Summary

Jace knows who she is to him the minute he walked into the club. He had known who she was to him since four years ago. Werewolf/Mates AU. Clace.

Notes

This story is heavily inspired by Teen Wolf.
Disclaimer: I do not own the characters, barely the story line.
Chapter 1

It was a hot afternoon, almost three o'clock, and the sun was still burning hot and beating down on the two people who were standing on the back patio of the large house. The house was a big modern home, all glass and metal and big black walls. It looked cold and unforgiving from the outside, but even though the place was built like a fortress, once inside, it felt like love and family and warmth.

"Come on, hun," Luke Garroway said, resting his hands down on Clarissa Morgenstern's shoulders and squeezing them gently. They were standing in the backyard of Luke and Jocelyn Garroway's home, staring out over the long stretch of grass. "Alaric and Gregg and Leila are coming over and we're having a barbeque, and you can stay in your old room." Clary pouted up at her step dad, who was more or less her father in every aspect other than blood, and let out a sigh. "You know that your mother misses you, and the rest of the pack hardly ever see's you anymore."

"I can't," she almost whined, which was a little embarrassing for a twenty-three year old, except this was Luke, and he loved her no matter what. "We're going out to celebrate Simon's birthday, since it was a full moon on his actual birthday." Luke nodded understandingly, although he looked a little disappointed.

"Yeah, well, you make sure he looks after you," he told her.

"Si always looks after me," Clary let out a laugh. "And even if he didn't, you know that I'd kick ass," she smirked.

"And don't I know it," Luke grinned and leaned in to kiss her on the forehead. "But, seriously, you know why I'm worried about you, right? You know what day it is, what's happening today." His face went serious, and Clary pursed her lips together, rolling her eyes.

"I'll be fine, Luke. How much trouble do you think I'm gonna get into?" She teased him. Luke raised his eyebrows at her, clearly thinking back to the amount of trouble that he had needed to get her out of in the past. "Look, I'm going out with Si and Helen and probably Lyds. We're gonna go to a club, and we're gonna have some fun, and I'm never going to cross paths with this big, bad Alpha that's coming into town."


"What?" Clary snorted.

"I'm serious," he told her. "And maybe keep the joking to a minimum, just until the chaos around that new Alpha calms down." Clary shrugged, not looking too concerned even though she knew she probably should be. Luke clearly thought so as well, because he raised an eyebrow at her.

"Yes, I'll keep out of the way. It's not like I care about the whole thing anyway, you know you're the only Alpha in my life," Clary punched him lightly on the shoulder. "The one's who are getting all up an excited about it in town are the biter bitches and the wolves who aren't used to having a stronger presence. Luckily for you, I don't fall into either of those categories." Luke pursed his lips, but he knew that Clary was right, so he nodded once and then wrapped her in a hug.

"Alright, but I want to see you back here soon, okay?" He told her. "And make sure you say goodbye to your mother on your way out."

"Ye-es," Clary hummed out at him, grinning at the way he clasped his hand around the side of her neck in a way that would come off as possessive to someone who didn't understand it. She let him,
she was used to it. It was simply his way of making sure other werewolves knew that she was
protected; they would smell the scent of an Alpha on her and know that there would be trouble if
they so much as looked at her the wrong way. Luke had done it to her since she was little, and the
rest of his pack did it as well, touching her arms and hair, letting her know that she was loved and
cared for. "Love you, dad," she called out to him as she backed away and headed into the house.

"Love you too, pup," he called back as she ran up the steps into the house. She had been living here
for as long as she could remember, since her blood father had been killed when she was a toddler,
and she knew the place like the back of her hand. Her mother was on the second floor, in the big
room that had ceiling to floor windows. The room caught all of the morning sun and gave an
unobstructed view of the back yard.

"Mum!" Clary called as she took the steps two at a time and then jogged down the long, wooden
hallways to her mums room. "Hey, mum, I'm off!" She rounded the corner and stepped into the
room, instantly hit with the smell of paint and acetone. The windows were all open and there was a
breeze that was tangling the curtains.

"Hey, baby," Jocelyn brushed away some stray strands of hair away from her face and tucked them
behind her ears. "You're going out with Simon tonight, right?"

"Yes," Clary nodded.

"And I'm sure Luke has reminded you a hundred times that you should be careful? Because you
know who's arriving into your town tonight?" Jocelyn put down the paintbrush in her hand and
walked over to her daughter, who looked like an absolute mini-me of Jocelyn herself, except Clary's
hair was dyed several shades darker red.

"Mum, I don't get the big deal," Clary rolled her eyes.

"You do get the big deal, baby," Jocelyn raised an eyebrow at her. "He's from one of the most
powerful families around. The same goes for Simon as well, make sure he doesn't go and do
something stupid."

"It's Simon," Clary smirked. "He's always going to do something stupid."

"Yeah, well, some things can't be helped," Jocelyn agreed. "You have fun tonight, and make sure
you give Simon a kiss for me." Clary nodded and leaned in to hug her. "Have a good night, baby,"
Jocelyn said as she dropped a kiss to her forehead. "Drive safely home." When the older woman
turned back around, the wind caught on her long hair that was falling down her back, exposing two
of the runes on her back, the standard Angelic Power rune and the Wedded Union rune. Jocelyn had
many more, but most were hidden by her clothes, or she chose to keep them hidden from the public
eye at most times.

"I'll see you later!" Clary jogged out of the room and back down the stairs. Her sleek, black 2015
Dodge Challenger was parked outside, a present from Jocelyn and Luke when she had graduated
high school. It was over the top, of course, but Luke had always spoiled her rotten. She turned over
the engine and slipped on her sunglasses, turning the volume of the stereo up so that Digital Daggers
was playing a whole lot louder and checked the time. It was three, and it took almost two hours to
get to Raven Creek. Then she had to get dressed and do her make up and get started on a few drinks
before meeting Simon at a club.

Clary stopped at a drive thru to pick up a burger and some fries, eating them on the way home and
carefully wiping her hands down on a napkin and tucking it back into the paper bag. She made it
back home in record time, parking in the underground parking lot of her apartment building and
screwing up her nose as she looked around.

Her building definitely wasn't the nicest one in Raven Creek, and Luke and her mother had tried time and time again to get her to move out and into somewhere nicer with their financial support, but she refuted them every time. She was an adult and she was responsible for her own living situations. The elevator never worked, and so she took the stairs, two at a time as usual, up to the fourth floor and unlocked her apartment door. The apartment was small, most of it open plan with only the bathroom and the single bedroom cordoned off with walls. The lounge and the kitchen was filled with colourful furniture, paintings and utensils, with her easel and paints set up in the corner by the single row of windows along the wall.

It was already dark outside, and she turned on the TV as she started moving around the apartment. She did some cleaning up first, and then went to her bedroom, flipping through the dresses in her wardrobe. Simon's birthday was last week, but it had been a full moon during the weekend, and so he hadn't been able to go out. Or, he did go out, but it had been more about running through the woods in his werewolf form, burning the excess energy that came with a full moon. So now they were going out and celebrating his twenty-fourth birthday in more typical fashion, by going out and getting drunk.

Clary pulled out a short black and green dress, holding it in front of her in the mirror and staring at her reflection. Lydia Branwell had brought her the dress last year for Christmas, saying that it brought out her eyes and that it guaranteed her to get laid whenever she wore it.

And it had been a long time since she had gotten laid.

Not that she had been actively looking for someone, because she had done the whole sleeping around thing when she was at University in New York, but since moving to Raven Creek, she had only been with a one person, which was over five months ago. Sebastian Verlac still lived in the city, and she only saw him when she went into the city, or he came out to the town for a visit.

So yes, she was going to wear the sexy black and green dress, and she was going to curl her hair and do up her eyes, and she was going to have a good time with her friends, and go home with someone. It wasn't as though there weren't options, there were plenty of good looking men, and if she was just looking for someone to scratch an itch, then that would be easy enough to find. After she squirmed her way into the dress, she went into the kitchen to pour herself a glass of wine, enjoying the buzz as she turned her music up and danced around her apartment, fixing her make up.

It was just after eleven that Clary was in the club with Simon, Lydia and Helen Blackthorn. Simon was ordering shot after shot laced with wolfsbane from the bar. The wolfsbane alcohol was more expensive than the normal drinks, but given normal alcohol burnt out of a werewolves bloodstream too quickly to have any affect, it was the only thing that Simon was able to drink if he wanted to get drunk.

"You look sexy as sin!" Lydia screamed over the music that was playing. The club was packed, with humans and werewolves alike, and the fluorescent purple, blue and green lights swirling around and splashing colours of light over the drunken people. There were two floors in the club, the main dance floor where the bar was and there were a couple of booths around the outskirts of the club. The second floor was overlooking the dance floor, with more private booths. "You looking at getting laid tonight?!"

"Something like that!" Clary laughed as she threw an arm around Lydia's shoulders and her other arm around Simon. "Although we should also be looking at getting Simon laid—it's his birthday celebration after all!"
"I don't need your help getting laid!" Simon protested.

"Yeah, you do, wolf boy," Lydia smirked and Simon let his eyes glow gold at her teasing before rolling them. "Come on, it'll be our twenty-fourth birthday present to you!" Simon protested again but Lydia and Helen were already looking around for some poor girl to try and coerce into dancing with him. Even though after he had been bitten he wasn't quite as gangly and long-limbed as he had been before, he still danced just as awkwardly, despite the girls all trying to teach him.

"I'm going to go up and get us some more drinks!" Clary said. "You want another one, Si? You guys?" Lydia and Helen were already comfortably drunk, and they shook their heads, although Simon nodded. "Okay, I'll go grab you some." She turned to make her way off the dance floor and back to the bar. The music was so loud it was practically deafening, and Clary wondered how the wolves in this place walked away without any permanent damage. She managed to push her way to the front of the queue and shouted out her order to the bartender.

"What was that?!" The bartender shouted back.

"I said—" Clary broke off when she realized that the bartender was no longer looking at her but over her head. Clary rolled her eyes and looked over her shoulder to where there were a couple of good looking men walking their way. "Oi!" Clary waved her hand in front of the bartender and the girl jerked her head back to look at Clary, who gave her a pointed look. "Can I get my drinks now?" She snapped.

"Uh, right," the bartender mumbled and looked down at the screen where she was entering the order, but her eyes lifted back up again, over Clary's head, and she knew that she was looking back at the men who were there.

"Oh for fucks sakes," Clary rolled her eyes. "You know what—forget it! I'll come back later!" She turned around, ducking her head and letting her eyes search out spaces for her petite body to fit as she made her way back to the dance floor. She started winding among people; humans, were's, a warlock and she even noted two shadowhunters, although they were probably dormant like her. There was this weird buzz around her, which made her stop in her tracks and glance around her as she came to the two steps that lead to the mosh pit that was the dance floor.

People were still dancing and laughing and singing, but there seemed to be something distracting them, especially the werewolves. She spotted Simon and the two girls dancing, and Simon was frowning, his head tilted back slightly. Clearly there was something in the air that had caught his attention, and she frowned, turning around to try and catch a glimpse of what it was. There was a waitress who was walking directly behind her, and Clary's sudden halt meant they almost smacked straight into each other. They both managed to right themselves, and the waitress turned to the side to avoid spilling her drinks.

Unfortunately, the two men who were on the other side of the waitress—who just so happened to be the ones who had distracted her bartender—kept on walking, and bumped straight into her, and the drinks that were balanced so carefully on the tray she was holding went flying forward.

"Shit!" One of the men, definitely the prettiest one with golden hair, growled and glared down at the girl. "What the fuck?!" The waitress dropped to her hands and knees, scrabbling for the long stemmed glasses and tumblers that had gone everywhere. One of them had smashed, and people were suddenly spreading out to make room for them, and there were a whole lot more eyes on them.

"For fucks sakes, that was your fault," Clary glared at the golden haired man as she leaned down to help the girl. "You should watch where the fuck you're going." The waitress gave her a wide eyed look that verged on petrified and an ever so slight shake of her head. Clary just rolled her eyes as she
reached for one of the glasses that had rolled away.

"Excuse me?" She heard a bark from the man who was still standing over them. She raised her eyebrows as she rose back to her feet, expecting him to have already stalked off given he hadn't even offered to help.

"Clary!" There was a vague shout behind her, which she just managed to make out over the music, and she knew that it was Simon trying to get her attention.

"I said," she repeated, her eyes narrow and her words snipped. "You should watch where the fuck you're going."

It would usually be comical, the way there was almost a collective gasp from the people around them, and it was then that Clary realized that a whole lot more people than the ones just close by that were watching them. She frowned as she glanced around and saw that people were tilting their heads to the side. It was more than just a simple gesture as well, it was all of them, and it was a movement of submission.

Clary's eyes turned back to the tall, golden haired man in front of her and her hands curled into fists as she saw his eyes glow the Alpha red.

"Fuck," she breathed.

It had been a long week.

When Jace Herondale had announced that he was going back to his home town, Raven Creek, after eight years of being gone, the Werewolf Institute had decided to take charge of the whole thing. It had become a publicity thing, a Herondale Alpha returning back to Raven Creek, and then they had started talking about the politics of the whole thing, what the do's and don'ts were.

It was tiring.

Alec and Isabelle Lightwood were clearly just as annoyed as him, but he was glad that they were there by his side. Even if Isabelle was on her phone the whole time, and Alec just had his arms crossed over his chest and was glaring ahead stubbornly. Luckily enough, they agreed Alec and Isabelle would be the ones to go back with him to Raven Creek, which meant that Magnus Bane, Alec's mate and a warlock, would be coming with them.

That was the best thing that came from the meetings Jace had had to go to each day this week. It was going to be his family coming with him, his pack.

"I don't get why you want to go back here," Isabelle said for the umpteenth time, her eyes still glued to her phone, tapping away at the screen as they sat in the back of the Mercedes SUV. "New York is fun. New York is lively. New York is colourful! Raven Creek is..." she screwed up her nose as she looked out the window and sighed dismally. "Smaller. And kind of sad looking."

"It's home," Jace said quietly, hands tight around the steering wheel. Alec glanced over at him and then raised an eyebrow back at his sister, who scrunched up her nose and shrugged, and then looked back at her phone. "Are you sure you don't want to come out for a drink with us?"

"No thanks," Isabelle shook her head. "I'm gonna go to the flat that I have to share with my brother and his lover," she sneered at the words, clearly not impressed, given she had her own loft back in New York, one that she didn't need to share with anyone. "And I'm going to try and make the place livable."
"When's Mags coming down?" Jace asked, giving Alec a side look.

"Uh, two days," Alec replied. "He'll be down in two days." Jace went quiet as they drove toward the flat. They had been back in Raven Creek for five hours so far, and they had managed to avoid people. That wasn't going to last long at all, given everyone knew that a Herondale Alpha was coming back into the city, and they knew it was this weekend. That was why Jace and Alec had decided to get it over and done with, and go out for a few drinks at the local club, make a public appearance.

"Are you boys gonna need me to pick you up?" Isabelle asked as they stopped outside the expensive apartment building. It was nowhere near as fancy as the one that Isabelle stayed in back in New York, but it was high end for this city.

"Nah, we'll be fine," Jace replied. "We'll see you later on, okay?"

"Yeah, sure thing," Isabelle slid out of the car. "Are you going to be coming back here tonight, or going out to your place—your home?" She tilted her head to the side. "It sounds weird to call it your home, even though you lived there for, like, ever, before you came to live with us." Jace just raised his eyebrows at Isabelle and she shrugged and looked at her brother. "So are you going to be coming home?"

"I don't know," Alec shrugged. "I've got a key, so just lock up." Isabelle nodded.

"Aight, see you later," Isabelle turned on the impossibly high heels of her boots and headed into the apartment building. Jace waited until she disappeared inside, listening to tap of her boots as she head inside, and he used his supernatural hearing to wait for the ding of the elevator and for the boots to walk inside, and then the doors to slide closed. When he turned the car around and headed back into the township, he looked over at Alec.

"I appreciate you coming back here with me," he said quietly.

"You knew I would," Alec replied, running his fingers through his styled, dark hair. Jace nodded, because that was true. They got into the main part of the city, the term 'city' being used a whole lot more loosely than it was in New York. Raven Creek was a city, but it wasn't overflowing at the seams like New York was, and that was what Jace wanted. When he had escaped to New York after the death of his parents and loosing their pack, it was because he needed to loose himself.

And now?

He wanted to find his center again, and be at home.

"This place actually looks decent," Alec sounded surprised as they got out of their car and started walking toward the club. "I don't remember this from when we were here last."

"Maybe that's because we were sixteen and we weren't allowed to come to places like this when we were here," Jace pointed out. There were a couple of glances from people that they past on the street, but it was dark, and both Jace and Alec had their heads ducked so that they weren't particularly obvious. One of the people who past them was a werewolf, and their footsteps stuttered as they past and clearly caught the scent of an Alpha.

"ID's," the bouncer at the door of the club asked stoically. The two boys pulled out their wallets, and Jace was about to jerk out his licence, with the embossed werewolf stamp in the corner, when the bouncer finally looked at him. "Oh, uh—sorry, sir," he stammered. Jace just pursed his eyes, looking bored. "Uh, go right in."
"Thanks," Alec muttered, following into the club after Jace. The music and the smell of alcohol and sweat hit both werewolves the moment they stepped inside, and they needed to take a moment to filter out the thousands of noises and scents and sounds. Jace had mastered the skill of focusing on only what he wanted to a long time ago, but sometimes it still took moment or so, especially when he was in a new place. "Drink?" Alec asked, nodding over to the bar.

"Fuck yes," Jace sighed. They started toward the bar, and that was when the looks all started. It was probably initiated by the way that the were's who were mixed in with the humans in the club instantly picked up on his scent, and the scent of his second in command. Their eyes flashed gold in respect as he walked past and they bared their necks in submission. That meant that the humans and the shadowhunters around the werewolves all started to pick up on him as well. It was a normal reaction, and Jace gave a few nods of his head before focusing back on walking toward the bar.

And that was when he smelt it.

It smelt like strawberry, and something flowery, and something slightly bitter but not unpleasant, and home and love and—

"Jace?" Alec raised an eyebrow as he looked over at Jace, and it was then that he realized his eyes were flashing red. Jace swallowed hard as he let his eyes fade back to their normal golden hue.

"She's here," he stated, stopping short and looking around. There were hundreds of people in this club, and the instant he started letting scents flood back in they became a little overwhelming, and that was hard when he was trying to find just that one person.

"She?" Alec frowned. "She who?"


"You're going to have to be way more specific than that, because there were a lot of girls in New York—wait," this time it was Alec who stopped walking and he reached out to grab Jace's arm.

"The girl? As in, your—"

"Yeah, her," Jace snapped and then turned toward the bar. There was a girl standing there, a petite red head with a killer body, wearing a tight dress that did everything for her figure, and an Angelic Power rune that was partially showing from underneath the dress on her shoulder. Alec was saying something else, but Jace was completely ignoring him as he started walking directly toward the girl. She was annoyed, and she turned around and stalked off toward the dance floor. It was as though there was an invisible cord attaching the two of them together, because he was following straight after her. There were people noticing him and Alec, but he wasn't paying them any attention, completely intent on getting to her.

Something caught the red heads attention, because she stopped, just as they were about to reach her, and looked around. There was a waitress in front of them, the only person between Jace and the girl, and she only narrowly avoided walking straight into the girl. Usually with Jace's enhanced reactions, he would have easily been able to side step around the waitress, but he was caught off guard, only focused on the girl, and he walked straight into the waitress.

"Shit!" He hissed as the tray fell from her hands, falling onto the ground, sticking liquid flying everywhere and the glasses crashing down onto the ground. "What the fuck?!" He blinked as he swiped his hands over the front of his jeans, the alcohol splashes already staining the dark denim. The waitress fell to the ground, reaching for the glasses and huffing under her breath, but when she glanced up, she seemed to recognize who he was.
But clearly the red head hadn't.

"For fucks sakes, that was your fault!" She was facing them now and he saw her face for the first time. "You should watch where the fuck you're going." The waitress was shaking her head at the red head, as though to try and warn her, but the girl didn't seem to have noticed. Her green eyes were sparkling furiously, plucked eyebrows pulled together, and looking indignant on the waitresses behalf.

"Excuse me?" Was all Jace managed to get out, his voice sharper from surprise. She faltered for a moment, her head half turning as though hearing someone behind her, but then she was right back to focusing the full force of her glare back on him.

"I said," she repeated, squaring her shoulders as though preparing for a fight. "You should watch where the fuck you're going."

Shit.

He liked her.

Jace was fighting to keep the smirk off his face as he saw her beginning to look around, noticing that they had a lot more attention than a few spilt drinks warranted. And were's and humans alike were all exposing their necks in respect, and when she looked back at him, her eyes were wider—still angry, but a little more wary.

He let his true eyes show, the red bleeding through into his orbs.

"Fuck," the girl said through clenched teeth as she realized she was facing an Alpha.
Chapter 2

Submission to an Alpha was basic instinct for werewolves.

Submission to an Alpha was survival instinct for everyone else.

Submission to an Alpha for someone who had been raised by werewolves practically their whole life should be second nature.

But Clary's body was stock still.

The blood red eyes were burning into hers and usually her body would move naturally, tilting her head to the side, exposing her neck—the most vulnerable part of herself—to him. She had done it a hundred times, to many different Alpha's including Luke, time and time again. Humans were trained from a young age how to act, and with Shadowhunter blood running through her veins as well, Clary had an advantage. She had also been around werewolves for as long as she could remember, and it should just be a reflex to show respect.

But there was nothing.

Absolutely nothing.

Her body wasn't telling her to submit, or show respect, or back down at all.

And what was even stranger, was the man in front of her didn't look at all angry or confused, like an Alpha usually would—like he would be entitled to.

There were only a couple of occasions when someone's natural instinct would escape them when it came to a werewolf, and none of them applied to Clary. She knew that all eyes were on her right now, even though this whole exchange had only taken a matter of a minute or so, and she choked back a breath as she forced herself to submit.

It felt unnatural, and she knew that her mouth was twisted into an angry scowl as she tilted her head to the side, exposing her throat, vulnerable and pale, to the Alpha, hoping that he was going to overlook this little incident even though he was within every one of his rights to cause some trouble.

The gorgeous dark haired man who was flanking the Alpha, clearly one of his beta's, started ordering people to move alone and continue with their evening in a firm, no-nonsense voice. She was definitely thankful for that, because she felt as though she may have a full blown panic attack. The crowd began to disperse, people going back to drinking and dancing, although their eyes kept flickering over to watch what was happening between the two. Clary couldn't blame them, she would be pretty interested to know how it was going to end if she was one of them. Unfortunately, she was completely involved in this, and she just wanted to get out.

Oh, God.

Luke and her mum were going to kill her.

Or they were going to lock her up in the basement, which had been fashioned into a sort of dungeon for newly changed werewolves who still couldn't control their shift in the full moon.

The golden haired man was still staring at her, his eyes bleeding red and not releasing her from his stare. She was still taken aback by the fact that he wasn't angry or even surprised by her apparent
lack of respect, especially for an Alpha who was new in the area and needed to show his strength. Well, he didn't look angry, but he looked... *Something*. His hands were clenched at his side, and he was clearly fighting to keep himself under control because the red in his eyes kept fading and then returning vibrantly. His whole body was coiled tight, almost vibrating with tension as he focused on her.

She couldn't breathe.

Her body just wasn't working the way it was supposed to.

*Deep breaths,* she tried to tell herself. *One, two. In, out.*

"Clary," she could hear Simon's voice behind her. It was low, but the Alpha in front of her obviously could hear because his head twitched to the side, his eyes seeming to burn a little brighter as he saw an unrecognized werewolf approaching them. Simon hadn't quite reached her, he had stopped walking, and even though Clary couldn't see him, she was guessing that he was torn between protecting his best friend, and submitting to the Alpha. "Clary," Simon repeated, although his voice was a little quieter this time. But even though his voice had dropped, he must have taken another step closer because suddenly the Alpha's eyebrows pulled together and there was a low growl that Clary could only hear because she was so close, and other werewolves would be able to hear because of their advanced hearing.

A growl from the Alpha.

A warning growl to the other werewolf.

Clary bit down hard on her lower lip before taking in a breath through her nose and carefully turning away from the Alpha to look over to where Simon and Lydia were both standing, looking a whole lot more sober than they had twenty minutes ago. She didn't doubt she looked terrible, the colour from her face completely drained and her lips were pinched together, and the way her friends were looking at her with wide eyes just confirmed her thoughts.

"I'm fine," she said quietly to them, really hoping that she was.

"Clary, I don't think you are—" Simon started approaching her again and then there was movement behind her. She didn't have to turn around around to know that it was the Alpha moving closer to her, presumably glaring at Simon, because he instantly stopped. His eyes were glowing the golden beta colour and he strained his neck to the side, showing the soft skin. And then there was a hand resting at the dip of her lower back and all logical thought just disappeared, her body freezing as his hand touched one of the gaps in the fabric of her dress, against her own skin.

There was this intense roaring in her ears, like when she was under water for too long or all of her blood was rushing to her head and her brain felt as though it was being squeezed inside her head. Her mind already felt like mush, confused and worried about what was going to happen, why her body wasn't reacting the way that it had always been trained to, and now she was getting this insane heaviness hanging over her head. And then all of a sudden that rush was gone, the pressure was released, and there was this flood of—of *something* rushed through her veins.

Of warmth, and home, and—

"Oh, *fuck,*" Clary hissed through clenched teeth, all breath whooshing from her lungs, taken aback by the intense rush. That feeling that was rushing through her, that pulse of energy, that wasn't from her—it couldn't be. That was coming from *him.* From the Alpha. And that wasn't something that she had ever felt before—sharing feelings with were's wasn't something that just happened! Her heart
was pumping so rapidly in her chest, it was a no wonder that Simon had rushed forward, risking the wrath of the Alpha. To the supernatural creatures around her, it probably sounded as though she was verging on a heart attack.

"I need to go," Clary blurted out, jerking her body away from the man behind her, and away from Simon, because she didn't want to start a turf war between the two werewolves by choosing one over the other, even though she had no clue what the Alpha's link to her was. Whatever it was though, it wasn't something she could process while drunk and still feeling aftershocks of whatever that feeling was.

She needed to get out of here.

She pushed her way out of the club, people were wisely moving to give her room although she could feel all of their eyes on her, and when she made it out onto the street, her eyes skimmed quickly, looking for a taxi automatically. It took her mind a moment to catch up on the fact that she wasn't in New York anymore, and if she wanted a taxi here, she would need to call one, because they didn't just flow down the street.

"Need a ride?" Came a low, rough voice from behind her and Clary felt that heat again, that jolt of warmth through her body, spreading through her limbs. She wanted to let out a whimper; of frustration and confusion, but she bit it back, because she was stronger than that. So instead, she took in a shaky breath, trying to ignore the weird flutterings in her stomach and the pins and needles in the tips of her fingers.

"Shit," Clary closed her eyes in disbelief that this was happening to her, and let her head drop backwards, facing toward the night sky. It was a cool night, and the air felt good against her burning cheeks. She couldn't even begin to decipher the rush of emotions that were tangled up inside her and making her feel so nervous she felt like she might throw up. She could feel him getting closer to her, because the humming in her body was increasing, and the sensation would be pleasant and comforting if she wasn't so nervous.

"Look, I know that this might be really—"

"Can you just not talk right now? Like, step the fuck off. Why the hell are you even following me for? Fuck!" Clary interrupted him with a shaky sigh. Everything was catching up to her and processing now, and she couldn't believe that she had just spoken to an Alpha like that. It was one thing speaking to Luke like that, because he was her step-father and had known her her whole life. But she had never spoken to another Alpha like that, without any respect or regard. She bit down on her lower lip and turned around to face him, trying not to let her utter appreciation for his looks show all over her face.

He was gorgeous.

Sinfully so.

With a full mouth that she wanted to lick and high cheekbones she wanted to kiss.

"I really want to be alone right now," Clary said quietly, trying to keep her voice even but knowing that there was a quiver to it, jutting her chin forward and meeting his eyes. He seemed to have himself more under control now, his eyes a beautiful molten gold colour now rather than the Alpha red, but it was still making her body feel weak and warm all over. "Please," she refused to back down, narrowing her eyes ever so slightly, knowing that were's appreciated strength. There was this strange expression on his face, the corner of his lips pulling a little, as though he didn't know whether to smile or frown.
Well, she's glad that she wasn't the only one confused as to how to react.

"Then let me take you home, so that I know you're safe, and then I'll leave you alone," he told her, his voice firm, as though he thought that if he spoke like that, she wasn't going to argue.

Unfortunately, he didn't know Clary.

"I can get home myself," she replied evenly. "I'm a competent adult." She pulled her phone out of the tiny handbag that she had over her shoulder, ducking her head and preparing to send off a text when the Alpha had moved and he was standing directly in front of her. Clary instinctively took a step backwards, putting a good few feet between them, but she couldn't stop herself from looking back up at him. "Look, you need to back off," she began, clenching her fingers tightly around her phone as something to anchor herself. "I don't know what's going on here, but—" whatever she was going to say next was cut off because she suddenly saw a cab beginning to pull away from the curb a few metres away, clearly just dropping someone off. She jumped to the edge of the sidewalk, waving her arm in the air, and driver inched forward, stopping next to her.

"Where are you—" the Alpha began as Clary jerked open the back door and practically threw herself. He grabbed the door, his fingers clenching around the metal as he stared down at her, leaving indents of his fingers. He could stop her if he really wanted to, but she had a feeling that he wouldn't. She looked up at him with firm eyes for a moment, and whatever he saw there, he seemed to realize that she needed to be alone right now.

"I need you to take me to the Riversdale Apartments," Clary said to the driver as the Alpha shifted his hand, releasing the metal door from his grip, even if it was a little bent now, and she pulled the door shut. "Twenty-six Avonhead Drive." The Alpha would undoubtedly be able to hear her destination even though the door was closed, but that wasn't something she could think about right now.

She just needed to get home.

The cab pulled away, and Clary refused to look out the window as they left the werewolf on the sidewalk, shaking in the seat.

"So you just let her go?" Alec grunted, appearing at Jace's side, the pair of them staring after the quickly disappearing cab, his arms crossed over his chest.

"I couldn't exactly force her to stay," Jace replied through clenched teeth, the feeling of watching her disappear making his control slip. His wolf was right under the surface of his skin, wanting to break free, and make sure that she got home safe. Or better yet, take her home with him.

"Actually, there are specific rulings saying that you can make her stay," Alec smirked and Jace rolled his eyes toward his friend. "There are literally laws around that."

"Not helping," Jace snapped and Alec just smirked again. The cab had gone and Jace took in a deep breath through his nose, trying to chase after any scent left behind by the red headed girl, but it had almost completely evaporated in the air, clouded by the scents of everyone else. Alec reached out and put his hand on his Alpha's shoulder, giving it a slight squeeze.

"What do you want to do?" He asked quietly.

"I think I'm gonna go home," Jace replied.

"You want me to call Izzy?" Alec questioned, already pulling his phone out of his back pocket.
Isabelle would definitely be surprised that they were coming back so early, although she would understand when she found out the reason.

"No, I'm fine," Jace shoved his hands into his pockets as he turned to start walking. Alec automatically moved to walk at his side but Jace paused and shook his head. "Go back to your place. I want to be alone." Alec looked hesitant at letting him go by himself, but Jace just gave him a hard look. Alec sighed and stopped, watching as Jace walked away, head bowed and shoulders hunched forward slightly. He wanted to follow after his Alpha, to make sure that he was okay, but he respected the request for him to be left alone.

Jace kept his head forward, avoiding the gaze of anyone on the street. It wouldn't be to long before he would be off the main street, because this place was probably less than a fifth of the size of cities that he had lived in previously. His house, the one that had been empty for all of the years that he had been gone from, was on the edge of the city, next to the forest which stretched on for miles. The forest itself was actually all part of the property owned by the Herondale's, so technically it was private property, although given how long they had been missing from the city, it was used by the general public.

He didn't have too much of a problem with that, although he would be making sure that it was empty on the night of full moons.

The girl—Clary, the beta had called out to her—was beautiful.

And stubborn, that was definitely clear.

He liked that.

Letting her go had been hard. In fact, it had been damn near impossible. He had almost ripped off the door of the cab when she had fell inside. His whole body was trying to force him to go after him, every single one of his senses was telling him not to let her out of his sight, to at least make sure that she got home safely.

But he had to think.

And the chemosignals that she was sending off said that she was confused and scared and even though she was putting on a brave face, he could tell that she wanted to be alone.

The first time he had picked up her scent had been in New York, when he was twenty-one. It was four years after his parents and their pack had been killed, and he still hadn't been any position to face the person who he could clearly smell to be his mate. When her scent had hit him—a rich mix of something flowery, that same, slightly bitter layer he had smelt tonight, warmth and comfort—it had thrown him through such a loop that he had fled from the club that he and his friends were in, and holed up in his apartment for the next week. All he had caught was a glimpse of red hair and a petite, fair skinned body a few steps in front of him. It had taken him a few weeks before he opened up to his closest friends about what had sent him running. They had tried to convince him to go back, to find the girl, but he had refused.

He wasn't ready for that.

Despite Alec and Isabelle being his pack, and being a part of their wider family with Robert and Maryse Lightwood and younger brother, Max Lightwood, a mate was something completely different. It was someone that both his human and his wolf embraced as their other half, and tied themselves to for the rest of their lives.
He hadn't been ready for that.

He was still recovering from loosing his parents, and the pack that he had been a part of since the day he was born.

He wasn't prepared to accept someone new into his life, not someone who had the potential to take over such a large part of it.

So he had avoided that club, he had avoided that whole part of the city in fact, for a long time, not wanting to risk crossing paths with her again. He had even gone as far as leaving New York for almost a year, going to the Werewolf Institute that was based in Italy.

When Jace's mind had finally settled down, he had finally let himself think about what he had lost by letting her go in the club that night. Not all werewolves met their mates. His parents hadn't been mates, and they had been happy. Alec and Magnus weren't mates, and they were disgustingly in love. There were too many people in the world for all werewolves to meet the person who was meant to completely balance them out and fill everything that was missing in their lives, for a lot of were's it was a pipe dream.

But Jace had the chance to be with that person, and he had walked away. He didn't think that he would ever have that opportunity again—it was the last thing he had thought he would get a second chance at when coming back to Raven Creek.

But he did know that he wasn't going to let her go again.
Jace woke with a start the next morning, his body covered in a light film of sweat. He couldn’t exactly remember what his nightmare was about, although he definitely knew that it would have been about his parents. It always was. But what had woken him had been this abrupt soothing scent that he knew his body was remembering from the night before when he had met her. His body was trying to tell him to go to her, because she would make everything better, and maybe it had been the realization that he couldn’t do that was what had woken him with a start.

Being back in this house was bringing back the nightmares that he had tried for so long to fight down and ignore. He had known that the memories of that night would all be dredged back up when he came back here, and even if he had thought that he had outgrown it, Alec and Isabelle had said it over and over again. It was going to take a while for his body and mind to readjust to being back in Raven Creek.

And with her being here...He didn’t know if that was going to help or hurt.

Jace shook his head to try and shake the girl out of his head because he had things that he needed to do today, and he needed to be focused. When he had gotten home last night, he had ripped off his jacket and shirt, shedding his shoes and then taking off into the forest behind his house, letting his body transform. His face became ridged, his teeth had lengthened, his fingers and toes had become clawed and his eyes had glowed red. He lost track of how long he was in the forest, running until even his supernatural body felt heavy and tired, and he fell into his bed without bothering to shower. He was regretting that this morning, given he had tracked mud into the house and his sheets were a mess, but the run had been worth it, to get out of his head and just run.

Today, he, Alec and Isabelle had to meet with the Alpha from the bordering town. He had been there for years and had quite a large pack. They needed to make peace amongst themselves, make sure their territories were clear, and the Alpha was also going to tell him about the were’s in Raven Creek who currently weren’t under an Alpha’s protection. There were apparently quite a few omega’s in Raven Creek, one’s who had moved in after the Herondale’s had left, leaving behind their own packs or not having one at all for various reasons. It wasn't the safe option for a werewolf, not having an Alpha, and it wasn't usually a preferred option either, because wolves were all about pack and family, but it happened. Now, with an Alpha in town, the most common thing for them to do would be for them to join his pack, to come under his protection and join together with his strength. If they didn’t join with him, and if things between him and that were weren't on good terms, then it would be the beta wolf that would be forced to leave town, because Raven Creek had always been Herondale territory.

The Alpha on the bordering town had been there for quite a few years, although he had come after Jace had left, after the death of his parents. Jace actually remembered the Alpha who had been there, he had been a bit of an asshole, and the agreement between Gabriel Reynolds and his own parents
had been a tense and uncomfortable one. Jace hoped that the new Alpha was better than the previous one.

Jace stripped his bed, and out of his clothes, trudging down the stairs to the laundry room and dumped them in the washing machine, turning it on a wash cycle. The house—it felt completely the same, and yet different at the same time. The lay out, the body of the house itself, it was all so familiar, it was home. It was where he had grown up. And in the years that he had been gone, it had been looked after, the Institute had made sure of that. However all the furniture in the house, it was all either brought from his apartment in New York, or brand new, and it just didn't feel right here, it didn't belong.

It was going to take some to get used to.

In the shower, Jace's muscles began to tense again. He knew that it was just his body getting ready for a hard day, and he really, really hoped that it wasn't going to be difficult, but it was better to be ready rather than unprepared. He rolled his shoulders, taking in deep breaths, trying not to let his body clench up to much, and without evening meaning to, his mind wandered back to her.

To Clary.

To his mate.

She had been so beautiful. Petite, but clearly strong, and the Angelic Power rune on her back showed that she was a Shadowhunter, which he hadn't realized when he had first seen her. Her green eyes had been fierce, framed by the dark eye makeup which made them spark and jump out at him, and Jace knew that even if he never saw her again, he would remember those eyes until the day he died.

His wolf instantly became restless at the idea of never seeing her again and he had to push those ideas out of his head.

Jace could hear Alec and Isabelle approaching before they knocked on the front door—he heard Isabelle's car park up outside, and then their feet crunching on the leaves and tracking through the compacted mud as they walked toward the house. It was Alec who knocked, two sharp knocks, and then they opened the front door, not waiting for the Alpha to answer the door. As he was getting dressed, he could hear his two beta's walk into the kitchen, helping themselves to things in the fridge and talking amongst themselves. After he changed, he walked down and raised an eyebrow at Isabelle, who was eating grapes and giving him a pointed look, her eyes narrowed.

"What?" Jace grunted, clearly able to tell that Isabelle had something to say. The girl just arched an eyebrow at him, her cherry red lips parting as she pressed another grape between them and then took a step closer to him. "Just get it over with, Iz, whatever you want to say."

"Alec told me you saw her—properly this time," she stated. Jace sighed and ran a hand through his shaggy golden hair, pulling at the ends which fell close to his shoulders. Isabelle was absolutely gorgeous, partly because of her genes, partly because of the perfect skin and toned figure that came from being a werewolf, and she cut quite an intimidating figure in jeans, boots and a cropped leather jacket.

Not for the first time, Jace was glad that she had his back, because with the narrow, piercing way that her eyes were fixed on him made him want to spill every secret he had, and he was meant to be the Alpha!

"We'll talk about it some other time," Jace muttered as he grabbed an apple from the fridge. "Right
now, we need to head out." Isabelle pursed her brightly coloured lips, but gave a short nod, swinging her keys up in front of her face. Jace snatched the keys away from her and stalked out of the house, hearing his two beta's following after him. Technically the car was Isabelle's, but unless he was drunk or high or injured, he was the one driving. The only reason he wasn't driving his own vehicle was because Magnus currently had his Camaro, which was a whole other story.

The trip to the bordering town took almost two hours. There were scatterings of houses between Raven Creek and Little Rock, but nothing bigger than a group of ten or eleven with a dairy or a garage, until they reached the boundary of Little Rock.

"Are you ready for this?" Alec asked quietly as the GPS announced that they were only a few blocks away from the Alpha's home. It was in a similar place to Jace's in Raven Creek, right on the edge of the town, backing onto the woods. It was a prime position for the central home of the pack to be, where they could escape into the trees and run wild when during the full moon. The windows were all down, and all the werewolves in the car could smell the overlapping scents of several wolves the closer they got to the address, a sure sign that they were surrounded by were's. Isabelle had been sitting in the backseat, legs crossed and primly examining her blood red nails, but now she was staring out the window, her nose twitching slightly.

"Yup," Jace stated shortly as they reached the end of the street which looked up at a sprawling home, a modern house that was all glass and metal and wood, with a huge backyard. They parked and got out slowly, Isabelle and Alec quickly taking their places on either side of Jace, their eyes moving around quickly. There were the scents of at least fifteen, probably more, wolves as they walked up the driveway, and Alec's shoulder were stiffened, his eyebrows pulled together.

The mingle of different scents from unknown were's along with a hundred different smells that Jace wasn't used to was overloading his senses, and he couldn't go into this meeting with a messy head. So he tuned out almost everything—everything except the steady heart beat of his beta's, Isabelle's confidence and Alec's loyalty. The two of the together fed his strength, as he lifted his hand and knocked on the wooden door. There were two heartbeats inside the house, both of them quite faint, although one steadily getting closer. The door swung open and the greeting on Jace's lips completely fell when he saw the woman behind the door.

"You must be Jace Herondale," Jocelyn greeted him, extending a hand.

Jace was still frozen, staring at her, completely caught off guard.

This woman was related to her.

She even looked like her!

Their scents were in no way the same, but there were definitely similarities.

"Uh," Jace blinked and cleared his throat, ignoring the raised eyebrow that Isabelle was giving him, and she would undoubtedly berate him for his 'weirdness' later on. "Yes. I'm Jace."

"I'm Jocelyn Garroway," she introduced herself, extending her hand. "I'm Luke's wife." She wasn't a werewolf, although as Jace's eyes skimmed over her he instantly caught a glimpse of a rune that was partially hidden by her shirt. She was a Shadowhunter, which would have been where the girl from yesterday got her angelic blood from.

"This is Alec and Isabelle Lightwood," Jace managed to say, introducing the two at his side as he took her hand and shook it firmly.
"Come on in," Jocelyn stepped aside to allow them both into the house. Jace was almost hesitant to step over the boundary, but he made sure he did so with confidence, waiting for Jocelyn to begin leading the way down the long, spacious hallway. It was lined with tinted windows, which let in the bright sunshine from outside in, but shielded them from prying eyes outside from the occasional passerby that would drive past the house on the edge of town. Not that the tinted windows stopped were's from being able to see through, but at least humans who past by couldn't.

It only took a few steps through the house before her scent hit him.

She had been here.

Must have been just in the past few days as well because it was still lingering in the hallways. Jace felt his jaw ache in that familiar way, his fangs threatening to drop, and he tried to will it away, because that would not be a good way to meet the Alpha. Alec cast a worried look across at him, obviously sensing his distress, and Jace pulled his phone out of his pocket, sending of a quick text to the wolf next to him. He wasn't going to say anything outloud and risk the Alpha just a few rooms away hearing them.

And then he caught sight of a picture hanging on the wall and almost tripped over his own feet.

It was of her.

Maybe a few years ago, looking absolutely gorgeous next to Jocelyn and who he knew was Luke Garroway from photos that he had been shown. It looked as though it had been their wedding day, and she was standing right next to them, smiling widely, hair blowing everywhere, purple dress long and billowing. Beside her was the werewolf from last night, the slightly nerdy looking one who had called out to her, wearing a suit and grinning.

"That was three years ago," came a deep voice from behind Jace, and it definitely spoke to how distracted he was given he hadn't sensed another Alpha walking towards him. Jace tensed, his eyes beginning to spark, but he blinked it away so that they weren't glowing when he half turned to face Luke. The dark skinned man inclined his head in a greeting nod, giving him a tentative but friendly smile. "That's my step-daughter, Clarissa," he continued. "And her best friend, Simon. They both actually live in Raven Creek."

"We're aware," Alec's comment was barely audible, and Jocelyn probably didn't hear it at all, but the were's in the room all heard, and Luke lifted an eyebrow at the beta. Alec just fixed his gaze on a spot on the wall behind Luke's head, not meeting his eyes in defiance but showing that he wasn't worried.

"Right, well, should we proceed?" Luke nodded toward a partially open door that looked as though it lead to a study. As he approached, he glanced back to where Alec and Isabelle were standing, watching their Alpha carefully. "I'm assuming that it's just going to be the two of us?" He asked as Jace took a few steps toward him, still trying to get his head around the fact that this girl—his mate—was the step daughter of an Alpha.

"Yes," Jace jerked his head in a nod, sending a look toward the two betas. "Just us."

Clary woke up pretty early the next morning. For one, blissful moment, she had completely forgotten about what had happened last night, and she was prepared to get out bed and have a shower. She was going to start her day; maybe do some painting, give Lydia a call and go out for lunch, and then go to yoga class with Helen that night so that Helen can perv at the hot instructor, Aline Penhallow.
And then everything came crashing down.

The reason *why* she was waking up early and not completely hungover.

The Alpha.

Clary groaned and pulled the covers back over her head, falling back to sleep.

When she woke up again, the sun was streaming through the windows, and when she fumbled around for her phone, pulling it off it's charger, she saw that it was after lunch. It wasn't usual for her to sleep in quite this late, but after what happened last night, she was going to give herself a pass.

"Fuck this," Clary grumbled as she splayed her arms out above her head and stared pathetically at the ceiling. "Fuck him. Fuck my life," she even pathetically kicked her legs a couple of times like a kid throwing a temper tantrum. After laying in bed for half an hour longer, playing Halsey on her phone, she finally dragged herself out of bed. She didn't feel like painting, and she didn't feel like going out for lunch, so she dressed in a pair of leggings, a sports bra and a baggy singlet and left the house with ear buds blaring in her ears and water bottle in her hand.

It wasn't often that Clary ran, usually her physical activity was limited to her kick boxing classes, yoga with the girls and the occasional sparring match with Luke and the rest of his pack. But when she ran, she would disappear in her head for hours. Years of trying to keep up with werewolves had done all sorts of miracle things for her stamina, and the angel blood running through her veins helped. Her go-to place to run was in the forest that surrounded Raven Creek, and thankfully the best trails which didn't attract too many people weren't too far from her home, and she reached them after ten or so minutes.

She ran until the blood rushing in her ears was almost louder than the sound of Three Days Grace pounding in her ears. Sweat was dripping down her back and she knew her face was probably an unattractive tomato shade of red, and her hair was damp, little strands curling around the nape of her neck. She was so deep in forest that it was going to take her a while to get back, and Clary had finished the rest of her water about ten minutes ago.

"Shit," Clary slumped against a tree, bracing her hands on her knees as she took in a couple of gulping breaths. She tugged the cords connecting to her ear buds out of her ears and just listened to the sounds of nature around her, birds and the wind in the trees.

And then something that was distinctively *not* part of nature.

A heavy footfall, pressing down into dried leaves and snapping a twig.

Clary spun around, eyes narrowed and hands curled into fists at her side as she searched out who was disturbing the peace.

"I didn't mean to frighten you," Jace murmured as he stepped closer to her, coming out from where he had been hidden by the trees. Clary blinked when she saw him, her eyes widening when she saw the Alpha. "Hi," his breathing hitched a little.

"Hi," Clary breathed.
"What are you doing here?" Clary asked, folding her arms over her chest and hoping that she wasn't still heaving in breaths like she had been suffocated. She was already bright red and sweating right through her sports bra and singlet, she didn't need to look like a gaping mouthed fish while she was at it.

"I, uh," Jace raised an eyebrow at her as he lifted his index finger and waved it around them. "I own all of this." She frowned as she glanced around, and then paused while looking in south, back toward the town.

"Right," she muttered, swiping the back of her hand over her sweaty forehead. "The Herondale Alpha and all," there was a slight sarcastic twinge to her voice that she could have kicked herself over. She couldn't believe the way that she was acting around this man—this Alpha—that she barely knew. It wasn't that she was some girl who just rolled over and showed her throat, but she knew all about respect and the hierarchy. She had been taught better than this her whole life, to treat Alpha's with the respect that their position called for, at least until they proved that they didn't deserve that respect. Just as she knew Luke, who was a good, caring Alpha, she also knew exactly what it was like to be around a nasty, power-hungry Alpha.

Jace didn't strike her as that kind of Alpha, but she still didn't know him, so she shouldn't be mouthing off.

"I don't care if you come here or anything," Jace told her abruptly, pursing his lips as his eyes shifted from where they had been looking her up and down to a spot just past her ear.

"How big of you," Clary mumbled, barely loud enough for him to hear. She shifted from foot to foot, feeling them pulse a little in the running shoes that she was wearing and she winced, knowing that they were going to be aching by the time she got home.

"You okay?" He asked, tilting his head to the side.

"I'm fine," Clary answered shortly, stretching out her legs before looking up at the sky, noting the way it wasn't quite as sunny as it was before. In fact, it was rapidly turning grey, and if Clary had been a werewolf, she didn't doubt that she would be able to smell rain coming.

"Did you drive here?" Jace asked. "You might want to start heading back—it smells like rain." Clary hid her smirk by ducking her head at the conclusion she had already drawn. She might not be a were, but she had picked up on a lot of things from growing up around them, and the angel blood in her veins also gave her an edge, even if she wasn't an active Shadowhunter.

"I'll be fine," she stated.

"I live just on the edge of the forest," Jace's eyes shifted back to her and there was something in his eyes that she couldn't quite read. "You could always wait there until it passes." She frowned, ready to refuse, but she caught by the intensity in his golden flecked eyes. She stared at him, not liking the fact that he confused her. She wasn't sure how long they stared at each other, but there was this tension crackling in the air, like dry electricity, and then there was a dull red glow in his eyes, one that he was clearly trying to fight, and she dropped her gaze.

"I should start heading back," Clary said, ignoring his invitation. She turned to move back to the track just as the first drop of rain fell and splashed against her cheek, tracking down her sweaty skin.
She ignored it and took another step, and then more rain drops fell, quickly picking up a steady pace. She could keep walking, and get absolutely drenched and freezing on the run home, which was going to take her at least half an hour given how long she had been running, or she could take Jace up on his offer. She looked back at the wolf, who was just watching her with a raised eyebrow. "Okay, Alpha," the words had a slightly teasing edge to them but there was a flare in his eyes despite that. "Lead the way."

"It's not too far," he murmured, taking off at a brisk jog. Clary ran after him, her legs needing to pump a little faster to keep up with him. By the time they reached the house on the edge of the forest, the rain was falling steadily. Everyone knew the Herondale house—it was massive, and it was legendary. There was a high, rock wall surrounding the sprawling home, with leafy veins climbing over it, and the grounds themselves looked a little overgrown. Clearly, though, there had been someone tending to them because given the years he had been gone and the place had been empty, this place would be an utter mess if someone hadn't been keeping an eye on it.

Clary could imagine that this was the kind of place that had a reputation as haunted, and she wondered how many teenagers had used it as a make out spot or a drinking hide out when it had been empty.

The rain was getting harder as Jace entered a code into the wrought iron gate on the side and lead the way inside, his breathing completely even despite their pace, and Clary tried not to wheeze. She was in good shape, she always had been, but she had been running for so long now that her body was pretty much ready to fall into a hot bath and her lungs felt as though they had been deprived of air for far too long.

"You don't need to take off your shoes," Jace muttered as he opened the front door and stepped inside. "The floors are kind of scuffed up anyway," there was something about his tone that made Clary want to question him, but she kept quiet, pressing her lips together. She couldn't help herself from gazing around curiously, surprised when she saw that the place was mainly empty. There was furniture, just not enough to full a house, and as they passed by the lounge she paused and frowned at the lay out. "What?" Jace asked, looking back at her.

"I..." Clary didn't know what to say as she took in the expensive leather L shaped couch in the room with black and grey cushions tossed on it, facing an TV that was held up on the wall with a bracket. She bit down on her lip as she looked up at Jace, unable to explain this heaviness that had settled in her chest. Jace was staring at her, an inexpiable look on his face as he stared down at her. "It doesn't look right?" It came out as a question and Clary regretted it the instant the words came out of her mouth because for one; they made absolute no sense. Who was she to know what belonged in this room? And secondly; the moment she said the sentence, hurt settled over Jace's face and he dropped his gaze to the ground.

And she felt that hurt.

Just like she had felt that bolt of energy and warmth and love, or something that felt a whole lot like it, when he had touched her at the club.

"Uh," Clary took a step back, her eyebrows knitted together and shaking her head, trying to get rid of the pain she was feeling in her heart, the pain that was most definitely not hers. A shiver ran through her as she tried to think of something to fill the silence, reminding her that her clothes were soaked right through. That made her realize how cold she was and she shivered again, and that seemed as though it snapped Jace out of wherever he had disappeared to in his head.

"Did you want to throw your stuff in the dryer?" He asked.
"Thanks," Clary nodded. Jace was about to turn toward the kitchen, which lead through to the laundry room.

"Oh, uh, my name is Jace by the way. I forgot we weren't properly introduced," he awkwardly extended his right hand to her. Clary pursed her lips together, hesitating before reaching out to take his hand. She wasn't sure what she was expecting, but the last time they had touched there had been an almost a disorientating wave rush over her and she wasn't too keen for a repeat. But there was nothing, nothing except a firm handshake.

"I'm Clary," she told him. Jace nodded and then turned back to carry on walking.

The way he flexed his right hand at his side didn't go unnoticed by her, and she felt a strange heat in her stomach.

"Here," he stopped in a room that was connected to the kitchen. "You can take everything off and throw your clothes in and get them dry." She stared at him, a smirk pulling at the corner of her mouth as she waited for him to process what he had just said. It took him a minute and then his cheeks adorably flushed. "I'll grab you some of my clothes—"

"I don't think so, pal," she quirked an eyebrow at him. "I know all about you were's and your scenting. Me wearing your clothes is going to do all sorts of things to your wolf that we're not getting into right now, especially since you're an Alpha." His cheeks seemed to go an even darker shade of red, which Clary found endearing, if not surprising. He had seemed pretty damn confident when she had seen him in the club, but he was coming off almost as shy now. "Just bring me a bathrobe or a blanket or something. I'll get undressed and shut the door, just knock when you come back." Jace stared at her for a beat and then nodded. Clary waited until she heard his footsteps fade on the wooden floors, and then shut the door, leaning against it.

This was strange.

Whatever feelings she kept getting from Jace—they were strange.

That happiness at the club, the sadness now—that wasn't normal.

Werewolves's could take away people's pain, touching someone to drain their physical ailments although they couldn't heal them, only dull the aches. Sometimes they could also soothe mental pain, calming the minds of people around them. It was most effective with their own packs, ones that they had close ties to, but it also worked with others, just not quite as strong. Were's naturally had a supernatural element running through their bodies, and some of them had more of a magical spark, where they could press their feelings onto others. But just like with taking someone's pain, it generally only worked intensely with pack members, definitely not people that they barely knew.

Clary took in a deep breath, trying to clear her mind and push the confusion away.

She was just here to wait out the rain, get her clothes dry, and then she was heading straight back home.

Jace took the steps two at a time, his movements silent throughout the house as he made his way to the linen cupboard next to one of the guest bedroom doors. He couldn't help but listen closely to Clary—he could hear her heartbeat slowing down as she caught her breath after her run, and he could hear the rustling as she undressed. That idea alone made him need to take in a few breaths of his own and fight away the thoughts that were quickly rising.

He hadn't even thought about the fact that the clothes he was planning on grabbing her would smell
like him, surrounding her in his scent and making her feel even more like his. As soon as she had said it though, the wolf inside him had almost howled at the idea of her smelling like him, and it had taken all of his strength not to let his eyes go red, even though he knew that his cheeks most definitely had. He had quickly escaped from the laundry room and run upstairs to calm himself down.

She was his mate.

She was in his house.

His wolf wanted her to stay—and like Alec had reminded him the other night at the club, there were rules that meant he had a legal right to keep her close by him. In fact, he could require her to stay in this house and she would have to. There was a rule around werewolves who had human mates, where humans had to stay with a were for at least six months. If the bond didn't take on their side, then there was a ritual that could break that bond. The reason for the ruling was because human's didn't feel the bond as strongly as were's did before the mate bond was complete, and so it could take them longer to respond. However with a wolf, there was only ever one mate for them. If the six months passed by, the human decided they didn't want to be with the werewolf and the ritual was done to break the bond, that was something that the wolf could never get back.

But he didn't want to force her to stay.

It made her seem like property, something to be owned, and that wasn't what Jace wanted.

Hell, he wanted her, but he didn't want her like that.

Jace tried to bring his mind back to the present, but then he remembered the way she had called him 'Alpha' when they were out in the forest, and even though she had clearly been teasing him, that word coming from her mouth...Jace was glad she wasn't a werewolf, or she would have been able to smell the arousal coming off him in waves. He wasn't entirely certain that she hadn't sensed it anyway, given how observant the redhead seemed to be.

"Come on, wolf man," Clary wasn't speaking any louder than normal volume, so she was clearly relying on the fact he was listening to her through the floor and the walls seperating them. "I'm getting cold down here." Jace couldn't stop his grin as he grabbed a fresh towel and one of the folded up bathrobes that Isabelle had forced him to buy when he had moved in. He walked back downstairs and knocked twice on the door that she had closed. As soon as she opened it, he was hit with the blatant, naked smell of her skin, given she must have stripped off all her clothes, and he was glad that she couldn't see him.

He knew for a fact that his eyes would be glowing bright red.

"So are you planning on staying here long?" Clary continued to speak in a level tone, not bothering to raise her voice as he heard her shuffling around on the other side of the door. To busy himself, he filled up the jug and turned it on, planning on making them something hot to drink.

"Uh, yeah," Jace cleared his throat, lifting his own voice so that she could hear his response. "I think I am."

"Have you spoken to the nearby Alpha?" He heard the sound of the door open for the dryer, and a moment later it turned on and the door opened. Jace blinked as he took her in, clothed only in the short flannel bathrobe, her hair now loose from it's ponytail, wet and falling around her face.

"You mean your step father?" There wasn't much point in pretending he didn't know who she was, it
was all going to come out anyway. Clary raised an eyebrow as she moved around to lean against the centre island on the opposite side of where he was standing, clasping her hands in front of him.

"That's the one," Clary nodded. "Although he's more just like my dad, loose the whole step thing."

"Okay. And, yes, I have," Jace pulled out two mugs from the cupboard and then held up a jar of coffee as a question. Clary nodded as she watched him move. "I saw your photo on the wall at his place."

"And undoubtedly smelt me there," Clary's words were off-handed, not making it sound like it was anything strange. And it wasn't—not to a werewolf. But just the way she was responding to him—the comment about his scenting, not bothering to raise her voice because she knew that he could hear her, and the comment about him being able to scent her. The completely comfortable way that she talked about such common things for wolves just made him want her more, because clearly she accepted the wolf side.

"That to," Jace nodded. He quietly made them both coffee and handed it over to her. It had been almost mechanical, making his own black with no milk or sugar, and then making hers with a dash of milk and two sugars. He hadn't even thought about it as he handed it to her, but when she saw her take a sip and widen her eyes in surprise, he realized that he had gotten her coffee right. "Lucky guess," he muttered by way of explanation, lowering his eyes and sipping from his own mug.

"Right," Clary didn't look as though she believed him, but she moved on. "So the guy who was with you the other night? He your beta?"

"He's part of my pack, yeah," Jace nodded. "His name is Alec."

"You didn't turn him?"

"No, he's like me," Jace replied as he drank more from his coffee. "He's a born wolf."

"Oh, right," she nodded in understanding. "Is he the only one who came with you?"

"His sister, Isabelle, and Alec's boyfriend is coming down in a few days as well. He's a warlock—would probably be pissed if I said he was part of my pack and I was his Alpha, but he knows it just as well as I do," Jace smiled a little at the thought of Magnus. The warlock was an incredibly powerful Downworlder, in fact he had been dubbed as the new up and coming High Warlock of New York by a lot of people, although currently Ragnor Fell held that title, and was nearly a thousand years old and still going strong. Jace and Magnus hadn't got on particularly well when he and Alec had first started seeing each other, but now Jace was fiercely protective of him, and even if Magnus might not be too happy about it, but he smelt of Jace, and the Alpha's scent warned off other supernaturals.

"Did you grow up with them? Alec and Isabelle?" Clary continued, her eyes carefully studying him.

"Yeah, I'd always been close to them and then I moved to New York with them after—" he broke off, swallowing hard and Clary felt another wave of sadness hit her. It was a lot to process, and she still didn't understand why she was feeling this pain from him. She tried to ignore the heaviness on her chest, assuming that Jace was meaning that he had moved in with them after his parents had been killed, and she pushed on.

"I actually lived in New York for a while," she told him as she finished off her cup of coffee. "It was beautiful, I absolutely loved it." Jace decided now wasn't the time to tell her that he, in fact, knew she had been in New York. "But it wasn't home, you know?"
"So you came back here? To your pack?"

"Uh," Clary shrugged, although there was an uncomfortable look on her face that Jace wanted to ask about, but he didn't. "I guess. Something like that. Luke didn't used to live in Little Rock, we used to further away, but then there was a run in with Gabriel, uh, the previous Alpha, and Luke ended up taking over his territory."

"I remember Gabriel," Jace grimaced. "He was an ass." Clary let out a snort and there was a smile pulling at the corner of her mouth for the first time, and Jace was proud of himself for putting it there.

"That's putting it mildly," she agreed. They fell into a comfortable silence for a few beats, and then there was a beep from the laundry room. Clary cleared her throat and straightened up, putting down the cup on the bench. "That'll be my clothes," she said and looked past him, out the window. "It's stopped raining," she stated. "I should be off."

"Uh, you can stay for a bit...I-if you want," Jace fumbled over the invitation, and Clary looked as though she might give him another smile. She bit it back though, and gave a shake of her head. It was still an improvement over the snarkiness and nervousness she had shown toward him the first two times they had met.

"It's okay—but thank you," Clary nodded and walked away from him, into the laundry room. She shut the door and he heard her opening up the dryer door and pulling out her clothes. He was itching to stop her from leaving, to the point where his claws felt as though they were trying to push through his fingers in his frustration. When she came back out of the laundry room, she was back in her clothes which were dry and also her shoes, which were still wet. She handed the bathrobe over to Jace, carefully avoiding contact with his hands, which frustrated him a little. "I'll see you around," she gave him a nod and was heading out of the house without a glance backward.

"See you around," Jace repeated back to her as his fingers curled into the bathrobe, which was still warm from her body, and smelt strongly of her.

Of strawberry, and comfort, and love—and it made him feel on the verge of losing control.

This whole thing was ridiculous.

He was an Alpha, he had been learning control all his life, and he was the one that the rest of his pack turned to when they needed control.

And yet it was just taking one girl to undo all of that.
Chapter 5

Maybe it was unhealthy that he kept the bathrobe Clary had worn laying over the chair in the corner of his room. It's just it smelt so good, a little bit like rain, and a lot like the warmth and flowery scent that surrounded his mate. It had been three days since Jace had seen her, and Isabelle had come into his room last night to put away some of his washing and had smelt it in the corner. She had raised an eyebrow at him and opened her mouth to say something, but when Jace flashed his red eyes at her and she had pressed her lips together, settling for giving him a knowing look.

"What's going on?" Alec frowned out the window of the coffee house that they were having breakfast at, looking at the red and blue lights that were flashing at the end of the street as the police cars flew past. The sirens were piercing to their advanced hearing, but they were steadily travelling further away and getting fainter, and Jace just shrugged.

"Probably nothing," he replied as he shoveled a forkful of bacon and egg into his mouth.

"That was like four cop cars," Alec pointed out, a wrinkle between his eyebrows as he listened in to conversations scattering the street, trying to pick up on anything that was related to the reason why there were so many police cars driving past. "No one knows what it's about."

"It's probably nothing," Jace repeated.

"Four cars," Alec repeated right back at him.

"The cops out here probably never get any action, so there's one teenager going a couple of miles over the limit and they send out the whole station," Jace shrugged. "I remember one night when me and Seb broke into the high school to use the swimming pool. They sent in the sheriff to drag us out of there." Alec smirked at the idea of his cousin being dragged back home in front of his parents, undoubtedly dripping wet, by the sheriff of the town. Stephen and Celine Herondale were incredible parents and powerful werewolves—Stephen being one of the strongest Alpha's around—but they were both known to have tempers.

"You heard anything from him lately?" Alec asked as he drank from his black coffee.

"Seb?" Jace raised an eyebrow. Alec nodded. "Nah, not in a while," he twisted his mouth as though he had tasted something unpleasant and then looked back down at his plate. Alec watched him for a moment and then leaned back in his seat, folding his arms over his chest. "What?"

"You're not still keeping an eye on him?" Alec asked carefully, knowing that things always got a little frosty when Sebastian was brought into conversation.

"I check in every now and then," Jace said shortly. "He's doing what he does best—looking out for number one. Himself." Alec pursed his lips and watched the Alpha for a few more minutes before leaning forward and continuing to eat. Minutes went by quietly until they had almost finished and then Jace's phone started vibrating in his pocket. He pulled it out and checked the caller ID, frowning and holding it up for Alec to see that it was a blocked ID. "Hello?" He answered gruffly.

"Is this Jace Herondale?" Alec could hear the females voice from the other side of the table.

"Yes," Jace responded.

"This is Helen Blackthorne, calling from Raven Creek PD dispatch," she continued. "I'm calling on behalf of Sheriff Jeremiah to ask that you attend a crime scene on the border of the town. I can give
you the address." Alec was already getting off his seat and pulling on his jacket. Jace got up as well and tucked his phone between his ear and his shoulder, jerking his wallet out of his back pocket. Helen rattled off the address and Jace knew vaguely where it was, knowing that it wouldn't be too hard to follow the sound of police sirens which he could still hear in the distance.

"I'm driving," Jace grunted, holding out his hand for the keys from Alec. Alec tossed the keys for the Mercedes across to him. "Can't wait for my car to get down here."

"Magnus will be here soon," Alec reassured him. "And you know that he's going to take good care of your baby."

"I still can't believe that I trusted that warlock to be in charge of my car," Jace hissed through his teeth.

"Well, that was Magnus' condition for moving down here," there was a smirk pulling at the corner of Alec's mouth as he thought about the coy smile on his boyfriend's face when he had told Jace the 'only way I'm moving out of my city is if you pass over those keys'.

"That's bullshit and you know it," Jace grumbled under his breath as he moved around to the driver's door. "Bastard warlock ripped me off. We all know that he would have moved here no matter what, he's too hung up on you." Alec grinned—an actual, genuine grin—which only really happened when Magnus was either around or part of the conversation. They got into the car and Jace pulled away from the curb without bothering to put on his seatbelt. It was easy enough to find the crime scene that Helen was talking about, and both Jace and Alec were hearing snippets of conversations as they parked the car and moved swiftly through the crowds of people.

The words 'werewolf attack' kept being repeated and Alec frowned over at Jace, whose eyebrows were pulled together as his stride lengthened. As soon as they reached the front of the crowd where a couple of deputies were blocking off the crowd, they stepped aside to let the two werewolves through.

"Where's the sheriff?" Alec grunted at one of the uniformed officers. One of them pointed across at a small grouping of men. There were a few tangled scents; metallic blood, fear, confusion, stale sweat. Jace's frown deepened as he reached the men and cleared his throat, Alec crossing his arms and glaring around them.

"What's going on, Sheriff Jeremiah?" Jace asked as he approached the tall, pale man who was wearing a sheriff badge on his belt. He vaguely remembered Jeremiah when he lived here years ago, when he was a teenager and Jeremiah had been a deputy. Jeremiah pointed toward where there was a black tarpaulin a couple of metres ago, and as Jace stepped closer, the blood and flesh becoming more pungent. Before one of the officers pulled back the tarpaulin, Jace and Alec knew a couple of things already.

It was a dead body underneath that tarpaulin.

And it hadn't been there for long; given it didn't smell like rotting flesh. Both boys unfortunately both knew what that smell like.

"You ready?" The officer who was kneeling beside the tarpaulin glanced up at them, carefully avoiding Jace's eyes out of respect. Jace jerked his head in a nod and the officer pulled back the sheet, revealing the body underneath.

"Shit," Alec breathed. Jace didn't say anything, just stared down at the body of the man. Their assumptions as approaching had been correct, the body hadn't been there long at all, perhaps a few hours at most. The blood that was spilling from the gashes in his body hadn't completely seeped into
the soft dirt underneath the body. There were a couple of damp leaves that had fallen down from the
tree above, but given how untouched the body was—apart from the obvious bites and deep, carved
lacerations—it was clear that it was fresh.

There was also the smell of a werewolf.

It wasn't strong, and there was something a bit off about it, but it was definitely a were.

"Do you recognize it?" Alec asked, his voice low.

"No," Jace murmured. "Although it's been years since I've been back here, I don't know all the
werewolves around here."

"That's why we've got a nearby Alpha coming in," came a voice from behind them, Jace and Alec
turning around to face the man. Jace and Alec had been aware of the other officers walking around
them, so they had known that there were several men waiting directly behind them, but Jace was
catched off guard when he realized that he recognized the man standing there. The beta, from the club
the other night, who had been there with Clary. "Deputy Simon Lewis," Simon nodded at Jace
shortly, letting his eyes flash gold before dropping his gaze. "I know that you met Luke the other day—"

"He's coming in?" Jace cut him off, wanting to get straight to the point.

"Yes," Simon nodded again.

"Do you recognize the scent? The were scent, not the man's," Jace asked intently. Simon hesitated,
glancing back at Sheriff Jeremiah, and then shook his head. "Why did you stop? Before shaking
your head?"

"I—" Simon paused and then shrugged. Jace could pick up on the uncertainty coming off the
younger man in waves, but there was nothing dishonest in his expression. "I don't recognize the
exact scent, but I think I've smelt it before. I don't know the werewolf though."

"You think Luke might have an idea?" Jace raised an eyebrow.

"Maybe. If it's a were from around here, then I would recognize it, I've been here for years, just like

"Officer," Sheriff Jeremiah's voice was deep as he stepped up next to Jace and Alec. "Cover the
body." The man still crouching tugged the tarpaulin up so that the man's body was covered again
before he got to his feet.

"Do you know who it is?" Alec asked. "The body," he clarified.

"ID says Elliott Watson," Simon spoke up. "The address is from about forty-five minutes away.
Maybe he came in for dinner or something, meeting with a friend."

"How long has he been dead?" Alec scrunched up his nose as he tentatively sniffed at the air. "It's
not long."

"That's correct," Sheriff Jeremiah nodded. "Perhaps three to six hours." Jace sighed as he twisted his
neck to look over his shoulder, looking at the crowds of people who were bunching up around the
yellow tape that was keeping the public far back from the crime scene. There were a couple of were's
in the crowd, and they would undoubtedly be able to hear everything that was being said and
probably be able to catch glimpses of the body. "Neither of the were's on my squad recognize the
man or any scent of the killer. We don't want to move the body before Alpha Garroway gets here, in case there's something that he picks up on."

"And what are we doing here?" Alec grunted, speaking for Jace, who was still looking through the crowd, trying to catalog every face he was seeing.

"As the Alpha in town, it was our duty to inform you," Sheriff Jeremiah was speaking directly to Jace, skimming over Alec.

"Keep us informed of the progress," Jace said shortly before looking toward Simon, who was speaking to another officer that Jace identified as a were as well. He took a few steps over to him and cleared his throat pointedly. Both of the officers turned to him, chin tilted to the side slightly to expose their necks. "Tell Luke to text or call me if there's anything I can help with, I know that you're close to him," There was a flare of surprise in Simon's eyes but he nodded his head. "Alec, let's go." Alec was at his side in an instant, the two of them walking toward the crowd of people, heading in the direction of their car.

It was still early morning, and most of the people who were crowed around the yellow tape would have been people on their way to work. There was a slight chill in the ear, most people were wrapped up in their jackets, and Jace shoved his hands into his pocket and rolled his neck. Werewolves temperatures ran a whole lot hotter than humans, so while the humans were huddling under several layers of clothes, he was enjoying the breeze against his face. As they moved through the crowd, both were's scented the air for anything out of the usual. There was nothing suspicious about any of them, all of their scents a mix of confusion and worry and interest.

"You okay?" Alec asked quietly, words clipped as they got into the car and Jace turned on the engine.

"Not what I thought I would need to be dealing with in my first week here," Jace uttered as he turned the Mercedes SUV around and pressed his foot on the accelerator. He wasn't worried about being pulled over, with all the cops in the town probably at the crime scene, and he drove in the direction of the apartment building where Alec and Isabelle were staying. They parked the car and opted to run up the stairs to the fourth storey rather than waiting for the elevator to come down.

"What happened?!" Isabelle demanded the moment they opened the door, the dark haired girl striding toward them, her eyes glowing bright gold. "Are you okay—I can smell blood," her nose twitched. "It's not yours—who's blood do you smell like? Fuck, Alec, who did you piss off this time?!"

"Shit, Iz, calm down," Alec rolled his eyes at his sister. "It's not us.

"There was a body," Jace's expression was stony as he shut the apartment door behind them. Isabelle's head snapped to look in his direction, glaring, her eyes flashing gold, and he began retelling the events of the morning to his beta.

Clary woke up to her phone ringing, and she groaned as she reached out to jerk it off the bedside table, wincing at the bright screen in the dark room. It was Helen, and Clary let out another loud groan when she saw the time above her friend's name announce that it was almost nine o'clock in the morning. She hadn't gotten home until almost two the night before—her and Lydia deciding to go out for mid-week wines and having just a few too many. She didn't have to take a class until eleven, and she was planning on using her steele to burn a recovery rune onto her skin.

Just because she wasn't an active Shadowhunter, didn't mean she didn't revel in the perks every now
and then of having Angel blood.

The phone stopped ringing and she face planted her warm pillow, closing her eyes and wondering if there was any point in trying to go back off to sleep until her alarm went off in about half an hour. But then her phone started ringing again, this time it was Simon's ringtone—*Teenage Dirtbag*—and Clary sighed. She kept her eyes narrowed in slits as she answered the call, closing them once she had swiped her thumb over the screen.

"Seriously, what the fuck is it with you guys waking me up? This better be a call to let me know that Dave Franco has showed up in town, completely single and ready to mingle," Clary growled into the phone. Simon was quiet for a moment and then she heard him intake a sharp breath.

"Clary, someone's been killed," he told her quietly. Clary's eyes flashed open and she sat up in her bed, swallowing hard.

"What the fuck? When? Where? Who?!

"No one we know, it's okay," Simon continued quickly. "Well, it's not okay, but...It's not someone we know," he assured her. "There's a scent of a were but neither me or Bat recognize the scent, so they're having Luke come in, and he'll probably be bringing Gretel and maybe Alaric." Gretel Simmons was Luke's second in command, with Alaric Bean being his third, both of who had been around since Clary was a little girl, all a part of her extended family. "I just wanted to give you a heads up."

"Probably why Helen was trying to call me," Clary muttered as she rubbed her hand over her forehead, feeling a slight ache in her temples from the amount of alcohol that she had had last night.

"Probably," Simon agreed. "Uh, Alpha Herondale and his second—the dark haired one who looks like he has a stick up his ass and smells perpetually pissed off—were here, and they didn't recognize the scents either—"

"Jace was there?" Clary asked before she could help herself.

"Jace?" Simon's voice lifted in pitch with surprise. Clary hadn't seen Simon since her run in with Jace during the weekend when she had gone into the woods, so she hadn't gotten around to telling him about their meeting. Although, she had seen Lydia last night, and she hadn't told her either. She wasn't too sure why, given Lydia was one of her best friends and usually they gossiped around everything, especially boys, but something about their meeting just felt personal.

He had let her into his childhood home, somewhere that he had only just come back to after being gone for so many years, and that ache in her chest when she had been looking into his lounge felt so real, as though it was her own pain. She knew it was his, and he must had been radiating some pretty insanely intense vibes for her to be able to pick up on them, and for that reason alone, she just didn't feel right talking about it.

"Clary?" Simon's voice was questioning and she realized that she had zoned out.

"Sorry," she cleared her throat. "Look, I'm still in bed. I need to get up and have a shower, and then I guess I should probably head into work. Keep me updated, okay?"

"Be careful," Simon told her, concerned. "I know you can kick ass with the best of them, but just..."

"It's okay, Si," Clary murmured. "I've got this."

"Okay," Simon sighed. "I'm sure Luke will come and check on you anyway, once he leaves."
"Yeah, you know he will. Protects me like I'm one of his pups," she joked lightly.

"That's because you are," Simon shot back. "You're his favourite."

"Well, you can't fault him on that. I'm pretty fucking awesome," Clary smiled tightly. "Anyway, I better go. Love you, Si."

"Love you too, Clare."
Chapter 6

Most Friday nights it was all about being together, and tonight was no different. It was especially important given the whole town seemed to be on edge with the murder that the police had absolutely no clue about. It was a werewolf who had murdered the man, but both Luke and Jace had informed people they didn’t recognize the scent, which should assure people that the were’s who were in the town were free and clear, but that didn’t stop the typical xenophobia.

Friday nights were important because for Simon, as a werewolf, needed physical contact. Aside from the obvious things such as protection and family, having a pack and an Alpha also meant that they got the contact that they craved. Without a pack, Clary and Lydia were more than happy to fill the void in Simon's life. Clary had lived with were's almost all her life, and so that contact that came with pack was like second nature to her. And then when Maia Roberts, a werewolf, and her human boyfriend, Jordan Kyle, had moved into the township as well, they joined in with their little huddle.

"Hey, sweetie," Lydia sung out as she opened the door to Clary's apartment and stepped inside, carrying a plastic bag with a couple of bags of chips and a bottle of wine. "How you doing?"

"I'm good," Clary replied with a grin as she put the paintbrushes that she had been using into a jar of water to let them soak. She opened up a couple more of the high up windows so that the fumes didn't hang around in the room and soak into the curtains. She loved the smell of paint, the sharp smell of it and the mentholated spirits. Simon and a couple of other were's told her that she constantly had the smell around her, as though it was just part of her natural scent.

"You hear anything else about that man? The one who was killed?" Lydia asked a little quieter as she unpacked the plastic bag onto the kitchen bench, going over to the cupboard and pulling out three wine glasses, in preparation for Maia joining them as well.

"Nah," Clary shook her head as she joined Lydia in the kitchen and turned on the taps at the sink, washing her hands thoroughly, scratching at the paint that was underneath her fingernails. "Luke came over the day it happened, and he wanted me to come back to Little Rock to stay with him and mum, but I wouldn't go. So instead he's come up with every reason under the sun to call me at least three times a day, and funnily enough, there's been a member of his pack drop by today and yesterday, both with extremely dodgy reasons as to why they were two hours out of their home town."

"They're just looking out for their pup," Lydia filled up two of the wine glasses and handed one over to Clary after she dried her hands on a cloth. She opened her mouth to say something else when the front door opened again, and Simon, Maia and Jordan all walked in, carrying plastic bags of their own, and Jordan with a six pack of beer hooked in his fingers.

"What's up, bitches?" Maia greeted them with a wide smile, her curly, dark hair bouncing around her shoulders. "Okay, so I'm thinking tonight we can start with the latest Jason Bourne movie? I mean, I know it doesn't have great reviews and shit, but—"

"Matt Damon is still a badass," Simon agreed with a smirk.

"And he's got a great ass in general," Clary grinned. "I second that. And then the new Star Trek? I'll try not to get too blubbery when Anton Yelchin appears on screen."

"That's bullshit and we all know it," Jordan snorted as he put down the pack of beer and pulled one out, cracking off the lid and tossing it toward the bin in the corner of the kitchen. "He was always
your favourite and you're going to get teary eyed the second he steps onto the screen." Clary just rolled her eyes and poked out her tongue, picking up her wine glass and a bag of chips that Lydia had pulled out of her plastic bag.

"Anyway, stick the pizza's in the oven," Clary announced as she walked toward her large, overstuffed couch and made herself comfortable in the middle, picking up the remote for the TV. Jordan and Maia unwrapped the store brought pizza's—all meatlovers with extra bacon and chicken piled on top—and put them in the oven, turning the heat up. There were two couches and an arm chair in the lounge, but as the other four came into the room to join them, no one took any of the other seats available, all five of them piled onto the couch, squishing together. Jordan was on the end, one of his arms around Maia, and then it was Clary next to her, Simon squished in between her and Lydia, who was on the other end.

Maia and Simon were comfortably squeezed in between everyone else, surrounded by the warmth and scent of people they love, and the werewolves settled down, happily.

It was almost two hours later, after they had finished the first movie and then started on the second one, and after they had finished off their pizzas and then eaten their way through a cheesecake, that Maia spoke, her voice only just audible over the sound of the TV.

"My mum called me yesterday," she began. "She wanted to talk to me about Herondale." Clary arched her neck toward her friend. "She thinks that I should join his pack."

"Well, that's expected, right?" Lydia said as she leaned forward to grab a pack of crackers off the coffee table and ripped it open. "I mean, it's kinda of weird given there's werewolves without any Alpha in this town. It's normal to have a couple who have an agreement to be independent, but those are usually older werewolves, ones that aren't family orientated. For you guys—it's not normal."

"I think I want to talk to him," Simon murmured and the other four all looked at him in surprise. "I mean...Luke told me that I should talk to him at some point, he said that with an Alpha in town I should be joining his pack."

"Makes sense," Jordan said as he finished off his third beer for the evening and dropped the empty bottle to the ground. "I mean, you were already saying that you feel better with him around, right, babe?" All eyes turned toward Maia who looked down at her hands, her fingers tapping against her knees.

"Yeah," she shrugged. "I kind of forgot what it was like to be around an Alpha, ya know? Since moving out here. I mean, I get it when Luke's around, but it's a little bit different because I know he's not my Alpha, and that he's not going to be, because of the distance. But scenting Herondale around the town all the time, and every time I see him around I get this—"

"The calm feeling?" Simon piped up.

"Yup," Maia nodded her head rapidly. "And it's weird for me to feel this...I don't know, this grounded when I haven't shifted in a while."

"We should go running," Simon spoke over Clary's head. "I haven't been since the full moon."

"But we always go in the woods," Maia cringed. "The reason we haven't gone is because that's technically Herondale territory, and we don't know if he would be okay with us going out there."

"He'd be fine with it," Clary said. "I was running there the other week and he had no problem."

"You've spoken with him?" Simon frowned.
"Wait, you spoke with the gorgeous, Alpha werewolf and you didn’t tell me about it?!” Lydia sounded betrayed. "And this was after you had this weird ass run in with him at the club?"

"Oh yeah, I heard about that," Maia twisted in the couch, pressing her back against Jordan's side and tugging his arm around her waist. "You didn't concede, right? Shit, you should know better than that, given you were brought up with Luke!” Clary just shrugged, but the attention had now shifted onto her.

"Fucking aye," Lydia agreed. "Whatever happened between you two was fucking weird. You guys were like staring at each other and it was all tense and shit, and it took you like a full couple of minutes before you finally submitted. What was going through your head?"

"I don't know," Clary shrugged, turning her eyes back to the TV, hoping that the conversation was over.

"It's because she hasn't been laid in a while," Lydia announced knowingly. "She was struck by a bout of horniness when she saw a gorgeous man."

"I've seen him," Maia smirked. "He is fucking beautiful."

"And it's been, what...A good two or three months since Seb has been back in town?" Lydia reached behind Simon's head to flick Clary behind the ear.

"Ow! Fuck off," she growled and swatted at her friends hand. Lydia just laughed and snuggled back between the couch and Simon's side. "Look, I don't know what happened, but I just...I didn't react the way I usually would. I'm not sure what was going on, but at least he didn't make a big deal about it," she pursed her lips before continuing. "And then I saw him when I was going running in the woods, and he seemed alright enough. From everything I've heard—and clearly Luke as well, or else he wouldn't be suggesting it—he's a good Alpha, even if Alec and Isabelle are his only pack. He's strong, controlled—"

"And hot!" Lydia interjected and there was a groan from both Jordan and Simon. Conversation seemed to fizzle out after that, or at least it moved away from talk of Jace, and Lydia and Clary finished off the bottle of wine that had been brought. It was a little after midnight that they decided it was time to go to bed. As usual, Jordan and Maia curled up together on the couch, Maia comforted by the fact that her close friends were nearby, the bedroom door wide open. Lydia, Clary and Simon all climbed into Clary's king-sized bed, the girls familiar scents and touch giving the wolf inside Simon the contact it needed.

It took Clary a while to fall asleep, but the more she thought about it, the more she agreed with Luke and Maia's mother.

Simon and Maia needed an Alpha, and a wolf pack. She knew that they were working with what they currently had, but an Alpha and a pack added stability that both of them deserved and needed, even if their friends did the best they could. There were a couple of other were's in town, and while they were attracted to each other, without an Alpha holding them together, they were just lost individuals trying to find their way.

She had just known that Jace was going to continue to cross her path.

From the time that Magnus had reached the city, Isabelle had been complaining endlessly about having to be trapped in close living quarters with the pair of them. It had always been the plan to have the three of them to end up living at the house with Jace, but they had wanted to give him his
space as he adapted to being back in his childhood home. He had thought that maybe doing it by himself would be the best thing, but he really should have known better. He always operated better when surrounded by his pack, so they had all moved their things in, and now Jace was regretting them invade his space.

"Ooh, I missed this," Isabelle giggled as a cocktail glass appeared in her hand, the alcohol lit with a blue flame on top. Magnus Bane smirked at her as he waved his fingers again and this time a cocktail glass appeared in his own hands, tipping it forward to clink against her glass.

"It's not even one in the afternoon yet!" Alec protested as he came into the lounge and saw the two of them sitting there.

"But it is afternoon," Magnus shrugged off his boyfriends worries. "And that's the important thing to remember here." Isabelle swallowed back half of the cocktail, which was laced with wolfsbane and all sorts of other drugs that were specifically designed to get a werewolf drunk. Alec collapsed on the couch and slung one arm along the back of the cushions, the other arm resting on Magnus' thigh, glad to be back in the same area code as his boyfriend.

"When are you planning on talking to the other were's?" Alec asked as Jace walked into the room, observing the three of them all relaxing on his couch.

"Ooh, have you already started talking to them?" Magnus piped up, looking over in interest at Jace and wiggled his eyebrows. "Started rallying those poor, lost souls up to join your pack?" Jace rolled his eyes at Magnus' expression.

"*Our* pack," he corrected Magnus lightly, and the warlock shrugged in response, but there was a warmth on his face that always happened when Jace made sure to tell him that he was part of their family. Magnus was some sort of a lost soul—warlocks could live for thousands of years, and before Alec, he had seemed to give up on making any kind of meaningful connection with anyway. When he fell for Alec, Isabelle and Jace were part of the deal as well, and Jace made a point to include him, even though they pair of them rubbed each other the wrong way more often than not. "And yes, I've already spoken with a couple."

"How many are there in town?"

"I think there's eight," Isabelle stated. "And most of them are pretty keen on finding an Alpha and joining a pack."

"Most?" Magnus quirked an eyebrow. "Well, I guess there's always some who don't want a pack, but as long as you talk to them about keeping the peace, then it's okay."

"There were never any omega's in the city when my father was the Alpha," Jace murmured as he moved to sit in the arm chair next to the couch, resting his elbows on his knees.

"Yeah, but things are different now," Alec's voice was quiet. "And you don't have to run things the same way as Stephen did." Jace pursed his lips together, glancing over at Alec before going still as he heard movement coming in the direction of the house. Isabelle and Alec heard the footsteps and chatter a split second later and they both straightened up where they were sitting, Isabelle leaning forward to put down the cocktail glass on the mahogany coffee table in front of her. Alec was on his feet and walking toward the windows on the lounge wall and then looked back at Jace.

"Who is it?" Jace raised an eyebrow.

"It's the kid from the club and then from the crime scene," Alec replied.
"Simon?" Jace asked.

"That's it," Alec nodded. "And there's two others with him, I don't recognize them, but they're both were's."

"Okay," Jace got up from the armchair and started walking toward the front door. The footsteps were just outside now, and he opened the door just as Simon was lifting his hand to knock on the door. Jace's lips were already parted, ready to greet them, when the intense scent of Clary washed over him, coming strongly from Simon and from the curly haired girl standing next to him. All three beta's gave him nervous looks, their heads twitching to the side to show their necks, and Jace assumed that his eyes were glowing red.

An instant side effect, it seemed, from catching Clary's scent.

"How can I help you?" Jace asked, swallowing hard and trying not to breathe in through his nose, knowing that he would get distracted if he let himself get lost in his mate's scent.

"We wanted to talk to you," Simon began, letting his eyes glow gold as he met Jace's gaze.

"Yeah?" Jace glanced between the three werewolves; Simon, the curly haired girl, and a muscular built man with a scar on his right cheek.

"Uh, you already know me—I'm Simon," he cleared his throat awkwardly. "This is Maia Roberts —" he waved at the girl who gave Jace a tight smile. "And this is Bat Velasquez—" the tall man gave him a short nod. "We wanted to talk to you about joining your pack."
It had been a month.

One month since he had been back Raven Creek, and the run ins with Clary had been few and far between.

His mate wasn't at all the reason why he had come back to his home town, and he was being careful to make sure she wasn't his priority, given the main reason that he was back here was to rebuild the Herondale pack and uphold the honor that came with his family name. There was also the murder of the human that had the town on edge, and that Luke and his pack as well as Jace and Alec were looking into with Sheriff’s department.

But that didn't stop Jace from thinking about her.

Simon and Maia and Bat had been coming over to his house more often, going for runs out in the woods with him, Alec and Isabelle, having dinner with them and just some general bonding. Despite Alec's prickly exterior and his natural unease when it came to trusting others, the wolf in him was more relaxed being around wolves that didn't pose a threat. And Isabelle loved having another girl around, and she seemed to have a bit of a soft spot for the nerdy police officer that Magnus found all too amusing. Werewolves were pack creatures, and no matter how strong they were, they needed to be surrounded by other were's and whoever else made their pack, it made them feel safe, and soothed, and cared for. It was their natural instinct to gravitate toward a pack, and Jace was glad that there's seemed to be expanding.

Whenever Simon was over, and sometimes Maia, they brought the faint scent of Clary into his house. Sometimes when Bat came over as well, he smelt like Clary, but he wasn't at the house as much as the other two, and it didn't seem as though he was around Clary as much either. He knew that there wasn't anything intimate between her and any of them because they never smelt of arousal, it was just as though they were around her a lot. He was jealous of them—Alec and Isabelle were clearly aware of that—and the only reason that Simon and Maia weren't aware of it was because they weren't quite as in-tune to him as his cousins were.

She came up in their conversation a lot as well, and he hung onto every word they said about her.

She painted a lot—that was where the slightly bitter smell came from. She made some money off her completed work, which Simon and Maia raved about, but apparently she wasn't totally confident in her abilities, so didn't often deem her art up to standard to be put in a gallery.

She taught art classes three days a week at the local community college, sometimes picking up extra work at the high school, and she even went in occasionally to the kindergartens to help out, which was more finger painting than anything else.
Her father was violent, and his temper had apparently been quite well known, and both Jocelyn and Clary had been lucky to get away from him when Luke had come along.

She had moved to New York with Simon when she was eighteen to train for a year as a Shadowhunter because even though she didn't have plans to go into the family business, she didn't ever want to forget who she was or push that part of herself away.

She was an integral part of the kind-of pack they already had in this town, always letting them come over to her place when they needed somewhere safe and familiar to stay, or when they just needed to be with one another.

She even went out with them in the woods sometimes when they shifted, running with her own supernatural speed even if she couldn't quite keep up with them; a girl running among wolves.

Jace tried to push his instinctual thoughts out of his mind, because that just brought up a ridiculous amount of emotions that he wasn't ready to share. So whenever they spoke about her, he listened to everything they had to say, but he tried not to process it until later, or even Simon and Maia would be able to pick up on his mixture of scents and chemosignals.

His mate was talented.

His mate was caring.

His mate accepted were\'s, just as she accepted humans.

It was a Sunday evening, and Jace was reading over the latest report that Sheriff Jeremiah had brought over to his place, an update on the murder, which in all reality, was barely anything at all, when he heard a car pulling up outside. He assumed it was one of the were\'s until he heard the footsteps falling just a little too heavily, and then a completely different scent came through the windows that were open along the ground floor of his home. Jace was off his desk and practically flying down the stairs before Clary had even gotten to the gate.

"Hey," Clary blinked when she saw him throw open the front door, a little taken aback, but recovering with a smile. "How\'s it going?" Jace scanned her over, listening out to hear if they were being joined by Simon or anyone else, but he couldn\'t hear anyone approaching.

"Fine?" He phrased it more as a question, his eyebrows pulling together, wondering what she was doing here. Clary just gave him a smile that he couldn\'t quite read and took a purposeful step forward. Jace was used to woman being quite pushy in what they wanted when they were around him, and it had a couple of different affects on him usually. If it was a hot girl and he was in the mood for a hook up, he really didn\'t mind girls making it clear they were after him. If it was a werewolf, on the other hand, and it appeared as though they were challenging his authority, the Alpha inside him would start to prickle and tense.

With Clary...He stepped aside without a second thought, letting her walk into her house as though she owned the place, even though she had only been there once.

He would be lying if he said he didn\'t like it.

"This place feels better than before," she stated as she glanced in the lounge before heading through to the kitchen area, putting down the plastic bag in her hand. "It feels more lived in, ya know?" The fact that she said that, could sense the difference just by stepping into his home, made his heart beat faster. Jace just blinked at her, following after her dutifully as she began to unpack the bag in front of her onto the bench.
"What are you doing here?" He finally asked her, managing to form words.

"I thought that you and I could do some bonding," Clary stated, words coming out plain as day, and Jace almost choked on the breath in his throat.

**Bonding.**

He wondered if she knew exactly what that word meant to a were.

By the way she shot him a smirk and pinched the tip of her tongue between her teeth in a teasing way, she seemed to know exactly what that word did to him.

"A couple of my best friends are talking about joining your pack, so I thought you and I should get better acquainted," Clary told him and Jace tried to focus on what she was doing rather than what she was saying. "I didn't want to interrupt with your time with them, though, so I waited until I knew that they were busy." That made Jace frown as he looked at her move over to a cupboard and take out a couple of plates.

"You wouldn't have been interrupting, Clary," he told her earnestly. "You're welcome here anytime." She paused and looked over her shoulder at him, her eyes widening a little, before she ducked her head and went back to putting the plates on the bench. Jace watched her as she pulled out a couple of tupperware containers, the smell of something incredible hitting him and making his nose twitch. There were spices and something cheesy and he could already tell that it was chicken, which was one of his favourite foods.

"So I brought dinner," she stated. "And I brought dessert. Because if there's anything I know about wolves, it's that you're always hungry." she shot him a smile as she tipped out the food onto the dishes, piling both of them high. "This is southern Italian-style chicken, and my mum always makes it for Luke and the pack the night of a full moon, it's kind of tradition for them. Her's is way better, and I'm honestly not the best cook, but I figure that it's the thought that counts, right?" She didn't wait for his reply as she found two forks, picked up both plates and lead the way back out of the kitchen, toward the lounge.

"So...Bonding, huh?" Jace hoped that he was pulling off a cocky smirk rather than a nervous smile as he took of the plates from her and sat down on the couch close to her. She threw him off balance every time, and he really needed to recover from that. "What kind of bonding did you have in mind?" He let his eyes skim over her, hoping that she would get the teasing lilt to his voice and not just the leering gaze over her body.

"I don't need to have a wolfie sense of smell to know what chemosignals you're putting out," Clary rolled her eyes, but her mouth was still lifted upward in a smile. "Nah-uh, buddy," she wiggled her finger in front of his face. "I meant more of the conversation kind of bonding." Jace leaned back into the arm of the couch, his eyes never leaving her as he stabbed his fork into the plate of food.

"Conversation can always be just as fun," he grinned at her, feeling a little more in his element, trying to breathe in through his mouth and out through his nose.

"Yeah, yeah, cut the crap," Clary rolled her eyes again as she took a large mouthful of food. "Now, I wasn't kidding. We're here a talk because I need to know that you're going to look after Simon and Maia." Jace let the smile drop off his face, because he knew that despite her teasing and smiles, she had come here to discuss something that was important to her.

Her friends, who seemed a hell of a lot like family to her.
And he could understand the protectiveness that he saw glint in her eye.

"Okay. Shoot," he nodded at her as he put the first forkful of chicken and couscous into his mouth. The different flavors exploded on his tongue and he couldn't help but let out an appreciative groan. Clary lifted her eyebrows and then ducked her head to hide her surprised smile. "If you think that your mothers is better than this, then it must be something close to perfect," he complimented her.

"Flattery's only going to get you so far," she muttered. "Right," she rolled her neck and her shoulders as though preparing for a fight, and Jace's nose twitched as he smelt the hints of anxiety coming off her. He felt proud of his mate, that she was nervous, and yet she came here to talk to him and was showing no signs of backing down.

His wolf was proud of her too.

"How long have you been an Alpha?" Clary began, her voice steady despite the flicker in her eyes.

"Since I was seventeen," he replied, still watching her as he continued to eat.

"Which was when your parents died, and the Herondale pack split up," she didn't flinch as she mentioned the death of her parents, however there was a slightly softer tone to her voice.

"Yes," Jace nodded, feeling a familiar ache in his stomach at the mention of them. It was a pain that he had long become used to, but being back in this town, in this house, it brought everything back up, and it appeared as though he was going to need to heal all over again. When he focused back on Clary's face, he was surprised to see a sad expression there, as though she knew how he was feeling, but then she blinked and moved on.

"How many are in your pack? You mentioned Alec and Isabelle, and also Alec's boyfriend, who I'm assuming is Magnus from what I've been told," Clary stated. "Is that it?" Her words could be perceived as rude, but Jace could understand the question. A pack without too many people wasn't as safe as a pack with a lot. There was strength in numbers, and at the end of the day, Clary was here because she wanted to know that her friends were safe.

"That's right," Jace nodded.

"Are you thinking about expanding?"

"I'm talking to Simon and Maia, aren't I?" He pointed out and she tipped her head to the side.

"So you only accept were's into your pack?"

"I'm not xenophobic," Jace raised an eyebrow at her. "Magnus is a warlock. My parents had several humans and Shadowhunters in their pack, and I intend to carry on the tradition if the situation presents itself." Clary stared at him for a beat longer than she really needed to, her tongue flicking out over her lower lip before she nodded.

"You told me that Alec and Isabelle were born werewolves," she tackled her next question. "Have you ever turned a were?" Jace felt his heart rate pick up at that and for the first time, he broke eye contact, looking down at his food. He had almost finished his plate and he idly wondered if she had any more in the containers she had brought in.

"Yes," he answered, voice low.

"And?" She prompted.
"And what?" Maybe his tone was a little harsher than usual but she didn't appear fazed.

"And what happened? Why are they not a part of your pack?" She continued and Jace sighed, looking back up at her, not wanting to get into that conversation. "Are they alive?" She asked, coming in from a different angle.

"Yes," Jace answered. "There were no problems with the transformation." Clary pursed her lips and ate in silence for a minute or so, giving him a break.

"The reason I ask is because Bartholomew is still having trouble with his shifts in the full moon," she finally said. "At the moment, Luke is helping him through it, but his wolf knows that Luke isn't his Alpha, and so it's not responding the best way. I wanted to know if you can help him."

"Bartholomew?" Jace frowned.

"Bat," she clarified and Jace's eyes widened in recognition.

"Oh right," he said. "Yeah, Luke told me. He's been coming over with Maia and Simon. I haven't talked to him about that specifically yet, but yes, I could smell he was a new wolf. Sometimes his senses are a little...All over the place."

"He's doing fine for a newly turned wolf," there was a slight warning edge to Clary's voice, and he knew that it was the protectiveness coming back.

"I didn't say he wasn't," Jace said carefully and she nodded, finishing off her food and putting her empty plate on the ground.

"You're planning on staying though, right?" Clary asked. "I mean, you're not just here for a short while and then going to run away again?" Jace's eyes narrowed, feeling anger flare in the pit of his stomach as classed what he had done after the passing of his parents 'running away'. She must have been able to read that on his face because she quickly reworded her sentence. "I mean, you're not going to leave again." He frowned at her for a moment longer before shaking his head. "Good. Because Simon has already been talking about how he's felt more grounded having you around, and more in control, and when we have Friday nights at my place, he's not wound quite as tight. Same with Maia. Bat comes by sometimes, but he's not quite settled enough to feel safe spending a lot of time with others."

"Friday nights at your place?" Jace asked. He knew that there was something important about Fridays, because Maia and Simon had said on two separate occasions that they had long standing engagements on Fridays when it had been brought up.

"Yeah," she shrugged. "You know, we all sort of just get together once a week. It's usually me, Lydia, Simon, Maia and Maia's boyfriend, Jordan. Sometimes Bat comes, or Helen, or Leila come as well." Jace knew that Leila was another werewolf in the town, although he hadn't met her yet. "It's sort of just this cuddlefest in front of the TV with food."

"Cuddlefest?" Jace couldn't help the smile pulling up the corners of his mouth.

"Yes," Clary stuck her chin forward, a little defiantly. "Everyone needs cuddles, especially were's." Jace's smile grew, although he knew she was completely correct. Physical contact was something that werewolves craved, for comfort and security, and he loved how she was part of a routine that involved that.

"I like that," Jace blurted out before he could stop himself and Clary looked taken aback and Jace willed himself not to turn red.
He had been doing so well in not coming off like a completely twat, and then he goes and says that.

"Well, ya know, you're always welcome," Clary was suddenly saying and she looked just as surprised by her statement as by his. "I mean, like, if you wanted to come over and watch TV with us. It's not exactly invite only, anyone can come along." Jace nodded and then pursed his lips together. There had been something playing over and over in his head and he figured now was as good as anytime to ask.

"Can I ask you a question?" He began, shifting on the couch, bending one leg at the knee and resting it over his other leg. Clary watched his movements before nodding, the fingers from one of her hands playing with a loose thread on the couch. "When you were here last time...When we were talking about New York, you said that you came back here because it felt like home." Clary jerked her head in a nod. "I mean, your family is in Little Rock, is there a reason you came here instead? This is still two hours away?" Clary's lips parted but he quickly finished his question before he lost his nerve. "And when I asked if it was because you came back because of your pack, and you kinda got this weird look on your face." Her shoulders were tense again and he could have sense her discomfort even if he didn't have supernatural senses.

"Uh," Clary started pulling at the thread even harder, unwinding it a little more, tugging as the thread became longer. "Luke is my family. Luke and mum and Simon. And I love Luke's pack. They treated me like their own daughter, always have."

"But..?" Jace quirked an eyebrow.

"But they're not my pack," Clary murmured softly. "I don't know...I talked to Luke about it when I was younger, because I just don't understand it. I just don't feel as though I'm part of their pack. Family, yeah. Pack, no. I talked to Luke about it when I was younger, and he said that it was fine, that I would always belong, no matter what, that maybe I belonged to another pack and my body and mind already knew that."

It was because she was waiting for him.

Because she was his.

His wolf was whining inside, desperate to reach out and touch her, feel her skin underneath his fingertips.

"I don't know," she shrugged and took in a sharp breath through her teeth. She shook her head from side to side and got up. "Anyway, uh, I just wanted to talk. It's been good." She picked up the two plates from the coffee table and carried them into the kitchen. He heard her beginning to rinse them off, and he took a moment to breathe before following after her. She was packing up her things into the bag when he got to the kitchen.

"Were you serious? About the Friday nights?" He asked her softly.

"Yeah," she took the bag off the counter and walked up to him, obviously going for the hallway leading to the front door, but letting her shoulder bump against his lightly. "I'll see you around, Alpha."

Chapter End Notes
Let me know what you think :)
"You better have brought spare blankets," Clary announced as she opened the front door and saw Maia standing there with Jordan, Bat and Helen behind her. "Because I know you werewolves run hot blooded, but you always still steal the blankets, and that's not gonna work with us freezing humans."

"Speak for yourself," Helen rolled her eyes as she elbows her way past Maia and Jordan and walked into the apartment, holding up a bottle of wine in each hand. "You're the one who seems to have perpetually cold feet. The rest of us manage just fine."

"Yeah, well, guess what? You get to sleep on the couch tonight," Clary sniffed at her, stepping aside to let the rest of her friends inside. Lydia and Simon were already on the couch, shoving their hands into bags of Doritos, Lydia with a glass of wine in her hand and Simon with a bottle of beer. "You guys sorted out our viewing for the evening?" Clary asked as she climbed over the back of couch and wriggled between the two of them.

"Lord of the Rings trilogy!" Lydia announced. "Jordan—you brought over your amazing beef patties right? I've been dreaming about your burgers since we agreed on the menu on Tuesday."

"That's the only reason I'm here, right?" Jordan joked as he held up the bag in his right hand. "For the food?"

"Well it sure as hell isn't for your comedic side," Helen poked her tongue out at Jordan, who just pulled the fingers back at her before going into the kitchen. Clary's apartment seemed even smaller with seven people inside, but none of them minded. Even when it got closer to midnight and they were all going to sleep, they didn't mind either. Just because Clary, Lydia, Helen and Jordan weren't werewolves themselves, they had still become accustomed to the closeness that they needed, and maybe they weren't a typical pack, but they made up some sort of family.

"I'll have you know that some people think I'm very funny," Jordan shot back at Helen.

"Who? Your mum?" Bat snorted, and Helen let out a laugh, holding up her palm to give Bat a high-five. Jordan just made a sulky face and started unloading the containers that he had in his bag, two of them filled with the home-made beef patties that he had prepared earlier in the evening. "Wait," Bat suddenly frowned, and the rest of the room looked over at him in concern. "There's..."

"It's Jace," Simon announced with a frown, obviously picking up on the same scent that Bat was. "And Isabelle." There was a knock on the door a moment later, and it was almost funny the way seven sets of eyes all spun to look at the front door, before everyone turned to look at Clary.

"Right, as if they can't hear all of us from the other side of the door," she rolled her eyes. "Open it up, Maia." Maia was closest to the door, and shrugged, leaning over to twist the door handle to reveal Jace and Isabelle standing there. Isabelle had a wide grin on her face, and the way her eyes immediately sought out Simon made Clary's eyebrow raise in interest, making a mental note to ask her best friend about that later. She had never actually met Isabelle, only seen her around the township a couple of times, and heard Simon mention her. Jace's expression was schooled blank, but there was no doubting from the way his eyes were flickering around, taking everything in, assessing for any threats and for all the exits, before resting on Clary's.

"We brought dessert," Isabelle announced as she walked in, not seeming to care that their arrival had thrown everyone a little off balance. "I make a mean cheesecake."
"Hope you brought enough for everyone," Lydia piped up from beside Clary. "Because I'm a slut for cheesecake and I'm not sharing with the rest of you fuckers." And with that, the silence was broken, and Clary's small flat erupted in conversation and laughing again, and she saw Jace's shoulders relax slightly. His eyes were still on hers, the golden orbs making her feel all sorts of warm and tingly sparks skittering over her skin, and she gave him a smile before turning back to Lydia.

"So? Want to put the first movie in?" She prompted. Lydia's eyes widened and she did a couple of intricate eyebrow movements towards the two new werewolves who were standing in their kitchen, an obvious kitchen. Clary just gave a half shrug, and was glad when Lydia was smart enough to ask any questions out loud, because there was no way to have a private conversation in the same apartment as a crowd of werewolves.

"Patties are gonna be ready in about five minutes," Jordan announced over the din of Isabelle introducing herself formally to everyone and Helen going on and on about a run in that she had with Aline at the grocery store today. "Everyone start getting your burgers ready so that we can get these movies started." Simon and Lydia were off the couch and scrambling toward the kitchen before Jordan had even finished speaking, and Clary rolled her eyes at their eagerness.

"You're not rushing to join the line?" Jace glanced over at her, and Clary shrugged.

"There'll be plenty of food, there always is," she replied. "I don't mind waiting until those pigs are all done."

"I heard that!" Simon snapped over at her, and Maia pulled the fingers in her direction. Clary just grinned back at them, poking her tongue out in their direction. Jace smiled at them, his body seeming to relax just a little bit more, and he came over to rest his hip against the back of the couch.

"I didn't actually think you'd show up," Clary noted quietly.

"You said it was an open invitation," Jace gave her a side look, almost nervous.

"Yeah, it's totally fine," Clary grinned at him. "Hope you like Lord of the Rings, because that's our viewing for the evening." Jace pursed his lips, his eyes flitting away from her, and then back at her, wincing a little and looking guilty. "Oh my god," Clary's eyes widened. "Have you never watched Lord of the Rings?"

"No!" Simon gasped, spinning around from where he was lined up to get burgers, his eyes comically wide. "That's a disgrace!" Maia snorted and nudged Simon in the back, forcing him forward in line. "No, really!" Simon continued complaining to Maia. "How can we trust a man who's never seen Lord of the Rings to be an Alpha?!" He was teasing, that was clear from his voice, but Isabelle looked a little worried as she shot a look over to where Jace and Clary were standing. But there was a smile pulling at the corners of Jace's mouth, showing that he didn't take the comment seriously, and the dark haired girl calmed down, going back to talking to Helen.

After everyone made burgers and got themselves drinks, they settled in the lounge. Instead of all trying to cram on the sofa, they were all spread over a little more area this time. Jace took a seat in the arm chair with Isabelle settled quite happily by his feet, her shoulder pressed against his leg. Bat, Helen, Simon and Clary were on the big sofa, with Maia, Jordan and Lydia on the smaller one. It would be almost claustrophobic for anyone who didn't like being in such a small space to each other, but it worked for them, all invading each others space and keeping each other feeling safe and loved.

Clary couldn't help but let her eyes drift over to Jace throughout the first movie, and then moreso in the second one after she had finished off her second glass of wine. He was the only one in the apartment who was still on his first bottle of beer, and she noted that it was one of the bottles that
wasn't specifically for were's, so there was no way he was actually going to get drunk off it. The tension and nervousness from his shoulders and the lines in his face that seemed to be there almost every time she was around him seemed to fade away, and she was glad that he felt comfortable with their mismatched little family.

Jace had been thinking about Clary's off-handed invitation to their Friday night gathering all week. Both Isabelle and Alec had known that something was on his mind, and they had been smart enough to know that it was relating to Clary given they could smell she had recently been in his house. He had finally told them what was going on when Magnus had gotten sick of them bugging their Alpha and had threatened to snap his fingers and turn Jace's golden hair a vivid shade of purple.

Isabelle had instantly been enthusiastic about going over to join them for the night. She hadn't gotten to know anyone particularly well since she had been in town, and Isabelle needed to be around others. It wasn't just her wolf that wanted to be around people, it was also just her personality that craved friendships. It was something that they had known was going to be hard for her when they moved out here, because they were leaving behind all their friends and the werewolves they had been surrounded with in the city, but Isabelle had been determined to follow her Alpha.

Alec, on the other hand, had been hesitant, which wasn't surprising. He didn't warm to people as quickly as Isabelle, and he was only just adjusting to having Simon, Maia and sometimes Bat in Jace's house—somewhere that he considered their sacred place, just for their pack. He was getting better though, and he had grudgingly admitted that there was a definite warmth to having the scent of friendly werewolves around after being just the four of them for this long. However, Friday night came around, and Alec jumped at the chance to have a night alone with Magnus.

"Did you tell her that we were coming?" Isabelle asked Jace as they parked up outside Clary's apartment building.

"Not exactly," Jace admitted as he turned off the engine and pulled the keys out of the ignition.

"Oh well," Isabelle shrugged with a grin as she opened the door. "Let's do this." Jace couldn't help his small smile as he got out of the car, glad that he had brought Isabelle along. She was skipping off ahead of him, but as they reached Clary's floor and could hear her and her friends inside, she paused and waited for Jace. He bumped her elbow reassuringly, and she dipped her chin forward slightly, her eyes flashing beta gold for a moment.

They were about to step into a room full of people that they barely knew, including a couple of werewolves that they were still getting used to. Even though Isabelle was headstrong and confident, she still relied a lot on her Alpha. Jace reached out to touch his hand to her neck—the most sensitive and vulnerable part of a werewolf—and then reached in to press a quick kiss to her cheek. Their scents were already blended, naturally from being pack and spending so much time together, but every time they touched it became stronger, and it was instinctive to seek it out before being in a room with other werewolves.

The evening went a whole lot better than Jace thought it would.

He really didn't know what he was expecting, his judgement had been clouded by the fact he was going to see Clary, and he was going to be in her apartment, completely surrounded by her scent.

But it had gone well.

There had been some tension when he had first walked in, and even for the first half an hour, he was still a little uneasy. But as time went on, it all seemed to fade away. The whole apartment smelt good,
like everything amazing that built up Clary's scent, and it was comforting and right in so many ways that Jace didn't know where to start. He purposefully didn't grab one of the beers that Simon and Bat were drinking that were laced with wolfsbane, so that he didn't get drunk, wanting to keep his head level.

One of the things that he had been nervous about was smelling someone else in Clary's apartment—someone other than her friends. Someone intimate. He had no idea how he would react to that, but luckily the only scents he picked up on were the people already in the room, or of Luke or Jocelyn.

The way they all relied on each other was closer than family, it was pack, and Jace felt a niggle of jealousy in his stomach with how comfortable they all were with each other. Helen and Clary were snuggled up with Simon, and even though Bat didn't look quite as touchy-feely as the rest of them, Helen had her feet resting on his lap, and he had one of his hands around her shoulders. Lydia, Jordan and Maia were all tangled together, although as the evening went on, Lydia seemed to be falling asleep and just seeking out the heat that Maia's raised body heat was giving off. Even when they had all gotten up from their positions to go into the kitchen and get second helpings of dinner, or dish up dessert, they were all touching or bumping into each other, moving as though there were elastic cords stretching between them.

This was what he had missed.

This was what he had distanced himself from after his parents had passed.

And now it felt as though he was being invited in.

Better yet, it felt as though he had the chance to be part of one, and his mate was clearly a well loved member of it.

Isabelle stayed close by Jace, but he could see the way Simon and her kept exchanging glances. Hell, it was obvious to any with advanced senses that the pair of them were interested in each other, and Jace wondered what was going to happen there.

It was almost one in the morning, and they were halfway through Return of the King when everyone was drifting in and out of sleep, humans and werewolves alike all feeling sated with food and alcohol, and warm with one another. Lydia had been snoring for a while, and Bat had curled himself around Helen, while Simon had slid off the couch so that he was now sitting on the ground, his leg only a couple of inches away from Isabelle's.

"You guys want to drag the spare mattress out?" Clary mumbled, lifting up the remote and pausing the movie.

"I got it," Bat grunted as he unfolded his long legs from the couch and stood up, stretching his arms over his head. He disappeared into the adjoining room that Jace had already picked up on was Clary's bedroom, given how strong and raw her scent was coming from that doorway. Jace personally wanted to disappear into the room and never leave, but he was trying his hardest not to twitch in that direction. A moment later, Bat reappeared from the bedroom, dragging out a double mattress with him.

"Uh, do you need help?" Jace got up and gave him a questioning look.

"We need to push out the couches so that we can fit it in the middle," Clary sounded tired as she extracted herself from Helen's hold and got off the couch. She arched her back, making it click a couple of times, and then rolled her neck, blinking rapidly. Jace watched intently, tracing the smooth, sleepy lines of her face, and the relaxed slump of her body. He liked how loose her limbs were and
how open her face was, and he wanted her to always look this calm and relaxed around him.

"I'll grab blankets," Simon said as he got off the ground, easily navigating the cupboard in the corner of the room and pulling out a couple of spare blankets and pillows. When he came back over to the mattress, there was a strange look exchanged between him and Isabelle and Jace could feel the tension between them. Clary didn't have his attuned senses, but she could clearly see it, because she cracked a half smile and rolled her eyes.

"You guys crash out here," she stated. "But you're gonna have to share."

"I bags the couch," Helen grumbled, already starting to stretch out on the couch and reaching for one of the blankets. "You're on the mattress." Bat didn't look too bothered, and it wasn't long before Helen looked as though she was asleep on the couch, and Simon, Bat and Isabelle were making themselves comfortable on the mattress.

"You need help with her?" Jordan asked quietly, speaking over Maia's sleeping head to where Lydia was also asleep at the other end of the couch.

"I can help," Jace assured him. "Where do you want her?"

"She'll be in my bed," Clary said, pointing toward the doorway. "And that's where you'll be as well." Jace had started walking over to where Lydia was sleeping but he froze at Clary's comment. He glanced over his shoulder, but Clary was already walking toward her room. Jace's eyes dropped to Isabelle and Simon, both werewolves looking at him, Isabelle a little smugly and Simon's eyes narrowed slightly. It looked as though Simon was about to say something, but then he pursed his lips together and looked away. Jace's skin was buzzing now, the idea of not only going into Clary's room, but slipping between her sheets.

Jace took in a subtle breath through his lips and forced his eyes not to bleed red, leaning down to coax Lydia to her feet. She smelt like the rest of the pack, as well as wine and burgers. She'd probably had the most alcohol out of everyone there, and she barely opened her eyes as Jace helped her to her feet. They walked into Clary's bedroom, the room dark with the only light coming from where there was a sliver of moonlight shining through the curtains. Jace could hear Simon turning off the TV, and everything had fallen quiet in the lounge, except for the breathing and rustling and heartbeats of the werewolves and humans, and they were all comforting noises as Jace deposited Lydia onto the bed. He did a cursory glance around the room, making out the clutter in the dark with a half smile.

"No hanky panky," Lydia mumbled as she pushed off her jeans and climbed into the bed next to Clary. "I don't care if you're smoking hot Alpha...No one's having sex with me in the bed, unless I'm in the middle of it." Clary snorted and Jace could make out that she leaned over to put her arm around her friend, the two girls cuddling together. Jace's heart stuttered slightly as he took off his jeans and folded his jersey, putting it on the top of the dresser in the corner. He considered getting into bed beside Lydia, not wanting to push Clary too far out of her comfort zone, but she was staring at him, and didn't look as though she minded when he started walk around to her side of the bed.

She felt so perfect against him, and she had no problem with them touching, one of her legs shifting backwards to press against Jace's.

She smelt so good, and it was taking every ounce of control Jace had not to reach out and taste her skin, or bite at the curve of her neck.

Matematemate kept chanting over and over in his head, and he took in several deep breaths to calm himself down. Clary's body shifted again, and it was as though she could sense his anxiety, because
she reached back and laid her hand against his arm. The touch was soothing, calming, and Jace blinked in surprise, taken aback by the way that she reassured him so simply.

It was his body telling him that he was completely comfortable with her.

He was asleep within minutes, listening to the steady beat of her heart just inches away from him.
When Jace woke up the next morning, he felt the most rested and relaxed that he had since he had come back to Raven Creek. When he felt himself beginning to wake up, he didn't feel restless with the need to get up and go for run. Instead, he kept his eyes closed and breathed in through his nose, instantly hit and surrounded with the scent of his mate, which just made his body heavy and his wolf content. After a few moments, there was movement in front of him, and he cracked open one eye, becoming aware of his location for the first time.

He was pressed right up against Clary, one of his arms thrown over her waist and their legs were tangled together. Her body was curved against his, fitting into the cradle created by his hips and thighs. It was like she was meant to be there, slotting against him perfectly like a puzzle piece. Jace flexed his fingers, feeling the slight itch of his claws right underneath the surface, and had to take in another deep breath to calm himself down. There was a warm heat on the other side of Clary, which he knew was Lydia, but barely any of his attention was on the other girl, completely focused on the red head. Clary made a noise at the back of her throat, a sleep whine, and then started stretching her arms above her head and pushing her hips back unconsciously against his groin. He gritted his teeth to stop himself from making any noise, because he didn't want her to stop, and then her body relaxed as she yawned and let her arms fall back beside her.

Clary rolled over, and then came nose to nose with Jace, who took in a deep breath when she realized that he was awake. They didn't say anything for a long few minutes, just staring at each other, one of Jace's arms still pinned underneath her body, and that smell—that intoxicating, sweet, perfect smell—of hers just kept on making his brain short circuit for things to say.

"Morning," Jace greeted her, his voice low and gravelly. He felt her twitch a little in his arms before she gave him a small smile.

"Did you want to go for a walk?" Clary asked quietly. "It's going to be a while before any of these guys wake up." Jace nodded, his lips curving in a slight smile. They moved almost silently in the dark bedroom as they got up and got dressed, Jace into his clothes from last night, and Clary into a pair of leggings and a light sweater. Jace lead the way out of the apartment, the werewolves in the room probably aware of people moving, but clearly feeling comfortable enough not to open their eyes and find out what was happening. They slipped out the front door, Clary not bothering to lock it as they started down the steps.

"You usually a morning person?" Jace asked Clary as they got out of the apartment building and were hit with the sharp morning air.

"Not really," Clary shrugged. "Although I feel like I had an insanely good sleep last night." Jace ducked his head forward slightly, hiding his smile as they began walking in the direction of the end of the road. They were quiet as they walked, Jace surprised that he didn't need to shorten his stride for her to keep up, although he shouldn't really be surprised, because he had seen her running quite often, and she would go for quite some time. "So did you enjoy last night?"

There was a lot that Jace had enjoyed about last night, primarily falling asleep next to the woman that he knew to be his mate, but he had a feeling that wasn't quite what she was asking.

"It felt...Good," he answered honestly. "Being around other were's and...You," he shot a look over at
Clary, and maybe it was the brisk morning breeze, but there seemed to be a slight red flush on her cheeks. "It's good for Isabelle as well, and for Alec. Being around a group of people—being with a pack," he corrected himself, because that's what they were. A pack could be made up of a mixture of werewolves and humans and shadowhunters and warlocks, and that's exactly what this group of people were. Sure, they didn't have an Alpha, but they all trusted and relied heavily on each other and loved another. It was definitely a pack.

"Not a pack," Clary corrected, giving him a sharp look out of the corner of her eye. He knew that the surprise showed on his face because she sighed and looked back ahead. "When it comes to were's, you can't just use that word—you know that. That words means so much, and it's not..." she drifted off and pursed her lips, her eyebrows pulling together. It didn't look exactly as though the word offended her, but there was clearly something there. "It's not what we are."

"Well," Jace frowned, not too sure what nerve he had touched. "Maybe no ones saying that word out loud, but I can absolutely guarantee that's what they're feeling." Clary swallowed hard and he could scent the unease coming off her in waves. "What's wrong? I don't understand what's so wrong about that."

"They need an Alpha," Clary murmured. "I mean, it's one thing to say 'pack' with humans. It's another thing to say 'pack' with werewolves, it means something so much more than family. It wouldn't be right to call ourselves a pack without one of the main people who can help them more than anyone else can. I don't want them to feel this obligation to me, or to us, because they need an Alpha, and I don't want them turning down the chance to have one because of loyalty." There was truth in her words, although he still disagreed with her—what he felt in that room was definitely pack. But he could tell that she was nervous, and he didn't like that, so he decided to steer the conversation in a different direction.

"I used to go there," he nodded up ahead to where they were approaching the high school. "Mind if we take a detour? I haven't had a look around since I've been back in town." Clary shrugged, showing she didn't mind, and so he lead the way through the brick and wrought iron gates. They walked in silence for a few minutes, their arms bumping together every couple of minutes, and the quiet between them was companionable. The school smelt completely different than it did when he attended, although it looked almost exactly the same. Jace looked through a couple of windows into old classrooms and Clary grinned as he pulled himself up on top of a wooden awning so that he could see through the window of a second storey. "This used to be an old science lab," he began with a grin, raising his voice so that she could hear him from where she was standing on the ground. "Except it was hardly ever used, so quite a few seniors would use it as a make out spot."

"You bring all your cheerleader girlfriends here?" Clary teased with a wiggle of her eyebrows.

"What do you mean by 'girlfriends' plural?" Jace attempted an indignant look. "How do you know there wasn't just one special lady?"

"Oh, sweetie," Clary shook her head with a grin. "You are far too charming to limit yourself to just one girl, especially as a teenager. I bet there were many girls who wanted to visit the science lab with you. What did you lure them in with—did you ask them if their name was homework? Because it's something that you needed to be doing later that night?" Jace's eyes widened at the horrific pick up line. "Oh, or ask if that was a mirror in her pants, because you could see yourself in there?" That time Jace let out a bark of laughter as he stepped off the awning and dropped elegantly to the ground beside her, shaking his head.

"Those are fucking terrible," he rolled his eyes at her, but he couldn't stop his wide smile at her teasing tone, or the way her cheeks were pink from the early morning breeze and her green eyes
were dancing.

"Oh, no, I've got it," Clary smirked as she nudged him with an elbow before dancing backwards playfully. "You asked her to take off her clothes, because you wanted to see how an angel hides her wings?" Jace let out another laugh and he quickened his pace to catch up with her.

"Fuck, those are bad. Please tell me people didn't actually use them on you? Because that would be..." Jace paused for a moment, imagining someone trying to use them on the stubborn girl. "That would have been interesting."

"Oh no, not on me, thankfully, I think I probably would have punched someone in the nose for any of those," Clary grinned as he caught up to her and bumped their shoulders together. "But Simon...He's not exactly what one would call 'smooth'."

"He seems to be making quite an impression on Isabelle," Jace noted, feeling a twinge in his stomach as their knuckles brushed together and he acted before he could over think it, lifting an arm and throwing it around her shoulders loosely. He felt her tense for a split second, and then she relaxed against his side. When she began talking again, her voice squeaked slightly before it evened out again, and Jace felt a flare inside him at the fact that he was the one making her nervous.

"They would make an interesting match," she commented. "So, do you think that Alec and his boyfriend will be joining us next time?"

"Next time?" Jace raised an eyebrow at her and Clary glanced at him before looking ahead and he heard her heart skip a beat.

"If you want," she mumbled. They had reached the large field on the back of the school, and Jace remembered playing soccer here when he was younger, and also running track. There were a lot of restrictions about werewolves playing sports, and it had sucked to have to restrain himself when playing with others, but he understood it more now. Jace paused on the edge of the field, Clary coming to a stop next to him.

"Oh, I definitely want," he told her earnestly, looking down at her. Clary stared up at him, and he could scent that she was a little bit embarrassed, still quite nervous and there was something faintly like arousal as well. Not heedy, not intense like it would be if they were about to have sex. More just like the scent when someone was interested. All of that on top of how incredible she smelt in the first place was making his wolf preen, and he hoped that his eyes weren't glowing at her.

He was pretty sure he was managing to contain himself, because he was certain that she would call him out on it if they were. Although she could still read something in his expression, because her heart beat was doing all sorts of crazy things and he really just wanted to lay his hand over her chest to feel the flutter under the palm of his hand.

"Uh," Clary took in a breath and looked away from him, clearly her throat. "So, you make out with any pretty girls here?" Jace laughed at her change in topics and looked over to the bleachers, giving them a vague nod.

"There may have been one or two underneath the bleachers," he admitted.

"You stud you," Clary laughed and started walking forward again. Jace started walking with her, not wanting her to end up out of reach of where his arm was still around her shoulders.

"I even got to second base with Lindy Carmicheal, and she was the preachers daughter," Jace grinned and Clary rolled her eyes.
"Oh my god, could you get any more cliche?"

"If we're going to start cliches, let me remind you of those cringe worthy pick up lines you were quoting earlier," Jace shot back at her. Clary grinned at him and then looked down at the ground. They had almost reached the bleachers, and when they did, Clary pulled away from him to jump over the barrier. She glanced over her shoulder before she began skipping up the steps, her footsteps making clanging noises as she ran up the steps. Jace vaulted over the barrier as well, but chose to remain at the bottom, leaning against the railing as he watched her climb onto the seats which were a little damp from the morning dew. Clary was sure footed as she walked along them, jumping down until she reached the seats in front of him. "There's something I want to ask you," Jace said.

"That sounds ominous," Clary stated, although she seemed to be teasing. When he didn't smile back at her she raised an eyebrow. "What's up?"

"There was something that you said when you came around to my place," he said, stepping up so that he was close to her, directly in front of where she was standing on the seats. "When I asked you about coming back from New York? And I said that you were coming back to your pack?" There was another look of discomfort on her face when he had said that, which just made him more curious. "There," he pointed his finger up at her. "That look. Why?"

"That's pretty personal, isn't it? Asking someone why they feel as though they're uncomfortable about their pack?" Clary pursed her lips and looked away from him, out onto the field. The comment was kind of funny, because Clary had no idea just how personally the two of them were connected, but now wasn't the time for that. So he stayed quiet, leaving the ball in her court. She sighed and stepped forward, dropping off the seats so that she was on the same level as him. "I just never felt as though it was totally right, something always felt off."

"How so?" He prompted gently.

"I don't know," Clary shrugged, looking down at her feet as she kicked at some dirt that had been tracked onto the bleachers. "Because even though humans or shadowhunters don't feel the exact same pull as were's, there's still that feeling deep inside of belonging," she sighed again, sounding upset and Jace almost regretted asking her. "I never really felt that with Luke and his pack. I love them, and they're family, but they're not my pack."

"Do you feel pack when you're with your friends?" Jace asked her softly, tilting his head closer to her, wanting her to feel as though she could trust him. She was still hesitating, he knew that she was holding back, but that was understandable; it was an intimate conversation.

"Yes—sort of," Clary nodded. "I mean...Something still feels like it's missing, you know? Something inside still feels like I'm not—like I'm not whole," she made a frustrated noise. "Last night felt good, when all of us are together it always feels good, but last night was really...But something just isn't right, and I can't..." she drifted off and Jace reached forward to touch his fingers against her forearm. She didn't flinch away from his touch, in fact it felt as though some of the tension left her body. He circled his hand around her forearm, tightening his grip a little and he felt her letting him ground her. Just like an Alpha would with his pack.

With his mate.

"I don't know. I talked to mum about it once, and she said that she thinks my mate is a werewolf, and that's why I don't feel right in another pack, but then if that's the case, why does it feel so close when I'm with—" she broke off and looked up at Jace, her green eyes suddenly clouded. Jace felt his breath catch in his chest as they stared at each other, wondering if she was realizing just who he was
to her. "Jace, I—" her words were broken off when her cell phone rang shrilly in the front pocket of
her sweatshirt. It broke the moment and she frowned, tugging her arm away from him and pulling
out the phone. She answered it and put it to her ear. "Simon? What's going on?"

"Clary!" Simon's voice sounded worried and rushed. "Clary, listen, I—" Jace stopped listening when
he heard something else, the sound of someone fast approaching, and he caught the scent of someone
familiar. He turned around to see Alec running across the soccer field, clearly tracking them down by
following their scents, so he must have gone by Clary's apartment first.

"Alec?" Jace frowned, sensing the panic. "What's wrong?"

"There's been another body," Alec hissed out once he reached them. "Another body's been found, in
the woods."

Chapter End Notes

Hope you guys enjoyed the update :)


"Simon, I'll be back at my apartment soon," Clary said in a hushed tone into the phone.

"Are you okay? Where are you?!" Simon demanded, and from where Jace and Alec were standing next to her, they could hear a slight growl in the werewolves voice, undoubtedly worried about his close friend.

"I'm with Jace," Clary told him. "I'll be home soon, I promise."

"Okay, don't let them leave you alone," Simon lifted his voice a little, knowing that the werewolves on the other end of the phone would be able to hear him. Clary gave the two were's next to her a tight smile and pulled the phone away from her ear, tucking it into her pocket. Jace let out a long breath, tilting back his head and scenting the air. Before it had just smelt like fresh air, and cut grass, and ever so slightly of sweat from the bleachers nearby. Now, there was panic and worry rolling off his beta and also from his mate. He wanted to reach out to comfort her, reassure her, but he stopped himself from doing it, because he didn't want to make her uncomfortable.

"I can't believe this has happened again," Clary let out a shuddering sigh. This time, Jace couldn't stop himself. He instinctively reached out for Clary, putting a hand at the curve where her neck met her shoulder. Alec raised an eyebrow at the movement, and Jace's eyes widened as he realized what he had done and almost pulled his hand away, but he felt her relax against him. Relief surged through him, with the way she was leaning into him.

"I need to go to the scene, I'll call the Sheriff," Jace began, keeping his voice soft.

"Yeah, uh, one of the desk girls called me when she couldn't get ahold of you," Alec said. Jace frowned, the hand not touching Clary reaching into his pocket and pulling out his phone. He made a face and held it up to them.

"It must have run out of battery," he said.

"It's fine, but you should really head over there," Alec glanced between him and Clary before fixing his eyes back on his Alpa. "It's another fresh one, they think only an hour or so old this time."

"Yeah, I'll..." Jace licked his lips before narrowing his eyes slightly. "Did you drive?"

"Yeah, I brought my car," he answered. "I picked up your scent from the apartment."

"Okay, give me your keys. I'll head over there," Jace said and Alec nodded, digging the keys out of his pocket and tossing them over. "I want you to take her back to the apartment and stay with her."

"Jace, no—" Clary began, frowning at him and beginning to pull away, but Jace just tightened his grip on her neck. As someone who had been raised by werewolves, she would know that the way he was touching her was almost in a claiming way, the way that an Alpha touched the rest of his pack. If she showed even a hint of discomfort, he would have pulled away, but she didn't. She was still leaning into him.

"I just want to know that you're going to be safe," he told her earnestly. There was confusion in her eyes as she looked at him, and he knew that she didn't completely understand why he was so worried about her well being. "Please, just go back with Alec." Clary pursed her lips together, and for a moment he thought that maybe she was going to tell him 'no', but then she nodded.
"Luke will probably be on his way over as well once he finds out," Clary said. "But come over to my place after—after you've spoken with the cops, if you want."

"Yeah," Jace flashed her a quick smile, reluctantly dropping his hand from where it was cupping her neck. "And we'll carry this conversation on later as well." Clary frowned again, but then remembered what they were talking about before the interruption, and her cheeks stained pretty pink, nodding. "Do you know where I need to go?"

"Head toward town," Alec said shortly. "You'll be able to find it from there." Jace nodded, taking the keys from Alec's outstretched hand and then running at a blur toward the parking lot alongside the field. Alec looked over at Clary, who took in a deep breath and rubbed her hands up and down her arms. "Uh," he looked uncomfortable as he looked her up and down. "Are you cold? Do you..." he made a move to take off his jacket, but Clary shook her head.

"No, I'm fine," she murmured. Her phone started vibrating again, and when she looked down, she saw that it was her mum. "I just need to take this," she told Alec before taking a few steps away from him. It was more for show, given Alec would still be able to hear every word that she and her mother were saying. "Mum?" Clary answered.

"Where are you, babe?" Jocelyn replied.

"I'm with..." she glanced over at Alec. "I'm with Alec. He's one of Jace's beta's, Jace just left. I assume you're calling because of the body?"

"Yes, Sheriff Jeremiah called him and Luke is just getting ready to leave with Gretel," Jocelyn said. "He's going to come by your place as well, after he's spoken with the police, he just wants to make sure you're okay."

"No, no, that's fine. I'll be at my apartment," Clary told her. "I'll be fine, Alec's going to look after me," she glanced over at Alec, and he raised his eyebrows at her, knowing that she was just saying that to make her mother feel better. Little did she know that Alec wasn't going to let her out of his sight or hearing range until Jace was back and gave him the all clear. "I love you, mum."

"Love you too, babe," Jocelyn said. "You make sure you're keeping yourself safe, okay?" Clary hummed out in response and then ended the call. She looked over at Alec and took in a deep breath through her nose.

"Ready to go?" He grunted at her and Clary nodded. The walk home was quiet and a bit uncomfortable, very different compared to how it had felt with Jace. She didn't know much about Alec apart from what Maia and Simon had told her. He was very protective over Jace—over Isabelle and his boyfriend as well—and apparently he barely ever said anything. Bat, who Clary wasn't particularly close with but was welcome into her life because of his connections with Simon and Maia, said that both Jace and Alec were helping him to control his shifts, and Alec had been a big part of that.

"I don't think we've properly met before," Clary finally said when they were a block against her apartment. "I'm Clary," she attempted to give him a smile, even though the situation was weighing on her shoulders and over her head. Alec looked at her out of the corner of his eye and then directed his gaze forward again.

"I know," he grunted and Clary's eyebrows lifted.

"Right," she breathed out through her teeth. Clearly he wasn't the charming one out of the lot. As they reached her apartment building and she swiped her key card to open the front door, Alec
frowned and his steps faltered.

"What's wrong?" Clary asked, pausing and looking over her shoulder at him. She may not know much about Alec, but she knew enough about werewolves to trust their instincts when they started twitching their noses and acting as though something was wrong. Alec’s eyebrows pulled together and he reached out to push the door open further, his hand resting on the door above her head.

"It's nothing, I just—my sister is worried," he explained in a mutter.

"Oh right," Clary nodded. "Izzy. You'll see her in a sec, she'll still be in my apartment." Alec nodded in response and they hurried upstairs. The relief on Alec's face was obvious when they reached her apartment and opened the door, Isabelle already walking toward them, obviously able to smell her brother coming. Clary stepped aside to let the two hug and then looked around her apartment. Everyone was awake now, and Simon was just coming out of her bathroom, one of her spare toothbrushes in his mouth and his face looking damp, as though he had just splashed water on it. He relaxed slightly when he saw her, jerking the toothbrush out of his mouth and throwing an arm around her, pulling her in close and pressing his nose against the side of his face. He pulled away after a second, frowning, and Alec looked over, knowing that the other werewolf could smell the Alpha on her skin.

"What were you—" Simon broke off, seeming to realize that they were surrounded by other people, and especially other werewolves, who would be able to hear everything they said. "I need to go," he changed the course of the conversation. "Sheriff is calling everyone in because of the new body. He called Luke as well."

"Yeah, mum rang me," Clary replied. "You go, and I'll see you later." Simon nodded. He called out his goodbyes to the other werewolves and humans in the lounge, and then paused by Isabelle on the way out. There was an awkward moment where it looked like maybe they were going to kiss goodbye, Alec practically glaring at the two of them while Clary just raised her eyebrows, and then they settled for a hug before Simon fled from the room to get rid of Alec's glare. Clary turned to everyone else, taking in a breath. "I don't really feel like going out for breakfast, with everything's that happened..."

"I get that," Maia got up from where she was sitting in between Jordan and Bat. "I think I might head home—will you be okay?"

"I'll be fine," Clary assured Maia. "You guys head home." Maia nodded, gathering up her clothes and walking over to Clary, throwing an arm around her friend. She nuzzled her face into Clary’s neck, breathing in her familiar scent and then rubbing her nose against the side of Clary’s face. When she pulled back, she was frowning.

"You reek of Jace," she stated, and there was a snort from Lydia on the couch, who quickly tried to cover it in a cough, but really wasn't fooling anyone. Maia stared at Clary for a moment longer, but Clary didn't give anything away, even though her scent clouded with something like embarrassment.

"Bye, Clare," Jordan got up and hugged Clary as well, giving her a kiss on the cheek, doing the same with Lydia and Helen before following after his girlfriend. Since Clary and Jace had left, the group had done some cleaning up, undoubtedly after Simon had woken them up because of the call from his boss. Usually they were all still fast asleep at this point, and Clary still had no idea why she had felt so rested after only a few hours of sleep, but she was glad that she had woken up to him, and not to finding out about the murder.

"Do you know who it is?" Clary asked, looking over to where Helen was sitting, running a hairbrush through her hair.
"Not yet, no identity has been released," Helen made a face. "I can't believe this has happened—we haven't had anything like—like murder around here in years, and now there's two in the space of a couple of weeks?" Helen sighed as she got up, dropping the hairbrush onto the coffee table and pulling her hair back in a ponytail. "I'm going to head into work, technically the Sheriff only called in all the officers, and someone else is on desk duty, but I think I'm gonna go in, see if there's anything I can do to help."

"Let me know if you find out anything," Clary said as she dropped down onto the sofa where Helen had been sitting, leaning back against Lydia. Lydia looked the worse out of everyone there, pale faced with blood shot eyes, and she wrapped an arm around Clary, dropping her head into her lap as she made herself comfortable on the couch.

"I'll head off as well," Bat murmured as he got up from his seat.

"You don't have to," Clary offered with a small smile which Bat returned.

"It's fine. I need to go for a run anyway, I'm feeling a little..." he made a face and shook out his hands at his sides. "A little cooped up." Clary nodded. As Bat passed by Alec at the door, Jace's second in command reached out and put a hand on Bat's shoulder. Clary's eyes widened slightly, surprised at the man who had seemed so quiet and reserved reaching out for someone other than his sister.

"Make sure you keep off the trails, stay away from humans if you're going to shift," Alec said softly. "People are going to feel even more on edge today, and you don't want to give them any more reason for panic." Bat nodded again and then left with one final wave over his shoulder, leaving Clary, Lydia, Isabelle and Alec alone in the apartment. It wasn't unusual for Bat to leave if Maia or Simon weren't there. He was one of the newest ones in their circle of friends, brought in by Maia when she had found him fully shifted and out of control on a full moon. Bat had been mugged when he had gone on vacation in California, but hadn't been too badly injured. He hadn't realized he had been bitten until he was back in Raven Creek and the full moon was high in the sky. He was still making himself comfortable with the group who had been friends for so long, and it appeared as though Alec and Jace were also making him feel welcome into their pack as well.

"So has it been classed as another werewolf attack?" Lydia mumbled from where her face was buried in Clary's lap, the red-headed girl running her fingers through her friend's long, blonde hair.

"Yes," Alec stated. "And I think that it'd be a good idea if we just stayed here until Jace came back from meeting with the Sheriff." Isabelle raised an eyebrow at her brother before looking at the two on the couch. Clary frowned at Alec, not too sure how she felt about him practically declaring that he wasn't leaving her apartment until getting permission from his Alpha.

"Uh, we would be perfectly fine here by ourselves," Clary began, a slight edge to her voice. "It's not as though we're targets or anything."

"No, but Jace wanted me to make sure you were safe," Alec replied steadily, reaching over to close the front door firmly and then folding his arms across his chest, making it very clear that he wasn't planning on going anywhere. Lydia snorted again and turned her head to look up at Clary.

"That's cute. First you challenge him, then you spend the night in bed with him, and now he's got his guard dogs protecting you," Lydia teased. Alec's eyebrows furrowed even deeper but Isabelle just smirked. "I think you've gotten under his skin, Clare baby." Clary rolled her eyes as she shoved at Lydia's shoulders, pushing her off her lap.

"Whatever," Clary mumbled, although the two werewolves in the room exchanged looks when they
smelt the tinge of embarrassment that she was giving off once again. "If we're getting the record straight, I didn't mean to challenge him at the club, that was just some big misunderstanding that we've never spoken of again, so I'm pretty sure everyone involved is just pretending that didn't happen. Then last night, if you don't remember, you were in bed with us. And now," she hesitated slightly as she looked over at the Lightwood siblings. "Well, I guess now he's just being a bit of an overprotective Alpha. We're the only friends he has in town other than his pack and he wants to make sure we're safe."

"Funny," Lydia tilted her head to the side as she sat back up. "I'm pretty sure if I left this apartment, it's you that Alec is going to stay with," she had a cheeky glint in her eye and Isabelle was full blown grinning now, knowing that Lydia was someone that she was going to get on with well. Clary didn't really have an answer for that, because she knew that Lydia was right.

Something about the way Jace looked at her, and then the way he had touched her neck just an hour earlier, told her that there was a whole lot more there than what she understood at the moment.

"I'm going to have a shower," Clary said, by way of ending the conversation. "If you guys want to eat or whatever, food is in the kitchen," Clary waved her hand toward the kitchen, more for Alec and Isabelle's benefit, since Lydia knew her way around like this place was her own. She disappeared from the room and Lydia turned around and looked over the back of the couch.

"So? Anyone want to make bets on how long it's going to be before they bang?" She asked with a smirk.
"I'm pretty hungry," Lydia stated as it got closer to one in the afternoon.

"You're always hungry," Clary retorted from where she was laying on the couch in the opposite direction of Lydia. The two girls had been making their way through old episodes of *Chicago PD*, with Isabelle and Alec sitting in two of the arm chairs, the two werewolves clearly on edge and looking at their phones every couple of minutes. "I've got some leftover Chinese in the fridge from the other day, it'll still be good if you want to heat it up."

"Or you could be a good hostess and heat it up for me," Lydia propositioned.

"Or you could fuck off," Clary retorted, kicking out with her foot. Lydia shoved at her friend and the pair playfully tussled for a few moments before Lydia fell off the couch and landed on the ground with a thud.

"Bitch," Lydia muttered without any malice behind the word. She got up from the ground and headed toward the kitchen. "You guys want anything?" She called out, looking toward Isabelle and Alec. They both shook their heads, the siblings tense. Clary glanced over at them before pulling her own phone out from where it was shoved between two couch cushions and sent off a quick text to Luke, asking if he was going to be stopping by her apartment before heading home. His response was almost immediate, saying that he and Jace were already driving over. The Alpha's must have been close, because after only a few minutes, Alec and Isabelle got up and walked over to the window, noses twitching as they obviously picked up on the scent of Jace approaching.

"Can you heat me up some noodles?" Clary asked Lydia, who hummed out the affirmative before piling more noodles onto the plate that she was getting ready to put in the microwave. Alec was walking toward the front door and pulling it open before Jace and Luke had even knocked, and Clary sat up, looking over the back of the couch toward her step-father and the younger Alpha as they came inside and shut the door behind them.

"Hey, baby," Luke greeted Clary, coming over and putting his hand on her shoulder as he leaned down and kissed her forehead. "Hey, Lyds," he walked into the kitchen and giving the blonde a kiss on the cheek as well.

"Hi, Luke," Lydia gave him a perky smile. "You hungry? Clary's been kind enough to let me heat up some of her old Chinese," she rolled her eyes toward her friend, who just pulled the fingers back at her. Luke shook her head at their antics, obviously used to them, and there was a smile on his face.

"No, I'm fine," Luke replied before taking in a deep breath and turning back around to look toward the rest of the people in the room. Jace had moved to stand next to Isabelle, resting a hand on the side of her neck and giving it a squeeze. The dark haired girl looked concerned as she leaned into her Alpha, a frown creasing her forehead. Clary glanced toward Jace, at the grim expression on his face, before looking back toward Luke.
"Did you guys learn anything new?" She asked quietly. Luke came over to where she was sitting, leaning against the back of the couch and pursing his lips together before he let out a heavy sigh.

"Nothing new, not really," Luke shook his head. "It's an omega, and their scent was all over the place, didn't seem organized at all. That scent though—there was a scent that Simon was talking about when he was telling me about the first scene—"

"He was saying something about a scent being something that he had Smelt before," Alec remembered.


"It's smells like magic," Luke told them quietly. "Not warlock magic, though, which is why it wasn't so obvious. Something softer." Clary's eyebrows pulled together and she swung her legs over the edge of the couch and then stood up. She braced her hands on her hips and looked around the room, at the werewolves and her fellow shadowhunter.

"So there's a rogue werewolf going around killing people, and they've got some sort of magic user on their side on their side?" She asked. "This isn't good."

"Princess State the Obvious over here," Alec muttered with a roll of his eyes. Clary looked over at him with a raised eyebrow and he met her gaze before looking away with a huff through his nose. Jace also gave him a look, but didn't say anything. Clary turned so that she was facing Luke, and ran her fingers through her hair.

"So Gretel is in town?" She asked, referencing his second in charge. "Where is she?"

"She went to the morgue, to find out if there was anything else that would help us," Luke replied. He rolled his shoulders and then jerked his head at Clary, indicating that she come over to stand beside him. She rounded the couch, taking her place at his side, and he put an arm around her shoulders, pulling her in close. From the way that she was facing, away from Luke, she didn't see the way his eyes glimmered red for a split second as he breathed in the scent of Jace on her skin—on her neck specifically. The other werewolves in the room noticed in, and both Isabelle and Alec shifted instinctively, taking tiny side steps so that they were standing in front of Jace. It was hardly obvious, but Clary noticed.

Lydia didn't—she was too busy shoving noodles in her mouth.

"I don't want you to forget what I said, pup," Luke murmured, leaning in close and kissing her on the side of her head. "You know our house is always open. I would feel comfortable if you came and stayed with us, just until all of this blows over," he looked over at Lydia, who's cheeks were like chipmunk ones. "You too, Lyds."

"I told you I'm staying here," Clary replied, her voice quiet as well, even though she knew that everyone in the room could hear what she was saying, except perhaps Lydia.

"Even if it's just for a couple of weeks, just so that I know you guys are safe," Luke continued, keeping his voice even but the look in his eyes was pleading. Clary took in a breath through her nose to try and keep down her frustration, not wanting to disrespect the Alpha in a room filled with other werewolves.

"I'm staying here," she repeated, her voice a little firmer than the first time and Luke pursed his lips together, obviously knowing when he had pushed his daughter far enough. Jace, Isabelle and Alec had only recently met her and even they knew from the gleam in her eye that she wasn't going to
change her mind. Clary turned so that she was facing Luke, wrapping an arm tighter around his waist. "You need to stop treating me like a kid, dad. I can take care of myself," she was smiling gently at him, obviously to take the sting out of her words.

"I'm not treating you like a kid," Luke replied, lifting an eyebrow down at her. "I'm treating you like pack." At the word, Jace tried to concentrate everything on Clary, and just like he had thought she might, there was a slight stiffness in her expression, a tightness in her lips, and maybe he was just dreaming, but it seemed like her eyes flickered in his direction before going back to Luke. He licked his lips and averted his eyes from the pair. "Alright, well, I better go pick up Gretel, see if she has found anything else out, and then get back to speak with the rest of the back." He put his hand on Clary's neck, although carefully not where Jace had touched her this morning. "Call me tonight, your mother wants to talk to you."

"And you want to make sure that I'm being a good little girl and staying home," Clary confirmed with a placating smile. "I'll call you—and don't worry. You know I'm good."

"I've got her back, Luke," Lydia piped up from the adjoining kitchen, almost completely finished the food she had heated up.

"And so do we," Jace spoke up, quiet but clearly heard from across the room. Clary raised an eyebrow across at Jace, probably not particularly happy about having another Alpha try to step in and act as though she wasn't strong enough to stand on her own. She didn't say anything though, and Luke looked across at Jace, nodding at him.

"Walk me to my car," Luke stated, and it was in no way a question before looking back at Clary. "I'll see you later, pup. And you make sure you call tonight."

"I will," Clary promised, crossing her arms over her chest as she stepped back from her father and looked between him and Jace. Jace nodded at Isabelle and Alec who shot him nervous looks, and stepped aside for him. Luke opened the door and waited for the younger Alpha to step out first before following after him. Once the door shut, Clary met Lydia's gaze, the blonde barely containing her laugh. "Well, that wasn't completely obvious or anything," she muttered.

"Luke's just doing his big scary routine," Lydia grinned. Clary pulled the fingers at her and then went into the kitchen to try and snatch the plate up from the bench top to finish off the left over noodles.

Down on the street, Luke and Jace were walking alongside each other, a space between them as they approached where both of their cars were parked. Jace knew that Luke wanted to talk about Clary—there was no other reason for them to be alone since they had already talked about the murders. The tension between them was palpable, even for anyone who wasn't a werewolf, and Jace felt the wolf inside him growing more and more uncomfortable as the silence stretched. They reached Luke's car, and Jace turned around to look the older were directly in the eye.

"You and my daughter," he began, Luke meeting Jace's gaze. "I don't know what's going on there, but I could smell you all over that apartment, and on her. On her neck." His eyebrow twitched, but Jace didn't say anything, waiting for him to continue. "Is she..." Luke trailed off, swallowing hard and glancing back toward the apartment building. "Is there something between you two?"

Jace pursed his lips and nodded once, answering at least for his part. Luke clenched his jaw, and Jace could see him struggling not to let the red filter through to his eyes before continuing.

"She's an adult and she is more than capable of handling herself, and if she's not interested in whatever this is between the pair of you, she will tell you. My question to you is; will you respect
that?" Jace had already gathered that Luke was a straight forward man, but he hadn't expected him to get straight to the point, just like that.

He wasn't too sure what he could say in response to that question, because the simple idea of leaving Clary alone actually made him feel physically weak. If he told Luke that he knew Clary was his mate, then there was nothing that Luke could do about it, and even if he didn't like Jace, he would have to back off. There were laws around werewolves and their mates—especially Alpha's and their mates—that said if a werewolf found their mate, then they could demand that their mate come with them, to live with them. Generally, that didn't happen, because two werewolves sensed their mates together. But when one of the mates was human or a shadowhunter, it wasn't as automatic, or as comprehensive.

But Jace didn't want that.

He didn't want to force Clary into anything, and he didn't want to tell Luke that the red head was his mate before he told her.

"Yes," Jace managed to force himself to say. "If she asks for distance, then I will give it to her." Luke kept his eyes on him steadily for a long moment before nodding and walking around to the drivers side of the car to unlock it. Jace took in a deep breath, stepping away from the curb as Luke got into his car and drove away.

Luke was just looking out for the girl he raised—and his protective instincts were even more exaggerated because he was an Alpha. Jace understood that, he felt like that whenever Isabelle brought another man around, even though he knew that she was strong-willed enough to stick up for herself. Luke also viewed Clary as a daughter, not separated as a step daughter, which just added to the instincts to watch over her and make sure that she was okay.

After watching Luke's car drive away, he walked back into the apartment building. Even as he was walking up the stairs, he could hear Alec, Isabelle and Clary. Lydia was there as well, he knew that, but her heartbeat was a bit more faint, not quite at the forefront as the others. He didn't even need to open the door, the Lightwood siblings were standing there when he reached the floor.

"Are we staying here?" Alec asked abruptly. "I want to get back to Magnus, especially if there's a magic user involved. He'll be able to help track the magic."

"We can go down to the crime scene," Isabelle added grimly. "You don't need to come with us—stay here if you want to," her eyes slid sideways to where Lydia and Clary were in the kitchen, talking quietly, their heads close together. Jace could easily listen in to what they were saying, but he tuned it out, out of respect.

"That's okay, we'll all head down there," Jace replied with a nod, although the words came out easier than that felt in his chest.

"You're fine with..." Alec frowned and licked his lips, looking over toward Clary, and Jace was surprised when he noted a look of concern on Alec's face. Alec was infamously stoic and not particularly interested in anyone who wasn't pack or family. Jace was so surprised that he didn't realize that Alec was still talking to him until halfway through Alec's next sentence. "...And I just don't know if it's a good idea to leave her here alone, don't you think it would be a good idea for one of us to stay?"

"None of you are staying," Clary spoke up from the kitchen. "Just like I told my dad, I'm fine." Jace took in a deep breath and met the piercing green eyes of the shadowhunter, who arched an eyebrow at him stubbornly and he knew better than to even try to argue with her, despite what his instincts
"Don't worry, we're leaving," Jace stated, but he took in one last deep breath through his nose, taking in the smell of the room and the scent of Clary and the rest of her friends, and the way his scent was now in her house. He wanted to reach out and touch Clary one last time, he wanted to put his hand on her neck and bury his face in her hair. God, he just wanted to stay here with her, curl up in her bed where it would undoubtedly still smell like both of them from the night that they had just spent together, and forget that there were gruesome events such as murders going on around them. Instead, Jace scratched his forehead and managed a half smile. "Think you could give me a call around the same time you call your father and mother?"

He expected Clary to turn him down flat, but she just gave him a smile that was probably meant to come off as long-suffering but he could see that she really didn't mind all that much. Even with the distance between them, he could catch a faint whiff of affection coming from her, and it made him want to puff out his chest with pride.

"Yeah, I'll get your number off Simon," she responded. There was more that Jace wanted to say but he just nodded and left, leading Isabelle and Alec. The siblings talked among themselves as they left the apartment building, but Jace was quiet where he was walking in front of them. He was completely aware of their surroundings, and when they passed a couple of humans, he could smell the fear coming off them as they looked at the werewolves. Another horrible side effect of the murders; the distrust coming from the rest of the town was bound to start spreading since it had been widely publicized that it was a werewolf doing the killing, and it was awfully convenient that they started just as Jace's pack had come into town.

"Jace?" Alec stopped as they reached Jace's car, his 2015 Lexus that he now had since Magnus was in town.

"What?" Jace snapped out of his trance and looked across at his second in command.

"I said that—" Alec broke off and looked at Isabelle, who just nodded and turned her eyes toward Jace, "I said that...She smells right. You know, Clary," the dark haired man looked uncomfortable, but determined. "She smells like pack. Her whole apartment—all of the scents in that apartment smelt right." Jace knew that his eyes were glowing red, just at the confirmation that his pack knew that she was right.

That she was the one.
Chapter 12

Clary shook her head side to side as she ran. She had her music turned all the way up, Calvin Harris pounding in her ears and drowning out any of the noise around her. After the two murders, she had started keeping to the main roads, well populated areas. Despite what she had said to her father and also to Jace about looking after herself, she wasn't stupid—she wasn't going to put herself in dangers way. However, that meant that things were busy around her, and it was harder for her to clear her head, which was a big part of her actually going for these runs was for.

The town had been tense since the first murder, and things had gotten worse since the second one. The town was big, maybe verging on the size of a small city, but Clary had been to New York, and that was what she considered a city, not the town she had grown up in. And with an Alpha living just a few hours away, there were crimes like petty theft, joy riding and some breaking and entering beforehand. But murder was a whole other thing, and everyone was on edge.

And then there was Jace.

He was a big reason why she was still running, even though she was now running on the roads, rather than in the forest like she preferred.

Because she was trying to understand the way she felt, the way that he made her feel. It was completely different from anything she had ever felt, and she was lucky to know what love, and home, and family felt like. Despite that, the way that she had felt the morning that she had woke up next to Jace, it was so strong that it resonated deep in her bones. She had felt some comfortable, and she had felt like she was completely cocooned by her pack.

Being around a pack had been something that had surrounded her her whole life. She couldn't remember her real dad, he had disappeared long ago, when she was barely walking, and Luke had been the one to help pick up the pieces when her mother was struggling to get by. Clary had seen the way that Jocelyn interacted with Luke and with the rest of his pack, the way that they all acted toward each other including her. But that feeling, that connection, was missing.

When she was young, maybe thirteen or fourteen, she felt like something was wrong with her, because she just didn't feel that closeness that she knew she was meant to feel. Jocelyn and Luke had hugged her, reassuring her that nothing was wrong, and when she had calmed down, Jocelyn had said that sometimes it would feel as though there was a piece missing if her mate belonged to another pack. Humans didn't generally have a sense of mates—it would be like another relationship to them. But shadowhunters had angelic blood in their veins as well, and that gave them a certain advantage when it came to things, including sensing mates. It wasn't as vivid as werewolves, from the way Maia described Jordan, it was this pull that she had no chance of resisting, there was no way she could stay away from him even if she wanted to. Clary would never feel that, but she would still feel a stronger emotional connection than a human when it came to her mate—if she ever met her mate.

When Clary was with Simon, and Lydia, and Maia, Jordan and Bat—it almost felt as though it was her own pack, they felt more like her pack that Luke's, even though she had grown up with Luke's. She still loved Luke's pack, they had been her family for so long and she couldn't imagine life without them. But her friends...They were the ones that felt as close to pack as she had ever gotten.

Until Jace.

"Fuck!" Clary's heart was beating fast in her chest, she realized that she had started running faster and faster until she had practically been sprinting rather than keeping her pace steady. The stamina
rune that was burned onto the skin of her upper arm meant that she could usually push herself to run for two hours at a reasonably quick pace, but she had been pumping her legs faster to try and escape the thoughts that were running through her head at hyperspeed. She reached a curb and slowed to a walk, making sure to keep her body moving so that she didn't get nauseous at a sudden stop.

When Luke had said that she was pack, that he was treating her like pack—implying his pack—in front of Jace, it made her flinch, it made her physically feel as though she needed to recoil. It had felt so incredibly wrong, and her eyes had wanted to slide over to look at Jace, but she had managed to stop herself. Luke could obviously already sense that there was something between her and Jace—even though she had absolutely no idea what that something was—and it would just make it worse if she deferred to Jace over him.

Clary checked the watch that was strapped to her wrist and saw that it was nearly nine o'clock. She was meant to be at the community college in two hours, so if she started back home now, she would still have plenty of time to shower and get ready. She wiped the back of her hand across her face, her wrist catching the sweat that was gathered on her upper lip, and the turned to start jogging back in the direction of her home.

She taught art at the college three days a week, and she absolutely loved it. She had studied art in New York, and she was good friends with the head of the art department, Charlotte Branwell, and she asked Clary to teach a few afternoons at the college. Clary wasn't rich, but she was comfortable. She made money off her art, which she sold online and at a couple of galleries in her town and in the ones nearby, she had a trust fund set up for her by Luke and her mother that she barely ever touched but had as a fall back if she ever ran into trouble, and then she had her teaching job. She also occasionally helped out start up companies and self employed people in town, who wanted her to help with creating labels or signs. She liked what she did—she got to work in the business she loved, and she had spare time to spend with her friends and family.

It took Clary twenty minutes to get back to her apartment, and she had to walk the last couple of blocks and up the stairs to her floor. Sweat had dampened the the band of her leggings and soaked right through her sports bra. When she reached her apartment, she pulled her key out of her bra, unlocking the door and tugging the cord of her ear buds out. Clary toed off her shoes and took off her socks one at the time as she crossed the apartment to the fridge, pulling out a bottle of water and gulping it down.

After finishing off almost the whole bottle, Clary went into the bathroom and turned on the shower. She was about to start undressing when she heard a couple of heavy knocks at her front door. Clary frowned, finding her phone where she had tossed it onto the bed and checking to see if she had any messages from any of her friends, notifying her that they were coming over. There was nothing there, and she definitely wasn't expecting anyone, so she was a bit wary as she walked over to her front door and opened it up, not removing the chain from it's slide as she looked through the crack.

"Clary," came a familiar voice that she hadn't heard in some time, and the red heads eyes lit up in surprise.

"You've been awake pretty much all night," Magnus noted as he came into the lounge where Jace was sitting, moodily staring at the TV that was playing some re-run of an angsty teenage show. "You woke Alec up with your pacing." Jace just gave Magnus a sideways look before directing his eyes back to the TV so as to avoid the warlock. "And so of course, if you wake up Alec, then you wake up me, and I don't do well without my eight hours beauty sleep."

"You can say that again," Jace snorted and Magnus narrowed his eyes and stalked back out of the lounge. Jace could hear the man moving around in the kitchen, probably making himself his morning...
coffee in that ridiculously fancy contraption that he had brought down from New York. The Lightwood siblings had gone into the town to meet up with a couple of their allies, mainly because they wanted jobs. Jace lived off a sizable family inheritance and he would probably look for a job at some point, but at the moment, his main concerns were Clary and the murders, although not necessarily in that order. Jace wasn't even sure what was playing on TV, it held absolutely none of his interest, and even with his incredible, supernatural hearing, he wouldn't have a clue what was being said. He didn't even realize how completely he had zoned out until the smell of rich coffee hit him and he realized that Magnus was actually back in the lounge and sitting down across from him, a coffee cup the size of a soup bowl clasped between his hands.

"So?" Magnus prompted after several moments of Jace pointedly ignoring him.

"So, what?" Jace rolled his eyes over to Magnus, pursing his lips together.

"Are you going to tell me about the girl?" There was a smirk on Magnus' full lips.

"Given I never tell you about anything, ever, the answer to that would be 'no'," Jace retorted and turned his eyes back to the TV, feigning interest. It wasn't that Jace and Magnus disliked each other. In fact, given how happy Magnus made Alec and how invaluable Magnus was to them as a pack, on some days, Jace might even admit to himself that he loved the warlock. But they butted heads on just as many occasions as Jace did with Alec, and Magnus liked to have the upper hand in situations, which meant Jace couldn't often predict what Magnus was going to say or how he could act, which made him a little wary.

"You can tell me by choice, or I can make you tell me," Magnus sung out, his eyes glowing gold, and Jace looked back over at him, letting his own eyes bleed Alpha red. Magnus definitely had the power to compel Jace, but he never would. It didn't stop the Indonesian man from reminding Jace just how powerful he was from time to time though.

"I'm gonna go for a walk," Jace stated as he got up,

"Walk? Or stalk?" Magnus called after him, and Jace grumbled under his breath at the fact that Magnus could read him so well. Jace was shoving his feet into the shoes that were beside the front door when Magnus called out after him, a laugh in his voice. "Just remember—peeping in windows and shit is frowned upon! And from what Alec has told me about this girl, she'll probably have no qualms with punching you in the face if you encroach on her privacy!" Jace rolled his eyes at the comment, although he didn't doubt for a second that was true, and then he was striding out the front door.

Jace was still adapting to being back in the house he had grown up in, and sometimes he needed to get out of it for a while, to clear his head. The memories at times would just get too much, or there would be this sudden, intense scent of one of his parents, or the pack that he had grown up with, and he felt like a teenager again, lost and confused and hurting so bad that it made his body physically ache.

Focusing on Clary though, that helped. It had been a week since he had stayed over at her place, and he hadn't seen her since. He had picked up her scent around town in several places and maybe he had purposefully stayed in those areas for longer than necessary, but he prided himself with at least not just showing up at her place without announcing himself. He had her number on his phone now, and he had been itching to use it ever since Isabelle had tapped it into the device, but he had stopped himself.

Jace considered walking through the woods, but he decided to start toward town. If his feet began leading him in the direction of Clary's apartment, then that was no one's business. Everyone in this
town knew who he was, even if he had only been back for a short amount of time, and as he was walking, he got looks from most of the people that he passed. Every now and then he would scent a werewolf, and there was the occasional other supernatural creatures but most were human.

And the common, underlying scent was fear.

Xenophobia—fear of the unknown and the misunderstood was a common thing. Even though supernatural creatures were common place and respected, that didn't stop there from being protest groups or riots, bigoted people who had nothing better to do with their times or lives than to degrade others. Especially in bigger cities, such as New York, they were more common—Jace had been taken aback the first time he heard the word 'dog' hissed in his direction in a derogatory manner when his mother had taken him to the city when he was eight. He had gotten used to it as he had gotten older, but he really hadn't expected to need to put up with it once he had gotten back to Raven Creek.

However, with the two murders that had happened over the past few weeks, only after Jace and his pack had come back into town, had everyone on edge. 'Werewolf attacks' were being whispered in hushed tones, and people were scuttling around, with the scent of alarm and terror trailing after them.

Jace hadn't even realized that he had reached the block where Clary's apartment was, and when he checked the time on his phone, he noted that he had actually been walking for nearly half an hour. He considered walking straight past her street, but it had been a week, and Maia, Simon and Bat had been over at his house a couple of times since then, so he could always just say she was coming by under the guise of discussing her 'pack'. It didn't matter if she claimed she didn't have a pack, or that she had always felt out of place, Jace had gathered by that she was just meaning in Luke's pack, because when she was with her friends, that was clearly her pack. And if she was a werewolf, she would have been the Alpha. In fact, even with her not being a werewolf, it seemed as though she was the leader of their group.

Jace couldn't even begin to describe how much that appealed to him.

He turned down the street to start walking toward Clary's apartment, and his heart began beating a little bit faster, and he was very glad that she wasn't a werewolf because she would have been able to hear him coming a mile away. He had almost reached her building when he suddenly caught a whiff of a scent that wasn't his mate. It wasn't a scent that he had smelt in a long time and it made his eyes glow red and all the tiny hairs on the back of his neck stick up. The closer he got to the apartment building, he realized that the scent actually lead inside, and he was practically sprinting to get from the street up to Clary's apartment. The scent went right inside, it was all over the door, the frame, the handle, and the only reason that Jace didn't kick open the door was because there was no scent of fear or blood inside. He refrained from slamming his fist against the door and managed to just give the door a couple of hard knocks.

"Hold on a sec!" Came a shout from inside that he recognized as Clary's. A moment later, she came to the door, opening it up, wearing only a towel, her hair damp and hanging over one shoulder. "Jace," she looked surprised, but not upset at seeing him there. "Uh, I just got out of the shower, but you can come in and wait for me to get dressed if you want," she stepped back and looked back over her shoulder. She hadn't seem to notice how on edge he was, but when the object of the scent he had been following suddenly appeared, she glanced between them.

"Jace," the other werewolf said from where he was lounging comfortably on her couch, not looking surprised to see him there.

"Sebastian," Jace growled.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Happy Pride Month, ya'll!

"Um," Clary looked between the two werewolves, who were now facing off against each other, Jace clearly on edge with his eyes glowing red, while Sebastian was smirking, slouching, not showing any respect to the Alpha.

"Interesting seeing you back here," Jace managed to say in a way that might have almost been civil if his fangs weren't inching out of his gums, the tips showing ever so slightly as his lips pulled back over them.

"Well, I heard about the attacks," Sebastian gave a one shouldered shrug, and then shifted his weight onto his foot that was closest to Clary, and lifted his hand to put it around her bare shoulders. Jace's eyes flashed again, and Clary's jaw stiffened as her eyes darted between them again. Sebastian still didn't look bothered at all, his hand hanging over the front of her shoulder, his fingers dangling close to where the towel was covering her breasts. "I just wanted to come here, check on my girl." This time, Jace couldn't help himself; a growl escaped past his teeth and Clary's eyebrows arched high, reaching toward her hair line.

"Okay, whatever it is that's going on between you two?" Clary smartly stepped away from Sebastian, so that there was space between herself and both of the werewolves. "Whatever it is, I'm not dressed enough for this. If I leave you two alone to go and get dressed, you promise not to get any blood on the carpet."

"Of course," Sebastian sent a smile Clary's way, backing away from Jace but not turning his back to him. He reached one of the arm chairs and dropped down, looking completely comfortable in the apartment. He even lifted up his feet and rested them on the edge of the coffee table.

"Put your fucking feet down, you know you're not allowed them on the coffee table," Clary said offhandedly as she gave Jace one last warning look before walking toward her bedroom. Jace couldn't even take a moment to appreciate her walking away in the barely there, his eyes were glued on Sebastian, the beta werewolf lounging on Clary's furniture as though he had been there a hundred times before.

Actually, maybe he had.

Jace hadn't picked up on the scent of this particular werewolf when he had been in Clary's apartment before, but then if it had been a long time since Sebastian had been there, and given how many other werewolves frequented her place, then it wouldn't be hard to miss the scent. Even if it was one that was as familiar to him as Isabelle or Alec, that could be the case. Jace stepped inside the apartment stiffly, closing the door behind him, but not coming in any further. Sebastian might be all smiles and relaxed posture, but Jace knew that the other werewolf wasn't missing a single movement that he made. They were also both listening in closely to Clary, who had shut the door behind her as she had gone into the bedroom, but they could hear her heartbeat thudding a little bit faster than normal as she made her way around her room to get dressed. When she came back out, the tension in the air was even thicker than it had been just a few minutes ago.
"Right, so..." Clary pursed her lips as she looked between them. "You guys know each other, there's no way you can deny that. This isn't just some werewolf friction going on between you two, there's some weird, like, other shit going on here."

"Me and Jace go way back," Sebastian smiled up at Jace, although it didn't reach his eyes. Jace could scent the hostility in the air, even if Sebastian was putting on a good face, and despite the fact that Clary wasn't a werewolf, she was smart enough to be able to see it as well. "We actually went to school here together, when we were kids."

"O-kay," Clary turned her eyes back to Jace. "Well, you know, I went to school with a lot of people as well. I don't ever get this fucked off when I step into the same room as one of the them." Sebastian raised an eyebrow, lazily sliding his eyes between Jace and Clary, before shrugging slowly.

"There may have been a disagreement or so," Sebastian got up from the couch, approaching Clary, knowing that the movement was going to put Jace on edge as he got closer to her. "Over a girl."

"A girl," Clary rolled her eyes, scrunching her nose up and shaking her head from side to side. "Of course it was over a girl." She seemed to notice Sebastian getting closer to her and she shot him a narrow eyed look before stalking past both of them, and going into the adjoining kitchen, putting distance between both of the werewolves, knowing that it was the smartest thing for her to not show preference to either of them. "So you guys can just kiss and make up then? I'm assuming this girl is long gone?"

"It wasn't just over a girl," Jace snipped through clenched teeth, and Clary raised her eyebrows at him. "And the girl herself wasn't just 'some' girl, she was—is—special." That caught Clary by surprise, since she had assumed this girl was no longer in the picture, her eyebrows lifting. "But the girl wasn't the only thing that came between us, and you know that," Jace glared over at Sebastian, letting his glow red, and Clary was surprised by how unbothered the beta looked, just grinning confidently directly back at Jace, although his eyes were still cold.

"So what's the big story then? And who's the girl?" Clary asked, pushing herself off the ground and sitting on the kitchen bench, swinging her legs slightly so that her heels bumped against the cupboard.

"The girl was someone who was meant to be special to Jace," Sebastian sung out, and Clary narrowed her eyes as she looked at him. "Except he didn't have the balls to talk to her," he shrugged. "I did." Jace looked confused for a moment before his lips parted as though he had just realized something. Clary didn't understand the confused expression on his face, because it seemed as though this was old news between them.

"This is not just about the girl," Jace repeated, feeling anger flaring up in his stomach. "In fact, it wasn't until recently—" about ten minutes ago in fact. "—That I even knew that you were aware of this girls existence. And importance." Sebastian just continued smiling, because he knew that it was getting under Jace's skin, and the chemosignals that were coming off him were caustic and self-righteous. "So," Jace locked his jaw, feeling sick to his stomach at the fact the two of them had history, that Sebastian had spent more time with his mate than he had. "How did you two meet?" He didn't want to ask the question 'how do you two know each other' because he had a feeling that he didn't want to know.

In fact, he knew that he didn't want to know.

The pair of them seemed extremely comfortable together, and he didn't want to know how far that extended. At best—which still wasn't even close to being okay—they were friends. At worse, they were something more than friends. Although he comforted himself with the fact that whatever it was,
it wasn't serious, since the scent of Sebastian hadn't been too strong in the apartment. And the only thing that had stopped him from reacting violently when he had opened the door and seen Clary in just a towel was that there was absolutely no scent of sex in the apartment, so whatever it was, at least it wasn't happening now.

"Uh, you remember how I told you that I lived in New York for a while?" Clary asked in response to Jace's question. The Alpha jerked his head in a short nod. "Well, I was at this club one night with a couple of friends, it was this weirdly named one that my friends dragged me to call Outback—" if Jace was capable of emptying the contents of his breakfast onto the floor then he would have done that right then and there. Clary was still talking, and she laughed about something, and god, he really wished that he would have been able to process the laugh because he absolutely loved that sound, but he felt as though he was under water. There was a rushing sound in his ears and all he could do was stare at Sebastian, who's nasty smile was growing even more as he found out how the pair of them had met.

**Outback.**

Isabelle had dragged him there for a night out, and that was the club that he had been at when he had first caught Clary's scent. Sebastian had been the fourth person there at the club. It had been Isabelle, Alec, Jace and Sebastian. Unlike Isabelle and Alec, when Jace had realized who the person was that he could smell and seen her tossing her long red hair round and taken off out of the club, Sebastian hadn't followed. Jace had never asked Sebastian what he had done that night, because in all honesty, he hadn't cared. Sebastian had a tendency to look out only for himself, something that had taken Jace years to properly realize that, but Jace had been completely caught up in his head that night, Sebastian had been the last thing on his mind.

As it turned out, while Jace had been freaking out and holing himself up his in his apartment, Sebastian had known exactly who it was Jace had been staring at, and had apparently gone after her. That had been four years ago.

**Four years.**

Sure, Jace and Sebastian weren't in touch anymore, after the incident that had resulted in the Clave needing to issue an official ruling, but that had only happened two and a half years ago. Which meant that for just over a year, while Sebastian had been a part of Jace's pack, while he had interacted with him on a regular basis, Sebastian had been cosying up to a girl that he knew was someone that was going to be so important to Jace. He had no idea how Sebastian had hidden it from him, especially her scent, but obviously he had worked hard to hide it from Jace, because he had clearly been looking forward to this moment.

"Jace...Jace!" He didn't even realize that Clary had been repeating his name, her voice getting louder and louder, and he blinked. She had moved closer to him, and she was holding out her hand toward him, but there was something on her face that Jace hated, because it was directed right at him. "Are you okay?" He had been growling, softly but definitely loud enough for them to hear. He hadn't even been aware of the snarl that was itching to come out, his fangs dropped and his lips were curling back, furious and completely focused on Sebastian and ignoring everything that Clary had been saying.

He hadn't ever thought that Clary, the badass Shadowhunter who clearly had no problem surrounding herself in supernatural creatures who had abilities to kill people in the blink of an eye, would look scared.

And it was because of **him.**
Jace blinked, his eyes fading back to their usual golden colour and quickly closed his mouth, his fangs receding back into his gums. He shook his head slightly and anchored himself, but then he looked over Clary's shoulder, to where Sebastian was standing, smirking and knowing exactly what it was that he was doing to the Alpha. In a split second, the red eyes and the fangs were back and Clary dropped her hand to her side, locking her teeth together.

"Jace, you need to go," she said firmly.

She was asking him to leave.

To leave her in the apartment with Sebastian.

"You need to go now," Clary repeated, and even though he could still faintly smell fear on her, she had squared her shoulders and her nostrils flared, and there was a determined glint in her narrowed eyes.

"Clary, I—" Jace really had no idea what he could say. It wasn't his fault he was reacting that way, to seeing Sebastian in Clary's house and finding out that he had known her for four years. But Clary didn't know why he was acting that way, all she saw was someone that she had a history with and then someone who was snarling and flashing their eyes in a way that usually meant things were going to get dangerous. Just because they had been getting on recently, didn't mean that she knew him, and didn't mean that she knew there was no way he would ever harm her. He would sooner hurt himself than her.

"Get out of my apartment," Clary didn't look as though she was in the mood to repeat herself a third time, with the way her voice was raising and her hands were shaking slightly at her side. At least, he consoled himself, it was mainly out of anger, rather than fear. He hated the idea of her being scared of him.

"Okay," Jace couldn't bring himself to look in Sebastian's direction, because the scent of his smugness and confidence was filling his nostrils and almost suffocating Jace. He was worried that if he actually looked at Sebastian and saw the self-satisfied expression on the beta's face, he would lash out at Sebastian and then he would really mess things up between him and Clary. "Okay, I'm leaving," Jace managed to grind out, despite how painful the words were coming out of his throat.

He wasn't sure how he managed to leave.

He didn't even realize what he was doing until he got out of the apartment building and was running toward his end of the town, and the forests surrounding his home.

His fangs had dropped, his claws came out of his nail beds, his eyes were glowing red as soon as he reached the edge of the forest. He ran, not paying attention to his surroundings as birds flew from the tree's as he ran past, his feet digging into the layer of rocks and leaves that were covering the ground.

There were laws.

There were laws that said if a werewolf identified someone as their mate, the mate had to go with them. Especially Alpha's, they had so much power in the community that there were literally legal steps that could be taken to force a mate to live with a werewolf. It sounded medieval, and there were communities that protested against these laws, saying that they were barbaric and robbed people of their free will and basic rights. But werewolves had always held power and been part of high society, so the laws were there to stay.

Jace didn't have too much of an opinion about the rules. Humans didn't always feel the pull as strong
as werewolves did, they didn't have the same senses, but werewolves were hardwired to protect and love their mates, and they were loyal to a fault. He had never heard a mate pairing not working out, even if the humans took several months before they realized the way they felt about their werewolf mate. Seelies, warlocks and Shadowhunters were slightly more in touch with the supernatural, like werewolves, which meant that often they would be able to feel a connection to their mates, although it was nowhere near as honed as werewolves senses.

But he didn't want to force Clary.

He never wanted to make her do things that she never wanted to do.

He wanted her to be with him because she wanted to.

And because he hadn't been upfront with her the first several times they had met, he couldn't just all of sudden change his mind and decide that he wanted to claim her. He could only imagine how angry she would get at him for not being honest with her. He didn't doubt that she would follow the law set by the werewolf council—the Clave—if he decided to enforce it, given her connection with werewolves.

He didn't want that though.

And so now, he was running through the forest, while Clary—his mate—was in her apartment with Sebastian, the person that he trusted the least in the world.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Sorry about the wait, guys.
Life is crazy.

Jace wasn't sure how long he ran in the woods, but he knew that he ended up barefoot, bare chested, and there were tears in the sweatpants that he was wearing. His temperature ran burning hot, like any other werewolf, and given he had been outside the whole time and his eyes had adapted, so it took him a while to realize that he had actually been out there all day, and the moon was now rising in the sky. He was hurting, his stomach was still churning, the smugness from Sebastian still filled his nostrils, and everytime he thought back to the fact that Clary was in her apartment with him his claws started pressing through the skin of his fingers and toes.

He wasn't ready to go back to his house.

His pack would understand—they would try to make him feel better, distract him, dull his pain in any way that they could.

But the house had only just begun to feel like home again. The scent of his pack, and the stupid, faint singing smell of Magnus' magic, and like Maia and Simon and Bat, and maybe he still hadn't washed that bathrobe that Clary had used, although her scent was incredibly faint now. It had been so long since he had found a place that felt like home, because even though he had been surrounded by people who loved him in New York, it still just hadn't felt right. Then coming back here, he knew that the house wouldn't just automatically feel like home the way it used to, but he hadn't expected it to feel so foreign.

He knew that the reason that he was just starting to feel as though he belonged again was because of Clary, and now she was...She was with Sebastian.

Jace couldn't help himself, he threw his head back and let out a howl.

It was ripped from deep in his chest, flowing from his throat until his voice was hoarse and he slumped sideways against a thick tree trunk. His feet were completely covered in mud, underneath his toenails and staining the hems of his sweatpants. There were a couple dots of blood on his chest and his arms from where he had been whipped by long hanging branches, the scrapes already healed.

He stayed there, sucking in deep breaths of night air, his mind lost in his thoughts. Clary, Sebastian, Clary, mate, Sebastian, Clary—

There was a responding howl, Alec's, that sounded through the night and Jace blinked as he lifted his head, turning his face in the direction of the beta's howl. There was another howl, this one with a different pitch, a little bit higher. Isabelle's. The Lightwood siblings must have been in the house, given how quickly they was responding to the Alpha's cry. Jace thought about getting to his feet, but he had been running for so long that even he was tired, with his supernatural stamina. He would be fine in a couple of minutes, and the siblings would be with him by then, and he would be able to draw strength from them as well.
It didn't take long before Isabelle and Alec found him, running to where he was still leaning against
the tree, the worry obvious in the scents coming off them. Jace wanted to reassure them, that was his
job as an Alpha to do that, but it took him a few minutes before he could talk to them. That didn't
matter though, because his beta's were rambling over each other.

"How long have you been out here?"

"You smell terrible."

"You smell like all the worst things in the world—"

"You sort of smell like Sebastian."

That was when everything went silent, and the only noise was coming from the birds flying
overhead and the occasional owl hooting in the distance. Jace licked his lips, which felt dry from the
amount of time that he had spent outside, and jerked his head in a nod. Isabelle and Alec exchanged
looks, and then Isabelle let out a heavy sigh, falling onto the ground beside Jace and running the
fingers from both hands through her hair.

"You also smell like Clary," she mumbled. "Did you see her before or after your run in with
Sebastard?" Jace scratched the side of his face, noting the dirt that came off under his fingernails. He
didn't answer, and then Alec stepped closer, his jaw set and his blue eyes flashing.

"Or was it during?" He asked, his voice rough. Jace didn't have to answer, because the way that his
eyes suddenly glowed red did all the talking.

"He knows Clary?!" Isabelle hissed, her eyes glowing in response, feeling his anger.

"Yup, they seem to know each other pretty well." Jace managed to bite out, barely able to talk
through his mouthful of fangs, which had slid through his gums at the memory of Clary and
Sebastian in her apartment. The two beta's were quiet as Jace pushed himself off the trunk of the tree
that he had crumbled against, rolling his shoulders and curling his toes into the dirt and composting
leaves.

"How well is 'well'?" Isabelle asked, her words clipped.

"Well enough that she was there in a towel, just out of the shower, and she was totally okay with him
just hanging out in her lounge," Jace responded. Alec was chewing down on his lower lip, an angry
expression on his face, shifting from foot to foot, his feet crunching in the leaves. Isabelle let out
another sigh, flipping her hair over her shoulders and then shrugging.

"She sort of seems to run a house for wayward werewolves," Isabelle pointed out. "And human's, I
guess, but that doesn't have the same ring to it. I mean, we felt it when we were there, even Alec
knows it, even if he's not going to admit it." Alec just rolled his eyes, but Jace knew that Isabelle was
right. Alec hated being in places where he didn't feel as though he was accepted or welcomed. He
would have been itching to get out of his skin at Clary's house the other weekend if he didn't want to
be there. But instead, other than the worry and concern that he felt toward his Alpha and the murders
that were happening in the town, he had been settled. "So it could just be...They met and Sebastian
feels comfortable there, and because she's so used to werewolves being around, she's got no problem
with him hanging around."

"Well, she should know what he is—what he's done!" Jace snapped. "He shouldn't be anywhere
near her. I should go back there and rip his fucking throat out with my teeth." His eyes were bright,
and his mouth was all full of fangs again, and his claws were coming out of his finger tips and toes.
"Okay, okay, okay," Isabelle lifted herself back to her feet and put her hands on his shoulders, giving them a squeeze. "Look, Sebastian technically has never done anything wrong, and if you're right, and she has history with him, and you go barging in there and spout all this bullshit about him, then she's probably going to kick you out."

"Unless you invoke the laws around mates," Alec added unhelpfully. "Then she won't have a choice but to forgive you and come with you."

"She might come with you," Isabelle shot a glare over her shoulder at her brother. "But she definitely won't forgive you. That girl is stubborn and strong, and Jace isn't going to force his way into her heart like the neanderthals who came up with those laws around werewolves and their mates, he's going to win it, fair and square." Jace should really reprimand Isabelle for speaking for him, her Alpha, like that, but she was completely correct. She turned back to Jace and took in a deep breath. "You barely know the girl, and that's where you need to start."

"So what's your bright idea?" Jace asked gruffly.

"Well, rather than starting with murdering someone that she's close to," Isabelle began sarcastically, but the expression quickly dropped off her face as Jace growled at the mention of Sebastian again. "Ask her out." That seemed to stun both of the male werewolves, who stopped short and looked at her as though she was proposing to rip out someone's throat with her teeth.

"Ask her... Out?" Jace asked haltingly.

"Yes," Isabelle rolled her eyes and nodded her head. "Like a normal person." Jace and Alec exchanged looks before looking back at the dark haired beauty. "That's what people do when they're getting to know someone; they go out on dates." She rolled her eyes again as she turned around and started walking back in the direction that they came from, toward the house. "How have either of you ever held relationships without my help—and don't even try to say you managed Magnus on your own, coz you were a fucking mess, big brother."

With a little bit of help from a skeptical Simon, Jace found out where Clary was the next afternoon. He hadn't ever been inside the actual college before, given he had been seventeen when his parents had been killed and he had left the town, and so it took him a while to work out where he was going. But as soon as he picked up on her scent, he was able to follow it right to the art rooms that were on the far side of the campus. The doors and windows were all open, and there was the sharp smell of mentholated spirits that he associated closed to his mate, and he could also smell her, amongst the scent of the students that were in the room.

"Okay, you guys can start cleaning things up—please soak your brushes! I am not going to clean up after you, I am not your mother—I'm way too fucking hot for that!" Clary was calling out to her classroom, and there were scattered laughs throughout the room. The chemosignals that Jace was picking up from the people in the room were happy and relaxed, which he could understand.

Everyone seemed to feel that way when they were around Clary—Jace included.

He didn't want to interrupt her class, especially since it seemed as though they were so close to finishing, so he stayed outside, sitting on the wooden bench that was running along the outside wall. He could smell a couple of werewolves inside the art room, along with someone else, maybe a werefox. They could probably smell him as well, from where he was outside, given the distinct scent that followed an Alpha, but hopefully they didn't bring too much attention to his presence, because he was only there to speak with Clary. They would be werewolves who lived in surrounding towns, since there weren't any others in this town that he didn't know, and he wondered if they were in
A bell sounded and a moment later, there were students coming out of the art classes, and out of some of the surrounding classes as well. He got looks, and he nodded his head at a couple of the werewolves who noticed him, all of them letting their eyes glow and tilting their heads ever so slightly to the side to show respect. Jace took in a breath before getting up off the bench and going inside. Clary was on the far side of the classroom, talking to a petite girl, the pair of them standing in front an easel, and Jace stood by the desk at the front of the class that was covered strongly in Clary’s scent, so he assumed that it was probably her desk.

"It looks gorgeous, you're being too hard on yourself, Ava," Clary was saying to the girl. "Now, go to your next class, you don't want to be late—" she cut off as she turned to the front of the class and saw Jace standing there. She blinked, looking surprised, and then flattened her lips together before looking back to Ava. "Yeah, you don't want to be late, so," there was a scent of nervousness coming from Clary and Jace diverted his eyes to look down at the floor. Ava was human, but she seemed very aware of the fact that he was an Alpha, because she practically fled from the room. "Jace," Clary arched an eyebrow as she slowly began crossing the room toward him. "What are you doing here? Also—how did you even know that I taught here? Stalkerish, much?"

"Uh," Jace shrugged. "Izzy called Simon."

"And you don't have to be a werewolf to know that Simon is panting after Isabelle," Clary rolled her eyes. "Look, now isn't exactly the best time. I'm working."

"Well, last time I came by your place, I was kicked out," Jace noted wryly.

"Yes, and you know exactly why," Clary retorted, brushing past him and heading toward her desk, not letting him make her feel bad. As she past by him, he caught a whiff of Sebastian on her clothes, and in her hair, but it didn't smell like sex, so he comforted himself with that thought. "I didn't want a turf war breaking out in my apartment, I didn't need you two messing the place up." Jace pursed his lips and swallowed down his annoyance, because the wolf inside him still saw it as a betrayal, because Clary chose Sebastian over him.

"I can understand that," he forced himself to say, even though his teeth were pretty much grinding against each other as he did so. Clary nodded at him, looking as though she appreciated the sentiment. "I was hoping that we could...Smooth things over."

"It's already forgotten," Clary said as she sat down at her desk and tapped her password into her keyboard. "I know how territorial werewolves can be." Jace nodded and cleared his throat. Despite how normal Isabelle had made it sound, the idea of asking Clary out actually made him feel nervous. This was what he wanted though. He didn't want to force the idea of them being mates on her, he wanted her to want to be with him. So he took in a deep breath and blurted it out before he lost his nerve.

"I was actually hoping that we could go out to dinner." Clary looked up from her computer screen at him, blinking in surprise. "As in, a date." Clary stared at him for a few more minutes before she took in a deep breath and blurted it out before he lost his nerve.

"Okay," she agreed slowly. "But I don't want to go out somewhere fancy, with candles on the tables and prices so expensive they're not on the menu." Jace let out a snort and nodded understandingly. That had been the next part that he had been torn over, because Isabelle had said to take her out to a nice restaurant, Alec had muttered go for a walk in the woods, and Magnus had said that he should ask Clary for her input, since he didn't really know this town anymore, and he didn't know Clary all that much. "There's a burger place that I go to with some of the others, it's called Taki's. It's a diner,
kinda greasy, paper napkins, and it can get kinda loud with all the kids that show up there."

"Sounds great," Jace nodded eagerly, just happy that she was giving him another chance. He took in a deep breath, and thought to himself that he could get drunk off her scent. It was just too damn sweet. "So, uh, is tomorrow night okay?"

"Sure," Clary nodded, and even though she was hiding her nervousness well, her face expressionless, Jace could hear the quick uptick in her heart beat. "Pick me up around five."
Chapter 15

It was ridiculous how nervous he was.

Jace hadn't been out on a lot of dates, but he had been on enough. Most of the time, when it came to girls, he would just pick them up in bars and go home with them. He never actually took them home, because he didn't like their scent in his bed and all over his furniture, lingering in his apartment, which was meant for just his pack, so he would take them back to their place. Usually he slept with humans, rather than werewolves or other supernatural creatures, because once scenting Clary in that club four years ago, he knew that none of them were his mate, and he didn't want any of them to form an attachment that he knew he would never return.

But this was Clary.

This was his mate.

This was the one person in the world who was meant to complete him, his wolf and his human halves.

This was the girl who's scent actually made his whole body feel as though it was on fire, the first person who had actually made him feel as though he was whole again, after loosing his family when he was younger. The girl who was strong, and loving, and fierce, and had absolutely no problem with creating her own pack, despite the fact that she wasn't a werewolf. And not only did she have a pack—one that she openly recognized as not complete yet, because he wasn't a part of it—but she was clearly the Alpha of her own small group.

Jace wasn't sure how long he spent, sitting in his car, parked down on the road outside Clary's apartment building. At first it was because he had gotten there early, but then it was because he got lost in his thoughts. He snapped out of it when he got a text from Isabelle, the phone vibrating against his thigh.

*You better not be wussing out of this.*

Jace narrowed his eyes down at his beta's message and shoved his phone back in his pocket. He got out of the car and headed toward her apartment building. He took the steps up to Clary's apartment, and then hesitated before knocking on the door.

What if Sebastian was still there?

He really wasn't sure how he would handle that.

Especially since they were going out, on a date, and then she was going to come back to her apartment, with *him*?

Turns out, he didn't need to knock, because Clary opened the door after a moment and raised an eyebrow at him.

"Was wondering if you were actually going to come up, or if you were going to set up camp down in your car," she said to him, a small smirk at the corner of her lips. "You good to go?" Jace bobbed his head in a nod and she stepped out into the hallway with Jace, turning her back to him as she shut and locked the door. Jace gave her some space, but he couldn't help the way his eyes skimmed her over, taking in the way she looked a little bit different than how she usually did.
She was wearing jeans, which seemed normal.

But she was also wearing a nice pair of shoes, and a nice, deep blue shirt that dipped down in a low v-neck, showing off some of her cleavage, and a black jacket that seemed to be tailored to her figure.

She was also wearing a bit of make up, and even though it was only light, he could smell perfume, something slightly different than what she usually wore.

She had dressed up for him.

The wolf inside Jace preened at that fact his mate had dressed up for him.

He bit back his smile, because he didn't doubt for a second that Clary would shoot some snarky remark at him if she saw the smile on his face. She smelt incredible, and although her natural scent was the best thing in the world, the flowery perfume that she was wearing wasn't overpowering like what some woman wore. She knew what complemented her scent, and she knew that she didn't need to use too much, especially since she was going out with a werewolf.

"So, uh," Jace took in a deep breath as they started down to the stairs. "How was your day today? Did you have work? Like, at the college?"

"No," Clary shook her head. "I was at home today, although I went out for lunch with Lydia, and then we went to yoga class with Helen, because Helen never wants to go to the class alone, even though all she does is stare at the instructor the whole lesson." Jace grinned at that.

"Helen, that's who I met at your place the other week, is that right?" Jace asked, and Clary nodded. "And she's Helen Blackthorn, right? Who works dispatch at the police station?" Clary nodded again as they reached the ground floor. "So she..." he really wasn't all that good at the whole small talk thing, but Magnus and Isabelle had kept on repeating that he had to try and keep it up, as a way of getting to know her. "She likes this instructor guy?" Clary looked as though she actually felt sorry for him, as she looked over at him as he opened up the front door of the apartment building, a small smile on her face. It was as if she knew that this made him feel uncomfortable.

"She likes the instructor girl," she corrected. "And we're pretty sure Aline likes her as well, but Helen just hasn't asked her out yet."

"Right," Jace nodded and pursed his lips, not too sure how to continue from there. They reached his car, and went to open the passenger side door for her. Clary stepped forward, blocking his path to the car, and just gave him a look. He wanted to open the door for her, but he bit his lip and relented, and walked around the drivers side of the sleek, black Camaro.

"Do you know where Taki's is?" Clary asked as they got in and made themselves comfortable.

"Uh, no," Jace shook his head. "I don't think that it was here when I lived here." Clary gave him a contemplative look for a moment before nodding. "That's fine," she said, reaching forward and turning on the radio. "Just turn left up here, and I'll tell you where to go." She turned the volume up a bit, which Jace was appreciative for, because it meant that they sat in comfortable silence, rather than attempting more small talk. Clary spoke up a couple of times, pointing when they needed to turn, and Jace found the diner easily. He pursed his lips as he got out of his car, looking over at the diner, which looked a whole lot different than when he had come to this same shop years ago. Clary had taken a few steps toward the diner, but she hesitated when she didn't feel him behind her, and turned back to look at him. "You alright?" She asked, her words casual, but something caring in her voice.
"Uh, yeah," Jace cleared his throat as he stepped away from his car and pressed the button on the key fob, locking the doors of his car. "We used to come here, eight years ago, when I lived here with my parents and their pack." It was also his pack, but he had to try and differentiate between the two packs, the two lives, so that he could move on. "It was called something else then...Um, Dream Cones." Clary just stared at him, not caring that they were standing in the middle of the car park. "It was a ice cream parlor, and my mum loved it, always used to drag me and my dad here." It was an ache in his chest, and the similarities between the two of them—his mum bringing him here when he was a kid, and then his mate bringing him here, on their first date, whether it was official or not. It didn't hurt as much as it used to, but it was still an ache in his chest.

"Come on," Clary said softly, and she reached out and touched his hand, the backs of her fingers brushing over his. Jace wanted to grasp her hand in his, but he refrained, managing to compose himself and smiled tightly, following her into the diner. There were no werewolves in the bar, although he could sense a seelie as one of the girls behind the counter, everyone else was human. They received a couple of looks as they walked to the counter, Clary smiling at the woman behind the cash register. "Hey, Mari. Mind if I get two menu's?"

"Sure thing, doll," Mari smiled at Clary, although there was a nervousness in her eyes as she looked over the red head's shoulder to Jace. She was still respectful, swallowing hard and turning her head to the side so that her neck was exposed. Jace nodded at her, before following after Clary as they walked toward the back of the diner. He caught whispers of conversation as they went, and if he focused, he would be able to hear each and every conversation, but he didn't want to do that, given he knew it would ruin his mood for the rest of the evening. They took a seat at the end of the diner, siding into the booth so that they were facing each other.

"If the voices get to you, we can always get the food to go," Clary mused as she looked down at the menu in front of her, sliding her eyes over the laminated sheets.

"No, it's fine," Jace replied as he looked down at his own menu. They were quiet as they looked through the menu, and when the waitress came over, Jace noted how she kept her eyes on Clary, more than Jace. It was normal, especially for someone as young as the human who came over to take their order. They were intimidated by Alpha's, uncertain as to how to act, and then with the murders that had begun as well; people were scared. The waitress scuttled away after she took their orders, and Clary leaned back in the booth, folding her arms loosely over her chest.

"A lot of people think that there being an Alpha in town is what is attracting the rogue omega," she stated, and Jace appreciated how upfront she was being. "The murders have people on edge, they don't know who to blame, and you and your beta's are the only things that have changed here." Jace nodded, because he could understand that. Clary stared at him across the table for a moment before continuing. "They're just looking for someone or something to blame, they want to understand what's happening."

"I get that," he nodded again.

"Luke is worried," Clary noted. "If you weren't around then he'd be trying hard to force me to go and stay with him and my mum."

"Didn't know you'd let that happen," Jace gave her a wry smile.

"Looks like you're getting to know me," she smiled back at him. Jace felt himself relax a little at that, and he tilted his head to the side.

"So, you teach art," he began, wanting to change the subject to something lighter. "Is that what you studied in New York?"
"Well..." Clary started, and launched into her own story of New York. She had gone and gotten a degree in Fine Arts and Art History, although she never really had a plan as to what she was going to actually do with the degree. The plan had always been to come back to Little Rock. She tensed a little when Jace brought up Luke's pack, something that he noticed always happened when he grouped her together with his pack, and she said that she felt the need to get some breathing distance, but still be close enough to her parents that she could visit them.

So she moved to Raven Creek, which was where Simon had moved after they had finished high school. Lydia had been someone she had met when she was in New York, she had been studying at the same university, but she didn't have a plan, so she had ended up in Raven Creek with Clary and Simon. They had all sort of gravitated to each other, especially the younger werewolves who didn't have a pack and didn't feel as though they fit in with the older werewolves in town. That was how their little rag-tag group had been created. Somewhere along the way, she had gotten the job a couple of days a week at the local college, and she also did some painting for local stores to hang in their shops, and advertisements and banners.

Jace was happy to just sit there and listen to Clary talk, but she prompted him with questions, careful not to ask anything too specific about his childhood or his parents or their pack. When their food was brought over, it didn't put an awkward stop to the conversation. Instead, they would just bounce off each other, as the other person took a break to eat.

"I'm glad we did this," Clary commented as they walked out of the diner.

"Me too," Jace shot her a smile. He wanted to ask her about Sebastian, about her relationship with him, but he didn't want to ruin the evening. So he asked her about Bat, since he was the were that he couldn't get a read on out of the ones who had come to him.

"Bat came from an abusive home," Clary said as they got into his car. "He's pretty quiet, keeps to himself. It took him a while before he opened up to Maia, and then to the rest of us. He was only turned into a werewolf a few years ago, and he's never really talked about it, but I don't think that it was consensual." Jace clenched his jaw at that. A lot of werewolves were turned forcibly, by rogue Alpha's or one's wanting power that they knew the Clave would turn away. There were so many rules in place, guidelines and paperwork that had to be filled in, before an Alpha was legally able to change a human into a werewolf. "Who knows, maybe he'll open up to you about it," she shot him a small smile. "You know, if you do become his Alpha."

There were no scents of jealousy or resentment coming from Clary, at the fact that she had known Bat for several years and he hadn't opened up about how he had turned, and yet she thought that he might open up to Jace, who he had only just met.

"You're looking for something," Clary murmured, not bothering to turn her head to face Jace, continuing to look forward although aware of his eyes on her. "What is it?"

"You have...You have no problem with me coming in? With my relationship with your friends?" He asked, not sure if he was phrasing it correctly.

"You're an Alpha," Clary stated. "They need an Alpha, they need a proper pack." There was a twinge in her voice and her scent bittered a little, but he couldn't place exactly what kind of emotion it was. She didn't seem angry, but maybe she was upset.

"You know...What you guys have..." Jace turned down the road where her apartment building was. "You are a pack." Clary smiled, and then she smelt happy again, like happiness and home and love. He wanted her to always smell like that, because it made his limbs feel light, and his inner wolf was practically purring with contentment.
"We're something, that's for sure," Clary nodded as Jace pulled over to the side of the street. "But it's different. They need an Alpha." Jace turned off the car and looked over at Clary. He wanted to tell her that she was pack, that she was always going to be part of his pack, she would always have a position at his side. But he bit his tongue and pressed his lips together, not wanting to scare her away. "Well," she glanced toward the apartment building. "Thank you for taking me out. Dinner was...Better than I expected," she gave Jace a smile that was small, but intimate, and sincere.

"Can I walk you up?" Jace asked, nodding at the building. Clary nodded, getting out of the car and waiting for him to get out and lock the door. He walked half a step behind her, her scent trailing behind him as they walked up the stairs to her apartment. When they reached her floor, Jace was suddenly struck with the fact that this was the part where he could kiss her. Ending a dinner date...Generally this was the part where he could kiss her.

"Well, I guess I'll see you around soon, yeah?" Clary tilted her head to the side as she rested her hand on the doorknob, a key in one of her hands.

"Yeah," Jace swallowed hard as she stared down at her. It felt too abrupt, and he didn't want his first kiss with his mate to be in the hallway of her apartment building. Clary solved the problem for him, seeming to know—once again—what his worries were without him needing to say anything. Clary reached up, wrapping her arms around his shoulders. Jace leaned forward, completely swathed in her scent, and he breathed in deeply, trying to commit everything to memory—the way her hair brushed up against his nose, and her body was soft and pliable against his. She didn't pull away quickly, and Jace couldn't help but turn his head into her neck, not-so-subtly scent marking her as he brushed his nose against the curve of her neck. He finally pulled back and her skin was flushed.

She knew exactly what he had been doing to her.

"I'll be seeing you," she said, her voice cracking slightly before she turned around and unlocked her door quickly, disappearing inside. Jace could smell her delight and slight embarrassment in the air, and he couldn't help the grin that spread across his face as he jogged back to his car.
Jace wondered how long he could sit in his car without any of his pack noticing, outside his house. It just smelt so good.

Like Clary.

Like his mate.

There was the lingering scent of her perfume, but underneath that, there was just that amazing scent of her, and his wolf was curled up and practically purring with happiness inside of him. He had wanted to kiss her, but the moment just hadn't felt right. He could still feel the warmth of her arms around him when she had hugged him... And then when she hadn't moved away when he had turned his face into her neck, accepting the fact that he was scenting her neck, it had made his whole body feel calm and his wolf so happy.

The house was silent, Jace couldn't hear any heartbeats inside, which was why he let himself just sit in the car, his eyes closed as he leaned back against the headrest, breathing in Clary's scent and reliving being able to feel her soft body underneath his touch.

It lasted all of two minutes, before he heard footsteps approaching and a heartbeat that he hadn't heard in so long, and had now heard twice in the span of a week.

Sebastian.

Jace felt the prickle of his fangs at his gums, and he didn't even bother to try and suppress them. His eyes flared red as he opened up the door of his Camaro and got out, his feet spread apart and his knees bent ever so slightly, in a position to lunge. His claws stretched over his nails and his eyebrows pulled together as he waited. Sebastian's footsteps slowed down, coming to the edge of the forest and out of the trees. Jace couldn't stop the growl that started from his chest and passed through his lips as the blonde man emerged from the tree line and stopped, several metres away from him.

"Jace," Sebastian inclined his head forward in a nod, his voice low, but carrying easily to reach Jace's ears.

"Sebastian," Jace's eyes were burning red and his words were slightly slurred through his fangs. He had control—he was in complete control—but he had no problem with showing his were form when Sebastian was the one involved. "What are you doing here?"

"And by that..." Sebastian casually walked closer, showing both disrespect and also how much he wasn't afraid of Jace. "Do you mean here, in this town, or do you mean here, as in at your house?" He got even closer, and took in an exaggerated sniff, making Jace clench his jaw together in order to stop himself from lunging forward and taking a bite out of the other werewolf with his teeth. "It smells different here," he commented, tipping his head to the side. "Can't really smell your parents anymore." Jace's growl was more pronounced this time, and Sebastian let a smirk slide across his lips, knowing that he was underneath Jace's skin.

"I mean both," Jace managed to say, his whole body coiled tight, ready to lash out.

"Well, I heard about those murders," Sebastian tsked, as though he actually cared. "And I have a history with Clary, I just wanted to make sure that she was okay." He had history with Clary, that made Jace furious. It made the blood in his veins boil and it made his jaw ache at the need to just bite
down on something.

Preferably something attached to Sebastian's person.

"You knew who she was to me," Jace bit out. "You knew who she was to me and you, what, you went after her? You had a relationship with her?" Sebastian snorted and tipped his head to the side, shaking it slowly.

"I wouldn't quite call what we have a relationship," Sebastian said easily, and Jace could smell the smug satisfaction coming off the other werewolf in rolling waves, fueled by Jace's anger and, well, jealousy. "I mean, we definitely spent a lot of nights together, rolling around in her bed..." the same bed that Jace had slept in with her. "But, as I'm sure you know, she's a smart one. She always knew that there just something missing between the two of us, so she made sure to keep it casual. We haven't been together like that in about a year." Well, at least Jace could comfort himself with that.

"Didn't mean we couldn't have fun, though."

Jace growled from deep in his throat, and Sebastian let out a laugh, tossing his head back, blonde hair catching in the wind. Jace knew that his fangs had pushed through his gums, because they were pricking at his lips.

"That temper of yours, it's gonna get you into trouble one day," Sebastian taunted, eyebrows twitching and nostrils flaring.

"Last time I checked, it wasn't my temper that was getting me into trouble," Jace snapped at the other man and Sebastian shrugged, although there was a tic in his jaw, and his eyes narrowed slightly, the smirk fading from his face. "I'm not the one getting thrown aside by the Institute, and anyone who actually knows who you are and what you've done knows that it's your temper that screws people over." He heard the faint sound of Sebastian's grinding his back teeth together. "I don't want you around Clary. I don't want you around any of her friends. I don't want you anywhere near my pack. Fuck—I don't want you in this town!"

"This is my town, as much as it is yours!" Sebastian snapped. "I lived here just as long as you!" Jace couldn't help but feel an immature flicker of accomplishment in his stomach at the knowledge that he was getting under the were's skin.

"Just because you grew up here, doesn't mean that this town belongs to you," Jace replied, his words clipped. "This town belongs to the Herondale pack." Sebastian's upper lip was curling, and that self-satisfied expression that had been on his face was completely gone, and Jace could see the flicker of anger in the other man's eyes, the dark colour flickering with an icy blue. "You're not part of the Herondale pack—last time I checked, you didn't belong to any pack, and none of the were's under the protection of the Institute trust you. So that kind of means...That kind of means you don't belong anywhere," he tipped his head to the side, feigning thoughtfulness, and shrugged a shoulder.

A werewolf without a pack, meant a werewolf without power.

A werewolf without allies, meant a werewolf without protection.

It was a dangerous place to be for a werewolf, but Sebastian had no one to blame but himself.

"I don't care what it is that you have with Clary, because at the end of the day, you only went after her because you knew it would hurt me," Jace grunted. "Which is ridiculous, because we're not teenagers anymore, and going after a girl that you know I'm destined to be with is a dead end."

"So, what, exactly?" Sebastian was trying to get the upper hand again, but he was still furious to the
point where his eyes were glowing the icy blue colour and he kept clenching his jaw. "You going to
go over there and tell Clary that she's yours? Forbid her to ever see me again? Sorry, but maybe you
don't know your mate as well as you think you do, because I don't see our pretty little red head
letting you order her around."

*Our pretty little red head.*

Jace was seeing red and the only thing that stopped him from lunging at the beta was the faint sound
of the SUV approaching, which meant that Alec was nearby. Sebastian sensed the shift in his
attention and arched an eyebrow before turning on his heel and disappearing into the trees.

It took over an hour before Jace calmed down, his eyes finally fading back to their usual gold.

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Clary slept in late the next morning, which wasn't unusual for her, and when she woke up, she felt
rested, completely sated. It was strange, because usually she only slept this well when her friends
were over and they were all curled up together. She had always put it down to the fact that she was
used to living and sleeping with a pack around her, and that was why she slept better when they
were nearby. But in the past couple of weeks, she had been sleeping better, not waking at all through
the night, getting a solid eight hours until either her alarm went off, or she woke up naturally. She
stretched her arms above her head, and then felt an involuntary smile spread across her face.

Jace.

It was weird.

She really just couldn't get a proper read on him.

The first time that they had met, in the club, he had seemed like the typical, arrogant Alpha. A lot of
Alpha's were like that—thought that they were better than everyone else, paraded their status around
as though it entitled them to more respect. But then when she had gone into his house, after meeting
him in the woods...It had felt different. There was something about his house that made her heart
ache. It felt lonely, sad.

She knew the story of the Herondale's, how they were once one of the most powerful packs in the
State.

Every twenty to thirty years, there was an uprising of humans who didn't like the fact that
werewolves were the more dominant species in the world, that was just how the world worked.
Power invited challenge. It wasn't as though humans or Shadowhunters or any other supernatural
creatures were treated badly or didn't have rights, but that didn't stop resentment from brewing. So
every now and then there would be a group of humans, sometimes along with other supernaturals
who were bitter toward werewolves as well, would rise up and cause problems with werewolves.
They didn't always actually cause big problems, sometimes there would just be protests and some
property damage.

But sometimes there would be violence.

Clary had just turned fifteen when the story of the murder of the Herondale pack had swept across
the country. Given how powerful the Herondales were—both Stephen and Celine coming from a
long line of werewolves, with the Alpha spark being passed down to each generation of Stephens
family—they were a major target. It had been the middle of the night, and a group of hunters who
had strangely extensive knowledge of the house, had barred it from the outside, and then set on fire,
fueled with branches of wolfsbane to weaken the werewolves inside. The whole pack had been
inside, except for Jace, who had snuck out early in the evening to meet up with a couple of his friends at the school, where they had broken into the swimming pool with some girls.

The story of the murders had spread across the country, and then swiftly across the world as the Institute declared that the humans that were responsible for this would be held accountable to the utmost of the law set by the werewolves.

Jace had found the hunters responsible.

He had killed them all, by himself.

And then he had fled the town, to New York.

It had turned out that one of the humans had been on the construction team that had been doing up their house six months or so before the attack. That was how the attackers had known about all of the exits from the house and which ones to bar, including the door from the basement, which was hidden around the back of the house.

Luke had been second in command to Gabriel at the time, and the pack had been shaken, especially since they were the pack closest to the Herondale pack. Delegates from the Institute's had come down to smooth things over, and there had been no charges pressed against Jace. An eye for an eye, a life for a life—the hunters were guilty of murder, and so Jace had every right to take their lives.

That would explain the hurt that Clary felt, when she had been inside his house, but what it didn't explain is why she had felt it. Werewolves could pick up on emotions from one another, but it was less common for humans or Shadowhunters to be able to feel those emotions, unless they were directly being pressed onto them by the were, and Jace had no reason to do that.

And it had been from that point going forward that Clary felt differently toward Jace.

He seemed a little nervous sometimes, when he was around her, as though Clary was the one who was holding the power. But he was strong, and he seemed like a good Alpha. Simon and Maia were happier, they were acting more free, seemed more comfortable in their skin with a permanent Alpha around, and even Bat—who didn't take well to new people, and was still adapting to being a werewolf—had taken a shine to Jace. Alec and Magnus had dropped by a couple of times to her apartment when they were all sleeping over, although it was only Jace and Isabelle who regularly came, but they just felt right together with their group.

Something felt right in Clary with them around—with Jace there.

Clary's phone vibrated and she was broken out of her little trance, picking it up and making a face when she saw that it was from Simon. They were meant to meet for brunch,, and she was already late. She jumped out of bed, glad that she had showered last night before going to bed as she rushed around to throw on a pair of leggings and a baggy sweatshirt before running out of the apartment. She arrived at the cafe where she was meeting Simon, and winced as she saw that he had already ordered his breakfast and a large coffee.

"Really?" Simon arched an eyebrow.

"What? I'm only twenty minutes late," Clary smirked at him as she slid into the seat opposite him and put her bag on the ground by her feet, picking up the menu and skimming it over. "You've waited longer for me before."

"That's not what I mean," Simon stated, still staring across at her, completely ignoring his food and coffee. Clary was looking at the menu, a finger tapping against the side, unaware of the way that
Simon was watching her. "You smell like him." That made Clary stop, and she knew exactly who her best friend was talking about. She pursed her lips together and looked up.

"Like who?" She asked.

"Don't play dumb," Simon rolled his eyes. "Jace. You smell like Jace. You let him scent you." It sounded dirty, the way that he was saying it, even though Clary knew it wasn't. "Since when do you just let him do that?"

"Right," Clary rolled her eyes. "Don't make it into some big werewolf territorial thing."

"Hey, you can't blame me," Simon stated as he reached forward to pick up his coffee. "It's Luke you should be worried about, if he finds out that you're letting him scent you." Clary rolled her eyes again, although she lowered her eyes down to the menu because in a way, Simon was right.

Scenting was a big thing for werewolves.

It was a way for them to mark territory, although it wasn't quite as primitive as it sounded. It was a protective thing—the scent of a werewolf on the rest of his pack, especially an Alpha's scent—made it clear that this person was under their protection. It was for comfort, especially for werewolves.

It was a big deal, and that was why as someone who had grown up around werewolves, Clary never let werewolves do it to her until she was completely comfortable with them, a werewolf that she knew, and trusted. It had only ever been Luke and Simon that scented her, not even Maia or Bat, or Luke's pack scented her, not strongly, not in the way that she had let Jace touch her last night.

"Look," she took in a deep breath. "I don't know what it is, but—" her phone vibrated in her pocket and she pulled it out, dismissing the call. "Okay, so there's something about Jace, and I don't know—" her phone vibrated again and she sighed, picking it up from where she had rested it on the table top, swiping her thumb across the screen. "Luke? Is everything okay?" Simon could hear perfectly from the other side of the table.

"There's been another murder," Luke stated, keeping his voice low. "Who are you with at the moment?"

"I'm with Simon," she answered.

"Okay, I want you to go back to your apartment," he said.

"Luke, I'm not in danger. I'm with Simon, I'm in a public place," Clary began, although Simon was already getting up from the table and pulling out his wallet to pay for the meal that was untouched. Her stomach squeezed at the fact that someone else had been killed in their town. Simon pulled out his phone and tapped the screen a couple of times, before putting it to his ear, probably calling one of his colleagues for more information.

"I'm not doubting that Simon can protect you. Just go to your apartment so that I can come over and talk," Luke sighed on the other end of the phone, and Clary could hear the worry in his voice.

"Okay. We'll see you soon."
Luke hated this.

If it were a couple of months ago, and this was all happening, then he would be petitioning the Institute to allow him to move into Raven Creek. His pack would understand, and they would uproot their lives and follow him. Raven Creek was still Herondale territory, even before Jace had come back, and that was why even though there were several werewolves that moved into the area as time went by, none of them were Alpha’s.

And then if his petition was denied, he would drag a kicking and screaming little red headed Shadowhunter back to Little Rock and lock her up in the basement of his house, because he knew that she would just try and get back to the town she had made her home.

Because having Clary in this town, while he was a two hour drive away, and about a two and a half hour run, while there were murders happening just didn't bode well with the Alpha. He had been Clary's father figure since she was a toddler, and so not only did he feel a sense of protectiveness because of that, but also as an Alpha. Clary had always been just a little bit different, in the sense that although she completely loved and adored and would willingly lay down her life for the Garroway pack—and they felt the same way about her—she had mentioned a few times that something had felt like it was missing.

When she was twelve, Luke remembered the scent of salt and frustration, and he had stood outside Clary's door as he listened to Jocelyn comforting their crying daughter. She thought that there was something wrong with her, that she was missing some vital piece because she just didn't feel as whole as she knew that she was meant to. Jocelyn had kissed and hugged her daughter tightly, telling her that there was absolutely nothing wrong with her. That she could love each and every member of this pack because they were her family, but maybe there was another pack out there that she belonged too. And that was when she had explained 'mates' to Clary. It wasn't something that was foreign to the teenager—everyone knew about mates—but more into the details about when you were mated to a werewolf. How even if you had never met your mate, you just wouldn't feel as though you properly belonged to another pack.

Twelve year old Clary had been upset, worried that she would never meet her mate, and if she didn't, then she would never belong to a pack, which was something she craved so desperately growing up with were's.

Jace had known for certain at that point that her mate was a werewolf.

He was pretty certain that he would never have been able to get Clary to leave this town and her friends that she had created her own kind of pack with, but now he was pretty sure he didn't even have the right to.

He had a strong feeling that she and Jace were mates.

He also had a strong feeling that Clary didn't know this.

With Jace as her mate, he was the one who—by law—had the last say when it came to what Clary could do. The laws were primitive, basically taking away all rights of the person who wasn't a
werewolf in the mated pair, and very rarely did a werewolf actually resort to these laws, but they were still there. With humans and Shadowhunters and any other than species other than werewolves, they were pretty much completely controlled, at least for the first six months from the point of meeting. They didn't have any choices or options, if the werewolf decided to enforce these laws, they were bound to them for that first half year, to see if the bond would take.

In most instances, a werewolf didn't want to enforce these laws, they didn't want to make things harder to understand or more difficult to grasp for their mate. Just like Luke with Jocelyn, he had known that she was his mate from the first moment that he had laid eyes on her. But she had just been coming out of a difficult relationship with Valentine, and she had a young daughter to look after. So he had fought his wolf, despite every part of his being wanting to take her and claim her.

And it had worked out for the best.

It was only in very rare circumstances that the mate bond wasn't felt by the other half, and from the very limited interactions that Luke had witnessed between Jace and his step-daughter, Luke was already guessing that this wasn't going to be a problem here.

Clary was stubborn and she was strong and she didn't let anyone push her around. It had been that way since she was five, playing with the other werewolves, who were already stronger and faster than her, but she didn't let them treat her as though she was breakable. She just pushed herself harder so that she could keep up with them when running and training. But not only was she strong, she also had the biggest heart, just like her mother. She loved the Garroway pack, as fiercely as if she was a were with a connection to each of them. And she loved her friends, especially the ones that she surrounded herself with in Raven Creek, and that was the reason why Luke knew that he was never going to be able to drag her back to her childhood home.

Luke stopped by Clary and Simon's place, briefing them on the latest murder. It was ridiculous that that was how he was thinking of it—as the latest murder. Which meant that there had been murders before then.

Peace was a thing that was relatively kept in their small part of the country. They were small towns, and the biggest sort of crime that they dealt with was petty theft and small crimes. Every now and then, there would be fights and violent disputes, and sometimes there would be a death, from a car crash, or a bar brawl gone wrong, but blatant murder—and multiple ones—hadn't been heard of in a long, long time. And for them to just start, so quickly after an Alpha and his pack had come into town...It wasn't surprising that people were feeling scared, worried that the new werewolves in town were the ones responsible for these attacks.

"This one just seemed more vicious," Luke sighed as he sat in the arm chair beside the couch where Simon and Clary were sitting. "Like they were angry. That magic smell was in the air again and there was another scent as well, which I'm going to go and talk to Jace about after I leave here."

"Why did you want us to come back here? You could have just come to the diner and told us there—I'm not going to stay in my apartment until all of this is over," Clary gently chided.

"I know," Luke sighed. "As much as I would love it if you would just hole up here until everything is over, I know you're going to continue living your life. But the reason I wanted you here right now is I didn't want to be in public when telling you this."


"The scent that I picked up when I was there, it smelt faintly of the Herondale pack," he said quietly. "I didn't want to say that somewhere public and have it overheard."
"That can't be right," Simon stated and Clary frowned.

"You're saying that Jace is responsible for these? That's not right. That first body that was found—the actual murder had happened before they came into town!" Clary protested. "It wasn't Jace, or anyone in his pack."

"I know that—I do," Luke nodded, reaching over to rest his hand on Clary's knee. "And so do the police. Bat was the one that noticed the scent of the Herondale pack at the crime scene, and that was why he told Sheriff Jeremiah to call me, rather than to call Jace." Simon's eyebrow rose at that, surprised that Bat hadn't felt the natural pull to tell the werewolf who was in a position to become his Alpha. And both he and Clary were surprised that he hadn't called one of them when he had picked up on the scent as well as Luke. "Bat wanted to tell the both of you, and Jace," Luke continued, knowing what they were thinking just by looking at them. "But he knew that he needed to speak with an Alpha first, and I wanted to be the one to speak with you, and also Jace."

"You've spoken with Jace? What did he say?" Clary asked.

"No, I wanted to talk to you first. Everything we've said, you need to keep it to yourselves," Luke warned them.

"We know," Simon nodded. "I'm sure I'll be briefed when I go in for my shift this afternoon."

"You will," Luke nodded. "I'm going over to Jace's house now but, please, just be careful. Okay?"

"Always am," Clary responded, and Luke raised an eyebrow at that. Even Simon turned his head toward her with an expression of disbelief on his face. "Yeah, yeah," she muttered, deflating a little bit and leaning against the back of the couch.

"I told you to be careful just a few weeks ago, and then I find out that you're practically challenging an Alpha," Luke got up from his seat and reached down to touch a finger lightly to Clary's nose.

"I wasn't challenging him," Clary rolled her eyes. "You're making a big deal over nothing."

"If you were a werewolf, not showing respect would be viewed as a challenge," Luke told her, although it was unnecessary, since she already knew that. "You're lucky that Jace didn't take it that way."

"Pretty sure Jace has no issues with anything Clary does," Simon muttered under his breath, earning a jab to the ribs from Clary and raised eyebrows from Luke.

"Alright, well, I'm headed off now. If you hear of any new developments when you go in, given me a call, Si," Luke said and Simon nodded. He could hear the two talking as he left the apartment, although he tuned them out as he shut the door and made his way down the stairs. He could already smell Jace all over the apartment, and over both Clary and Simon. With Simon, that wasn't unusual, given he was a werewolf, and so it was normal for him to seek out a new Alpha in the area, but for Clary, it was different. Clary didn't have the same pull toward an Alpha as a werewolf did, and she knew that once she got involved with one it was a relationship that wasn't broken as easily as one with a human. It wasn't normal for Clary to just open up to other werewolves—Simon was different, he was only turned a couple of years ago due to his health problems, but it took a while for Maia and Bat to earn Clary's trust and become part of their little group. And a lot of that was because Clary knew how intense relationships with werewolves were.

But that hadn't stopped her.
It hadn't stopped her from becoming involved with Alpha Herondale, and the rest of his pack, given Luke could pick up the scent of the two.

And there had been something about the way Jace had spoken about her and reacted when he was in the same room as her that said that he felt protective toward Clary. He had even confirmed that when he had walked Luke out to the car. It was strange for a werewolf to step up and include a human so easily into his pack. It was normal for other werewolves, for an Alpha to take them under his wing. A human, not so much.

Unless they were mates.

Luke swallowed hard as he drove to the Herondale house on the edge of town, hoping that the rest of Jace's pack wasn't going to be there, since it felt like a conversation that would be better to happen one on one. When Luke reached the house, as he walked through the wrought iron gate, he could sense only one heart beat inside the house, so he was assuming that it was only Jace inside. He lifted his hand to knock on the door, only out of respect, because Jace would have heard him on the property when he had pulled up outside.

"Luke," Jace nodded as he opened the door.

"Jace," Luke nodded back. Jace stepped to the side, his arm lifting to welcome him inside. Luke took in a breath as he stepped into the house, glancing around. The place felt as though it was slowly becoming a home, and he turned to walk into the lounge. When he looked back to face Jace, the younger Alpha was looking at him carefully, and he could ever so slightly see the flare of his nostrils.

He could smell Clary on him.

That was something that he would address later.

"Sheriff Jeremiah called me," Luke got straight to the point. Jace's eyebrow lifted and he clenched his jaw, a nerve jumping. Luke could understand that. Jace was new, back in his territory, and although he was automatically the Alpha that had ownership of the land, he still had to prove himself to the people there that he was a worthy Alpha. Just because his position ordered others to have respect for him, didn't mean that he didn't need to earn that as well.


"It's not quite as simple as that," Luke continued. "Bat was the one who told the Sheriff to call me, after he got to the scene."

"There's been another murder," Jace stated grimly.

"Yes," Luke jerked his head in a single nod. "The scent of magic was at one of the previous scenes, that we already know." Jace nodded. "And Simon told me how he could vaguely smell the scent of something familiar on one of the other bodies." Jace nodded again, his lips pursed together, pale. "It's your scent, Jace. Not a scent left by you specifically, but the scent of someone who has been in close contact with you, or one of your beta's."

"Alec and Isabelle had nothing to do with any of the murders," Jace began, his eyes narrowing, a burn beginning from inside, out of indignation for his pack.

"I'm not saying they do. I'm really not saying that, because Bat and Simon know the smell of your beta's," Luke said, trying to ease the other Alpha. "But it's someone that you've been in contact with—and in contact with recently. And it hasn't just been at this particular crime scene, it's faintly been at the others as well. It's someone who carries your scent, Jace." Jace's face was hard to read and
Luke couldn't pick up on any chemosignals from him, but he wasn't going to try and invade his space like that.

He knew that Jace had nothing to do with the murders. The scent at the crime scene was nowhere near strong enough to come from Jace himself. And like Clary had said earlier, the body of the first victim had been found after Jace and his pack had come into town, but they had determined that the actual murder had occurred before they had come. It wouldn't make sense for Jace to start killing just as he came into town, because naturally the suspicion would fall onto him. Plus, Luke had contacted the Institute and there was nothing but good response from all of them, and the Institute kept close watch over all of their werewolves, especially their Alpha's.

"The police will be in contact with you, and I'm sure Simon is going to be over here and want to talk with you about this, along with the rest of the were's who seem to be gravitating toward you in the town," Luke nodded. "The Sheriff doesn't think that it's you, he knows that you would be a lot more subtle if it was you, and you'd be able to get away with it if you wanted to."

"Thanks, I guess," Jace muttered, rolling is eyes to the side, his arms crossed tightly over his chest. Luke was about to pass Jace, back on his way to the door, when he paused.

"Clary," he pursed his lips. "She's your mate, right?" Jace's shoulders clenched and Luke knew he was right. "I asked you, a couple of weeks ago, if you would respect her decision, if she wasn't interested in you." Jace didn't say anything, fully remembering the conversation. "You're willing to give her time and space, even though she's your mate? I know...I know that can't be easy."

"I meant what I said," Jace said with a nod of his head. Despite how nerve-wracking it was for Luke, to know that his daughter, someone that he loved almost the most in the world, was mated to an Alpha. It wasn't a bad thing, mates were a beautiful thing, finding the person that you were most compatible with in the world, but it was a life long commitment, much more permanent that a human marriage.

"Thank you," Luke murmured, because that's all he could really say. "And you'll keep her safe?" It was unnecessary, because Clary was his mate. Even if Jace didn't want anything to do with Clary, the wolf inside him would protect her with everything it had.

"With my life," Jace assured him.

Chapter End Notes

Yesterday was World Mental Health Day, or today is that day for a lot of you, the 10th. Please be kind to each other, people have so much going on in their heads that just isn't obvious from the outside.

Much love xx
Chapter 18

It turned out that Clary's unofficial pack and Jace's official one melded together better than some who had been a pack for years.

Lydia and Isabelle were dangerous when mixed together, they were loud and always seemed to be laughing and they obsessed over celebrity tabloids. There was also definitely something that was going on between Simon and Isabelle, although it wasn't anything that had been put into words yet. Jace knew that they weren't mates, or else the two werewolves would have acted on it already, but they had another pull to each other. Alec didn't usually take too kindly to other people, but he and Bat got on well, they both had the strong and silent vibe going on, and he and Clary also seemed to have some sort of understanding. It made Jace's stomach clench and the wolf inside him so happy it was practically purring and prancing around. Alec would sit down next to Clary, either on a couch or on the floor by her legs, and sometimes she would touch his hair, or just press her arm or leg against him, and Jace could feel that Alec was happy.

Magnus got on with everyone, just like he always did, making friends left, right and centre. He and Maia clicked, and so did he and Clary. Magnus and Lydia also got together and finally managed to get Helen to ask out Aline, the yoga instructor that she had a thing for. They did her hair, dressed her up and got her make up perfect, and then it had all gotten ruined within an hour because Aline had practically jumped Helen the minute she had walked into the yoga studio after a class and asked her to dinner.

The Friday nights together were still a thing, but instead of them always happening at Clary's, sometimes it would be at Jace's. He hadn't wanted to impose, especially since it seemed as though Clary's was where everyone was comfortable, but Isabelle was the one who proposed it first, and everyone seemed happy with it, and so it became an alternating thing, one night at Clary's and then the next at Jace's.

Jace loved it.

They would all sleep in the lounge, and Clary was careful to never go upstairs to use the bathroom on the second floor where she knew his bedroom was. Jace found it both frustrating and amusing. Frustrating because he wanted Clary's scent spread throughout his house, especially up near his sleeping quarters. Amusing because it just proved how smart she was, how well she knew werewolves, and how she knew that it would just make him more protective of her, make him feel even closer to her. And that was before she even knew that they were mates.

It just made everything so much better, when she was around, and when her friends were around.

Even with the murders that had happened, and the fact that Sebastian was still hanging around, Jace was happier than he had been in a long time.

The whole house smelt like family and happiness and warmth. His pack was happier, Isabelle no longer longed for New York, and Alec actually seemed to be smiling on a daily basis, Magnus wasn't making out as though this whole move had been an absolutely terrible idea on Jace's behalf.

The murders were still being looked into, and the connection to Jace and his pack was something that was being kept well away from the press, given the animosity that was already brewing throughout the town toward the werewolves. Sheriff Jeremiah was keeping in close contact with both Jace and Luke, letting them know if they had any updates, but there were never really anything, no leads. A representative from the Clave, Victor Whitelaw, had called Jace and said that they would be sending
Someone down if there was one more murder. It was definitely a werewolf that killed the three people, and while the local police had jurisdiction, the Clave could step in at any point, since it was a crime committed by a werewolf. Not only was there the scent of a werewolf by the bodies, but also the lingering scent of magic at the crime scenes, and given how powerful a warlock Magnus was, and his reputation, he had been invited to look at the body, but he didn't recognize the signature of the magic. It didn't seem like strong magic, and while it didn't have anything to do with her cause of death, the scent and traces had been at all three scenes, so it had been safe to assume that the magic user had been present at the murders.

None of the people who were killed were from the township itself, they were all people from towns a couple of hours away, and they had all been single, working males. The bites and gashes that had killed them had been rough and unrefined; the bites themselves had been around the collarbone and neck, which were some of the usual places where a werewolf would bite when trying to change a human. But Jace got the impression that if that's what the werewolf had been trying to do before killing the human, it was one of their first times.

It was because of these murders that Jace hadn't yet started reaching out to any of the other werewolves in the nearby areas who weren't aligned with an Alpha. Simon, Maia and Bat were already affiliated with him, given his connection to Clary, and they already felt like pack to him. He wasn't going to cut them off. But given the bad blood in town, the way that people felt about him and Alec and Isabelle, since they were the latest ones in town, and the murders started just after they came in, he just didn't want to put anyone else in the line of fire until this was all sorted out.

Isabelle had found a job at a little lingerie shop in town, and she got on well with the young owner, and was now working four days a week. Today, she was meant to get home around five, and Magnus had already started cooking, Alec hanging around in the kitchen and Jace could hear them being disgustingly sweet with each other. He let out a sigh of relief from where he was sitting in the lounge, watching TV, when he heard the SUV pull into the driveway.

"Hey," Isabelle greeted Jace when she came inside.

"What's wrong?" Jace asked abruptly, getting up from the couch. There was something off in Isabelle's voice, and even if she hadn't said anything, he could smell the anxiety that was rolling off her skin.

"Izzy?" Alec frowned as he came out of the kitchen.

"Nothing," Isabelle sighed as she shook her head.

"Don't lie to us, biscuit," Magnus sung out from behind Alec. He sounded a lot more relaxed than the other two, but there was still concern creasing his expression. "What happened at work?"

"It was after work, actually," Isabelle pursed her lips together, and Jace's nostrils flared as he stepped in closer to her and breathed in her scent. She wasn't scared, just nervous...And then there was—

"Sebastian," Alec growled, obviously picking up on the faint scent at the same time as Jace. "What the fuck did he say to you?"

"Alec, it's okay," Isabelle reached out and put her hand on her brothers arm, giving it a slight squeeze, before turning to Jace, and reaching for his hand as well. "He didn't say anything, I barely saw him, but he looks like he's here to say. He was coming out of the grocery store as I drove past, and he was carrying a couple of bags. He was with a couple of girls, uh, skinny blonde things. I just...I'm just not used to seeing him around again, you know?"
"Can't you talk to him?" Alec grunted as he looked toward his Alpha. "Or the Clave? Get him to get the fuck out of here?" Jace lifted an eyebrow at the dark haired man, who grumbled as he reached forward to wrap his arm around Isabelle, arm possessively around her shoulder, holding her tight to his side.

"He hasn't done anything wrong," Jace muttered and Magnus gave him a pointed look. "He hasn't done anything wrong here." Isabelle gave her brother a quick hug, but was then stepped away from both of them, squaring her shoulders, a determined look on her face. "Did he see you?"

"Yup," Isabelle jerked her head in a nod. "He looked up as I drove past and saw me, and he had that smile that he always has. I could feel him watching me as I drove past," she shivered and crinkled her nose. "He's a creep."

"Amen to that," Magnus stated. "Anyway, I say that we should just forget about him and have dinner—I have got pesto chicken with blistered tomatoes and snap beans." Despite the bad mood in the room, it relaxed a little at Magnus' announcement. He was usually in charge when it came to making dinner for all of them, and he loved it, making them their guinea pigs for when he tried out new and different recipes. He was silent partner in a couple of restaurants in New York, easily charming his way into the lives of the restaurant owners, and he helped out a lot with the menu.

"I think I'm gonna go for a run," Jace commented, his expression stoic. For a moment, there were looks of confusion on the rest of his packs faces. But then Isabelle and Alec listened harder, and they heard the sound of a quickly beating heart, and feet falling heavily outside. Someone was running past their house, probably toward the forest. A lot of people ran there, usually in pairs—a safety precaution after the murders had begun—but this person was by themselves.

And a quick sniff of the air caught a familiar scent.

And there was the spark of interest as Jace stepped back and looked through the lounge window facing toward the forest, told the pack that he must have managed to catch a glimpse of the special red head in his life. He was wearing sweatpants and white tank top, and he paused in the hallway to slip into a pair of running shoes before he took off out the door. He vaguely heard some laughing behind him, and although he knew that his pack was laughing at his expense, he was just glad that Isabelle wasn't quite as tense as she had been when she had first come home.

It was easy to follow and catch up with Clary. She must have been running for a while, because she was sweating, and her scent was stronger. Jace ran slower, keeping some distance, because now that he knew Clary, he knew that when she ran, she liked to be alone. He didn't often join her when she ran, even though his wolf itched to run alongside it's mate, but when she ran in the forest behind his house, he would listen as her heart rate increased, track her footfalls on the ground.

"You know..." Clary panted out as she came to a stop. She wasn't speaking any louder than normal, but she knew that he would be able to hear her. "Stalking someone when there's a murderer on the loose is generally something that polite society would try to not to do." Jace felt a smile prick at the corners of his mouth. He picked up his pace a little faster until he reached her, standing in front of a tall, old tree, one leg on the ground, the other held tightly behind her, stretching out her calf muscles. "You got nothing better to do but follow me around?"

"What can I say? I enjoy the view," he teased her lightly, another thing that he had found himself capable of actually doing now that he had found his footing around her. He wasn't on the verge of losing control every time he caught her scent, and feel helpless and almost bashful when she stood in front of him. She had him feel like he was before of his parents and pack. When he was first noticing just how much he liked girls, and how much they liked him, and he was cocky and playful. In the years that had gone by since then, that had disappeared, getting more to the point with what he
wanted from females rather than teasing it out, making it about the chase.

But Clary had brought that side back out in him.

"You know I can look after myself, right?" She raised an eyebrow at him as she rested her right foot back on the ground and bent her left leg back, grabbing it with her left hand and holding it tightly. "I'm not some damsel in distress who needs you to follow me around."

"I would never think that of you," Jace told her calmly, his eyes taking in every movement of hers. Clary studied him for a moment, as though trying to figure out if he was telling the truth or not, and then seemed to relax slightly at the realization that he was. She rested both feet on the ground and glanced around them.

"So any of your pack out here, following you, keeping an eye on us?" She asked idly.

"No, although I'm surprised that Simon let you out in the woods by yourself. You said that you would keep to the main roads with everything that's going on," his flirty side subsiding as he became more serious. "At least when you were alone."

"I thought that we just covered that I wasn't some damsel in distress?" Clary's teeth gritted together and her eyes narrowed.

"And I said that I would never think that of you," Jace repeated his earlier sentiment. "Doesn't mean that I can't be worried about you."

"Hey, I can look after myself," Clary arched an eyebrow at him, crossing her arms over her chest. "You're not just my Alpha, you're the Alpha of the whole town, and a lot of those people can't look after themselves." Jace knew that she was still talking, still saying something, because those perfect pink lips were still moving, but he didn't hear anything past 'You're not just my Alpha'.

She had never said that before.

She had never called him her Alpha.

There were all sorts of things that were running through his mind, and the blood in his veins was burning, it felt as though his heart was going to best right out of his chest, and he had to blink and glance away or else his eyes were going to be bright red.

"What?" Clary asked quietly.

"You called me your Alpha," Jace responded, wincing at the shake in the middle of his sentence. Clary pursed her lips, shifting from foot to foot.

"I didn't...Mean it...Like that," she muttered haltingly. She was lying. He heard it in her heart beat, and she knew that he could tell she was lying, so he didn't care.

"We...We talked about it before," Jace began slowly. "Or we started talking about it before...How you said that something always felt like it was off with Luke. How you never really felt as though he was your Alpha." Clary was standing there, looking confused. "And you said that your mum mentioned it may have been because your mate was a werewolf, right?" Clary nodded once.

"Well..." he really wasn't sure what he was going to say. He had thought about having this particular conversation with her a hundred times over, and it had never been when they were in the middle of the forest, and she was sweating and dressed only in a pair of leggings and a green sports bra. "Uh, well, what do you feel?" He stepped toward her, resting his hands on her forearms, curling them gently around her.
Clary frowned at Jace, and it looked as though she wanted to ask him questions, but she kept her mouth closed and trusted him. Jace stared at her, a little bit worried about what he was going to do, but figuring that he had kept it from her long enough. If he carried on, especially with her being as smart as she was, it was going to get to the point where he was flat out lying to her by not being open.

Which he didn't want to do.

So he took in a deep breath, and thought about everything that he felt when he was with her. Everything he knew that they could be if she gave them a chance. Everything he felt toward her already, even though they weren't even together. All that love and hope he felt for her already, that he felt for a girl that he barely knew, but that his wolf knew was the one and only person he was ever meant to be beside, it flowed through his limbs and his blood, making his wolf howl with happiness. He had been trying to stamp them down, because he knew how she susceptible she was to picking up on them as his mate, and this was the first time that he was letting them run wild.

For a moment, Clary was still.

But then he saw the change in her eyes, as she felt each of his emotions run through her body and her whole demeanor changed. The easy expression on her face dropped, and her eyebrows pulled together, and her shoulders squared, and Jace caught a whiff of anger as she jerked away from him, stepping back.

"I wanted to tell you," Jace began, stepping after her, but she shook her head firmly.

"You knew...You knew that you were my mate the whole time," Clary's voice was angry, and he could smell that it was just growing. "So that's why you've been getting close to me—getting close to my friends!"

"I—"

"How long have you known?" She snapped. Jace pursed his lips together. "You would have known since you moved here, I know that you would have smelt it the second you saw me, but when was that? When is the first time you ever saw me, Jace?!" Her voice was getting louder and louder, and Jace wouldn't be surprised if Alec and Isabelle could hear her back from their house.

"Since New York," Jace managed to say quietly. That caught her off guard, and she faltered.

"New York?" She managed to ask, she turned to the side, one of her hands going to her sweaty hair, pushing it away from her face as she took in a couple of deep breaths. "New York—I haven't been to New York in years."

"It was...It was a while ago," Jace agreed softly, and Clary made a choking noise. He tried to approach her again, holding one hand out to her, but she shook her head, drawing strength from inside of herself suddenly, glaring at him.

"No. No," she ordered him and he stopped, his wolf whining inside, wanting to both respect her and pin her to the ground at the same time. "I need some time."

"Clary—"

"No, Jace," she shook her head at him and he sighed, letting his hand fall back to side. He watched forlornly as she ran away from him.
A few days went by, and Clary didn’t contact Jace.

Maybe it was kind of an asshole move on her behalf, but she needed some time to process. And also, to be fair, it wasn’t as though her and Jace saw each other everyday anyway. Looking back through her phone, she could see that at least every second day, though, they would at least text.

But he had done what she had asked, and was giving her space and time, and that was good, because she needed to think.

Luke and Jocelyn were mates.

Jordan and Maia were not.

Both couples were happy and completely in love.

Just because werewolves had mates, didn’t mean that they always found them, and they could absolutely be happy with someone else. A part of them would always know that there was something missing, but they would still be happy, and when they were in love, that was all they needed. But if they met their mate...That was it. That would be the person that their heart—both their human and their wolf would always belong to. When she was younger, it had sounded sweet, kind of like a fairy tale romance. As she had gotten older, Clary couldn't help but feel like it sort of took away some free will, their whole bodies were engineered to find their mate, that perfect person who would complete them. She knew it wasn’t quite as simple as that, but it was definitely how she had felt when she had been dating a werewolf named Raj Ablack as a teenager, and he had met his mate. He had been sweet and he had been sympathetic when breaking up with her, but Clary knew that any chance they had of actually making it as a couple had been snuffed out when Lily Davis had come into the picture.

But it didn’t really matter whether she liked it or not, because it was a fact, it existed and she couldn’t change it.

Just like Jace couldn’t change it.

And despite how angry she had been when she had found out that he had been hiding this for a while from her, she guessed that she understood. This was a big thing, finding out who your mate was, and as a human, she didn’t quite have that same pull to a mate as Jace did. Sure, human’s definitely had a deeper connection to their mates than they would to another partner—and as a Shadowhunter, she also had another tie to the supernatural world that Jace was a part of. But he would have just been nervous...Maybe scared...Worried that she would reject him, that she didn’t want to be with him.

She appreciated that.

There were ancient laws that still existed saying that he could have actually ordered her to move into
his home and be with him in every sense of the word. It wasn't very often that werewolves actually
enforced those rules, but occasionally she would still hear of a story.

Jace had let her get to know him without the pressure of mates hanging over her head. He had taken
that burden on, but he managed to control himself, and not push that onto her.

And she had to admit...She knew that there was definitely something more with Jace, she knew that.
She had let him into her bed when she had barely known him, even though he was an Alpha
werewolf and that sort of invite would do all sorts of things to him. She had let him scent her, and it
had felt right.

She liked him.
She liked him.
And that was before she had known that they were mates.

Perhaps that was his plan right from the start, he wanted her to get to know him and to like him
without any of the pressure of being his mate. He wanted to her to have the choice, which was more
than he got.

Friday night came around and while Clary hadn't heard from Jace, she thought that he was going to
show up. It was at her place this time, and Maia and Lydia had been there since three o'clock in the
afternoon. They knew that something was wrong with her, but after the first few times when they
asked her what was wrong and she turned them down, they stopped asking, and decided just to keep
her company. Everyone else started to show up just after six, and Clary tried to smother out how
anxious she was to see Jace, because she knew how much she must stink, all nervous and worried, to
the werewolves who were coming into her apartment. Simon scrunched up his nose as soon as he
stepped into the apartment, Bat doing something similar, looking toward Maia as though for answer.
Maia just shook her head, and Clary was glad that she wasn't going to have to face any more
questions from her friends.

"Magnus is here," Maia commented from the couch as she looked toward the front door. Clary had
been cubing avocado to throw into the salad, and she froze from where she was standing in the
kitchen to look toward her door. But almost as soon as she looked, something settled over her, telling
her that Jace wasn't there. Disappointment flooded through her, and Simon—who was standing
directly next to her—jerked in response to the shift in scent in the air, and he looked at her with
concerned eyes.

"Hey, guys! We brought these amazing pork and beef rissoles!" Isabelle said by way of introduction,
holding up the large plastic container in her hand. Usually, Clary was relieved when there was
mention of more food. Because as the gatherings on the Friday night grew, it also grew with more
werewolves, and more werewolves meant that more food was eaten. In fact, she was pretty sure that
they ate over a hundred dollars or so worth of food on the Friday when they were all together.

Alec came in the door last, and he had his head tipped forward, eyes on the ground, which wasn't
unusual for him. Clary could tell that he was growing closer to them, he was opening up and
beginning to trust them, but he was still the quietest one at their gatherings—or at least, as quiet as
Bat was. But there was something a bit different about his demeanor tonight, and the way he looked
at Clary out of the corner of his eye, not meeting her gaze fully, she knew that it had something to do
with Jace.

Her and Alec had actually managed to have some sort of friendship. It wasn't like anything that she
had with the ones she had known the longest, or even like with Isabelle or Magnus, it was more like
an understanding. Lydia and Helen were all boundless energy, and Simon was nervous chatter, and Bat, Jordan and Maia sort of kept their distance, feeling him out. Clary just sort of sat next to him and didn't expect him to talk, and maybe he found something about it soothing, because he seemed to relax when she was near.

Maybe it was because of her mate bond with Jace?

Clary knew things about mate bonds because of Luke and Jocelyn, but they were personal, and they weren't all exactly the same. She knew that packs could feel the mate bond, could feel the strength that the were would pull from it's mate. Especially when it was an Alpha, the Alpha was more strong, more centered when he had his mate at his side. So, maybe that was it...Alec knew that Clary made Jace and Jace's wolf happy, which meant that Alec was happy with her.

But not now.

"I think that I need to step out," Clary muttered to Simon, although the other were's in the room would easily have been able to hear her. Alec looked up at her properly for the first time and she could see the indecision on his face. Maybe he knew what she was planning on doing and wanted to stop her. Maybe Jace had said that he didn't want to see her. She grabbed her jacket from the hook behind the door and walked out of the apartment quickly, ignoring the awkward silence that had fallen over her group of friends.

Stepping out of the apartment didn't require a jacket if she was just going into the hallway, so it was obvious that she was planning on leaving. She'd had a couple of wines that afternoon with Maia and Lydia, so it was probably a good thing that she hadn't grabbed her keys on the way out, although she was still deciding on her way out of the apartment where she was going.

But as she pulled on her jacket over the loose blue shirt that she was wearing and started walking down the steps at the end of her floor, she knew exactly where she was heading.

Jace's.

As she got out of the building, Clary winced as she realized that it was drizzling. It wasn't raining heavily yet, but if it got any heavier, it was probably going to soak right through the light jacket that she had grabbed. It hadn't been her heavy rain jacket that she usually wore when it was raining, it was more for show than anything, but she really hadn't thought this through. She pulled the collar of the jacket tighter around her neck, ducking her head forward, and glad that at least she was wearing sweatpants, which meant her lower half would be warm.

The red head picked up the pace as she began the path to Jace's house. Night was falling, and the sky was darker anyway since it was starting to rain, and Clary knew that if Luke found out that she was out by herself when it was getting dark he would be pissed off. The murders had everyone on edge, and Jace and Simon had told her off a couple of times for going out by herself. It was annoying, but she knew that it was just coming from a place that cared.

Clary began running, cursing under her breath that she hadn't gotten into more comfortable shoes than the ballet flats that had been by the door. She was kicking up water, and the hems of her pants were wet, and the water was soaking through her hair, dripping down her neck.

The heavens completely opened up as she turned down the road toward Jace's house. She picked up the pace, even though she wasn't in shoes that were any good for running, her feet stamping down hard on the asphalt as she ran further down the road, where the houses thinned out. It was about a two minute run between the last house and Jace's house, and Jace's house was almost completely hidden by the thick, stone wall and vines growing all over it to provide extra privacy.
Her fingers fumbled with the metal side gate, sliding off the bolt as she tried to hook her fingers around it. She managed to get the gate open it and as she pulled it open, it smacked against the concrete blocks and made a loud clanging sound. She didn't doubt for a second that Jace heard her coming, but there was definitely no way that he could have missed it after that noise, even with human ears.

Clary almost skidded over as she jogged along the side of the house to the front door, and she was breathing heavily when she reached the front door, pounding one of her fists on the door as thunder clapped above her. Jace opened the door in an instant, and he stared at her, his eyes burning red as he looked her over. Clary blinked up at him, water droplets catching on her eyelashes as she stared at him.

He looked incredible.

He looked strong.

And he felt so good.

She could feel him, feel his strength, feel how much he cared for her, feel how much he loved her already—it was rushing through her veins and settling deep in her bones and pounding in her head.

His eyes were shining, and he was bare chested, and his lips parted to show a hint of his fangs. She had never seen him with his eyes showing so proudly, and it was different from seeing Luke's eyes. His were a brighter shade of red, and seeing them shot all sorts of tingling feelings through her body that Luke's definitely never did.

"New York," she managed to get out between taking in several heaving breaths. The rain had soaked right through her sweatpants and sopped through her thin jacket. Her hair was sticking to her head and around her face and while she hadn't applied a lot of make up that day, just some stuff around her eyes to try and cover up how little sleep she had been getting in these past few days, but she didn't doubt that it was running and making her look like a raccoon. "When did you see me in New York?" Jace was staring at her, and he looked almost nervous, scared to say anything. Maybe she looked a little scary, although probably more in the drowned and rabid animal kind of way than intimidating way.

But then she realized it wasn't about the way she looked.

It was about what she did.

Jace had told her that she was his mate, that she was the most important person in the whole universe to his human side and his wolf side, and she had taken off, told him to leave her alone.

He didn't want her to run away again.

He was scared that she would leave him.

"I'm not..." she was still feeling a little breathless from her run over, even with her stamina rune that she burnt over on her arm every few days or so. "I'm not going anywhere. I just want to know, when did you see me in New York? Where?"

"You were in a club," Jace finally answered, taking a step closer to her, but still looking wary. She could feel it from here, his nervousness. She was cold from the rain and the wind that was starting to pick up, but she could feel a shift under her skin, it was hesitant and fleeting, but it was a warmth that was coming from Jace. She took in a deep breath, looking away from Jace, flipping her wet hair over her shoulder, trying to gather her thoughts. She wiped her hand over her face and then looked back
toward Jace, her teeth gritted together.

"I spent years—years—thinking that there was something wrong with me. All through my childhood, I felt like there was something wrong because I didn't fit in with Luke's pack. They were my only family, the place that I was accepted and loved, but even then, it still felt as though something was missing," Clary was getting angrier the more she spoke, even though she was trying to control her voice. But, in the bigger picture, it's not as though keeping her voice even was going to hide how she was feeling, given Jace was not only a werewolf, but her mate. "And maybe you weren't around when I was twelve and going through an identity crisis, or fifteen when my boyfriend broke up with because he had met his mate and I thought there was something broken inside me, but it's been forever since I was in New York, and you could have made my life—"

"Four years," Jace admitted to her.

"Huh?" Clary froze.

"It was four years ago," Jace bit down on his lower lip.

"You've known...For four years," Clary blinked up at him, water trickling down her forehead and catching on her eyelashes. She took in a shaky breath and closed her eyes for a moment as she thought. Jace wanted to reach out for her—she was only a few feet away from him, but he could feel the anger and confusion that she was feeling in his limbs. He didn't, though, he waited for her to make the first move. "Right," she opened her eyes again, and there was a determined glint in then. "Once this is all over, you're going to explain to me exactly why you didn't tell me four years ago, and why you didn't tell me when you first came into town. And potentially I'm going to make you do a lot of grovelling..."

"Once what is all over?" Jace asked with a tilt of his head.

"This," Clary ground out the word as she strode forward, stepping up onto the porch and reaching for Jace's shoulders. "We've got a lot of time to make up for," her words were bitten off as her lips came together with Jace's.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jace's whole body felt as though he had been electrified.

He couldn't work out if it felt as though he was floating out of body, or if he felt as though he was so completely connected with the earth, like everything had just clicked together and was right.

It felt as though this was too good to be true.

But then Clary moaned against his mouth and he snapped back to reality and realized that this was all actually happening.

"Shit," Jace sighed as he wrapped his arms tightly around Clary's petite body, letting her mold herself against his as their lips meshed together. She was soft and although her clothes were all wet, along with her hair, he could feel the heat coming from beneath the clothing. The wind was getting louder, practically howling, but Jace didn't care. He didn't want to move away from the open door and break this moment between them.

Clary's kisses were aggressive against his mouth, arms wrapped tightly around his neck to keep herself attached to his body. Her legs were tightly looped around his torso, her feet hooked behind his back, his heels pressing hard against his spine, and she shifted her hips against his, urging for him to respond. Jace shifted one hand, so that one was still securing her against his body, and the other moving up to cup around the back of her head, holding her there, right in front of his face. She tasted and smelt so fucking amazing, and apart from pulling away to suck in a deep breath, she didn't let her lips move away from his. Jace could feel himself getting hard just from their kissing alone.

It wasn't until Jace felt Clary shiver that he realized from the way they were standing in the doorway, she was absorbing all of the wind and rain that was managing to get underneath the small overhang of the house. Jace took a step backwards, careful not to loose his footing with the precious cargo in his arms, and managed to twist his ankle behind the door, kicking it shut.

"Bedroom," Clary managed to get out as she ducked her head, biting lightly at his chin, and then his jaw, and then beginning to suck a spot just underneath his ear. Jace let out a groan, at the very thought of her marking him, and at the back of his mind, he was glad that she knew so much about werewolves, knew that things like this were exactly what he needed to feel connected to her.

"Shit, Clary..." he whispered, tightening his fingers in her hair, his little finger brushing against the nape of her neck. His steps almost faltered as he reached the stairs, when he felt a brush of Clary's teeth against his skin, and he had to stretch out with one hand to grip the stairway banister, to steady himself. Clary rolled her hips forward again—her actual hips were in line with his stomach, given how small she was, she was high up on her torso, but every time she rolled her hips, her ass would brush against his cock, which was hard, and pressing against the band of his sweatpants.

"Come on, Alpha," Clary whispered, lifting her head up and biting at the shell of his ear and that was when Jace couldn't help it.

His head jerked back and his eyes burned red.

Clary's lips were red and slick with spit, and Jace heard her heart skip a beat as she looked at his eyes, and her lips curved upward into a smirk.
He had never let his eyes show in during sex, and especially in the foreplay *before* the sex. There had been a few times when he was a horny teenager that he had come close, when he was still getting used to keeping everything under control when in the middle of a moment with a girl, but he was older, he was an Alpha, he was *in control*.

It barely took two minutes alone with Clary for it to all completely come undone.

And the acceptance on her face was clear, which made his wolf howl with pleasure.

Their lips came back together and this time it was somehow even hungrier. Clary was wiggling against his body, gripping his shoulders, scratching at the bare skin there, and Jace was trying to run up the stairs without loosing his footing, almost crashing into the top railing of the stairs. Clary broke away from him to let out a short laugh as he almost fell, but he quickly recovered, and then he started walking toward his bedroom.

Jace was glad that the rest of his pack were already gone from the house, because if they weren't he would have physically *thrown* them from the house so they weren't there to taint this moment.

He didn't bother closing the door for the bedroom as they finally stumbled inside, and he wasn't too sure how he made it to the bed, but they did, and Clary let go of his neck, falling backwards onto the bed. She immediately tilted her head to the side, rubbing the side of her face against his bed cover, twisting her head to the other side and doing the same thing. She was spreading her scent, and Jace almost came in his pants when she faced him again and winked.

She knew exactly what she was doing to him.

Jace felt a growl at the back of his throat as he pounced on her, tearing through the jacket and the shirt that she was wearing, her ripped bra following almost straight after. She looked so good and she smelt even better, and Jace buried his face in the side of her neck, his nose pressing against the curve of her shoulder, where her scent was strongest.

Clary smelt like everything that was right with the world.

She smelt like summer rain, and like fresh earth, and faintly of strawberry body wash, and there was still that slight, clinging scent of mentholated spirits. She smelt—and felt—like comfort, and home, and love, and Jace ran his hands up the sides of her boy, relishing in the smooth feel of her skin under his hands.

She felt *so good*, he could barely believe that this was actually happening.

"Stop staring," Clary grunted, suddenly throwing a leg around his waist and catching him off balance, rolling to one side. Jace was strong enough to keep them from rolling, but he liked the idea of her on top, and she licked her lips as her eyes flashed over him below her. She looked almost wolf-like in the way that she raked her eyes over him, scratching her fingers down his chest and watching with glee as red lines rose on his tanned skin. Jace groaned, flexing his fingers on her hips, his claws pressing through his nail beds, retracting and pushing back through over and over again as he hovered on the edge of control. Clary leaned back down, smashing her lips down on his, her hands gripping at his shoulders, digging into the muscle, marking his flesh, showing her claim.

Jace sat up suddenly, keeping their lips together—not letting the seal between them break—and his hands started pulling at the elastic of her sweatpants. But just as his fingers began to slip underneath, he paused, pulling away for a moment and looking at her.

"Are you sure? I just..." he let out a ragged breath and closed his eyes for a moment. "I don't know if
I'm going to be able to stop."

"No one's asking you to," Clary responded, flashing him a small smile before bringing their lips together. It was soft and sweet for all of twenty seconds before it got hard and fast again, and Jace stood them both up, legs a little shaky as they steadied themselves. They managed to get off their pants, although Clary's underwear got stuck at her knees and Jace grabbed at them, shredding them with his claws as he tore them apart.

Jace grabbed her around the waist, and Clary's hands were back around his shoulders, scratching at his back, and Jace stumbled forward until they reached the set of drawers. Clary groaned as they hit the drawers, but it wasn't from the pain. The room was flooding with arousal and want and need and Jace's wolf was just screaming _matemate matemate_ inside him, and when Clary bit down on the side of his neck, Jace's vision completely went red.

He vaguely processed grabbing for a condom in the top drawer and he pulled it on, and when she bit his neck again, right underneath his ear, _marking him_, he pushed into her.

"Fuck!" Clary gasped out into his ear, her teeth slipping on his neck, pulling at the skin. He felt his own teeth shifting, the fangs dropping down, the pointed edges biting into his lower lip. He wanted to bite her, everything inside him was telling him to bite down on her neck, just like she was doing to him. But unlike him, she wasn't a wolf, her pain threshold was a lot lower than his, and she wouldn't heal as fast.

But she knew this.

She knew what he wanted.

_Something in her blood told her what he needed._

As he thrust into her—so hard that some of the things on top of his drawers crashed down to the ground—she pulled away from him, her hazy eyes meeting his for a moment. Then she tilted her head back and to the side, baring her neck to him. _Trusting him._

Jace couldn't hold himself back, lunging forward and biting into her neck, tasting her blood in his mouth, and then he was spilling into the condom.

"That explains a lot," Clary murmured, tapping her long fingernails against Jace's bare chest. "It explains why this house feels..." she went quiet for a moment as she tried to think of the right word to explain what she was feeling. "I don't know, I think I can feel what you're feeling. When I came by here the first time, it felt so sad..." Jace could remember her making the comment. "It feels better now, especially now that everyone has been coming around here," she tilted her head backwards so that she could look up at Jace. "Is that you?" Jace nodded his head twice.

"Yeah," he murmured. He went quiet for a moment, and she didn't push him, not wanting to pressure him. After they had finished having sex, they had sat on the ground for a while, catching their breath, Jace cushioning Clary's body from needing to sit on the wooden floors. Once they had caught their breath, Jace had moved her carefully onto the bed, cleaning them both up before laying down next to her. "Did you hear about my parents?" He asked, his voice quiet.

"I did," Clary nodded, twining her legs together with his and rolling her body over from where she had been curled against her side so that she was half laying across his body, in an attempt to comfort him. "Luke told me, the morning after it happened, before it became public knowledge." Jace swallowed hard, and Clary waited.
"Did you know what happened to the ones responsible?" He continued. Clary's eyes flickered over his face before she nodded again. "You know that I killed them?" It was important to him that she knew that about him. That he had killed people. It was a conversation that probably should have taken place at another time, but they had already lost so much time, he didn't want to waste anymore.

But Clary just met his eyes steadily, and nodded.

"They killed your family. They killed your pack. Luke wouldn't be any different, I don't think Simon or Maia or Bat would either," Clary said firmly. "Some people..." she took in a deep breath. "Some people are bigoted and stuck in their heads and just can't accept that not everyone is the same. I don't understand it, and I—" Jace could hear her heartbeat getting faster and she was angry. "I remember people when I was in school, and they would call me names, calling me a were-whore and trying to antagonize the were's that I was in school with, trying to get them to wolf out and lose control. But that was all kids stuff, you know?" She let out a sigh through her nose. "I've never actually been around when there have been adults actually hurting were's, and killing them?" She let out another heavy sigh. "I'm sorry that you ever had to go through something like that. I can't imagine losing my mum, much less everyone else I care about most in the world." Jace's own pain had felt as real to her as it had been to himself when she had been in his house first—she couldn't imagine what it had been like at the time, or the years that had followed.

"It had only been a few years when I saw you for the first time," Jace murmured, running his fingers up her spine, tracing her skin. "I was...I was spinning out, still adjusting to being an Alpha. I was twenty-one but I was acting like an immature kid." He smoothed his fingers over her shoulders, finding the warmth of her skin underneath his hand to be an anchor as he talked about something that he had avoided for so long. "When I saw you, I just couldn't handle it. I barely even saw you in the club, it was more than I just smelt you, and I knew straight away. I was still getting over my parents and my pack, and so when I saw you...I just kind of took off."

"When you saw me in a club..." Clary repeated quietly, before it seemed as though something clicked in her head. "You said that a girl came between you and Sebastian." Jace's body tensed at the mention of the other's name, especially with his mate in his bed and in his arms. Clary looked up at Jace, her eyebrows pulling together. "It was me, right? It was me that came between you and Sebastian?" Jace licked his lips before shrugging a shoulder.

"He was there, the night I first saw you. I walked into the club, and I saw you and smelt you straight away. Alec, Izzy and Sebastian were there with me, and Alec and Izzy followed after me when I ran out—I didn't even realize Sebastian hadn't come with us until like an hour later. Didn't even think about it, just thought it was Seb being Seb," Jace ran his hand through his shaggy hair, his wolf feeling restless and anxious inside of him at the conversation. "I didn't realize that the two you had even met until I saw him with you."

"So it wasn't a girl—me—in a club that came between you?" Clary asked in confusion.

"It's..." Jace pursed his lips together. "When I saw him with you, I wasn't surprised. It's the type of spiteful thing that Sebastian would do," he gritted his teeth together. "But it wasn't the initial thing that came between us, no." Jace sighed. "Some things happened, a few years ago, and it pulled us apart. Coming here and seeing you together..." he ground his teeth again and Clary made a face, reaching up to touch his jaw, her thumb gently rubbing against it. He relaxed his jaw and she gave him a small, soothing smile. "He knew that you were my mate, after that night at the club...And he still came after you. Which says all you really need to know about our relationship." Clary cringed at that, because he was right.

Werewolves were so incredibly territorial anyway, and for one to go after another's mate...It was
almost unheard of for one werewolf to go after anothers mate. And when it happened, bloodshed
usually followed.

"It sounds as though you did something to piss him off," Clary commented quietly.

"I don't know about that," Jace muttered. "I did everything he wanted."

"What does that mean?" Clary asked.

"I was the one that gave him the bite," Jace admitted with a heavy sigh. "I was the one that turned
him." Clary’s eyes went wide.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed it x
"He's your beta?" Clary twisted her body around so that she was facing Jace directly. "As in, not just your beta because he's part of your pack, but your beta—as in, you're the one that turned him?" She was no longer lying on the mattress flat, she had her elbows propped on the pillow underneath her so that she could look down at Jace from her slightly elevated position, watching every flicker of expression on his face.

"Yup," Jace nodded his head once, gritting his teeth as he took in a deep breath. Clary didn't push him to talk any further, share anymore, but it seemed as though she knew that he wanted to tell her more, he just needed to take it at his own pace. Jace's nose twitched as he thought for a moment, closing his eyes and just breathing in the scent of Clary's skin and shifting his leg so that it was pressing firmly against her own leg that was stretched out next to him, finding her warmth comforting. "Sebastian was my best friend when I was growing up. His whole family was human, his dad was a drunk and his mum was never around, she was sleeping with the half the town, so he spent a lot of time at our place." Jace remembered back to when he was a teenager, a lot different from how he was now, when he and Sebastian had been so close they were like brothers, and they would spend every waking moment together. "He wanted to be a werewolf, he asked my father, but he said that Sebastian would need to wait until he was a bit older before he would give him the bite. Sebastian wasn't particularly happy about it, but he knew that there was no point in arguing with my father when he had made up his mind."

"Sounds like Luke," Clary interjected quietly, and Jace dipped his head in a nod.

"After..." Jace breathed shakily and Clary could feel sadness sinking like a heavy rock in her stomach, and she knew that the despair was coming from Jace. From her mate. "After my parents, and my pack...After they were killed, Sebastian was the main person who was there. I now know that it wasn't healthy—at the time I knew it as well, but I was just so angry that I didn't want to listen to reason—but it was a good outlet at the time. I would fight with everyone, werewolf and human, and I didn't care who I hurt. All I cared was that I was making other people hurt, because I was hurting," his voice was rough, and Clary inched even closer to Jace, laying her body half on top of his, resting her chin on his muscular chest. "One night, Sebastian talked me into giving him the bite. I was...I was stupid and irresponsible, because I knew that when my father said it would be a good idea to wait, before turning Sebastian, I knew that he was right. Because Sebastian had always been cocky and overly confident and somewhat of a bully, and he could be manipulative..." he broke off for a moment, and now Clary could feel guilt, gnawing away at her stomach, at her connection with Sebastian. She wrapped a hand around his waist, wishing that she could take the emotional pain away from him, in the the same way that were's could take it from someone. "It's just, he was my best friend, and it felt as though he was all that I had left. I was close with Alec and Isabelle, but not in anyway that I am now."

"You were looking for a pack," Clary murmured quietly, trying to reassure him, letting him know that although she didn't have that same pull and instinct that he did, because she wasn't a werewolf, she still understood.

"Something like that," Jace sighed. "And so I turned him."

"So he's your beta...And he still came after someone that he knew was your mate?" Clary let out a breath and winced. "What happened between you guys?"

"I'm assuming you know what it means when someone's eyes are blue?" Jace asked Clary as he twisted his neck to the side, looking at her from a slightly different angle, releasing the pressure on
his neck.

"Yeah," Clary dipped her head in a small nod. "It means that they've taken the life of someone innocent." It wasn't particularly unusual for werewolves to have blue eyes, especially werewolves who were turned when they were older, rather than born were's, who had had the time to learn control. It wasn't a good thing, but it happened. Alpha's had red eyes, beta's and omega's generally had gold, and beta's and omega's who had killed an innocent had icy blue eyes.

She knew that Sebastian's eyes were blue.

She had seen them.

It had only come up once before, and Sebastian had said that he didn't want to talk about it, which she respected, understanding that it was personal and not her right to know, since the relationship they had was a casual one.

"The first night that I saw you, Sebastian was with us. I freaked out, sort of blurted it out and left and Alec and Izzy were just behind me. We didn't realize for a while that Sebastian wasn't with us, and that was when he must have met you," Jace sighed. "At the time, I knew absolutely nothing about it, which was probably a good thing, given what a bad place I was in then. Now that I look back on it, I can imagine that Sebastian probably just did it to get a kick out of it. A few months after that, he got in a fight...He got in a fight with another werewolf that he had been disagreeing with a lot. His name was Carlo, and he actually dated Izzy for a little bit, although I'm pretty sure it was more about sex than anything else. They just had personalities that grated each other, you know how people just don't get on so well, and sometimes when there was alcohol and full moons involved, things would get physical between them. Sebastian always felt the need to prove himself, and given Carlo was a born wolf, he was stronger and faster than Carlo, most of the time winning when they got into fights. Anyway, long story short, Carlo was killed, and it was Sebastian that killed him." Clary's eyebrows shot upward.

Werewolves killing other werewolves and then walking away from it unharmed and unpunished was unusual.

"The Clave cleared him, deemed that it was an accident. Well," Jace scoffed. "Not necessarily an accident, but they didn't put the blame squarely on Sebastian's head. People had seen them egging each other on for months, and they had fought so many times before. This just seemed like another one of those fights, but this one had gotten out of hand."

"You didn't think that, though," Clary prompted softly.

"No," Jace shook his head. "I knew Sebastian better than that. There's a certain power that you absorb when you kill another werewolf—"

"I've heard about that," Clary nodded. "It's as though you take on some of their power and abilities, add them to your own powers." Jace nodded.

"Sebastian never liked the fact that he would never be as strong or as powerful as a born wolf. Some bitten wolves do become as powerful—or even more so—than natural born wolves, but it's not often. He had always been manipulative, and if I had been paying more attention, then I would have seen that he was just trying to find a way to add to his own power. It wasn't until after Carlo had been killed and the Clave pardoned him that I realized...I realized that it wasn't an accident. When I confronted Sebastian about it, he didn't even deny it, and he wasn't remorseful or..." Jace drew in a deep breath and he closed his eyes again, leaning his head back, deep in the pillow. Clary could feel regret and sorrow, curling around her limbs, heavy and dense. "It was my fault, and I couldn't deal
with that. I told him I didn't want anything to do with him anymore. I already had enough death in
my life, and I couldn't be around anymore of it." They went quiet for a while, before Clary smoothed
her hand down his neck, cupping his cheek in a comforting gesture that made Jace's heart beat
uptick.

"I'm sorry," she said quietly.

"I think..." Jace took in a deep breath, keeping his eyes closed, wanting to finish telling her his story,
but not wanting to move too much, because the feeling of her touching him so soft and sweet was
everything he wanted in the world right now. Her scent had been enough to give him the strength to
repeat a story that he had tried to avoid for a long time, but then her touch... Jace still couldn't believe
that this was actually happening right now, that she was here—she was his. "I know that Sebastian
introduced himself to you on purpose that first night in the club. I don't know why, but it doesn't
surprise me. I don't think he would have had any plans to...I don't know—pursue you, I guess, but
maybe after I cut him off he thought that it was a way to get back at me..."

"I don't know if it was all about you," Clary lifted an eyebrow. "I've heard that I'm a bit of a catch." There
was a lighter tone to her voice, and Jace let his eyes open before narrowing them a little bit at
the implication of her comment. But she just smirked back at him, and Jace tightened the arm that
had snaked it's way around her waist, and he reached up to press his lips firmly to hers, maybe a little
firmer than necessary. When he pulled away, and she slowly opened up her eyes, she licked her lips
and gave him a small smile, that was soft and reassuring. "It was never anything serious, me and
Sebastian. Sure—it was fun, and I liked him—" Jace couldn't help the sub-vocal growl in his throat,
but Clary just rolled her eyes before continuing. "—But it had never been anything serious. We only
ever saw each other a couple of times a year."

She rolled back over, so that she was on her back on the bed, staring up at the ceiling. Jace stayed
where he was for a few minutes, processing what they had just talked about. He was glad that he had
told Clary about Sebastian, but he had to admit, it would take a while before he could get the images
of Clary and his beta out of his head. He didn't resent her for what had happened, because while he
was her mate, and the idea of her with anyone else made his blood boil in his veins, she had every
right to sleep with whoever she wanted.

It wasn't as though she had known who he was.

And even if she had... Jace still wasn't that over-controlling type of Alpha, or at least he hoped he
wasn't.

Jace took in a deep breath of the room through his nose. It smelt like sex, and like Clary, and then
there were the emotions from both of them, which were running high in the room. Clary didn't smell
sad or disappointed in Jace in what he had first started telling her his story, but she did smell a bit
angry. Maybe at feeling as though she was used by Sebastian, or maybe angry on Jace's behalf—he
wasn't sure which one it was, but he was fine with either one, because she was entitled to her opinion
either way.

"You know..." Jace began with a quiet scoff. "This really wasn't how I imagined our first time would
end like."

"Oh?" Clary gave a short laugh. "So you've been thinking about this, huh?" Jace realized how it had
came out, and from the lewd wiggle of Clary's eyebrow, she was definitely thinking more about the
sex than their conversation. Something else he noticed was that although she had a teasing lilt to her
voice, there was a skip in her heart beat and something in her eyes that said she wasn't completely
relaxed. Jace couldn't be sure, because there was still so much that he didn't know about her—and
her about him, in turn—but it seemed as though she was nervous.
Maybe she thought from his comment that she hadn't lived up to whatever expectation he had built up in his head, which was stupid, and he really didn't want her thinking that, because she was fucking perfect, and the whole thing had exceeded any expectations he could have had.

"I meant the aftermath," Jace assured her in a soft, gravelly voice and it was his turn to roll over so that he was leaning down over her. "And I'm not saying it was bad or anything, it was just different from what I expected. Better than I expected." He lifted himself up on his knees, shifting so that he was straddling her smaller body, and leaned down to press his nose to the curve of her neck. Clary tipped her head backwards and to the side, giving him full access to the most fragile part of her body. Jace took advantage of that, kissing across the length of her shoulders and across her bicep. His lips skimmed over her cleavage, and an hour ago it would have been arousing and had her arching off the bed, but now it just felt warm and comforting.

His scent would have already been smothered across her skin, but she knew that it was instinct for him to continue to scent her. His nose grazed over her smooth skin, and Clary felt a new warmth beginning at her toes and slowly flooding over her ankles and making it's way up her legs. It was Jace—it was Jace feeling happy because of her. His feelings were being transferred to her, and because she understood that, because she knew that was what was happening and why—unlike the first few times it had happened—she accepted it, allowed it in without trying to fight it.

And it felt good, his love and affection for her, filling her limbs and her head, it almost felt as though she was getting high. As his teeth brushed against her neck, his lips pressing against the shell of her ear, it actually felt as though it was too much for her body to handle, it was just a ridiculous amount of euphoria that she had to close her eye and take in deep breaths to stop herself from being completely overwhelmed. Jace let out a breath, which sent a shiver down her spine, and she opened her eyes when she felt him pull away and brace himself over her. Her bright green eyes met his, which were flickering between gold and red, and Clary smiled up at him, reaching up to brush her lips against his softly, before resting back against the pillow.

"Everything about you..." Jace's eyes slid over her, drinking her in, taking in another deep breath through his nose and his eyes seeming to settle solidly on Alpha red. "Everything is so fucking perfect." Clary's cheeks flushed the prettiest shade of pink that Jace had ever seen and she bit down on her full, bottom lip, and Jace couldn't help but stare at the motion. She cleared her throat, eyes darting from side to side as she tried to control her blush.

"Yeah, well, we're still going to have a conversation about how you kept this whole mates thing a secret from me," she told him, slightly chiding. "But...We can hold that off for a while."

"Much appreciated," Jace joked and Clary looked as though she was holding herself back from rolling her eyes, which he found amusing.

"And you know that things are different on my side," she actually looked a bit worried as she said that, as though she wasn't sure if Jace knew. "I mean...I can feel some things," she licked her lips. "And I know that we're mates, something just feels right, but...But it's not as..." she searched for words. "But it's not the same as you."

"I know," Jace murmured softly. "I know." She looked relieved and Jace couldn't stop himself from leaning back down, burying his face in his neck, breathing in her scent, knowing that he could never, ever get sick of this.

"Oh—and don't you think that you're going to make me into some little housewife!" Clary blurted out. "Because there ain't no way that's going to happen." Jace snorted, shaking his head, his shoulders shaking as he laughed.
"Wouldn't dream of it."
Isabelle and Alec had disgusted looks on their faces when they got home on Saturday morning and sniffed. Jace and Clary were both fully clothed in the kitchen, Jace attempting to help Clary with the cooking as she moved skillfully around the room, making breakfast. Magnus came in behind the siblings, and there was a wide smile on his face, not at all put off by the fact he was _fully aware_ of what had been happening in this house the whole night.

"I can smell sex over _everything_," Alec said bluntly, folding his arms over his chest and sniffing suspiciously at the door frame.

"That's an exaggeration, and you know it," Jace retorted with a roll of his eyes.

"Not by much," Isabelle stated as her eyes slid from side to side.

"Well, I wish I could smell your sex over everything. Because I _love_ it," Magnus sung out as he traipsed past the scowling siblings and came over to Clary, smushing a kiss against her cheek.

"I...Don't really know how to take that? I don't know if it's a good thing?" Clary raised an eyebrow at Magnus, but she could barely contain her smile as she looked past Magnus and over to where Jace was standing. Jace didn't smile back, but there was a soft expression on his face, which was quickly broken when Isabelle began speaking again.

"Alright, well, I think that I'm going to start by disinfecting this place from top to bottom," she announced with a clap of her hands. "Because I'm really not sure if there's anywhere safe for me to sit down..."

"You continue with those snarky remarks and I'm going to start asking why you smell so strongly of Simon," Jace said under his breath, clearly meant as a light warning, but enough to make Isabelle's cheeks flare red and Clary look in her direction questioningly. Alec smirked and Magnus let out a gleeful noise before he leaned forward and sniffed at the omelettes that Clary had just finished making and had put on two plates for herself and Jace. He looked as though he was about to reach out and try to rip a little bit off, but Clary narrowed her eyes at him to deter any thoughts of stealing her breakfast.

"As long as it wasn't in my bed, I'm okay," Clary stated and then had a slightly horrified expression on her face when Isabelle let out a snort.

"It wasn't us in your bed," she replied.

"Someone was in my bed?" Clary's eyes were wide. "As in...Someone was _doing something_ in my bed?!"

"Three someones," Magnus grinned. Clary looked confused for a second before a spark of realization flickered in her eyes.

"Ah," she hummed out, shaking her head.

"What?" Jace still looked confused.
"I didn't see it coming either," Alec commented.

"Really?" Isabelle questioned. "I mean, all we had to say three people and Clary knows who we're talking about?"

"Who?" Jace asked.

"I mean, it was kind of obvious, but I really didn't want it to happen in my bed," Clary stated with a sigh.

"Don't worry, biscuit, I'm sure they'll air it out well," Magnus grinned.

"Who?!" Jace repeated, sounding frustrated.

"Maia, Jordan and Bat," Alec told Jace, finally putting their Alpha out of his misery. Jace's face froze, then shifted between about three different expressions before finally settling on a surprised one.

"I didn't see that one coming," he muttered with raised eyebrows.

"I feel as though it's something that's been coming for a while," Clary said with a shrug, resting her hip against the island in the middle of the kitchen. "Maia was pretty much the only one that he really trusted after he turned. I mean, he's hung around with us for a while, but he's just not someone who can really...Relax, I guess. Maybe with another Alpha and other were's in town, he feels like he can finally act on his feelings, because he's got other support if something goes wrong." Jace could understand that. Maia and Jordan were clearly a steady couple, they had been together for a while and they seemed to have a good thing going. If Maia was the only one that Bat truly trusted, without any Alpha or a fully formed pack, he may have been worried that he wouldn't have any other were's to make up a pack around to support him if things fell apart between the three of them. But now Jace was there, and although Jace knew that Bat was hesitant, he had begun to feel Bat opening up and letting him and Alec and Isabelle in.

"Well, I just hope they've thought it through," Alec mused. "Because that's definitely going to be awkward if it doesn't."

"As long as they wash my sheets, I'm okay with it...I guess," Clary made a face, but then she shrugged again and she picked up one of the plates with an omelette that was quickly cooling. "Anyway, I'm gonna..." she pointed a finger between her plate and then toward the lounge. "Go eat," she stated, picking up one of the forks that had been on the bench next to the plate and ducked around Jace and Isabelle to leave the kitchen.

As soon as she was gone, all eyes turned back to Jace, and he knew that they wanted details. Isabelle's look of disgust was tamped down almost instantly and even Alec looked as though his interest was piqued.

"So we know what the end result of last night was," Isabelle said, moving closer to Jace and surprisingly remembering to keep her voice lower since Clary was just in the next room. She may not have been a were and have their advanced hearing, but she would still have been able to hear their conversation if anyone spoke at the normal volume. "But, like, is it serious? She understands everything?"

"Understands everything?" Jace lifted an eyebrow.

"Yeah, about you guys being mates and shit," Isabelle said.
"She already knows what a mate means to a werewolf, Iz," Jace replied. "She's been around werewolves her whole lives, and that's pretty obvious whenever she's around us." Isabelle conceded to that with a nod. "And...I think..." Jace pursed for a moment, and then a small smile curved his lips upwards. Alec looked taken aback, Jace could feel the surprise coming off his beta, and Magnus let out a sound that was something like a squeak. "I think that she's happy with it. With me." Alec stared at his Alpha for a few long minutes before leaning forward and slapping his hand down his shoulder. He squeezed, showing his support, and Jace's smile grew.

The tension in the town continued to grow, although thankfully no bodies showed up. The bodies of the victims were still at the morgue, under the strict eye of the Sheriff and his men, who were still working hard to try and find the werewolf who was behind all of this. Luke and Gretel were making regular trips into the town, to consult with the police, and Jace was also finding himself at the station a couple of times a week, Alec at his side. Even though they were only going there to help, to go through photos of other werewolves, their scents, their specific claw and bite marks, every time they went into the police station and people of the town would see them, he could feel their judgement, smell their fear coming off them in waves.

He hated the fact that there were people scared of him.

As a fact, werewolves would almost always have the upper hand if it ever came to a physical fight with a human, and almost every other being, except perhaps a warlock. But despite that fact, people generally didn't have this perpetual, never-ending fear of were's. Jace didn't want people to be scared of him—this was his town, his families territory, which meant he had a strong urge to protect the town and everyone in it.

It had been a few weeks since Jace had spent the night with Clary when he caught a scent of Sebastian. He was coming out of the local grocery store and he had to fight to stop his eyes from glowing red because the last thing he needed to do was scare more people. He couldn't stop himself from coming to an abrupt halt and looking around, though. Jace had hoped that Sebastian had just left town; Clary had said that she hadn't heard from him and Alec, Isabelle and Magnus had said that they hadn't picked up on his scent or seen him around, so Jace had really hoped that he had gone.

Jace managed to narrow down the scent, and his eyebrows pulled together when he saw a girl with dirty blonde hair flouncing toward a red mini cooper. He took a few steps closer to her and he caught another scent from her. It was something like magic. Not the sort of magic that Magnus smelt like, which was clean and sharp, this smelt like something else. The fact that she also smelt like Sebastian had Jace's heckles raised, but there wasn't much he could do once she got to her car and opened the door.

She was probably just some witch that Sebastian was fooling around with.

As the blonde opened the door, she turned back, and looked directly at Jace, winking at him before she got into her car, driving quickly out of the parking lot.

Sebastian's scent was different now, but the underlying odour was the same, and it got under Jace's skin like hooks, and so rather than going straight home, Jace drove to Clary's apartment. He had been going there more and more often, not just on the one night a week when everyone gathered together. Jace loved his own house, he loved how it was slowly beginning to smell like a pack home, like family and love, but he also loved Clary's apartment, which had a much more condensed smell of her.

His mate.
"Jace?" Clary opened the door before he even knocked, and he couldn't help but love the way she opened herself up to the mate bond so quickly and receptively. She sensed things so quickly, able to feel Jace's emotions almost as acutely as another werewolf, able to know when he was close by. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah," Jace shrugged a shoulder as he stepped into her apartment, looking around even though he hadn't heard anyone else there.

"Don't lie," Clary replied, her voice even as she shut the door and turned around to watch Jace moving around her living room. He trailed his hands over the back of her couch, picking up one of the pillows, turning it over, his movements seemingly casual to the untrained eye, but Clary knew what he was doing. Marking the room, making sure his scent was spread around. He put down the couch and then walked over to the open window beside her easel, placing his hand flat on the window frame and tapping his finger a couple of times against the glass. "Jace?" Clary asked, stepping closer to him.

"I...I caught Sebastian's scent on someone," Jace admitted, feeling a little rueful since he knew that he was just being overprotective.

"Oh," Clary raised her eyebrows knowingly, a small smile on her face. "And you just wanted to come over here and make sure that any werewolf who dare set foot into my apartment knew that I was your property?" There was a teasing lilt to her voice, and Jace knew that he had to be a little bit careful about what he said in response to that, because Clary made it very clear that she was no one's property. She was independent, and even though she knew that she was his mate, she didn't just make things easy for him.

"I just..." Jace pursed his lips, and then shrugged, because what she said was pretty much right. Clary shook her head, coming over to stand in front of her. She smelt so fucking good, and that strawberryhomeflowerymate smell that she always carried with her also had his own scent twined with it, which made her perfect, and it calmed his wolf down quickly.

"It's okay," she told him quietly as she cupped one hand around his jaw, her thumb brushing over his cheek. "It's just me here. Sebastian hasn't been here." She reached up and her mouth pressed against Jace's lower lip. Jace didn't respond for a few moments, and Clary rolled her eyes as she pursed her lips, sucking his lower one into her mouth and playing with it with her teeth. Jace grumbled at the back of his throat as though it was some sort of hardship, but then he returned the pressure. It was only slight at first, and Clary knew that he still had his Alpha heckles up, feeling off balance after picking up on Sebastian's scent, so she just doubled her efforts. Clary stepped even closer, as though trying to melt their bodies together as she tightened the grip she had on his face. Her teeth kept on digging into his lip, until he finally responded in the way that she had been searching for.

Jace let out another growl from deep in his throat, but this one sounded different from before, and he kissed her firmly. Clary sighed, feeling the tension that had gathered in her body the moment Jace had stepped into her body begin to dissolve away. Jace's hands rested on her hips, turning her body around and walking them backward, out of the lounge and toward her bedroom. Clary knew that it was because it was where it smelt most strongly of her—where he would feel most safe and secure right now.

They got into her room, and Clary didn't even focus on the fact that the bed was a mess, the duvet was still pushed all the way to the bottom of the mattress and hooked around the wooden post of the bed, and one of the pillows was on the ground. Jace lifted Clary up with ease, one of his hands supporting her back and the other underneath her ass, resting her down on the mattress and stretching his strong, muscular body over top of hers.
"You smell so good," Jace murmured, kissing her cheeks and eyelids and chin and then burying his face in her neck. Clary just tilted her head back, knowing that this was what he needed.

They rid themselves of their clothes quickly, and when their naked bodies came together again, Jace let out a long sigh. Clary hooked one of her legs around him, the heel of her foot resting against his lower back, and Jace's hand skimmed down her side, his fingers sending sparks skittering across her skin. Clary sighed and arched up into him, her breasts pressing against his chest.

"You're so..." Jace's words dissolved as he nipped at her neck, sucking at the skin, kissing her collarbone before one of his hands gripped her thigh. He made his way down her neck, his lips tripping down her breasts and tweaked at her nipples before making his way back up to her mouth. "You're so fucking incredible," he breathed out before their lips came together came.

It all just felt so natural, it always did, everytime they were together.

Sometimes there was a fight for who was on top, both of them with such dominant personalities, but Clary seemed to realize that this was something that Jace needed right now—just like she always did. She lay back on her bed, rolling her hips forward so that her wet lower lips brushed against his hard cock, and rubbing her foot up and down his leg, sending sparks through his body. She offered up her neck to him, and after Jace paused momentarily to pull on a condom, he slid swiftly into her while simultaneously sinking his teeth into her neck.

Clary's whole body bowed off the bed and she let out a broken cry as Jace kept her thigh pushed back, so that her knee was pressing up close to her shoulder. Her legs were effectively doing the splits and allowing Jace to drive into her deeply. Clary's breaths were coming out in short pants, and Jace couldn't keep his mouth off her.

He was licking and biting her neck, and there was a fleeting thought at the back of her mind about how she was going to be covered in marks the next day, but she liked that. Hickeys were tacky, and they were something that she had avoided since she was a teenager, but being marked by her mate, her Alpha was something completely different, and the idea of him marking and scenting her for everyone to see made her cheeks flush and her head tip backwards.

"Shit, Jace—" Clary sighed, her fingers digging into Jace.

Everything just spiralled, his feelings flooding through her veins, spreading to her toes and fingers, and there were colours were spinning like a helix behind her eyelids as Jace relentlessly entered her.

"Oh, god," Clary cried out as she orgasmed, feeling Jace's teeth latch onto her neck, just below her ear, and the endorphins made her feel as though she was flying, clutching onto Jace's back drawing droplets of blood as he flew with her.

Chapter End Notes

My Tumblr is SereneCalamity, and my Twitter is CalamitySerene if you want to chat x
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It had started raining, shortly after they had rolled apart and decided to take a shower together. The temperature seemed to drop a bit, and although Jace was absolutely fine—given how hot werewolves ran all the time, no matter the weather—Clary put on a loose sweatshirt over the singlet she was wearing as they walked out to the lounge. She had a fluffy pair of adorable blue and green polka-dot socks and some sleeping shorts, and Jace could smell Magnus all over the sweatshirt she was wearing, and he wondered if it was his. He liked that, that their two packs—Clary was adamant her group of friends hadn't been a pack, but Jace knew better—had melded together, and she was starting to smell like all of them.

It seemed impossible that she could ever smell better than that incredible mixture of home and strawberry and love, but when she started smelling even more strongly like Isabelle, Alec and Magnus—and, hell, like him—she just...It was completely bewitching.

"You want a coffee?" Clary asked as she padded into the kitchen, picking up the jug and filling it with water.

"Are you having one?" Jace asked as he sat down on the couch in her lounge, looking toward the windows that were closed, water tracking down the glass. He picked up the remote from the coffee table and flicked on the TV, skimming through the channels before settling on a music channel that was playing hits from the 1990's.

"I'm having a hot chocolate," Clary replied and he heard her laugh under her breath. "With mini marshmallows." Jace smirked and shook his head.

"You're adorable," he stated.

"What?!" Clary protested.

"You're adorable," he repeated. "Hot chocolate and mini marshmallows."

"It's raining! This is literally the day that hot chocolate and mini marshmallows were created for," Clary stated in a matter-a-fact voice as she moved around her kitchen. Jace didn't say anything for a long moment, and Clary was pulling out the glass container that held the coffee granules in it before he spoke up.

"I'll have a hot chocolate as well," he said. Clary paused and looked over at him, through the hair that was falling in front of her face.

"With mini marshmallows?" She asked curiously.

"With mini marshmallows," Jace confirmed with a nod, his lips twitching. He looked back at the TV even though he could still feel Clary's eyes on him, and a slight change in the chemosignals that were coming off her, he knew that she was smiling. A few months ago, there was no way Jace would choose a hot chocolate over coffee, especially a hot chocolate with mini marshmallows. He was probably going to get it now and it would be far too sweet for him to drink fully, but that's who he felt like he was when he was with Clary. He felt like a guy who would enjoy hot chocolate over black coffee. He felt like a guy who wanted sugar rather than just throwing back bitter coffee.
"Here we go," Clary came over and handed Jace a blue mug, filled with milky brown liquid and pink and white marshmallows popping around on top. She sat down on the couch beside Jace, folding one of her legs underneath and wiggling around to make herself comfortable. Jace tried not to make it too obvious that he was watching her, because sometimes she would catch him and he knew that she was caught between feeling a bit embarrassed and a bit confused. But the thing was, sometimes it was still hard for him to process the fact that this was all so real.

The fact that he had found her again, and that she was such an amazing person. She was strong and definitely sarcastic at times, she was accepting of werewolves to the point where she had organized pack nights for her friends, even though she didn't consider them all a pack, exactly. She was caring and empathetic and...And she was understanding, and she actually wanted to be with him.

"Hey," Clay tilted her head to the side, looking concerned. "You alright?"

"Yeah," Jace gave her a small smile before he sipped from the mug. It was a lot sweeter than he was used to, but it was still nice. Clary drank from her own cup, and then moved around on the couch, leaning against the arm of the couch and stretching out her legs over Jace's lap. He rested a hand on her bare knee, and couldn't help but smile as he looked down at the fluffy socks that she was wearing. "This is good." Clary lifted an eyebrow and smirked.

"Mm, but you still prefer your black coffee," she said knowingly.

"Yeah, usually," Jace admitted. "But this is good for now." Clary didn't look as though she totally believed him, but she didn't say anything else. They sat there, in comfortable quiet, sipping from their hot chocolates and watching the music videos that were coming up on the TV screen. Jace smirked as Clary began singing along to a Backstreet Boys song. "Isabelle used to have this album," he commented. "She used to play it on repeat."

"I love them," Clary stated. "Not loved, love." Jace laughed and shook his head. They fell back into quiet, and Jace couldn't help but get distracted. His thoughts went back to the girl Isabelle had seen in the supermarket car park, and to Sebastian, and he wasn't sure how long it was before Clary reached out and rested a hand on his arm and brought him back to the present. When he looked at her, he could see the carefree expression on her face was gone, and there was concern in her eyes. He could sense that she was upset, and he knew that it was just because she was picking up on his shift of emotions. "What is it?" She asked gently. "Talk to me."

"Uh," Jace took in a deep breath, wondering if he should just push it all down.

"It's Sebastian," Clary stated, going back to their conversation before they had ended up in the bedroom.

"Sorry," Jace shook his head.

"You don't need to be sorry," Clary frowned, carefully putting her half finished mug of hot chocolate on the ground and shuffling forward so that she was closer to Jace. "Talk to me," she prompted him, and Jace took in a deep breath through his nose. Other than with Clary, he hadn't really talked about Sebastian before, not in depth. Alec and Isabelle—they had been there when everything had gone down with Sebastian, and they had known him before the change as well, given how often they came from New York to visit him. It wasn't exactly the healthiest way of coping with things, but when it came to his feelings, Jace wasn't the most forthcoming. Jace circled his fingers around her ankle, and rested the other arm across her thighs.

"So...Me and Sebastian were friends," Jace began. "Best friends, I guess, when we were younger. He lived just a few blocks away from the our house, and we had gone to school together since we
were, like, six years old. Sebastian never had any issues with me being a werewolf, like some of the
other kids did, and he also didn't act as though he wanted something from me, because of the
position my parents had, like the other half of the kids did," he took in a deep breath, and rubbed his
thumb over the thin skin of her ankle. "We became really good friends. As we got older, Sebastian
began bringing up comments about being turned, about the bite. At first it was just something every
now and then, but one night he asked me to talk to ask if my father would give him the bite, change
him."

"And what did your dad say?" Clary asked as she reached a hand behind Jace's neck, resting her
hand at the nape, her weight a comforting feel.

"He said no," Jace tilted his head to the side and made a self-deprecating noise. "And I got angry
because I didn't understand. I knew that it was a big thing, the bite, for people who aren't born as a
were, and there's a process that happens for people to actually get the bite. It's just—I thought
Sebastian was different, that my father would make an exception because he was my friend, and he
understood everything that we stood for, and we went through." Clary nodded comfortingly,
stroking her fingers through the long hair at his neck. "Sebastian was angry, but he tried to cover it
up. Things were kind of...Strained for a few months, I guess. My father tried to explain the decision
to me, saying that maybe when we were older, they would speak with the Clave about Sebastian's
potential to be a werewolf—"

"Which is the normal process to take," Clary murmured.

"Yeah," Jace nodded. "I had just been too immature to understand my fathers reasoning. He said that
Sebastian was too angry, too arrogant—that he just wasn't ready for the change." Clary knew the
traits that Sebastian was talking about, his personality hadn't really changed over the years, it seemed.
He definitely had an inflated ego, and he was very confident with himself. That was one of the
biggest reasons why it had only ever been casual between her and him. She couldn't imagine actually
being in a relationship with someone like that. "When my parents and my pack..." Jace swallowed
hard. "When I was left alone, and the Alpha spark was passed onto me, I felt alone, and I felt...I felt
like I had no one."

"So you turned Sebastian?" Clary guessed.

"Yup," Jace nodded, his eyes turned downward. "I turned him, and we went to New York, to join
my cousins." Clary nodded slowly, her fingers stroking through his hair, her thumb slipping up and
down the chord of his neck. "Sebastian was...He was overconfident in his abilities to adapt to being a
werewolf, and he made stupid mistakes a lot. Just...Wolfing out in public when someone annoyed
him or he got angry, or getting overwhelmed because he was trying to take in everything all at once."
Clary nodded again. Luke was a born wolf, and so the scents and the sounds that came with being a
werewolf—how all of their senses were heightened—just came naturally. But for bitten were's, like
Simon and Bat, it took a lot more adapting and training for them to be able to take everything in.

"But you helped him get better?" Clary asked, because everything that she had seen from Jace with
his pack and with her friends showed her that he just wanted what was best for them.

"We all did. Alec and him never got on very well, but Alec helped him because he knew it was
important to me—it was like as soon as I became an Alpha, Alec and Isabelle knew that they were
meant to be in my pack, which meant they rallied around me," Jace explained. "And things kind of
got better for a while, although he still felt the need to prove himself, trying to keep up with were's
who were born wolves, or who had been turned earlier than him. He always had a need to be better,
faster, stronger."

"And then Carlo came along..." Clary sighed and Jace jerked his head in a nod. She could feel the
guilt and shame coming off in waves from Jace, settling over her skin and sinking into her bones. She wished she could take that from him, in the same way that were's could take the physical pain from others. She climbed over him, straddling Jace and blanketing herself over him by way of comfort. She nuzzled her face into his neck, looping her arms around him and holding him tightly. Jace didn't say anything for a long time, but she felt his breathing even out and he tightened his grip on her hips, one of his hands sliding underneath her shirt. It wasn't in any kind of sexual way, Clary could tell that he just wanted that skin-on-skin contact. "It's not your fault."

"Well, it is," Jace muttered, and she felt him begin to stiffen again, which wasn't what she wanted.

"You can't blame yourself," Clary murmured, kissing his neck, smoothing one hand over the back of his neck. "You're the one that turned him, yes. You're his Alpha, yes. But you're not to blame for what he chose and continues to choose to do." She wasn't sure how much he believed, but he kept his head tilted back, his neck on display in a way that a werewolf—especially an Alpha—would only do to someone that they trusted with their life.

She nipped at his neck, smothering him in her scent, and after a while, she felt him relax.

It would do for now.

Clary wasn't too sure when they ended up moving to the bedroom. She must have fallen asleep while they were on the couch and he moved them into her room. He had left her in her shirt and underwear, but he was completely naked, his unnaturally warm body pressed up against her. He was already awake when she woke up, and just like every other time that they slept together, Clary woke up feeling completely rested.

It must be a side effect of the mate bond, and Clary was definitely grateful for it. She usually hated mornings, but she actually felt good when she woke up next to him, as though she had slept for twenty-four hours and woke up completely refreshed.

"Morning," Clary murmured as she rolled over and propped herself up on one elbow.

"Morning," Jace replied, and she was relieved to see that he seemed a lot more relaxed than he had last night. She stared down at him for a beat, before leaning forward and pressing a soft kiss to his mouth. It was chaste, and sweet, but it filled her stomach with butterflies.

Clary had only been in a couple of relationships before this. And she didn't doubt that there wasn't going to be any after this, because that's not how mates worked. But in the relationships that she had had before, it had never felt like this. She didn't do the morning cuddles, or the soft kisses, or the PDA that she began gagging over when she saw other couples engaging in. And she had never felt connected to any of her previous partners in the way that she felt to Jace.

But it made sense.

He was her mate.

As sappy and almost disgusting as it sounded, even when she just repeated it back in her own head, it was true.

"You got a text about twenty minutes ago," Jace told her.

"You've been awake for twenty minutes?" Clary asked, raising her eyebrow at him.

"Probably close to an hour, actually," Jace replied with a shrug.
"And you've been doing, what exactly? Staring at me while I sleep?" Clary snarked at him as she lay down on the bed and reached out for where her phone was on the bedside table, plugged into the charger.

"I guess you could say that...Or listening to you snore, might be the more accurate description," Jace replied, and then let out a laugh as Clary reached out and pinched his arm lightly in defense. She flicked her thumb over the screen of her phone and smiled as she read whatever message it was. "Who is it?" Jace asked, wondering who had put the smile on her face.

"Maia. Making sure that I'm free this weekend," she replied as she tapped out a response and then stretched out to put her phone back on the table, rolling back to face Jace.

"For the full moon?" Jace asked.

"Yup," Clary nodded, scrunching up her nose and making a face so adorable that Jace wanted to lean over and kiss her. "One of them always checks with me, even though I always have it marked on my calendar. I haven't missed a full moon weekend since I was...I don't know, four?" She grinned. Jace decided he was going to reach out and kiss her at that point, just softly, on the tip of her nose.

"You going to run with me?" He asked her, eyes flickering red slightly.

"That sounds awfully couply," Clary sung out with a tip of her head.

"Does that scare you?" Jace's eyebrows pulled together in a question. Clary considered it for a moment before smiling widely.

"Not a bit."

Chapter End Notes

Hope you guys enjoyed the update!
And I've recently seen Avengers: Endgame, if anyone wants to scream/cry about it!
Twitter: CalamitySerene
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"Pass the wings!" Isabelle said through a mouthful of food.

"I want more beer—stop trying to horde the bottles, Bat—I know there's tons in the fridge!" Jordan snapped.

"Seriously, you need to have at least some salad," Clary scolded.

"Yes, mum," Lydia poked out her tongue.

"Oh my god, close your mouth when you're eating!" Maia huffed out as she swiped at Bat's shoulder.

"I swear to god, Mags, if you keep on hogging those wings I'm going to wolf out on your ass!" Isabelle was still speaking through a mouthful of food.

"I'll have you know that there's only one person I like wolfing out on my ass, biscuit, and it ain't you," came Magnus' sassy reply before two buffalo wings were actually thrown down to the other end of the table.

"Oi!" Alec reprimanded, his cheeks going red at his lovers comment. "Just because there's werewolves at the table, doesn't mean you actually have to act like animals!"

"At least someone's pointing that out," Helen murmured, but there was affection in her voice.

"More wings!" Isabelle chanted, swiping the back of her hand across her mouth before holding them both out. "Again, again, again!"

"Don't you dare..." Aline began, holding up a finger to Magnus, obviously attempting to dissuade him from throwing more buffalo wings, but Magnus was already picking them up.

"Go, go, go!" Simon was chanting, cheering Magnus on as he sent two more wings soaring down the table.

"Ow!" Bat spoke for probably the first time since he came into the house, the wing bouncing off his forehead. He rolled his eyes, but there was a smile on his face as Isabelle picked it up from where it had landed on the table, and she handed him a paper towel for the sauce that had smeared down the side of his forehead.

It was loud and it was messy and the clean up tomorrow was probably going to take a while, but Jace didn't care. Because this— the noise and the feeling of family and the happiness that was filling this dining room—it was everything that he had been missing for years. Everything since he left this town... That hole in his heart that he was scared was never going to be filled—right now. This was it.

Clary was sitting down on the right side of the table, and while Jace had wished that she had sat next to him, he was just glad that she was in his direct line of sight. She was between Bat and Alec, and she looked slightly disgusted but definitely amused by the eating habits of the werewolves around her. Once again, Jace was hit by just how comfortable everyone seemed together. Clary's 'pack' and his own, melding together, they were already like a family. Magnus was head over heels in love with Clary, Aline and Alec had become fast friends since she had started dating Helen and were discussing taking archery lessons together, and Simon and Isabelle had finally admitted to being a 'thing'. They weren't mates, but they still seemed to fit together well.
But as happy as Jace was with everyone else, it was Clary this his mind kept circling back to.

It was ridiculous how happy she made him.

And every single werewolf in the room could feel it, the way his wolf was satisfied when she was near, and calm, and even though it was a full moon, and every single one of them was keyed up and anxious to shift and run, there was also this relaxed feeling among them, that everything was okay. Jace was pretty sure that even the humans in the room could feel that as well, and he knew that just how happy he was was written all over his face as he looked around the table at his friends. His family—his pack.

"Okay, that's enough," Clary growled as her hand snatched through the air, lightning fast, reflexes almost as fast as a werewolf. She grabbed the buffalo wing that Magnus was throwing again at Isabelle, and earned pouts from both of them. "You are at a kitchen table, you do not need throw food." Aline smirked at the two of them and Magnus grumbled something unintelligible under his breath. Alec looked triumphant as he smirked at his boyfriend, and it looked as though he was holding back from poking out his tongue. Jace couldn't help but snort at the way Isabelle had to stretch across the table to get the tray of buffalo wings, picking a few up and putting them on her plate.

Suddenly, the remaining kernels of corn that were left in one of the bowls lifted into the air and went flying, purple streaks of magic in the corn, pelting Clary, getting stuck in her hair and falling on her shoulders and a couple down the front of her shirt. Silence fell over the table as Clary's green eyes went wide and she didn't say anything for a moment.

"Uhhh..." Lydia made a face, when Clary lunged forward and grabbed a handful of salad and sending it flying back toward Magnus. It also hit Maia and Helen, and there were indignant squawks, but suddenly there was food flying in all directions and Jace let out a yell as he pushed back from the table and got to his feet, taking a few steps to get out of the firing zone. He couldn't quite believe that a full on food fight had just broken out in his dining room, among a bunch of adults, and he tried to put it down to the fact that all of the werewolves in the room were worked up because it was a full moon, and the humans in the room were just taking their cue from them.

Except neither Magnus or Clary were werewolves, and they were clearly the instigators here.

"You keeping your distance?" Clary asked as she came over to him, a wide smile on her face as she came over to where he was. There were corn kernels in her hair, a smear of barbeque sauce on her cheek and something red—maybe tomato or capsicum—was clinging to her shirt.

"This really isn't something that I need to get involved in," Jace said with a roll of his eyes. Clary would later blame it on the fact that she already smelt like a mixture of different foods, and there was so much chaos happening in the small room, that was why he was unprepared for her to suddenly pull out the arm from behind her back with a scoop of mashed potatoes, and mush it into his face. A cheer went up from Isabelle when she realized what had happened, and then Magnus caught on as well, and Jace was hit in the face with a head of broccoli.

"What the—"

"Just because you're the big, broody, fearless leader around here, doesn't mean you can't have some fun as well," Clary giggled, reaching up to brush a quick kiss to his cheek before she darted out of the room as Simon made a break for her.

Jace was glad that his pack and the rest in his home were distracted, because it was just simple things like that from Clary made his wolf so happy that he could barely stop his heart from beating out of his chest, and he knew his cheeks were red. She knew his position, and she respected that, but not so
much that she shied away from him, and couldn't still have fun.

It was a while before everyone calmed down, but none of them bothered showering. They were just going to be getting sweaty and dirty all over again when they went out running in just a few hours. Everyone had brought a few changes of clothes when they had come over, and the girls went upstairs to get changed and do a half job of cleaning themselves with some towels while the boys stayed downstairs. Nudity among werewolves was something that was expected, given how often they didn't want to be restricted by clothes when they were running, and how they would sometimes end up tearing them off while training, but they weren't all pack yet, and Jace was happy to let things take a slower, natural pace as they all got more comfortable with each other.

The clean up of the kitchen took almost three times as long as the actual food fight had lasted, and Jace still wasn't completely happy with the way it smelt like a mixture of food, but he wasn't going to say anything. He would come back in here tomorrow morning and give the whole thing another clean, and then Isabelle would undoubtedly tease him about it and call him a perfectionist.

"It's almost ten," Clary murmured in his ear when she came back downstairs and walked up behind Jace, slipping one arm around his waist so that her hand was flattened against his hardened stomach. Jace rested his hand over hers as he looked toward the window. It was dark, the sun had completely disappeared over an hour ago, and the full moon was high in the sky. It was almost time for them to leave the house and head out into the woods. Over the next half hour or so, everyone in the house got ready to run.

That meant changing into clothes that they didn't mind getting ripped or stained, and the non-humans in the room putting on sturdy shoes. Jace, Alec and Isabelle all looked surprised as Clary and Lydia pulled out steele's from their bags and traced them over fading runes on their stomachs. There was only one rune that was burnt dark and permanent on their bodies, and that was the Angelic Power rune. Jace had seen a couple on Clary, all at different stages of fading, and he hadn't realized that she still used them.

"Stamina," Lydia winked over at Jace before nudging Clary in the side and giggling. Clary just rolled her eyes at Lydia before wincing as her skin burnt. There was a quick flash of burning flesh through the room, that each of the were't picked up on, but it faded quickly, obviously their angelic blood healing them faster than a normal human. Isabelle and Maia were both almost vibrating out of their skin as they paced anxiously by the door, waiting for Jace to be the one to tell them that they were ready to go. Simon and Bat weren't much better, tapping their feet at frustratingly uneven rhythm on the wooden floors.

"Let's go," Jace said, making a move for the front door. His voice was low, but it was heard by everyone crowded in the lounge, and the energy shifted from anxious and almost needy to complete relief and joy as the were's in the room practically bolted out into the night.

It was lucky that the woods were right there, because none of the were's—including Jace—were even bothering to cover up their glowing eyes and the way their claws were starting to come out through their fingers and toes. Clary noted as she started to pick up her pace that Simon and Isabelle were sticking close to each others sides as everyone began to run. None of the were's were running as fast as they could, as fast as they wanted—as fast as they wanted—but Clary could see that they were about to.

To her left, Jace let out an inhuman howl that pierced through the night and shook through trees around them. A shiver went down Clary's spine at the sound, and she could feel the vibration in her bones. A smile spread across her face as she started running. She couldn't run as fast as the werewolves around her, but she could still run faster than a human. She heard responding howls
mixed with shouts as the pack replied and let themselves run free, pushing their legs faster and harder. They split up as they got into the forest, running at different speeds, and Clary was running alongside Magnus at one point, but she felt a flash of his magic and saw a spark of blue and then he was gone.

Clary wasn't sure where Lydia was, but she knew that her friend would be nearby, and then there was a figure in front of her, and she made out long dark hair, followed quickly by a second, who she knew almost instinctively that it was Simon, so she knew that it was Isabelle with him.

She ran further into the forest, pushing her feet off the ground, her arms moving at her side as she twisted among the trees.

The forest felt better.

It felt better than it had in so long.

She didn't realize how off the forest had felt until Jace had been there. She had been running through these trees for years, and they had never felt bad or wrong, but now they felt right. Maia, Simon and Bat had been talking about how the whole township was feeling better—settling after the unexplained deaths, and when Luke and Gretel came into town to check in on Clary a couple of times, they had noted it as well. While Clary was good at reading peoples moods and expressions, just feeling the way the forest felt better wasn't normal for her.

It was Jace.

It was her mate.

That was why she was able to feel it, just like how she could feel the sadness that had clung to the house and to him when she was first come to the Herondale, and how she could feel it as he got happier.

It was the bond that they shared, and every time they were together, she could feel it pulsing stronger between them. She could also feel it growing stronger with Jace's pack, and with her own friends. She could pick up on things a lot quicker than she had before, although it seemed as though with her own friends, it was just building on the friendship that she already had with them.

Alec ran by her for a bit, slowing down his pace so that they were alongside each other, and she could feel the happiness flooding off him as leaned in to touch her shoulder with a clawed hand before he put on a burst of speed and disappeared into the forest.

Lydia appeared at her side, and the two ran next to each other, taking breaks when they felt they were about to pass out from exertion. The Shadowhunters—along with Jordan—often ran with the were's when the moon was full in the sky, and Clary used to run every month with Luke and his pack, but it still tired both girls out, given they didn't recover as fast as the werewolves.

It was getting into the early hours of the morning when there was a howl that cut through the silence of the night. Lydia heard it, and she faltered, but it was Clary who knew that it was Jace, calling them home. She could feel it vibrating through her bones that it was him, and that he was calling them back to the house.

The house that felt like a home.

It took them a while to get back to the house, given how deep they had run into the woods. Clary fully expected for them to be the last ones to get back to the house, other than perhaps Jordan, and she was surprised when her and Lydia finally broke out of the trees and dragged their feet up the
stairs o the house, to find everyone there except Magnus. Jace looked completely refreshed, his feet and hands dirty, the shirt he was wearing torn, and his sweatpants slung low on his hips. Clary’s heart beat a bit faster in her chest, and she was glad that everyone else in the room was distracted with the left over dinner that they were all stuffing their faces with.  
"You weren't with Magnus?" Alec asked as he finished off one of the chicken wings, tearing off a napkin from the roll on the table.  
"No, I haven't seen him since—" Clary cut off when Alec and Jace both jerked their heads toward the door and a moment later, it swung open and Magnus walked in. He looked slightly disheveled, which was to be expected, but he also looked a bit confused. His confusion was obviously in his scent as well, because the were's in the room quietened down and looked toward him with questioning looks.  
"You alright?" Alec asked, approaching his boyfriend and giving him a quick kiss on the corner of his mouth.  
"Yeah," Magnus made a face that was something like a grimace. "There's just—there was magic in the forest. Not a lot, but a little bit."  
"Some kids fooling around with a spell book?" Maia suggested, because it wasn't unheard of. Sometimes kids who had a touch of warlock or seelie power would find an old spell book that their parents owned and try out some spells. Usually it just lead to nothing and disappointment, but Clary remembered a few years ago when there was a girl in town who ended up with a tail for two weeks before her parents took her to a warlock to get it removed.  
"Maybe," Magnus didn't look entirely convinced as he laced his fingers together with Alec's and came into the kitchen where everyone else was swarmed. Jace was watching Magnus carefully, his eyes flickering over his pack as the conversation resumed and the werewolves went back to cleaning up pretty much every crumb of food there was.  
"Hey," Clary nudged Jace's side, her fingers brushing over the back of his hand. "It's fine, it'll be nothing." She gave him a small smile before joining the rest of the pack in the kitchen, Jace following her after a beat.
Chapter 25

It was a couple of days later when Magnus approached Jace. He had been trying to tell himself that everything was okay, and there was nothing to worry about. When Alec had picked up on his concern, which Magnus had been trying to mask with his magic so as not to alert the werewolves, and he had asked his boyfriend about it, Magnus had just smiled and come up with a stupid excuse. The thing was, there was a chance it was nothing, but Magnus didn't think so. It felt like more.

Magnus was hesitant to tell Jace because the Alpha already had a lot on his plate, with the murders that were going on, and the other reason was because despite all the shit that was going on, he was also happy. Genuinely happy for the first time since Magnus had known him. Sure, there had been moments when Jace was happy before, and he usually seemed content when he had been with his pack—Isabelle, Alec and Magnus. But it was different, Jace was happy almost all the time. There was sometimes when he felt a bit overwhelmed and frustrated, when helping Bat control his shift and the anger that flared up inside him quickly and also when they got their daily phone call from Helen at the sheriffs office, letting them know that there was no update in the murders. But overall—he was happy.

And that was all thanks to a petite redhead.

"Jace?" Magnus began, already feeling guilty about dampening Jace's mood. He had been out in the woods behind their home with Bat and Maia. The two were close, maybe closer than they should be, and Bat seemed to be able to control his emotions a lot better with Maia around. So for now, Maia was there when Bat was learning control, and Jace was slowly going to wean him off her soothing presence as time went by. It seemed as though this session had gone well, because Jace had been smiling when he had got back to the house, and Bat had given the Alpha a quick hug before he and Maia had left, which was a bold move for Bat, who was still hesitant about physical touch, despite feeling the need for it like any other werewolf.

"What's up, Mags?" Jace asked as he walked into the kitchen to get himself a drink.

"I wanted to talk to you about the magic—that I felt in the woods," Magnus began as he followed Jace as he got a glass from the cupboard and then put it underneath the filter by the sink, chilled water slowly filling the glass.

"Yup," Jace didn't look surprised and Magnus pursed his lips to stop himself from sighing in frustration. Magnus had always prided himself in being able to keep secrets and being unreadable to others. But since being with Alec, and in turn becoming part of Jace's pack, he was a lot more of an open book, and Jace could read a lot more from him than Magnus liked sometimes. He took in a deep breath and moved to sit on one of the barstools at the island in the middle of the kitchen.

"It wasn't strong," Magnus began, still trying to find the right words. It wasn't often that he couldn't find words, and he didn't like that it was Jace that he felt so vulnerable around. But, then again, there was something that felt okay with it being Jace that was seeing him uncertain.

It was pack.

It was because Jace was his Alpha.

"But I think that it had something to do with the murders," he finally stated. Jace's eyebrows raised, and he tapped is fingers on the glass that he was holding. Magnus felt a little twinge of pride at the fact that he had said something that Jace wasn't expecting. "I was talking with Simon, and he said
that the police think that there is a magical element to the murders.

"Well..." Jace put down the glass of water on the bench, bracing both hands against the island on the opposite side of Magnus. "Magical as in werewolves are supernatural creatures so we are magical, or magical as in some other magic? Like a warlock? Or a seelie?" Magnus was back to feeling uncertain again, and he crossed his arms over his chest, twisting his mouth. Jace didn't push, giving the warlock time to try and sort through his thoughts.

"I think a faerie?" He said, the question in his voice.

"A faerie?" Jace raised an eyebrow.

"Or someone with fae blood. Maybe a half blood," Magnus rolled his shoulders, trying to rid them of the tension. Faeries, or the Fair Folk, weren't common. Most who were around were half blood or even less, given how diluted the blood lines were. Warlocks were more common, because there was no specific DNA combinations that produced a warlock, they just were, and also Seelie's, given they still lived in hidden communities.

"Okay," Jace nodded. His nose twitched and Magnus instinctively looked toward the kitchen door, waiting for someone to walk through. A moment later, the front door opened, and Magnus heard Isabelle's voice first, and then she walked in, with Alec and Simon close behind her. Alec was frowning, obviously able to smell the tension, and he bumped his sister aside so that he could move to stand beside Magnus.

"What's going on?" He asked, resting a hand on Magnus' shoulder. "Is everything alright?" There was almost an accusatory look as his eyes moved toward Jace. Jace's eyebrows raised as he looked back at Alec, as though waiting for him to say something, but Alec chose to keep quiet, which was for the best.

"I was talking to Jace about the magic that I smelt in the woods," Magnus began. Isabelle bit down on her lower lip, glancing to the side where Simon was standing beside her. Jace's eyes moved over them, and in the back of his mind, he noted that he could smell Isabelle's scent smeared all over Simon, and his all over her, but he turned his mind back to the conversation at hand, and concentrated on Simon.

"Magnus tells me that there might be a magical element to the case," Jace said pointedly. "Something more than werewolves." Simon at least had the decency to look guilty. "I know that when Luke originally went to look at the body, he said that he picked up on the scent of magic. But from what I remember, you guys dismissed this? Something about it just been the residue magic of a werewolf? I mean, that didn't really make sense to me, but I assumed your ME knew what they were talking about. Is there a reason that I, as the Alpha in town, was not told this if it was changed?" Simon's hand went to his hair, which was floppy over his forehead, and he tugged at a strand. Jace's eyes were unwavering on him, and Simon knew even without glancing around him, that everyone else was looking at him as well.

"Jeremiah didn't want to," Simon said faltingly, taking in a deep breath. "He brought you to the original crime scene and gave you an overview of the case because of tradition, because it's what's expected. But..." Jace didn't say anything to prompt him on, but he lifted an eyebrow expectantly. "He doesn't know you. And these killings started so soon after you came into town...He just—he's being careful."

"Right," Jace stated with a nod of his head. "Has he been telling Luke any of this?" He couldn't imagine Luke holding this back from him, from one Alpha to another, but then, it wasn't as though he knew Luke that well.
"No," Simon said with a shake of his head. "I mean, not much. Gretal, that's Luke's second, she sensed the magic as well, but she couldn't place it. He's closer with Luke and his pack, just because they're the ones that have been here all these years, but he's only been giving them minimal information, we've been working this ourselves." Jace nodded, taking in a deep breath through his nose and then approaching Simon. Isabelle shifted, even though Simon could feel that she didn't want to move. Jace stood in front of Simon, a flicker of red edging into his pupil, his chin jutted forward.

"You understand that any sort of crime that happens in this town—it's my responsibility to know about it, as the Alpha," Jace began, in a tone that wasn't hard to the point of being rigid, but was definitely firm. "I know that you're just doing your job, your job as a policeman, but if you're here, if you're going to be in my pack, I need to know where your loyalties lie." Simon shifted from one foot to another before nodding his head.

"We don't know much," he began. "Other than the fact it's a werewolf, we really don't know much else. Can't recognize the scents in the area, but...We know that it's being disguised." Simon glanced over at Magnus and nodded. "There's a seelie or a warlock at work here. That scent, that day when we found the first body? When you came by the crime scene with Alec?" Jace nodded. "We think it's a scent that we do know, but that it's being disguised with magic."

"And that's probably what I can sense magic in the woods," Magnus hummed and Simon nodded.

"The ME here..." Jace began. "Have they gotten any help from anyone with magic or knowledge of magic?"

"No," Simon shook his head. "Luke and Gretal—his second—came in to look at the body, but there wasn't really anything that they were able to sense or figure out either." Jace's eyebrow rasied at that, and Simon shifted uncomfortably, given he had just revealed that Sheriff Jeremiah had allowed another Alpha in to see the bodies but had not invited him in.

"Magnus should be able to help more," Jace said, looking over his shoulder at the warlock. Magnus made a face.

"Uh, I don't know about that..." he began. "I'm not really—I don't have much experience with human corpses. Warlocks and werewolves, yes. Humans, not so much." Alec scrunched up his nose at that, and Jace guessed that there was probably going to be some discussion between the two of them later. Magnus had been alive for nearly two hundred years, he was old for a human but young for a warlock, and usually warlock's didn't start exploring multiple fields of work until they got to the five or six hundred and they had done all the 'fun' stuff first, so it was surprising that Magnus had knowledge of corpses in the first place.

"But if there's a magical element," Jace prompted, stepping away from Simon and feeling the boy sigh with relief, able the smell in the air that he wasn't quite as anxious as he had been when the Alpha was standing directly in front of him. "If there's a magical element, then you'll be able to help for than a ME who has no magical knowledge."

"Alright," Magnus nodded.

"Great, we'll go now," Jace said as he walked toward the door.

"Now?!" Simon exclaimed.

"What?" Magnus asked in surprise.
"Better now than never. This has been unsolved for long enough," Jace called over his shoulder as he walked toward the stairs, heading up to his room to get a jersey. When he came downstairs, Magnus and Simon were putting on their shoes while the Lightwood siblings were standing in the hallway, looking a little uncertain.

"Do you think it would be a good idea if we all went?" Alec asked. "If there's already the three of you going, another two of us...It might look as though we're trying to intimidate them."

"You're right," Jace mused. "Okay, you two stay here. I'll call you if we find anything out." Alec nodded, and Magnus stepped around Jace to give his boyfriend a quick kiss on the mouth. Isabelle and Simon shared a soft look, and Jace was surprised when they didn't kiss or hug, because from the scents he was getting from both of them, they had probably done a whole lot more than that. They got into Jace's Camaro, Simon in the backseat while Magnus took the front passenger seat. It didn't take long for them to get into town, and Jace drove toward the police station. "The morgue is around the back, right?" Jace asked as he parked on the road, against the curb about half a block down from the station. "Is there a back entrance?"

"Yup," Simon nodded, taking in a nervous breath as they unloaded from the car. Simon lead the way around the back, Jace close behind him and Magnus bringing up the rear, his hands shoved in his pockets. Simon pulled out his wallet out of his back pocket and slipped out of his keycard, swiping it over the pad outside the door. Jace took over from there, following his nose down the hall, easily finding the morgue. He pushed open the door, and then stopped as he smelt a living scent over the death that the whole place reeked of.

"Uh," Maureen Brown stopped short from where she had been walking back from her small, adjoining office. "W-what are you d-doing here? I-I don't think you're h-here—"

"Maureen," Simon stepped out from around Jace, who was looking amused at her stuttering, although not completely surprised. "It's okay."

"Ummm," the medical examiners eyes flicked from Simon to Jace, and then past both of them to where Magnus was standing. Magnus wasn't paying any attention to the exchange, though, his eyes were drawn to the far side of the room, and Jace could sense Magnus extending his magic outward, so he was guessing that he had found what he was looking for. "Is the Sheriff okay with this?" Maureen began. "Because you know that he's not okay with people just coming back here, and I don't want to get in trouble, and—"

"I'm not just 'people'," Jace interrupted, looking impatient, and Maureen's mouth snapped shut. "You know who I am, and I'm here to look at the bodies from the recent spree of murders." Maureen's lips parted again, as though she might argue, but Jace just let the red begin to bleed at the edges of his iris and she seemed to change her mind, nodding her head a couple of times before stepping aside.

"Over there," she pointed, but Magnus was already walked to the far side, clearly knowing what he was looking for. Jace followed him, Simon last, and Maureen hanging back, chewing on the side of her thumb as she watched them, eyes nervously swinging between them and the door. Magnus pulled open the door for one of the drawers, sliding out the storage drawer. The scent of death just got stronger and Jace screwed up his nose and forced himself to take short breaths through his teeth. Simon opened the other drawers, pulling out the bodies, and Magnus closed his eyes, centering himself, before magic swelled at his fingertips.

Jace wanted to ask questions, and he could see all over Simon's face that he wanted to as well, but they both stayed quiet. The only noise that was being generated in the room was the slight hum of Magnus' magic, and the awkward gnawing noise that Maureen was making as she chewed on her thumb. Magnus was frowning, there was a little wrinkle between his eyebrows as his hands shifted,
pulses of magic leaving his hands as he moved them up and down the body.

They were there for nearly twenty minutes before Magnus spoke, and Jace was ridiculously thankful for that because Maureen's gnawing and Simon's nervous energy was starting to get on his nerves.

"There's definitely magic," Magnus concluded as took in a deep breath, rolling his shoulders as he stepped back from the body and flexed his fingers before letting them drop to his sides. "I mean, it's not obvious, it's subtle—" he glanced over at Maureen. "Which will be why none of the mundane's tests brought it up." Maureen frowned and it looked like she wanted to argue, but she bit her tongue. "And maybe Luke couldn't determine it either."

"Do you know what it is?" Jace asked.

"I was wrong. It's a seelie, not a faerie," Magnus answered. "That's why the scent is all muddled with earthy scents, they've pulled in scents from the air and ground to cover up the scent of the omega. It just felt like something was off about the magic, and that's why I was thinking fae rather than seelie."

"If it's an omega and a seelie working together... Magic and a werewolf..." Jace frowned. "That sounds like a pack." Magnus' eyes sparked at that and Simon swallowed hard.

"There are no other packs around here," Simon murmured. "Only Luke's and yours. There's none others ages."

"We need to talk to Luke," Jace said. "We need to let him know what's going on, find out if he can help with anything else." He looked over at the ME, who's eyes were darting between them all with that same nervous air that she had had since they had walked in. "Thanks for your help. I understand if you need to tell your boss about our visit." She jerked her head in a nod, and Jace flicked his fingers at Magnus and Simon. "Let's head out," he said shortly, leading the way out of the morgue, his pack members close behind him.

End Notes

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