, though Jem had not helped him be so. He had his love, and his parabatai, and his Institute. If Jem couldn’t help him, at least he did not want to hurt him.

Jem still thought about Céline Montclaire too. If he hadn’t been a Silent Brother, with his heart turning to stone in his breast, perhaps he would have understood how much trouble she was in. Perhaps he could have found a way to help her.

He didn’t call Céline Jace’s mother, because Jem had seen how Jace looked at Maryse Lightwood. Maryse was Jace’s mother.

Many years ago, when Jem was still a child, his uncle Elias had come to the London
Institute and offered to take him away. “After all,” he’d said, “We are family.”

“You should go,” Will had said stormily. “I don’t care.”

Will had slammed the door on his way out, declaring he was off on a wild adventure. After Elias departed, Jem had found Will sitting in the dark in the music room, staring at Jem’s violin. He’d sat down on the floor beside Will.

“Entreat me not to leave thee, idiot,” Jem had said, and Will had put his head down on Jem’s shoulder. Jem had felt Will trembling with the effort not to laugh or cry, and known Will wanted to do both.

Blood was not love.

But Jem didn’t forget that Céline had never had the chance to be Jace’s mother. Life was full of broken hearts and missed chances, but Jem could try to redress some of the wrong done Céline by the world. He could do his best for Jace.

Alec was studying Jem intently.

“I won’t tell Jace,” he said. “Not yet. Not if you tell him soon.”

“I hope I will,” said Jem.

“Can I ask you something?” said Alec abruptly. “The Buenos Aires Institute is corrupted, and the Cold Peace is fraying our bonds with Downworlders. You could do a lot of good, if you were with us. Why did you stop being a Shadowhunter?”

“I am with you,” said Jem. “Do I have to be a Shadowhunter to be that?”

“No,” said Alec. “But I don’t understand—why you don’t want to be one anymore.”

“Don’t you?” Jem asked. “You have a parabatai. Once, so did I. Can you imagine fighting without him?”

Alec was holding on to the doorframe, and as Jem watched, his knuckles went white.

“I have Tessa, so I have more joy every day than some do in their whole lives. Far more than I deserve. I have seen the world with my wife by my side, and we have our tasks to make life meaningful. We all have different ways to serve. She has the secrets from the Spiral Labyrinth, and I those of the Silent Brothers, and we have combined our knowledge and saved lives that I believe couldn’t have been saved by any other means. I do want to help, and I will. But not as a Shadowhunter. I will never be that again.”

Alec looked at Jem, those blue eyes wide and sorrowful. He looked like Will, but he wasn’t Will, any more than Jace was. None of them could ever be Will.

“When you fight, you should fight with your whole heart,” said Jem softly. “I don’t have the heart for life among the Nephilim, for that particular fight, not any longer. Too much of my heart is in a grave.”

“I’m sorry,” Alec said, awkwardly. “I do understand.”

“There’s nothing to be sorry for,” Jem told him.

He went back to his room, where Tessa was waiting, a book open in her lap. She looked up when he came in, and she smiled. There was no smile like hers in the world.

“Everything all right?” she asked.

He looked down at her and said: “Yes.”

Tessa shut her book and reached up to him. She was kneeling on the bed and he was standing beside it, and the world was filled with missed chances and heartbreak, but then there was Tessa.
Tessa kissed him, and he felt her grin against his mouth. “Brother Snackariah,” she murmured. “Come here.”
The room might be windowless, but there was a brown jar crowded with red flowers on the table, and two white single beds. Lily had tossed her leather jacket onto the bed closest to the wall. Rafael was sitting on the other bed, turning over a metallic object thoughtfully in his hands. Alec suddenly understood why he had agreed to be carried.

“What’s that you have there, sweetie?” Lily asked as Alec came in.

“What he has is my phone,” said Alec. “Which he stole.”

In Rafael’s hands, Alec’s phone buzzed. Alec reached for it, but Rafael moved casually out of reach. He didn’t seem terribly concerned that Alec had grabbed for him. He was staring at the phone.

Alec reached for the phone, then stopped, caught off guard. As Rafael studied the phone, the sullen line of his mouth twitched, then slowly curved into a smile. The smile, slow and warm and sweet, altered his whole face.

Alec’s hand dropped. Rafael turned a suddenly bright countenance up to him and chirped a question. Even his voice sounded different when he was happy.

“I don’t understand you,” Alec said helplessly.

Rafael waved the phone in Alec’s face to illustrate his point. Alec looked at the screen, and kept looking. He’d had a sick unsteady feeling in his chest since he realized what the Shadowhunters might be doing here, but the world felt steady again now.

Magnus had sent a photo with the caption Bluebird and I home from a wild and dangerous mission with a swingset.

Magnus was leaning against their front door. Max was laughing, all dimples, the way he did whenever Magnus did magic to amuse him. There were blue and golden lights streaming all around them, and huge iridescent bubbles that seemed made of light too. Magnus was smiling a small fond smile, and the black spikes of his hair wreathed with radiant ribbons of magic.

Alec had asked Magnus to send him pictures whenever he was away, after their first mission when Max was a baby. To remind Alec what he was fighting for.

Lily cleared her throat. “The kid asked: ‘Who is that cool man?’”

“Oh,” said Alec, kneeling by the bed. “Oh, that’s—that’s Magnus. His name is Magnus Bane. He’s my—he and I are going to get married.”

One day, they would.

Alec wasn’t sure why it felt important to tell this child.

Lily translated. Rafael looked from the phone to Alec’s face, then back again, his brow furrowed in clear surprise. Alec waited. He’d heard kids say terrible things before now. Adults poured poison in their minds, and then it came out of their mouths.

Lily laughed.

“He said,” Lily reported with unholy joy, “‘What is that cool man doing with you?’”

Alec said: “Rafael, give me back my phone.”

“Let him have it for a bit while he goes to sleep,” said Lily, who was one of the reasons Max was spoiled.

Alec glanced over, and found Lily wearing an unusually serious look.

“Come here to me a minute,” said Lily. “I promised to tell you why I didn’t want you to
go near that faerie woman at the Shadow Market. I have a story I want you to hear, that I think might help Jem. I don’t want to tell anybody but you.”

Alec let Rafael keep the phone. In return, Rafael let Alec tuck him into bed. Alec took the chair by the door and placed it by Lily’s bed. They waited until Rafael’s eyes fell shut, with Alec’s phone on the pillow beside him.

Lily studied the striped pillow on her bed as if it were fascinating.

“Are you hungry?” Alec asked at last. “If you—need blood, you can take mine.”

Lily glanced up, her face startled. “No. I don’t want that. You’re not for that.”

Alec tried not to show how relieved he was. Lily looked back down at the pillow and squared her shoulders.

“Remember when you asked me if I was a jazz baby, and I said to call me the jazz baby?”

“I’m still not going to do that.”

“I still think you should,” Lily argued. “But that’s . . . not what I meant. The 1920s were my favorite decade, but . . . I may have been misleading you about my age.” She grinned. “It’s a lady’s prerogative.”

“OK,” Alec said, not sure where this was going. “So—how old are you, then?”

“I was born in 1885,” said Lily. “I think. My mother was a Japanese peasant girl, and she was—sold to my father, a rich Chinese merchant.”

“Sold!” said Alec. “That’s not—”

“It wasn’t legal,” Lily said in a tight voice. “But it happened. They lived together for a few years, in Hong Kong where he worked. I was born there. My mother thought my father would take us back home with him. She taught me to speak the way he would want, and dress the way he would want, like a Chinese lady. She loved him. He got tired of her. He left, and before he left, he sold us off. I grew up in a place called the House of Eternal Pearl.”

She looked up from the pillow.

“I don’t have to tell you, do I?” she asked. “What kind of place it was, where women were sold, and men came and went?”

“Lily,” Alec breathed, in horror.

Lily shook her black-and-pink head defiantly. “They called it the House of Eternal Pearl because—some men want women to be young and beautiful forever. Pearls are created from a center of dirt that can’t be washed away. In the cellar without windows, in the heart of that house, were chained women. Those women were cold and lovely forever. They would never age and would do anything for blood. They were for the richest men, they fetched the highest prices, and they had to be fed. My mother grew too old, so they fed her to the vampires. And that night, I crept down and I made a deal with one of them. I promised if she Turned me, I’d free us all. She kept her side of the bargain, but I didn’t keep mine.” Lily studied the toes of her pointed boots. “I woke up and killed a lot of people. I don’t mean that I drank from somebody, though I did that too. I burned the place to the ground. Nobody got out, not the men, not the women. Nobody but me. I didn’t care about anybody but myself.”

Alec moved his chair closer to her, but Lily drew her legs up onto the bed, making
herself as small as possible.

“Nobody knows all that,” she said. “A few people know a little. Magnus knows I wasn’t made in the 1920s, but he could tell that I didn’t want to say. He never asked for any of my secrets.”

“No,” said Alec. “He wouldn’t.”

Magnus knew all about painful secrets. Alec had learned.

“Raphael bribed somebody to find out,” said Lily. “I don’t know who, or how much he paid. He could have asked me, but he wasn’t like that. I only knew that he knew because he was sweet to me, for a few nights. In his way. We never talked about it. I’ve never told anybody. Not until you.”

“I won’t tell anybody,” Alec promised.

The corner of Lily’s mouth lifted. “I know you won’t, Alec.”

Some of the tension went out of her thin shoulders.

“I told you so you’d understand what happened next,” she said. “I couldn’t stay in Hong Kong. I came to London, I think it was 1903, and I met Shadowhunters for the first time.”

“Shadowhunters!” said Alec.

He understood why Downworlders said the word that way, sometimes. Already he couldn’t bear what had happened to Lily. He didn’t want to hear about Shadowhunters doing anything worse to his friend.

But Lily was smiling now, just a little. “I noticed one in particular, a girl with hair the color of blood in shadows. I barely knew what Shadowhunters were, but she was brave and kind. She protected people. Her name was Cordelia Carstairs. I asked around about Shadowhunters. I heard about a faerie woman with a spite against all Shadowhunters, particularly against one family. We saw her at the Shadow Market tonight. Tell Jem to ask the woman with dandelion hair about the Herondales. She knows something.”

Lily fell silent. Alec knew he had to say something, but he didn’t know how. “Thanks, Lily,” he said at last. “Not for the information. Thanks for telling me.”

Lily smiled, as though she didn’t think what Alec had said was too dumb. “After London, I traveled on and met Camille Belcourt in Russia. Camille was fun. She was bright and heartless and hard to hurt. I wanted to be like her. When Camille traveled to New York and became head of the vampire clan there, I went with her.”

Lily bowed her head. After a long moment sunk in memory, she looked up.

“Want to know something dumb? When Camille and I reached New York after the Great War,” she said brightly, “I looked around for Shadowhunters. Wasn’t that stupid? Most Shadowhunters are not like you, or Jem, or Cordelia. I encountered Nephilim who made it very clear the angelic warriors were not sent to shield a creature like me. I didn’t care about anybody, and nobody cared about me, and that was how it was, for decades and decades. It was really fun.”

“Was it?” Alec asked.

He kept his voice noncommittal. She sounded so brittle.

“The twenties in New York were the brightest time for both of us, when the whole world seemed as frenzied as we were. Decades later Camille was still trying to replicate them, and so was I, but even I thought Camille went too far sometimes. There was an
emptiness in her she was always trying to fill. She’d permit her vampires to do anything. Once, in the 1950s, she let a very old vampire called Louis Karnstein stay at the hotel. He preyed on children. I thought he was disgusting, but I didn’t care much. I was very good at not caring, by then.”

Lily shrugged and laughed. The sound was not convincing.

“Maybe I hoped the Shadowhunters would come, but they didn’t. Someone else came instead. A pack of scruffy mundane boys, who wanted to defend their streets from the monster. They all died, except one. He always did what he set out to do. He killed the monster. He was my Raphael.”

Lily stroked the leather jacket where it lay in a heap on her bed.

“Before he killed the monster, Raphael was made into a vampire himself. Your Magnus came to Raphael’s aid, but I didn’t. Raphael could have died then, and I would never have even known. I met Raphael later. He came upon a bunch of us feeding in an alley and gave us a terrible lecture. He was so solemn, I thought he was funny. I didn’t take him seriously at all. But when he came to live at the hotel, I was pleased. Because hey, it seemed like more fun. Who doesn’t want more fun? There was nothing else in the world.”

Magnus had told Alec this story, though Magnus had never painted himself as anyone’s savior. It was strange to hear it from Lily, and stranger to hear knowing how the story ended.

“Raphael asked for better security at the hotel on his second day of living there. He argued that a pack of mundane kids had been able to break in and kill one of our own. Camille laughed at him. Then we were attacked by a rogue band of werewolves, and Raphael’s security measures were put in place. Guards were posted, and Raphael always took his turn guarding the hotel, even once he was second-in-command and didn’t have to. He took the first watch, on the first night. I remember him showing me plans of the hotel, every weak point, the ways he’d figured out how to best defend ourselves. He had it all worked out, though he’d been with us less than a week. He left to take up his post, and as he went he said ‘Sleep, Lily. I’ll watch the doors.’ I never slept peacefully before that night. I didn’t know how to rest, and trust I was safe. I slept that day as I’d never slept before.”

Lily stared at the vase of flowers, bright red as vampire blood. Alec didn’t think she was seeing them.

“Later it turned out that Raphael hired the werewolves to attack us so that we would implement the safety precautions he wanted,” Lily added in pragmatic tones. “He was extremely set on having his own way. Also, he was a total asshat.”

“That is clear to me,” said Alec.

Lily laughed again. She got up from the bed, gripping Alec’s shoulder for a moment as she passed, then she began to pace the little room as if it were a cage.

“Raphael was always there, from then on. Camille would demote him from being second-in-command now and then, to annoy him. It didn’t matter. He never wavered, no matter what anyone else did. I thought he’d be there forever. Then he was taken. I told myself I had to hold it together, form an alliance with the werewolves, hold the line against madness. Just until Raphael came back. Only Raphael never came back.”
Lily drew a hand over her eyes. She went to Rafael’s bedside, passing her tearstained hand lightly over his curly hair.

“Well,” she said. “I was happy for fifty-four years. That’s more than most people get. Now there’s the clan to look after, like Raphael would’ve wanted. The night we knew he was gone, and every night since, I watch my vampires in the home he guarded. I watch the mundanes in the streets he loved. Every one of them looks like a child I should help, a possibility for a future I wasn’t able to imagine. Every one of them seems precious, worth defending, worth the world. Every one of them is Raphael.”

The child stirred, as if he were being called. Lily pulled her hand away.

It was day, after a long night.

Alec rose and guided her, a hand on her trembling shoulder, to the bed. He pulled a sheet over her as if she were Rafael. Then he positioned the chair between Lily and Rafael and the entrance, and took his place there.

“Sleep, Lily,” Alec said, gently. “I’ll watch the doors.”
Alec didn’t rest well. His mind was churning with thoughts of Lily’s story, the Buenos Aires Institute’s corruption, lost Herondales and werewolves, and Jem and Tessa’s quest.

He was used to waking up in dark silk sheets and strong arms. He missed home.

Rafael slept in, not stirring until afternoon. Alec suspected that the orphans of the Shadow Market had all developed nocturnal tendencies. When Rafael woke, Alec took him out to the courtyard, where he sat on the stone bench moodily eating an energy bar. Alec thought he was sulking because Alec had taken back his phone.

“Has anyone ever given you a nickname?” he asked Rafael. “Do people ever call you Rafe?”

Rafael gave him a blank look. Alec worried he hadn’t conveyed his meaning.

“Rafa,” Rafael said finally.

He finished one energy bar and held his hand out for another. Alec gave it to him.

“Rafa?” Alec tried. “Do you want me to call you that? Are you getting any of this? I’m sorry I can’t speak Spanish.”

Rafael made a face, as if to say what he thought of being called Rafa.

“Okay,” said Alec. “I won’t call you that. Just Rafael, then?”

The boy gave Alec a massively unimpressed look. Here this fool goes again, his air suggested, talking to me when I cannot understand him.

Jem and Tessa joined them in the courtyard, ready for Rafael to lead them to the house he’d seen.

“I’ll stay and guard Lily,” said Tessa, reading Alec’s mind. “Don’t worry about her. I have wards up, and even if somebody came, I’ve got it covered.”

She made a tiny gesture. Gray glowing magic, like the shine of light on river water or the sheen of pearls in shadow, twined about her fingers. Alec smiled his gratitude at Tessa. Until he was sure about what was happening with this warlock and these Shadowhunters, he didn’t want anybody undefended.

“Don’t you worry about me either,” Tessa told Jem, settling her magic-bright fingers into his black-and-silver hair, drawing him down for a goodbye kiss.

“I won’t,” Jem told her. “I know my wife can take care of herself.”

My wife, Jem said, his voice sounding casual and delighted in that mutual possession: the bargain made between them in the sight of everyone they loved.

Alec had heard a poem read at weddings: My true love has my heart, and I have his. Never was a fairer bargain made. Love that was permanent in the eyes of all the world, demanding respect, blazoning the certain knowledge Alec had when he woke every morning. Nobody else for me, until the day I die: having everyone else know that. Jem and Tessa had that, as Helen and Aline had it. But a Shadowhunter couldn’t marry a Downworlder in gold. A Shadowhunter was forbidden to wear the wedding rune for a Downworlder, and he wouldn’t insult Magnus with a ceremony the Nephilim saw as lesser. He and Magnus had agreed to wait, until the Law was changed.

Alec couldn’t help the tiny sting of jealousy.

His phone buzzed in his pocket, and Rafael perked up. Magnus had sent Alec a picture of Max sleeping, using Chairman Meow as his pillow. Rafael glared, obviously disappointed Magnus was not in the picture.
Alec was slightly disappointed about that himself.

The afternoon was hot, the streets mostly deserted. The house where the warlock lived was down several winding streets, some cobbled and some dirt. Most of the houses on the curving roads were small, painted bright yellow or brick red or and snowy white, but the warlock’s house that Rafael pointed out was a huge gray building on the end of a street. A figure was approaching the door—a Shadowhunter. Alec and Jem exchanged a grim look. Alec recognized him as one of Breakspear’s men from the Institute. He pulled Jem and Rafael into an alleyway.

“Stay with Jem a minute,” he told Rafael, and tossed a grappling hook to the roof of a neighboring house.

Alec climbed up and made his way across the sloping terracotta tile until he was across from the gray building. There were bars on the windows, and the enchantments Magnus had put on his ring allowed him to sense wards with enormous accuracy. The place was heavily warded. Alec crouched down behind a chimney and swiftly drew runes for Clarity and Awareness on his arms.

With increased ability, he could hear noises from behind those walls. There were a lot of people in that house. Shuffling feet, muffled conversation. Alec was able to pick out a few distinct words.

“. . . next delivery from Breakspear will be at midnight tonight . . .”

He heard another noise, much closer up, and twisted to see Rafael and Jem coming toward him across the roof.

Jem offered a small rueful smile. “He slipped away from me and climbed a drainpipe.”

Jem was hovering at Rafael’s back, obviously nervous about touching him. Alec saw how Rafael had managed to slip away.

“Can you sense those wards?” Alec asked, and Jem nodded: Alec knew Tessa had taught him ways to use and discern magic, even though Jem no longer had all the power of a Silent Brother or a Shadowhunter. “Can Tessa handle them?”

“Tessa can handle anything,” Jem said proudly.

“I said to stay down there with Jem,” Alec told Rafael.

Rafael gave him a look that was at once both uncomprehending and insulting, and then his big boots slipped on the ridged terracotta tiles. Jem caught him before he hit the tile, and set him upright. If Rafael kept walking like this, he was going to skin his knees.

“You have to walk differently on roofs,” Alec told him. He took Rafael’s hands in his, showing him how. “Like this, because they slope. Do it like me.”

It was oddly nice, to teach a child these things. He’d had all sorts of plans to teach his little brother, when he got older, but his baby brother hadn’t lived to be older.

“When will you give your parents a real grandchild?” he’d heard Irina Cartwright ask Isabelle after a Clave meeting.

“By the Angel,” said Isabelle. “Is Max imaginary?”

Irina paused, then laughed. “A Shadowhunter child, to teach our ways. Nobody would give those people a Shadowhunter child. Imagine a warlock around one of our little ones! And that kind of behavior. Children are so impressionable. It wouldn’t be right.”

Isabelle went for her whip. Alec dragged his sister back.
“You Lightwood kids are out of control and out of your minds,” muttered Irina. Jace had appeared beside Alec and Isabelle, and given Irina a radiant smile. “Yes, we are.”

Alec had told himself that it was all right. It was a comfort, sometimes, when he was most worried about his friends, to consider that both Magnus and Max were warlocks. They didn’t have to fight demons.

Rafael mimicked how Alec was walking with careful precision. He was going to be good one day, Alec thought. Whoever got to raise him would be proud.

“Well done, Rafe,” he said. He hadn’t meant the nickname to come out: it just had, but Rafael glanced at him and smiled. They fell silent, crouching down as the Shadowhunter departed the warlock’s house. Jem raised his eyebrows at Alec, who shook his head.

Once the man was gone, they helped Rafe down from the roof.

“I wonder how far the corruption goes in this Institute,” Jem said soberly.

“We’ll know soon enough,” Alec said. “I heard that mercenary say ‘the next delivery from Breakspear will be at midnight tonight.’ If he’s delivering women, we need to save them, and stop the Shadowhunters as well as the warlock. We need to catch them all at once, and there are a lot of people inside. We don’t know how many might be prisoners and how many are guards. We need reinforcements, and there’s someone I want to talk to about that before we go back to Tessa and Lily. I have to believe not all the Shadowhunters in this city are traitors.”

Jem nodded. As they left the alley, Alec described the faerie woman he and Lily had seen, her withered-apple face and dandelion hair. “Lily said she might have information about the family you’re searching for.”

Jem’s expression darkened. “I’ve encountered her before. I’ll know who she is, when I see her at the Market. And I will make sure she talks.” His face was cold and grim for a moment. Then he glanced toward Alec. “How is Lily?”

“Um.” Alec tried to work out if he’d let something slip that he shouldn’t.

“You’re worried for your friend,” Jem said. “Perhaps you are more worried for her, because how she feels makes you think of how Magnus will feel, one day.” Jem’s eyes were as dark as the Silent City, and as sad. “I know.”

Alec wouldn’t have been able to put any of that into words himself. There was only the nameless shadow on Magnus’s face sometimes, the echo of old loneliness, and Alec’s yearning to protect him always, and knowledge he could not.

“You were nearly immortal. Is there any way to make it—easier?”

“I lived a long time,” said Jem, “but I lived in a cage of bones and silence, feeling my heart turn to ashes. I can’t explain what it was like.”

Alec thought of growing up in the Institute, crushed under the weight of his father’s expectations as if they were stones, trying to teach himself not to look, not to speak, not to dare try and be happy.

“Maybe I know,” he said. “Not—entirely. Not for a hundred years, obviously. But—maybe a little.”

He worried he was presuming, but Jem smiled as if he understood.

“It’s different, for my Tessa and your Magnus. They were born what they are, and we
love them for it. They live forever in a changing world, and still have the courage to find it beautiful. We all want to shield our best beloved from whatever danger or sorrow comes,” he said. “But we have to trust them too. We have to believe that they will have the strength to live on and laugh again. We fear for them, but we should believe in them past fear.”

Alec bowed his head and said: “I do.”

A block from the Buenos Aires Institute, Alec’s phone buzzed again. Clary had sent him a message.

A few months ago, they’d left Max with Maryse and gone out on the town. Simon’s old band was playing at Pandemonium and Simon had agreed to sub in for their missing bass player, as he occasionally did. Alec, Magnus, Jace, Clary, and Isabelle had all gone to listen. Simon’s friend Eric had written a song called “My Heart Is an Overripe Melon Bursting for You,” and that song was the worst.

Alec didn’t like to dance, unless it was with Magnus. Even then, he preferred the music not be terrible. Magnus, Jace, and Isabelle went to dance, the brightest points in the crowd. Alec enjoyed watching Magnus for a while, his chin propped on his hands. Then he grew tired of the assault on his ears. He caught Clary’s eye. She was sitting bolt upright in her chair, only wincing occasionally.

“This is fine,” Clary told him, nodding bravely.

“This is terrible,” said Alec. “Let’s go for tacos.”

Simon was only just offstage by the time they got back, drinking from a bottle of water and asking everybody what they’d thought of the set.

“You were very sexy up there,” Isabelle was saying, sparkling up at Simon, as Alec and Clary arrived.

Simon smiled a crooked smile. “Really?”

Jace said: “No.”

“You were so great!” Clary exclaimed, dashing up to Simon. “Wow, I don’t know what other word there could be. You were great. The band was great.”

Clary was a true and noble parabatai, but Simon was a sharp guy and had known her a long time. His eyes traveled from Clary’s guilty face to Alec’s.

“You went for tacos again?” Simon lamented.

Alec grinned. “They were great.”

He went over to Magnus, sliding an arm around his waist. Since they were going to a club, Magnus had swept silver glitter under his golden eyes, and he looked like starshine and moonlight.

“I know you were dancing,” Alec said in his ear. “But that band was terrible, right?”

“I can dance to anything,” Magnus murmured back, “but I have personally heard Mozart play. Also the Sex Pistols in their best days. I can confirm Simon’s band is beyond terrible.”

Alec’s friends were gathered all around him, and his family, and it was one of those moments when he remembered the desperate loneliness of when he was younger, hopelessly torn between fearing for what he might never have, and what he might lose. Alec secured his hold on Magnus’s waist and felt a small incredulous starburst of
happiness in his chest: that he could have all this.

“Tacos again next time?” Alec had whispered as they left, and Clary nodded behind Simon’s back.

That was how Alec had come to love her, after resenting her so much at first: in the greatest or smallest of ways, Clary never failed.

She hadn’t failed him now. She’d sent a picture saying We have been imprisoned by the Dread Pirate Max! Alec suspected this was a joke he didn’t understand.

Clary was at an odd angle taking the selfie, but he could see Magnus and Max well enough. Magnus had dashed brilliant blue color through the front of his hair. Max was holding on to Magnus’s spiky blue locks and Clary’s red curls with one hand each, and looking supremely self-satisfied. Magnus was laughing.

“Oh, look,” said Alec softly, and showed Rafael the picture.

Rafael snatched the phone, then skipped away to contemplate the photo further.

Alec let him keep it for now. He and Jem stopped at the door of the Buenos Aires Institute. As Alec had hoped, Joaquín was guarding the door again. He greeted Alec happily, then gave the faint scars on Jem’s face a startled glance.

“Are you the Silent Brother whom the Heavenly Fire changed?” he asked eagerly. “The one who—”

“Ran off and married a warlock, yes,” said Jem. Somewhere in his quiet voice and his smile, there was an edge of shining defiance.

“I’m sure she’s very nice,” said Joaquín hastily.

“She is,” Alec confirmed.

“I don’t know many Downworlders,” Joaquín said apologetically. “Though I met Alec’s friend yesterday! She also seemed . . . nice. There are a lot of nice Downworlders, I’m sure! Just not in our city. They say the Queen of the Shadow Market is a terrifying tyrant.”

Alec thought of Juliette with her kids gathered around her.

“I didn’t think so.”

Joaquín looked at him with wide eyes. “I bet you’re not afraid of anything, though.”

“Some things,” said Alec. “Failing. You know there’s something wrong with your Institute, don’t you? I want to believe you’re not part of it, but you have to know something is very wrong.”

Joaquín avoided Alec’s gaze, and as he did he caught sight of Rafael for the first time. Rafael was hanging back, clutching Alec’s phone.

“That’s little Rafael,” said Joaquín.

Rafael blinked up at him and corrected, in his small stern voice: “Rafe.”

“You know him?” asked Alec. “Then you knew there was a Shadowhunter child living in the Shadow Market. It’s the duty of Nephilim to care for war orphans.”

“I—” Joaquín faltered. “I tried. But he won’t let anyone near him. It was like he didn’t want to be helped.”

“Everyone wants to be helped,” said Alec.

Joaquín was already kneeling down, offering Rafael a brightly wrapped piece of candy. Rafe eyed him, then came cautiously forward, snatched the candy, and retreated behind Alec’s legs.
Alec understood being young and scared, but there came a time where you had to choose to be brave.

“Here’s an address,” he said, offering a scrap of paper. “If you want to find out what’s really happening at your Institute, meet me there tonight. Bring reinforcements—only the people you trust.”

Joaquín didn’t meet Alec’s eyes, but he accepted the piece of paper. Alec walked away, with Jem and Rafael on either side of him.

“Do you think he will come?” Jem asked.

“I hope so,” said Alec. “We have to trust people, right? Like you were saying. Not just people we love. We have to believe in people, and we have to defend them. As many people as possible, so we can be stronger.” He swallowed. “I have a confession to make. I’m—jealous of you.”

Jem’s face was genuinely startled. Then he smiled.

“I’m a little jealous of you too.”

“Of me?” Alec asked, startled.

Jem nodded toward Rafael, and the picture of Magnus and Max in Rafael’s hands. “I have Tessa, so I have the world. And I have loved going all through the world with her. But there are times I think about—a place that could be home. My parabatai. A child.”

All the things Alec had. Alec felt as he had last night, putting on Rafael’s boots over his battered feet: stricken, but knowing this was not his pain.

He hesitated. “Couldn’t you and Tessa have a child?”

“I could never ask her,” said Jem. “She had children once. They were beautiful, and they are gone. Children are meant to be our immortality, but what if you live forever and your child does not? I saw how she had to rip herself away from them. I saw what it cost her. I will not ask her to suffer like that again.”

Rafe held up his hands to be carried. Alec swung him up in his arms. Warlock hearts beat differently, and Alec was used to hearing the sound of Magnus’s and Max’s hearts, infinitely steady and reassuring. It was odd, holding a child with a mortal heartbeat, but Alec was getting used to the new rhythm.

The evening sun was scorching on whitewashed walls of the street they were heading down. Their shadows were long behind them, but the town was still bright, and Alec saw for the first time that it could be lovely.

Occasionally Alec despaired: that the world couldn’t be changed, or even that it wouldn’t change fast enough. He was not immortal, and didn’t want to be, but there were times he was afraid he wouldn’t live long enough, that he’d never have the chance to take Magnus’s hands in front of everyone they loved and make a sacred promise.

At those times, there was an image Alec held against exhaustion or surrender, a reminder to always keep fighting.

When he was gone, when he was dust and ashes, Magnus would still be walking through this world. If the world was changed for the better, then that unknowable future would be better for Magnus. Alec could imagine that on some scorching hot day like this, on a strange street in a strange land, Magnus might see something good that reminded him of Alec, some way that the world was changed because Alec had lived. Alec couldn’t
imagine what the world would be like then.

But he could imagine, in some faraway future, the face he loved best.
Jem filled Tessa in on what they had seen, and who they were searching for in the Shadow Market.

Lily caught Jem’s glance at her as he explained. “What are you looking at, you delicious peanut-butter-and-Jem sandwich?”

Tessa snorted behind Jem.

“I’ve got more names,” Lily told her, encouraged. “They just come to me. Want to hear them?”

“Not really,” said Jem.

“Definitely not!” snapped Alec.

“Yes,” said Tessa. “Yes, I really do.”

Lily regaled her with many names on their way to the Shadow Market. Tessa’s laughter was like a song to Jem, but he was glad when they reached the Shadow Market, though the place was a barbed-wire fortress and the door had been barred against them last time.

The door was not barred against them tonight.

Jem was accustomed to Shadow Markets by now, after years searching through them for answers about demons and Herondales. He was also used to being somewhat conspicuous among the people of the Market.

Tonight, though, everyone was looking at Alec and Lily. The Queen of the Shadow Market, a rather lovely and dignified young woman, came out among the stalls to greet them personally. Alec drew her aside to tell her of their plans for the evening, and to ask for her help. The Queen smiled and agreed.

“They’re from the Alliance,” he heard one teenage werewolf whisper to another, in awed tones.

Alec bowed his head and fussed over Rafe. Alec seemed slightly abashed by the attention.

Jem met Tessa’s eyes, and smiled. They had seen other generations pass, shining bright and hopeful, but Alec’s was something new.

Alec paused to talk to a faerie girl in her teens. “Rose, have you seen a fey woman with dandelion hair at the Market tonight?”

“You must mean Mother Hawthorn,” said Rose. “She’s always here. She tells stories to the children. Loves children. Hates everybody else. If you’re looking for her, stick around the kids. She’s sure to come.”

So they headed toward a campfire where most of the children were congregated. A faerie was playing the bandoneon at this fire. Jem smiled to hear the music.

Rafe clung to Alec’s shirt and glared jealously around. The other kids seemed intimidated by his scowl.

A teenage warlock girl was doing magic tricks, creating shadow puppets in the smoke of the fire. Even Rafe laughed, all the sullenness gone from his face. He was only a child, leaning into Alec’s side, learning to be happy.

“He says she is very good,” Lily translated for Alec. “He likes magic, but most of the powerful warlocks left ages ago. He wants to know if the cool man can do that.”

Alec took out his phone to show Rafael a video of Magnus and a witchlight.
“Look, it turns red,” Alec said, and Rafe instantly seized the phone. “No, we don’t grab! We stop stealing. I have to text Magnus back sometime, and I can’t if you keep stealing my phone.”

Alec glanced through the leaping iridescent flames at Jem. “I was actually wondering if you could give me some advice,” he said. “I mean, you were saying all that stuff earlier. Like—romantic stuff. You always know what to say.”

“Me?” Jem asked, startled. “No, I’ve never thought of myself as very good with words. I like music. It’s easier to express what you feel, with music.”

“Alec is right,” said Tessa.

Jem blinked. “He is?”

“At some of the worst and darkest times in my life, you have always known what to say to comfort me,” said Tessa. “I had one of my darkest moments when we were young, and we had only known each other a little while. You came to me and said words that I carried with me like a light. That was one of the moments that made me fall in love with you.”

She lifted her hand to his face, her fingers tracing the scars there. Jem dropped a kiss on her wrist.

“If my words comforted you, we are even,” he said. “Your voice is the music I love best in all the world.”

“You see,” Alec muttered darkly to Lily.

“We do love an eloquent babe,” said Lily.

Tessa leaned close to Jem and whispered, in the language she’d learned for him: “Wǒ ài nǐ.”

And at that moment, looking into her eyes, Jem caught a flash of movement and then stillness in the dark. The faerie woman with the dandelion hair had been coming toward the children, pushing her little cart full of poisons. She stopped at the sight of Jem. She recognized him, as he did her.

“Mother Hawthorn,” said the warlock girl Tessa had talked to. “Have you come to tell us a story?”

“Yes,” said Jem. He rose to his feet and advanced on her. “We want to hear a story. We want to hear why you hate the Herondales.”

Mother Hawthorn’s eyes widened. Her eyes were colorless and pupil-less, as if her eyesockets were filled with water. For a moment Jem thought she would run, and he tensed to spring after her. Tessa and Alec were ready to come for her, as well. Jem had waited too long to wait another moment.

Then Mother Hawthorn looked around at the children and shrugged her thin shoulders. “Ah well,” she said. “I have waited more than a century to boast of a trick. I suppose it doesn’t matter now. Let me tell you the story of the First Heir.”

They found a solitary campfire, with no children to hear a dark tale save Rafael, solemn faced and silent in the protective curve of Alec’s arm. Jem sat down with his friends and his best beloved to listen. Light and shadows danced a long dance together, and by the
strange fireside of the Shadow Market, an old woman wove a tale of Faerie.

“The Seelie Court and the Unseelie have always been at war, but there are times in war that wear the mask of peace. There was even a time that the King of the Unseelie Court and the Queen of the Seelie Court made a secret truce and had a union to seal it. They conceived a child together and agreed that one day that child would inherit both the Seelie and Unseelie thrones, and unite all Faerie. The King wished all his sons to be raised as pitiless warriors, and he believed this First Heir would be the greatest of them all. Since the child would have no mother in the Unseelie Court, he engaged my services, and I thought myself honored. I have always been fond of children. Once they called me the great faerie midwife.

“The King of the Unseelie Court had not expected a daughter, but when the child was born, a daughter she was. She was given into my hands in the Unseelie Court on the day she came into the world, and from that day to this day, the light of her eyes was the only light I wished for.

“The Unseelie King was displeased with his daughter, and the Seelie Queen was enraged that he would not, being displeased, give her back. There came a prophecy from our soothsayers that the day the First Heir reached for their full power, all of Faerie would fall under shadow. The King was murderously angry, and the Queen was terrified, and all the shades and shadows and rushing waters in my land seemed to threaten the head that I loved. The war between Seelie and Unseelie raged all the more fiercely for the brief peace, and the faerie folk whispered that the First Heir was cursed. And so she fled, fearing for her life.

“I did not call her the First Heir. Her name was Auraline, and she was the loveliest thing that ever walked.

“She took refuge in the mortal world, and she found it beautiful. She was always searching for the beauty in life, and it always made her sad to find ugliness instead. She liked to go to the Shadow Market and mingle with the Downworlders and mundanes who did not know of her birth and would not call her cursed.

“After visiting the Shadow Market for many decades, she met a magician there who made her laugh.

“He called himself Roland the Astonishing, Roland the Extraordinary, Roland the Incredible, as if he were something special, when she was the unique one. I hated that insolent boy from the moment I laid eyes on him.

“When he was not calling himself one of his foolish magician’s names, he called himself Roland Loss, but that was another lie.”

“No,” Tessa said, very softly. “It wasn’t.”

Nobody heard her but Jem.

“There was a warlock woman he said he loved as a mother, but Roland was no warlock, nor a mundane with the Sight. He was something far more deadly than that. I learned this warlock’s secret. She took a Shadowhunter child across the seas to America and raised him, pretending he was not Nephilim. Roland was descended from that child: Roland was drawn to our world because his blood called him to it. That boy’s true name was Roland Herondale.
“Roland suspected enough of his heritage, and he paid to learn more at the Market. He told Auraline all his secrets. He said he couldn’t go to the Nephilim and be one of them, lest it endanger the warlock woman he loved like a second mother. He said instead he would become the greatest magician in the world.

“Auraline lost all caution. She told him of the prophecy, and the danger attached to it. Roland said they were both lost children, and they could be lost together. He said he didn’t mind being lost, if he could be lost with her. She swore the same. He lured her away from my side. He told her to come live with him in the mortal world. He doomed her, and called it love.

“They ran away together, and the King’s fury was a fire that would have consumed a forest. He wanted the prophecy kept secret, which meant he needed Auraline back under his thumb or killed. He sent his trusted messengers to every corner of the world hunting her, even the bloodthirsty Riders of Mannan. He had all the worst eyes of Faerie looking for her. I kept watch for her myself, and love made my eyes the sharpest. I found her a dozen times, though I never told the King where she was. I will never forgive him for turning against her. I went to every Shadow Market and watched them together, my shining First Heir and that awful boy. Oh, how she loved him, and oh, I hated him.

“I was at a Shadow Market not long after Roland and Auraline went away together, and there I saw another angel boy, proud as God. He told me of his high position among the Nephilim, and I knew that his parabatai was another Herondale. I played a cruel trick on him. I hope he paid for his arrogance in blood.”

“Matthew,” whispered Tessa, the name sounding unfamiliar in her mouth, spoken for the first time in years.

Matthew Fairchild had been parabatai to Tessa’s son, James Herondale. Jem had known that this faerie had tricked Matthew to do a terrible deed, but he had thought it was only spite, not revenge.

Even this faerie woman’s voice sounded tired. Jem remembered feeling that way, near the end of his days as a Silent Brother. He remembered being that hollow.

“But what does that matter now?” asked the woman, as if speaking to herself. “What did it matter then? Long years passed. Auraline spent decade after decade with her magician in the filth of the mundane world, my girl born to a golden throne. They were together all the days of his life. Auraline shared what she could of her faerie power with Roland, and he stayed young longer, and lived longer, than most of their filthy kind could. She wasted her magic, like someone prolonging the life of a flower: they can only make the flower last for a little more time, before it withers. At last Roland grew old, and older, in the way of mortals, until he reached an end, and Auraline met the end with him. A faerie can choose the season of their own death. I knew how it would be, when I first beheld them together. I saw her death in his laughing eyes.

“My Auraline. When Roland Herondale died, she laid down her golden head on the pillow next to her mortal love and never rose again. Their child wept for them both and threw flowers on their grave. Auraline could have lived for century after century, but she was hunted to the point of desperation, and she threw her life away for a foolish mortal love.
“Their child wept, but I never wept. My eyes stayed dry as the dust and dead flowers on their grave. I hated Roland from the day he took her from me. I hate all Nephilim for her sake, and the Herondales most of their kind. Whatever the Shadowhunters touch is brought to destruction. Auraline’s child had a child. There is still a First Heir in the world. When the First Heir rises, in all the awful glory bought by the blood of Seelie and Unseelie and Nephilim, I hope destruction comes to the Shadowhunters as well as Faerie. I hope the whole world is lost.”

Jem thought of Roland and Auraline’s descendant Rosemary, and the man she’d loved. They might have a child by now. The curse the faeries had talked about had already claimed lives. This danger was far greater than he had ever suspected. Jem had to protect Rosemary from the Unseelie King and the Riders who brought death. If there was a child, Jem had to save that child. Jem had already failed to save so many.

Jem rose and left Mother Hawthorn. He went to the barbed-wire edge of the Market, moving desperately fast, as if he could race back into the past and save those he had lost there.

When he stopped, Tessa caught him. She held him in her arms, and when he stopped trembling she drew his head down to hers.

“Jem, my Jem. It’s all right. I thought it was a very beautiful story,” she said.

“What?”

“Not her story,” said Tessa. “Not the story of her warped sight and terrible choices. I can see the story behind hers. The story of Auraline and Roland.”

“But all the people who were hurt,” Jem murmured. “The children we loved.”

“My James knew the power of a love story, as well as I do,” said Tessa. “No matter how dark and hopeless the world seemed, Lucie could always find beauty in a story. I know what they would have thought.”

“I’m sorry,” said Jem instantly.

He would not speak to her about children. He had loved Tessa’s children, but they had not been his. Tessa had lost so much already. He could not ask her to lose more. She was enough for him: she always would be.

“Auraline grew up in horror. She felt cursed. And he was lost and wandering. They seemed destined for misery. Only they found each other, Jem. They were together and happy, all the days of their lives. Her story is just like mine, because I found you.”

Tessa’s smile lit the night. She always brought hope when he was in despair, as she had brought words when everything within him was silence. Jem put his arms around her and held on tightly.

“I hope you learned what you needed to learn tonight,” Alec told Jem and Tessa when they reached their rooms.

Jem had looked upset when he bolted from the fireside, but he and Tessa had seemed different when they returned.

“I hope they’re all right,” Alec said quietly to Lily when Jem and Tessa went off to prepare for their midnight visit to the warlock’s house.
“Of course Tessa’s fine,” said Lily. “You do realize she gets to go to the Jem-nasium anytime she wants?”

“I’m never talking to you again if those names don’t stop,” Alec told her, gathering his arrows and tucking daggers and seraph blades into his weapons belt. He found himself thinking of the heartbroken way Jem said parabatai. It made him remember the shadow that hung over his father, the wound where a parabatai should be. It made him think of Jace. Ever since he could remember, Alec had loved and felt responsible for his family. There had never been any choice, but with Jace it was different. Jace, his parabatai, the first person who’d ever chosen him. The first time Alec had decided to choose someone back, to take on another responsibility. The first choice, opening the door to all the others.

Alec took a deep breath and tapped out Miss u into his phone.

He immediately received back Miss u too and let himself take a breath, the ache in his chest easier now. Jace was there, waiting for him in New York with the rest of his family. Talking about feelings wasn’t so bad.

Then he received another text.

R U OK?

In rapid succession, Alec received several more texts.

R U IN SOME KIND OF TROUBLE?

DID U GET HIT IN UR HEAD!

Then he got a text from Clary.

Why did Jace get a text from you and look very pleased but then suddenly very worried? Is something going on?

Talking about feelings was the worst. Once you did it, everybody immediately wanted you to do it more.

Alec typed out a grouchy I’m fine and then called out cautiously, “Rafe?”

Rafael popped immediately up from his bed.

“Would you like the phone back?” asked Alec. “Here it is. Take it. Don’t worry if any more texts arrive. Just show me if there are any more pictures.”

He didn’t know how much Rafael understood of what he said. He suspected not much, but Rafe certainly understood the gesture of Alec offering his phone. He held out his hands eagerly.

“You’re a good kid, Rafe,” said Alec. “Take that phone away.”

“Are we going to smuggle our way into the house in laundry carts?” Lily asked Alec excitedly.

Alec blinked at her. “No, we’re not. What laundry carts? I’m a straightforward person. I’m going to knock on the door.”

He stood, with Lily, on the cobbled street before that great gray house. Jem and Tessa were waiting on the roof. Alec had literally used rope to tie Rafe to Jem’s wrist.

“I know Rafe stole your phone,” said Lily, “but who stole your sense of adventure?”

Alec waited, and the door opened. A warlock blinked up at him. He looked as if he was
in his early thirties, a businessman with close-cropped blond hair and no visible warlock mark until he opened his mouth and Alec saw his forked tongue.

“Oh, hello,” he said. “Are you another of Clive Breakspear’s men?”

Alec said: “I’m Alec Lightwood.”

The warlock’s face cleared. “I see! I’ve heard of you.” He winked. “Fond of warlocks, aren’t you?”

“Some of them,” said Alec.

“Want your cut, I expect?”

“That’s right.”

“No problem,” the warlock told him. “You and your vampire friend should come in, and I’ll explain what I’ll want in return. I think the vampire will be very amused. They don’t like werewolves, do they?”

“I don’t like most people,” Lily said helpfully. “But I do love murder!”

The warlock waved his hand to let them through the wards, and led them through a hexagonal hall with a ceiling carved in a shape like a plaster jelly mold. The green quartz of the floor shone like jade. There were no signs of ruin or decay here. The warlock obviously had money.

There were several doors, all painted white, set in the many walls. The warlock chose one and led Alec and Lily down rough-hewn stone steps into the dark. The smell hit Alec before the sight did.

There was a long stone passage, with flaming torches on the walls and with grooves on either side for filth and blood. Along the passageway were rows of cages. Eyes shone from behind the bars, catching the firelight in the same way Juliette’s eyes had shone from her throne in the Shadow Market. Some cages were empty. In others were huddled shapes that were not moving.

“So you’ve been taking werewolf women, and the Shadowhunters have been helping you,” said Alec.

The warlock nodded, with a cheery smile.

“Why werewolves?” Alec asked grimly.

“Well, warlocks and vampires can’t bear children, and faeries find it difficult,” said the warlock in a practical tone. “But the werewolves whelp more easily, and there’s a great deal of animal strength. Everybody says that Downworlders can’t bear warlock children, that their bodies always reject them, but I thought of putting a little magic in the mix. People whisper about a warlock born from a Shadowhunter woman, and that’s probably a myth, but it got me thinking. Imagine the power a warlock might have, with a werewolf mother and a demon father.” He shrugged. “Seems worth trying. Of course, you do use up the werewolf women at a terrible rate.”

“How many have died?” Lily asked casually. Her expression was unreadable.

“Oh, a few,” the warlock admitted genially. “I’m always in need of fresh supply, so I’m happy to pay you to snatch more. But these experiments haven’t been going as well as I’d like. Nothing has worked yet. You’re, uh, close to Magnus Bane, aren’t you? I’m probably the most powerful warlock you’ll ever meet, but I hear he’s pretty good too. If you can get him to come on in an assisting capacity, you’ll be very well rewarded. So will
he. I think you’ll both be very happy.”

Alec said: “Yeah, I hope so.”

It wasn’t the first time someone had assumed Magnus was for sale. It wasn’t the first
time someone had assumed that because Alec was connected to Magnus, Alec was
sullied.

That used to make Alec angry. It still did, but he’d learned to use it.

The warlock turned his back to Alec, surveying the cages as if selecting a product from
a market stall. “So, what do you say?” he asked idly. “Do we have a deal?”

“I don’t know yet,” said Alec. “You don’t know my price.”

The warlock laughed. “What is it?”

Alec scythed the warlock’s feet out from under him, so he fell to his knees. He drew his
seraph blade and held it to the man’s throat.

“All the women go free,” he said. “And you are under arrest.”

Alec realized why the warlock were burning torches, and not witchlight or electricity,
when a torch tumbled out of the wall and onto the straw. He had to leap to stamp out
the fire.

The warlock was good, Alec thought, as the world went orange with not just fire but
magic, criss-crossing from the bars, blinding Alec with its light.

Then another light sliced through the orange wires of magic, pearly gray, cutting
through all darkness. Tessa Gray, daughter of a Prince of Hell, stood at the foot of the
stairs with her hands glowing.

Tessa’s magic was all around him. Alec had learned how to sense magic, over the
years, learned to move with it and fight with it as another weapon on his side. This
wasn’t the singing power he was used to, well-known and well-beloved as his bow, but it
felt friendly. He let Tessa’s magic wrap around him, cooling and protecting, as he ducked
through the fiery spars of power back to the warlock.

“The most powerful warlock I’ve ever seen?” Alec snarled. “She cut through your wards
like tissue paper. And my man would eat you for
breakfast.”

He made a mistake, because he was overconfident. He didn’t hear Tessa’s stifled
sound, and he didn’t see the shadow moving as he swept his blade toward the warlock.

Clive Breakspear’s seraph blade met his. Alec met Breakspear’s furious eyes. He looked
to Tessa, struggling with three Shadowhunters with Jem coming to help her, Lily with
another Shadowhunter prowling toward her, and he glanced toward the warlock, who was
making every torch fall. Alec was used to being able to see the whole battle, fighting at a
distance.

Too late, he saw the blade in Clive Breakspear’s free hand, aimed for his heart.

Rafael barreled out of the shadows and sank his teeth deep into Breakspear’s wrist.
The blade dropped to the stone.

The man roared, and with all the Nephilim strength that should be used to shield the
defenseless, he hurled Rafael’s body into the cage bars. There was a sickening crack.

Alec shouted: “No!”

He backhanded Clive Breakspear in the face. The warlock dashed a torch at his feet,
and Alec stepped over the flames and seized him by the throat, then lifted him like a doll
and smashed the warlock’s skull against Breakspear’s forehead. The warlock’s eyes rolled back, but Breakspear screamed in outrage and charged at Alec. There was still a seraph blade shining in his hand, so Alec broke that hand, then used his hold on it to force the corrupt Shadowhunter to his knees. Alec stood over them, panting so hard his chest felt as if it would split apart. He wanted to kill them both.

Only Rafael was here. Magnus and Max were at home, waiting for him. Tessa, Jem, and Lily had made short work of the Shadowhunters attacking them. Alec turned to Tessa now.

“Will you enchant ropes to hold them?” he asked. “They have to stand trial.”

Tessa moved forward. So did Lily. Alec knew the situation was desperate because Lily didn’t make a joke about murdering them. Alec was too close to the edge. He was afraid he would have taken her up on it.

He went to the place where Rafael lay, his body a small wretched shape thrown into the dirt. Alec pulled Rafe into his arms, feeling his throat close up. He understood now what he had found here in Buenos Aires. He understood now that it might be too late.

Rafael’s grubby face was still. He was barely breathing. Jem came to kneel beside them.

“I’m so sorry. He slipped the rope, and I came in for him, but—but—”

“It isn’t your fault,” Alec said numbly.

Jem said: “Give him to me.”

Alec stared at Jem, then bundled Rafe into his arms.

“Take care of him,” he said. “Please.”

Jem took Rafe and ran toward Tessa, and together they rushed up the stone steps. There was still orange magic in the air, and the flames had caught in earnest. Smoke was rising fast, in a thick choking cloud.

One of the werewolf women reached out a thin hand and clutched the bars.

“Help us!”

Alec took an axe with an electrum head from his belt and struck open the lock on her cage. “That’s what I’m here to do.” He paused. “Um, Lily, are there keys on that warlock?”

“Yep,” said Lily. “Just grabbed them. I’ll open the doors with the keys, and you can keep doing your cool dramatic axe thing.”

“Fine,” said Alec.

The werewolf woman who had spoken to him bolted out the door as soon as she was free. The woman in the next cage couldn’t walk. Alec walked into the cage and knelt beside her, and that was when he heard the sounds of a fight breaking out at the top of the stairs.

He picked the woman up and ran for the stairs.

Tessa and Jem were in the hall, almost at the doors. The burning house was crawling with Shadowhunters. Jem couldn’t fight, because he was holding Rafael. Tessa was doing her best to clear a way for them, but Rafael needed Tessa’s help too.

One man shouted: “Where’s our leader?”

“You call that a leader?” Alec shouted back. He looked at the woman in his arms, then
helped her out so the Shadowhunters of the Buenos Aires Institute could see. “He helped a warlock do this. He crushed a child’s body against a wall. Is that what you want to lead you? Is that what you want to be?”

Several Shadowhunters turned to him in total puzzlement. Lily quickly shouted out a translation.

Joaquín stepped forward.

Lily said quietly: “He told them to stand down.”

The man who’d shouted for his leader hit Joaquín across the mouth. Another Shadowhunter shouted in startled fury and produced a whip, defending Joaquín.

Alec ran his eyes over the crowd. Some of the Shadowhunters looked uncertain, but Shadowhunters were soldiers. Too many of them were intent on following whatever orders they had been given, fighting Joaquín and Alec and whoever else stood in their way, to get to an unworthy leader. They were blocking Jem and Tessa’s way. They were keeping Rafe from help.

The doors of the burning house burst open. The Queen of the Shadow Market stood outlined against the smoke.

“Get to Alec!” Juliette shouted, and a dozen werewolves and vampires sprang.

Juliette cleared a path. Jem and Tessa slipped out the door. Rafe was out of this place of filth and smoke. Alec fought toward Juliette.

“Mon Dieu,” she breathed when she saw the woman in Alec’s arms.

She made a gesture, and a warlock jumped to take the unconscious werewolf out into the night.

“There are more women down there,” Alec said. “I’ll get them. Some of the Shadowhunters are on our side.”

Juliette nodded. “Which ones?”

Alec turned to see Joaquín, fighting two Shadowhunters at once. The man with the whip who’d come to help him was down.

“That one,” said Alec. “And whoever else he tells you.”

Juliette set her jaw and strode across the green-quartz floor to Joaquín’s side. She tapped one of the men fighting him on the shoulder. When he turned, she ripped out his throat with one clawed hand.

“Maybe take them alive!” said Alec. “Not that guy, obviously.”

Joaquín was staring at Juliette with eyes gone enormous. Alec remembered that Joaquín had heard tales of horror about the Queen of the Shadow Market. Juliette, with blood on her hands and firelight in her snarled hair, might not be doing a lot to dispel that image.

“Don’t hurt her!” Alec cried. “She’s with us.”

“Oh good,” said Joaquín.

Juliette squinted at him suspiciously through the smoke. “You’re not evil?”

“Trying not to be,” said Joaquín.

“Bien,” said Juliette. “Show me who to kill. I mean . . . take alive if possible.”

Alec left them to it. He spun around and raced back down the stairs, Lily at his heels. The smoke was thick in the passage below by now. Alec saw there were Shadowhunters
there already, getting Clive Breakspear and his warlock confederate out. Alec’s lip curled. “If your loyalty is to the Clave, put a watch on them. They’re going to stand trial.”

He and Lily opened the remaining doors. The women who could move on their own did. Too many could not. Alec picked up one woman after another and carried them out. Lily helped women who needed support to walk. Alec gave the women to the Downworlders of the Shadow Market whenever he could, so he was able to get back to the basement faster. Alec reached the top of the stairs with another woman and saw the hall was deserted, taken over by smoke and falling masonry. Everyone had fled the death trap this building had become.

Alec bundled the woman into Lily’s arms. Lily was small enough that it was difficult, but she was strong enough to bear her weight.

“Take her. I have to get the others.”

“I don’t want to go!” Lily shouted over the crackling fire. “I don’t ever want to abandon anybody again!”

“You won’t. Lily, go.”

Lily stumbled for the door under her heavy burden, sobbing. Alec turned back. The smoke had turned the whole world into a gray hell. He couldn’t see, or breathe.

A hand caught his shoulder. Joaquín stood behind him.

“You can’t go down there!” he panted. “I’m so sorry about those women, but they’re—”

Alec said, icily: “Downworlders?”

“It’s too dangerous. And you—you have a lot to go back to.”

Magnus, and Max. If Alec closed his eyes, he could see them with absolute clarity. But he knew he had to be worthy of going back to them.

Joaquín was still holding on to him. Alec shrugged him off, and not gently.

“I will not leave one woman down there, abused and forgotten,” he said. “Not one. No real Shadowhunter would.”

He looked over his shoulder at Joaquín, as he was going down the steps into hell.

“You can leave,” said Alec. “If you do, you can still call yourself a Shadowhunter. But will you be one?”

Rafael lay on the cobbled street as Jem and Tessa hovered over him. Jem used every silent enchantment he had learned among the Silent Brothers. Tessa whispered every healing spell she had learned in the Spiral Labyrinth. Jem could tell, from long, bitter experience, that there was too much broken and bruised within that small body.

There was a fire burning and a battle raging. Jem could not pay attention to any of it, could not bring himself to care about anything but the child under his hands.


Jem climbed to his feet, searching the crowd. There were so many from the Shadow Market here, there was surely one who could help. His gaze fell on Mother Hawthorn, with starlight on her dandelion hair.

She met his eyes and made to run. Jem was fast as a Shadowhunter still, when he had to be. He was at her side in a moment, catching her wrist.
“Do you have dittany?”
“If I do,” snarled Mother Hawthorn, “why should I give it to you?”
“I know what you did, more than a century ago,” he said. “I know better than you do. The trick you played, causing one Shadowhunter to poison another? It poisoned an unborn child. Does that amuse you?”
The faerie’s mouth went slack.
“That child died, because of you,” said Jem. “Now there is another child who needs help. I could take the herb from you. I will, if I have to. But I’m giving you the chance to make another choice.”
“It’s too late!” said Mother Hawthorn, and Jem knew she was thinking of Auraline.
“Yes,” said Jem, merciless. “It’s too late to save the ones we lost. But this child is not lost yet. This choice is not lost yet. Choose.”
Mother Hawthorn turned her face away, her mouth set in bitter lines. But she reached inside the worn pouch at her belt and put the herb into his hand.
Jem took it and raced back to Tessa. Rafael’s body was arching under her hands. The dittany flared to life at her touch, and Jem joined his hands with Tessa’s, joined his voice with hers as they spoke in all the languages they had ever taught each other. Their words were a song, their linked hands magic, and they poured everything they knew, together, into the child.
Rafael’s eyes opened. There was a flash of Tessa’s pearlescent magic in his dark irises, then it was lost. The child sat up, looking perfectly all right, well and whole and somewhat annoyed. He gazed into their distraught faces and asked, in clipped Spanish: “Where is he?”
“He’s in there,” Lily answered.
The narrow cobbled street was full of members of the Shadow Market seeing to the werewolf victims or herding Shadowhunters, with some different, deeply nervous-looking Shadowhunters tentatively assisting, or trying to put out the flames. Lily was not doing any of that. She stared at the house with her arms crossed, and her eyes dark with tears.
As they watched, part of the roof collapsed. Rafe started forward. Tessa lunged and seized him, holding him as he strained against her grip. Jem stood.
“No, Jem,” said Tessa. “Take the child. Let me go in.”
Jem tried to take Rafe, but he was fighting them both. Then Rafe went still. Jem twisted around to see what the child was looking at.
What everybody was looking at. There was a ripple in the crowd, then a hush. Jem did not think any of the Shadow Market or the Institute would forget what had happened here tonight.
From the swirling smoke, out of the collapsing building, came two Shadowhunters with werewolves in their arms. They walked tall, their faces grim, and people parted to let them pass.
The women had been saved, and the child. Jem felt new resolution rise in him. Tessa was right. If Rosemary could be saved, he would save her. If there was a child, he and Tessa would stand between that child and the Riders and the King.
Alec carried the werewolf he bore to Tessa, who immediately began enchanting the
smoke from her lungs. Then he dropped to his knees in front of Rafe.

"Hey, my baby," said Alec. "Are you all right?"

Rafael might not entirely understand the language, but anyone could have understood the message of Alec on his knees in the rubble, the love and concern on his face. Rafael nodded, dust drifting from his curly hair, and walked into Alec's open arms. Alec folded the little boy against his chest.

"Thank you both," Alec said to Tessa and Jem. "You're heroes."

"You're welcome," said Jem.

"You're a moron," said Lily, and put her face in her hands.

Alec rose and patted her awkwardly on the back, Rafe held in the circle of his other arm. He turned to Juliette, who had called one of her warlocks over to see to the werewolf in Joaquin's arms.

"You got them all out." Juliette smiled at them both, her expression wondering, as if she was young as Rafe and seeing magic for the first time. "You did it."

"The werewolf woman who was looking after Rafe," said Alec. "Is she—here?"

Juliette looked at the ashes drifting on the cobbled streets. The fire was dying, now that Tessa could spare magic to cool the flames, but the house was a ruin.

"No," said Juliette. "My girls tell me she was one of the first to die."

"I'm sorry," Alec told her, then his voice changed, as he addressed Rafe. "Rafe, I have to ask you something," he said. "Solomillo—"

"Steak?" Lily smirked.

"Dammit," said Alec. "Sorry, Rafe. But will you come back with me to New York? You can—I have to talk to—if you don't like it there, you don't have to—"

Rafe watched him stumble over his words.

"I can't understand you, fool," he said sweetly in Spanish, and tucked his head down under Alec's chin, his arms going around Alec's neck.


Tessa walked away from the burned-out building. There were several warlocks in the crowd watching her with awe, Jem noted proudly. She strode over to the bound warlock and the Head of the Buenos Aires Institute.

"Shall we ask Magnus to open a Portal for them?" she asked.

"Not just yet," said Alec.

There was a change in his demeanor, his shoulders going back, his face stern. If it weren't for the child in his arms, he might have been fearsome.

Alec Lightwood, leader of the Alliance, said: "First, I want a word."

Alec looked around at the assembled faces. His breathing felt as if it were tearing his throat and his eyes were still stinging, but he was holding Rafe, so everything was perfectly all right.

Except for the fact he had no idea what to say. He couldn't know how many of the Shadowhunters had cooperated with the capture and torture of these women. He suspected most of them had gone along with their leader's orders, but he didn't know
how responsible that made them. If he arrested everybody, then the Institute would be left an empty ruin. The people here were owed protection.

“Clive Breakspear, the Head of the Buenos Aires Institute, broke the Accords and will pay for it,” he said at last, and paused. “Lily, can you translate for me?”

“Absolutely, yes,” Lily said promptly, and began to do so.

Alec listened to her talk, watched the faces of the people listening, and saw a few smirks. Alec listened more intently, and picked up a word.

“Boludo,” Alec said to Jem. “What does that mean?”

Jem coughed. “It’s not—a polite word.”

“I knew it,” Alec said. “Lily, stop translating! Sorry, Jem, could you translate instead?”

Jem nodded. “I’ll do my best.”

“The Head of your Institute has brought shame on us all,” Alec told the Shadowhunters. “I could bring everybody here to Alicante. I could have every one of you put to the trial of the Sword. I know you were left after the war, to rebuild as best you could, and instead of leading you, this man brought more ruin. But the Law says that I should make each of you pay.”

Alec thought of Helen and Mark Blackthorn, cut off from their family by the Cold Peace. He thought of the way Magnus had sunk his face into his hands, despairing, when the Cold Peace was passed. Alec never wanted to see that despair again. Every day since that day, he’d tried to work out ways that they could all live united.

“What happened in that house should sicken any Shadowhunter,” said Alec. “We have to earn back the trust of everyone we have wronged. Joaquín, you will know the names of every man who was in Breakspear’s inner circle. They will go with their leader to stand trial. For the rest, it is time for a new leader, and a new chance to live as Nephilim should.”

He glanced at Joaquín, who was wiping tears from his eyes. Alec frowned at him and mouthed: “What?”

“Oh, it’s j-just the way Jem is translating,” Joaquín explained. “I mean, your speech is good too, very stern, it makes me want to do everything you say. And Jem is basically repeating it, but it’s the way he puts things, you know? It’s beautiful.”

“Uh-huh,” Alec said.

Joaquín grabbed his free hand. “You be the new head of the Institute.”

“No, I will not,” Alec snapped.

People were always trying to make him head of Institutes, and it made Alec tired. He couldn’t change enough, if he took that kind of position. He had more important things to do.

“No,” repeated Alec, less grumpily but no less firmly. “I’m not Clive Breakspear. I’m here to help you, not to take over. When you saw what was happening, you told your men to stand down. You should act as the head of your own Institute until the Consul can consider your case.”

Joaquín stood amazed. Alec nodded at him.

“You can work with the Shadow Market to rebuild,” he said. “I can provide you with resources.”
“So can I,” said Juliette.

Joaquín stared at her, then swung his head back to Alec.

“The Queen of the Shadow Market,” said Alec. “Do you think you will be able to cooperate with her?”

Juliette gave Joaquín a hostile look. There was still a suggestion of wolfish teeth in her mouth. Joaquín reached out, as if to point to the blood on Juliette’s hands, and Alec wondered for a nasty moment if the hatred between the Nephilim and the Downworlders in this place ran too deep.

Joaquín lifted Juliette’s hand to his lips, and kissed it.

“I did not know,” he breathed, “that the Queen of the Shadow Market was so beautiful.”

Alec realized abruptly that he’d got everything wrong. Juliette mouthed several shocked demands for explanation, and several more French expletives, at Alec over Joaquín’s bowed head.

“Shadowhunters go so hard,” Lily cackled.

“OK, fine, glad we’re entering into the spirit of cooperation,” said Alec, and turned back to the crowd. “This Nephilim child is now under the protection of the New York Institute,” he said. “Let’s say this was a very standard and normal adoption. Let’s say that though the head of your Institute was corrupt, you survived under a bad leader and kept your honor. You hold Breakspear here until he can be tried. I will, of course, be returning here often to finalize details of the adoption, and I’ll see what is happening. I want to believe in my fellow Shadowhunters. Don’t let me down.”

He had no doubt Jem would make that sound better in Spanish. He turned back to Juliette, who had succeeded with difficulty in freeing her hand and was retreating several steps under Joaquín’s rapt gaze.

“I should be getting back to my kids!” she said, gesturing to the three kids. Rosey gave Alec a little wave.

“Oh,” said Joaquín, a world of devastation in the syllable, then he seemed to notice the lack of anyone else with the kids. “Has it been very difficult, ruling the Shadow Market as a single mother?” he asked, with sudden transparent hope.

“Well, none of this has exactly been easy!” said Juliette.

Joaquín beamed at her. “That’s wonderful.”

“What?” said Juliette.

Joaquín was already heading toward the kids, on an obvious mission to endear himself to them. Alec hoped he had a lot of candies.

Juliette demanded: “Did he inhale a lot of smoke in there?”

“Probably,” said Alec.

“Shadowhunters get very set on things,” said Lily. “Very set. Do you enjoy intensely serious romantic commitment?”

“I don’t know his name,” Juliette pointed out. She sneaked a self-conscious look over at Joaquín, whose endearing of himself seemed to be going very well. He had Juliette’s warlock boy up on his shoulders.

“His name’s Joaquín,” Alec said helpfully.
Juliette smiled. “I suppose I do like some Shadowhunters. It’s always a pleasure, Alec Lightwood. Thanks for everything.”

“It was nothing,” said Alec.

Juliette strolled over to her kids, calling out to them to stop bothering the head of the Institute.

Alec looked around at the smoke drifting up to the stars, and the people in the streets all talking to each other without barriers. His eyes fell on Tessa and Jem.

“Is it time to go home?” Tessa asked.

Alec bit his lip, then nodded. “I’ll text Magnus and ask him to open a Portal.”

There was an official protocol for adopting Shadowhunter children. He knew that he and Rafael would have to go back and forth from Buenos Aires several times, but this trip home would be worth it, even if it did not last long. Alec wanted to take Rafael home as soon as he could.

He was tired, and he wanted to sleep in his own bed.

“I don’t suppose you have any ideas for how I can explain all this to Magnus?” he asked Jem.

“I think you’ll find all the words you need, Alec,” said Jem.

“Thanks, that’s very helpful.”

Jem smiled. “You even found a way to make the boy who doesn’t like anybody like you. Thanks for all your help, Alec.”

Alec wished he could help more, but he knew that at least for now he had done his part. They all had to trust each other, and he did trust his friends. If there was a Herondale in danger, they could not ask for better protection than Jem and Tessa.

“I didn’t do much, but it was good to see you both. Good luck with the Herondale.”

Jem nodded. “Thank you. I think we might need it.”

The Portal was open, and shimmering.

“Bye, Jem,” said Lily.


Alec studied Rafe’s face. “Do you like me?” he asked.

Rafe beamed and shook his head, then secured his arms more tightly around Alec’s neck.

“Oh, fine, that you understand,” Alec grumbled. “Come on. Let’s go home.”

They stepped out of the Portal into the electric starriness of a New York night. Alec could see his apartment down the street, the shimmer of a witchlight behind pale blue curtains. He checked his watch: it was past Max’s bedtime. Max fought bedtime like it was a demon, so Magnus was probably reading him a fifth story or singing him a third song.

Every brown and white façade, every tree surrounded by wire on the cracked sidewalk, was dear to him. Alec used to think, when he was younger and felt as if he might die amid the crushing expectations and stone walls of the Institute, that he might feel better if he could live among the glass towers of Alicante. He hadn’t known home was across the city, waiting for him.
He set Rafe on the steps of their apartment building, and hopped him up one step, then swung him up another, for sheer joy. He opened the door to home.

“Alec,” boomed a voice behind him.

Alec jumped. Lily swiftly thrust Rafael behind the protection of Alec’s front door and spun, lip curling from her needle-sharp teeth.

Alec turned as well, very slowly. He wasn’t scared. He knew that voice.

“Alec,” said Robert Lightwood. “We need to talk.”

“OK, Dad,” said Alec. “Lily, I need to explain everything to Magnus, so could you watch Rafe for a second?”

Lily nodded, still giving Robert the evil eye. There was a pause.

“Hello, Lily,” Robert added gruffly.

“Who the hell are you?” asked Lily.

“My dad,” said Alec. “The Inquisitor. The second most important person in the Clave. Someone you have met at least twenty-six times.”

“I don’t recall,” said Lily.

Alec’s incredulous look was mirrored on his father’s face.

“Lily,” said Robert. “I know you know me.”

“Never gonna, don’t wanna.” Lily shut the door of Alec’s apartment building in his father’s face.

There was an awkward silence.

“Sorry about that,” said Alec finally.

“All your other vampires like me,” muttered Robert.

Alec blinked. “My other vampires?”

“Your friend Elliott reaches out whenever Lily leaves him in charge,” explained Robert. “He says he feels in need of Lightwood guidance. I visited the Hotel Dumort while you were away, and the vampires had a little dinner laid on just for me, and they all talked to me about you. Elliott gave me his phone number, I presume so I can call him in case of emergencies. Elliott’s always charming to me.”

Alec didn’t know how to break it to his dad that Elliott was shamelessly hitting on him.

“Huh,” said Alec.

“How is Magnus? Doing well? Dressing, uh, uniquely?”

“Still gorgeous,” said Alec defiantly. “Yeah.”

His father looked abashed. Alec wasn’t comfortable talking about how he felt, but he wasn’t ashamed, and nobody was going to make him be ashamed, ever again. He didn’t know why his father never stopped poking at him, with the obsessive curiosity of a child poking at a scab.

When he was younger, his dad used to joke insistently about Alec and girls. It was too painful to respond to those comments. Alec talked less and less.

He remembered the day he’d walked out of the Institute to find Magnus. He’d met Magnus twice, and couldn’t forget him. The Institute lay behind him, its stark outlines cutting the sky. He’d been breathless and terrified, with one thought very clear in his mind.

Is this how you want to live your whole life?
Then he’d gone to Magnus’s place and asked him out.
Alec couldn’t bear the idea of one of his kids ever feeling trapped in their own home.
He knew his dad hadn’t meant to do that. But he had.

“How’s my little M&M?” asked Robert.
Max’s middle name was Michael, after Robert’s long-dead parabatai.
Usually that was Alec’s cue to take out his phone and show his dad all the new pictures
of Max he possessed, but he was in a hurry today.

“He’s the best,” Alec said. “Is there something you need, Dad?”
“I heard some rumors about the Buenos Aires Institute,” said Robert. “I heard you
were there.”

“Right,” said Alec. “Clive Breakspear, the head of the Institute, had his Shadowhunters
acting as mercenaries. They’ll need to stand trial. But I encouraged a change in
leadership. The Buenos Aires Institute is going to be all right.”

“This is why I needed to talk to you, Alec,” said Robert.

Alec studied the cracks in the sidewalk and tried to think of a way to explain everything
that would implicate nobody else.

“Do you know, the positions of Consul and Inquisitor often stay within the same
families? I’ve been thinking about what happens, when the time comes for me to retire.”
Alec stared at a weed growing through the cracks in the sidewalk. “I don’t think Jace
wants to be Inquisitor, Dad.”

“Alec,” said Robert. “I’m not talking to Jace. I’m talking to you.”

Alec jolted. “What?”

He looked up from the sidewalk. His father was smiling at him, as if he meant it.
Alec remembered his own words. The Inquisitor. The second most important person in
the Clave.

Alec allowed himself a moment to dream. Being Inquisitor, and having a hand in the
making of the Law itself. Being able to get Aline and Helen back. Being able to put some
sort of dent in the Cold Peace. Being able, Alec thought with slow-dawning hope, to get
married.

Having his dad believe that Alec could do it. Alec knew his dad loved him, but that
wasn’t the same as his dad believing in him. He hadn’t known that before.
“I’m not saying it would be easy,” said Robert. “But several members of the Clave have
mentioned it as a possibility. You know how popular you are with Downworlders.”

“Not really,” mumbled Alec.

“A few more people in the Clave are coming around,” said Robert. “I have that tapestry
up of you, and I take care to mention your name often.”

“Here I thought it was up because you love me.”

Robert blinked at him, as if he was wounded by the joke. “Alec. It—it is. But I want this
for you too. That’s what I came here to ask. Do you want it for yourself?”

Alec thought of the power to change the Law from a sword that hurt people into a
shield to defend them.

“Yeah,” said Alec. “But you have to be sure you want me to have it, Dad. People won’t
be happy with me taking it, and once I have it, I’m going to split the Clave apart.”
“You are?” Robert asked, his voice faint.

“Because I have to,” said Alec. “Because everything has to change. For everybody’s sake. And for Magnus, and our kids.”

Robert blinked. “Your what?”

“Oh, by the Angel,” said Alec. “Please don’t ask me any questions! I have to go! I have to talk to Magnus right away.”

Robert said, “I am very confused.”

“I really have to go,” said Alec. “Thanks, Dad. I mean it. Come for dinner again soon, all right? We’ll talk more about the Inquisitor thing then.”

“All right,” said Robert. “I’d like that. When I had dinner with you three, a few weeks ago? I don’t remember the last time I had such a happy day.”

Alec remembered how difficult it had been during Robert’s visit to keep the conversation going, how only Max prattling at his grandpa’s knee had broken the frequent silences. It broke Alec’s heart to think Robert had thought of that strained awkward dinner as happiness.

“Come over anytime,” said Alec. “Max loves seeing his grandpa. And—thank you, Dad. Thanks for believing in me. Sorry if I caused you a lot of paperwork tonight.”

“You saved lives tonight, Alec,” said Robert.

He took an awkward step toward Alec, and his hand lifted, as if he was going to pat Alec on the shoulder. Then his hand dropped. He looked into Alec’s face, and his eyes were so sad.

“You’re a good man, Alec,” he said at last. “You’re a better man than I am.”

Alec loved his father, and would never be cruel to him. So he didn’t say: I had to be.

Instead he reached out and pulled his father into an awkward hug, patting him on the shoulder before he stepped back.

“We’ll talk later.”

“Whenever you like,” said Robert. “I’ve got all the time in the world.”

Alec waved to his dad, then ran up the steps of his building. He opened the door and bounded up his stairs to find Lily alone. The door of his loft was open a crack, light filtering through, but Lily was standing in the shadows and appeared to be filing her nails.

“Lily,” Alec said dangerously, “where is Rafael?”

“Oh, him.” Lily shrugged. “He heard Magnus singing some Indonesian lullaby, and he bolted inside. Nothing I could do. Shadowhunters. They’re speedy.”

Neither of them mentioned Magnus’s wards, which couldn’t be forced by any magic or any strength Alec knew of. Magnus didn’t have wards up for anyone defenseless, anyone who might need his help. Of course a child could go through.

Alec fixed her with a reproachful glare, but was distracted by the deep, lovely murmur of Magnus’s voice through the open door. His tone was warm and, as it often was, amused. Alec thought of Jem telling Tessa Your voice is the music I love best in all the world.

“Ah, there’s that smile,” said Lily. “It’s been two days, and I missed it.”

Alec stopped smiling and made a face at her, but when he looked at her properly, she was fiddling with the zip of her leather jacket. There was something about the set of her
mouth, as if she’d set it determinedly so it wouldn’t tremble.

“Thanks for coming with me,” Alec said. “Also, you’re the worst.”

That made her smile. Lily wiggled her fingers in farewell. “Don’t you forget it.”

She slipped away like a shadow, and Alec opened the door and stepped inside his apartment at last. His coffee machine was on the counter, his cat was sleeping on the sofa.

There was a door standing open to a room he’d never seen before, which happened sometimes at his place. The room inside had golden-brown floorboards and whitewashed walls. Magnus was standing in the room, with Rafe beside him. Magnus was wearing a red and gold silk robe, and Rafe’s face was tipped up to watch Magnus as he produced a low soothing stream of Spanish. It was a beautiful room.

Alec realized Magnus knew he was there because Magnus started translating what he was saying into rapid English, switching between languages with fluid ease so everybody knew what was going on.

“Let’s put away the cross for now, and talk about organized religion later,” said Magnus, snapping his fingers at the crucifix on the wall. “And let’s have a window, and let the light in. Do you like this one?”

He gestured easily to the wall, and a circular window opened up onto their street, showing a tree catching the moon. Then he gestured again and the window was red and gold stained glass.

“Or this one?” Magnus waved a third time and the window was arched and tall as a church window. “Or this one?”

Rafe was nodding and nodding, his face wreathed in eager smiles.

Magnus smiled down at him. “Want me to just keep doing magic?”

Rafe nodded again, even more vehemently. Magnus laughed and set a hand on Rafe’s curly head: Alec was about to warn that Rafael was shy at first and would duck away, but Rafe didn’t. He let Magnus stroke his hair, the rings on Magnus’s hand catching the light through their new window. Magnus’s smile went from gleaming to glowing. He met Alec’s eyes over Rafe’s head.

“I’ve been getting to know Rafe,” said Magnus. “He told me that was what he liked to be called. We’ve been doing up a bedroom for him. See?”

“I do,” said Alec.

“Rafe,” said Magnus. “Rafael. Do you have a last name?”

Rafe shook his head.

“That’s all right. We have two. How would you feel about a middle name? Would you like one?”

Rafe broke into a stream of Spanish. From all the nodding, Alec was fairly sure he was agreeing.

“Um,” Alec said. “We probably need to talk.”

Magnus laughed. “Oh, do you think so? Excuse us for a minute, Rafe.” He moved toward Alec, then stopped short. Rafe’s hands were clenched hard on the edge of Magnus’s robe. Magnus looked startled.

Rafe burst out crying. Magnus cast Alec a wild glance, then ran his hands distractedly
through his own hair. Between torrential sobs, Rafael began to eke out words.

Alec couldn’t speak Rafael’s language, but he understood nonetheless. Don’t let me see you, and then have to go away into the loneliness that is the world without you. Please, please keep me. I’ll be good, if you would just keep me.

Alec started forward, but before he was even in the room, Magnus dropped to his knees and touched the child’s face with tender hands. All trace of tears disappeared with a shimmer of magic.

“Hush,” said Magnus. “Don’t cry. Yes, of course we will, my darling.”

Rafe put his face down onto Magnus’s shoulder and sobbed his heart out. Magnus patted his shaking back until he was quiet.

“I’m sorry,” Magnus said at last, and rocked Rafe in the curve of one red-silk arm. “I really do need to talk to Alec. I’ll be right back. I promise you.”

He stood and tried to move forward, then cast a rueful glance downward. Rafe was still holding onto his robe.

“He’s very determined,” Alec explained.

“So, completely unlike any other Shadowhunters of my acquaintance, then,” said Magnus, and swept off his robe.

Underneath he was wearing a tunic shirt shimmering with gold thread, and loose ratty gray sweatpants.

“Are those sweatpants mine?”

“Yes,” said Magnus. “I missed you.”

“Oh,” said Alec.

Magnus settled the robe around Rafe’s shoulders, wrapping him up so he was a red silk cocoon with a startled face on top. Then Magnus knelt down by Rafe again and lifted Rafael’s hands in his, holding them together. Inside Rafe’s cupped palms, a tiny fountain of glitter leaped in a shining loop. Rafe gave a hiccuping laugh, full of surprised delight.

“There, you like magic, don’t you? Keep your hands together and it will keep going,” Magnus murmured, then made his escape while Rafe was watching the fountain.

Alec took Magnus’s hand, pulling him out of the new room into the main loft and through into their bedroom. He shut the door and said: “I can explain.”

“I think I might understand already, Alexander,” said Magnus. “You were away a day and half and you adopted us another kid. What happens if you go away for a week?”

“I didn’t mean to,” said Alec. “I wasn’t going to do anything without asking you. Only he was there, and he’s a Shadowhunter, and nobody was looking after him, so I thought I could take him to the Institute here. Or to Alicante.”

Magnus had been smiling, but now he stopped. Alec felt even more alarmed.

“We’re not adopting him?” Magnus asked. “But—can’t we?”

Alec blinked.

“I thought we were,” Magnus said. “Alec, I promised him. Do you not want to?”

Alec stared at him for another instant. Magnus’s face was tense, intent but confused at the same time, as if Magnus was baffled by his own vehemence. Suddenly Alec was laughing. He’d thought he was waiting to be sure, yet this was better, as all the best things in his life were better than any dream that had come before. Not Alec knowing
right away, but seeing Magnus know right away. It was so sweet, and so obvious that this was exactly the way things should be: seeing Magnus experience the instant instinctive love as Alec had with Max, as Alec learned with Rafael the slow, sweet, and conscious way of love that Magnus had learned with Max. Opening a new door in their familiar beloved home, as if it had always been there.

“Yes,” Alec said, breathless with laughter and love. “Yes, I want to.”

Magnus’s smile returned. Alec pulled him into his arms, then turned so Magnus had his back to the wall. Alec cupped Magnus’s face in both hands.

“Give me a minute,” Alec said. “Let me look at you. God, I missed home.”

Magnus’s fascinating eyes were narrowed slightly, watching Alec back, and his smiling mouth was a little startled as it often was, though what surprised him Alec didn’t know. Alec couldn’t just look at him. He kissed him, and that mouth was against his own, the kiss making every tired muscle in Alec’s body turn to liquid sweetness. To Alec, love always meant this: his shining city of eternal light. The land of lost dreams reclaimed, his first kiss and his last.

Magnus’s arms went around him.


Now when Alec asked himself Is this how you want to live your whole life? Alec could answer yes, and yes, and yes. Every kiss was the answer yes, and the question he would get to ask Magnus someday. They kissed up against the bedroom wall for long bright moments, then both stepped away from the other with a wrench.

“The—” Alec began.

“—kids,” Magnus finished. “Later.”

“Wait, the kids plural?” asked Alec, and became aware of what Magnus had heard: the stealthy sound of tiny feet exiting Max’s room.


“Magnus!”

“What, I can call him that, it’s you who can’t call him that, because it’s infernally insensitive.” Magnus grinned, then squinted at his own stained hand. “Alec, I know you don’t really care about your clothes, but you don’t usually come home covered in soot.”

“Better see to the kids,” said Alec, ducking out of the bedroom and the conversation.

In the main room was Max, in his triceratops footie pajamas and dragging his fuzzy blankie, regarding Rafe with wide eyes. Rafe stood on the woven rug before the fireplace, wrapped in Magnus’s red silk robe. His eyes narrowed into the death stare that had frightened the other kids at the Shadow Market.

Max, who had never felt threatened by anything in his life, smiled guilelessly up at him. Rafe’s scowl faltered.

Max turned at the opening of the door. He padded swiftly over to Alec, and Alec knelt down to embrace him.

“Daddy, Daddy!” Max caroled. “This the brother orra sister?”

Rafael’s eyebrows went up. He said something quickly in Spanish.

“Not a sister,” Magnus translated from the door. “Max, this is Rafe. Say hi.”

Max clearly took this as confirmation. He patted Alec’s shoulder as if to say: great job,
Dad, finally you deliver the goods. Then he turned back to Rafe.

“What are you? Werewolf?” Max guessed.

Rafe glanced at Magnus, who translated. “He says he’s a Shadowhunter.”

Max beamed. “Daddy’s a Shadowhunter. I’m a Shadowhunter too!”

Rafe regarded Max’s horns with an air suggesting: Can you believe this guy? He shook his head firmly, and attempted to explain the situation.

“He says you’re a warlock,” Magnus translated faithfully. “And that this is a very good thing to be, because it means you can do magic, and magic is cool and pretty.” Magnus paused. “Which is so true.”

Max’s face screwed up in rage. “I’m a Shadowhunter!”

Rafe waved a hand, his attitude one of deep impatience.

“All right, my blue-ringed octopus,” Magnus interposed hastily. “Let’s continue this debate tomorrow, shall we? Everybody needs sleep. Rafe has had a long day, and it is incredibly past your bedtime.”

“I’ll read you a story,” Alec promised.

Max dropped his fury as swiftly as he’d assumed it. His blue brows knit. He seemed to be thinking deeply. “No bed!” he argued. “Stay up. Be with Rafe.” He sidled up to a stunned-looking Rafael and gave him a big hug. “I’m love him.”

Rafe hesitated, then hugged Max shyly back. The sight of them made Alec’s chest hurt. He cast a glance back at Magnus, who had an equally smitten expression.

“It’s a special occasion,” Alec pointed out.

“I was never very good at discipline anyway,” said Magnus, and threw himself down beside the kids on the rug. Rafe edged closer, and Magnus looped an arm around him. Rafe cuddled up. “How about you tell us all a bedtime story about what happened in Buenos Aires?”

“It wasn’t that exciting,” Alec said. “Other than: I found Rafe. I missed you. I came home. That’s it. We’ll have to go back and forth to Buenos Aires a few times to finalize the adoption, before we can make it official and tell everyone. Maybe we can all go together sometime.”

Rafe said several swift sentences in Spanish.

“Is that so?” asked Magnus. “How extremely interesting.”

“What are you saying?” Alec asked Rafe anxiously.

“You aren’t getting away with this one, Alec Lightwood.” Magnus pointed at him. “Not this time. I have a spy!”

Alec went over to the rug, knelt down, and made earnest eye contact with Rafe.

“Rafe,” he said. “Please don’t be a spy.”

Rafe gave Alec a look of firm incomprehension and burst into a torrent of Spanish for Magnus. Alec was certain at least some of it was Rafe promising to be a spy anytime Magnus wanted.

“Sounds like you did some pretty impressive things in Buenos Aires,” said Magnus at last. “A lot of people would have given up. What were you thinking?”

Alec picked Max up, tipped him upside down, then sideways, then returned him to the rug, grinning when Max crowed with laughter.
“All I did was think about being worthy of coming home to you,” said Alec. “It was nothing much.”

There was a silence. Alec turned, a little concerned, to find Magnus staring at him. That surprised look was on his face again, and there was a softness along with it that was rare for Magnus.

“What?” said Alec.

“Nothing, you stealth romance attacker,” Magnus said. “How do you always know what to say?”

He leaned forward easily, keeping Rafe held comfortably against him, to give Alec a kiss on the jaw. Alec smiled.

Rafe was studying Max, who seemed gratified Rafe was taking an interest.

“If you want to be a Shadowhunter,” said Rafael, in careful English, “you have to train.”

“No, Rafe,” said Alec. “Max doesn’t need to train.”

“I train!” said Max.

Alec shook his head. His baby was a warlock. He would train Rafe, but Max didn’t need to learn any of that. He looked to Magnus for back-up, but Magnus was hesitating, his lip caught between his teeth.

“Magnus!”

“Max wants to be just like you,” Magnus said. “I can understand that. Are we going to tell him he can’t be whatever he wants to be?”

“He’s not—” Alec began, and stopped.

“There’s nothing to say a warlock couldn’t physically fight,” said Magnus. “Using magic to substitute for Shadowhunter attributes. It might keep him safe, because people don’t expect a warlock to be trained that way. It wouldn’t hurt to try. Besides . . . we found Max on the steps of Shadowhunter Academy. Someone might have wanted him to have Shadowhunter training.”

Alec hated the idea. But he’d thought, hadn’t he, that he wished he could train a kid? He’d promised himself that he would never be the kind of father who made the walls of home feel like a trap.

If you loved somebody, you trusted them.

“All right,” said Alec. “I guess it wouldn’t hurt to show them a few ways to stand and fall. Might get them tired enough for bedtime.”

Magnus grinned and snapped his fingers. Practice mats suddenly covered the floor. Max scrambled to his feet. Rafe, head pillowed against Magnus’s chest, seemed uninterested until Magnus nudged him gently, but then he got up willingly enough.

“Maybe I can teach Rafe a few magic tricks as well,” Magnus mused. “He can’t be a warlock any more than Max can be a Shadowhunter, but there are magicians around. He might be a very good one.”

Alec recalled a story about a magician with Shadowhunter blood, known as Roland the Astonishing, who had lived a long, happy life with his best beloved. He thought of the Market and the Institute mingling in the streets of Buenos Aires, of Jem and Tessa, of love and trust in a changing world, and showing his sons they could be anything they wanted, including happy. He rose and walked to the center of the room.
“Boys? Follow the moves I make,” said Alec. “Stand with me, now. All together.”
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Cassandra Clare was born to American parents in Teheran, Iran and spent much of her childhood traveling the world with her family. She lived in France, England and Switzerland before she was ten years old. Since her family moved around so much she found familiarity in books and went everywhere with a book under her arm. She spent her high school years in Los Angeles where she used to write stories to amuse her classmates, including an epic novel called “The Beautiful Cassandra” based on the eponymous Jane Austen short story (and from which she later took her current pen name).

After college, Cassie lived in Los Angeles and New York where she worked at various entertainment magazines and even some rather suspect tabloids. She started working on her YA novel, City of Bones, in 2004, inspired by the urban landscape of Manhattan, her favorite city.

In 2007, the first book in the Mortal Instruments series, City of Bones, introduced the world to Shadowhunters. The Mortal Instruments concluded in 2014, and includes City of Ashes, City of Glass, City of Fallen Angels, City of Lost Souls, and City of Heavenly Fire. She also created a prequel series, inspired by A Tale of Two Cities and set in Victorian London. This series, The Infernal Devices, follows bookworm Tessa Gray as she discovers the London Institute in Clockwork Angel, Clockwork Prince, and Clockwork Princess.

The sequel series to The Mortal Instruments, The Dark Artifices, where the Shadowhunters take on Los Angeles, began with Lady Midnight, continues with Lord of Shadows and will conclude with Queen of Air and Darkness.

Other books in the Shadowhunters series include The Bane Chronicles, Tales from the Shadowhunter Academy, and The Shadowhunter’s Codex.

Her books have more than 36 million copies in print worldwide and have been translated into more than thirty-five languages. Visit her at CassandraClare.com.

Sarah Rees Brennan was born and raised in Ireland by the sea, where her teachers valiantly tried to make her fluent in Irish (she wants you to know it’s not called Gaelic) but she chose to read books under her desk in class instead. The books most often found under her desk were Jane Austen, Margaret Mahy, Anthony Trollope, Robin McKinley and Diana Wynne Jones, and she still loves them all today. After college she lived briefly in New York and somehow survived in spite of her habit of hitching lifts in fire engines. She began working on The Demon’s Lexicon while doing a Creative Writing MA and library work in Surrey, England. Since then she has returned to Ireland to write and use as a home base for future adventures. Her Irish is still woeful, but she feels the books under the desk were worth it. Sarah is also the the author of the Lynburn Legacy series, and the novels Tell the Wind and Fire and In Other Lands. Visit her at sarahreesbrennan.com.